

TWO NEGATIONS

by

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Abstract

This thesis belongs to the fields of creative writing, cultural theory and Lacanian theory. It comprises two components: one is a work of creative writing entitled "Two Negations". The "First Negation" is an exploration of Part A of German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* ("Consciousness", from §90 to §165) that chooses not to rely on secondary sources, instead remaining as close to the text as it can while establishing surprising or controversial links. The "Second Negation" consists mostly of aphorisms, with a handful of essays; its content side-tracks from what is initially a highly metaphorical and personal narrative into considerations upon the psychoanalytic understanding of time and space, and more specifically the feminine modalities of this experience. Creative writing here mixes psychoanalytic concepts, Hegelian vocabulary and well-known works of modern and contemporary philosophy with pop music and original fiction. This symptom writ large eventually begs the question of what it is a symptom of, raising the stakes for an interpretation.

The second component is a reflective commentary that seeks to put in context the creative writing in order to interpret it. Since Nietzsche's philosophy resembles *Two Negations* in both substance and style, it is the scholarly material best fit to bring contextual light to it. The first part of the commentary therefore investigates the use and function of aphorisms in Nietzsche's books, focusing on the analogy with the French moralists. The second part discusses Jacques Derrida's critique of Nietzsche in two papers written in the 1970s, in particular the groundbreaking emphasis on the woman in Nietzsche's writings, an analysis that bears on *Two Negations*. The third and final part introduces the question of melancholia in *Two Negations* in connection with Nietzschean nihilism and the psychoanalytic understanding of mourning, and closes on the notions of Author and Style in Hegel and French Romanticism.

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List of Abbreviations

Creative Writing

N1	First Negation, entry number usually follows
N2	Second Negation, entry number usually follows
PoS	Hegel's <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>

Reflective Commentary: Nietzsche

BT	<i>The Birth of Tragedy</i>
TALIES	"On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense"
UM	<i>Untimely Meditations</i>
HTH	<i>Human, All Too Human</i>
WS	<i>The Wanderer and His Shadow (Human, All Too Human, Vol.II)</i>
D	<i>Daybreak</i>
GS	<i>The Gay Science</i>
Z	<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>
BGE	<i>Beyond Good & Evil</i>
GM	<i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>
TI	<i>The Twilight of the Idols</i>
AC	<i>The Anti-Christ</i>
EH	<i>Ecce Homo</i>
FP	<i>Posthumous Fragments</i>

General Introduction

Aims and objectives

Historically, modern philosophy involved the mediation of content in the sole movement of the dialectic, whereas the university imposed the reification of theological and philosophical discourse under the academic pen. By using creative writing to express philosophical ideas instead of academic writing, this thesis aims to recreate the historic tension between the freedom of the philosopher and the constraints of the university in order to say something novel about theory. How? The two negations of the thesis' title allude to the structure of its creative component, which divides into two parts, or "negations". The first part (First Negation) abolishes the critical distance of the scholar to over-identify with the Hegelian text through a paraphrase that fully absorbs the content of part A ("Consciousness") of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* regarding the fragmentation of phenomenological experience. The second part (Second Negation) follows this up by writing a metaphor of its own through a mixture of fictional, poetic and psychoanalytic language crafted in aphorisms. In the creative writing, fragmentation thus passes from content (the subject of the First Negation) to form (the style of the

Second Negation). This negation *is then negated* at the end of the creative writing and in the reflective commentary – its aphoristic form is cancelled by the return of secondary sources and rigorous academic writing, and its fictional and psychoanalytic content is taken apart by analysis. Put simply, this thesis lets a philosophical subject emerge from the creative writing for the commentary to distinguish its essential features in the otherwise disorienting wealth of references and themes. The question for us is double: what does fiction tell us about theory, what is the aforementioned fragmentation the sign of? And what can the experience of writing creatively about philosophy tell us about past like-minded philosophical endeavours such as Nietzsche's?

Primary texts

In the creative component, the thesis' key primary text is Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This is because Hegel once again appears today as the master and the endpoint of philosophical enquiries, and therefore the dogmatic wall against which the creative writing rebels. The creative component mainly looks at part A and B of the *Phenomenology* ("Consciousness" and "Self-Consciousness") as it reflects on the fragmentation (and alienation) of consciousness in both the First and Second Negation.

The creative component also features a number of recurring literary references, including Keats' and Dylan Thomas' poetry, Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* stories, and Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Their inclusion reflects the architecture of hysteria that supports the creative writing, as it suggests eccentric characters (Sherlock Holmes, Holly Golightly) and the unrequited love of the poet posited against the anxiety of dying (Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale", N2§241; Thomas' "And Death Shall Have No Dominion", N2§149), themes that characterise the Second Negation. As to the selection of pop songs and films, it illustrates the conceptual shifts at work in the creative writing – shifts that are analysed in detail in the introduction to the commentary. For example, the inclusion of Christopher Nolan's films for discussion (N2§162, N2§189n12) comes in connection to the clashing temporalities that are evoked towards the end of the Second Negation. Similarly, the discussions of Pop music singers (N2§166) cement the shift we see in the text from a general discussion about the work of the signifier, to a question about femininity.

Because Nietzsche's aphoristic writing and his sometimes fictional, often confrontational approach to theory resemble in substance and style the experiment of *Two Negations*, the Nietzschean corpus is central to the

reflective component, and almost all of Nietzsche's works are largely discussed in the three parts that make up the commentary. In the first part, the commentary also touches upon many works by the French moralists, so that the comparison Nietzsche and *Two Negations* is contextualised in the larger tradition of fragmentary philosophical prose Nietzsche would have been aware of. It features secondary sources analysing the link between aphoristic writing, Nietzsche and the French moralists, notably R. Pippin's book *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy*, as this book in particular bound all three together in its discursive movement. In the second part, the commentary turns to the link between the aphoristic writings of Nietzsche and the question of femininity that haunts it and *Two Negations*, summoning the ground-breaking scholarship that has preceded as well as accompanied Jacques Derrida's interventions on this subject, namely the works of Sarah Kofman, Bernard Pautrat and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. And it of course includes Derrida's two interventions, i.e. *Spurs* and *Otobiographies*. When the commentary finally analyses melancholia in the writings of Nietzsche and beyond, and relates it to the French Revolution, the primary and secondary texts include Alenka Zupančič's work on Nietzsche, Freud's and Lacanian analyst Russell Grigg's works on melancholia, and Rebecca Comay and French

writer Chateaubriand on the link between melancholia and the French Revolution.

Theoretical framework

Two Negations implies the specifically Hegelian nature of two negations, namely that two negations are not unrelated to each other – on the contrary, one is the negation of the other. The negation of the negation of a content (or substance) does not take us back to the original content by simply cancelling the first negation, it ushers in a new content that is born out of these two successive negations: in Hegelian terms, the subject. For example, academic substance is cancelled by the First Negation that unleashes poetic and fictional contents, until these too are reined in and eventually negated at the end of the Second Negation, leaving us with only one word, "style", which is then at the heart of the commentary's argumentative effort.

Two Negations also avails itself of the experience of psychoanalysis to bring about this philosophical moment of specular rupture and symbolic overcoming, so much so that (Freudian and Lacanian) psychoanalysis is the other obvious element in the theoretical framework of the thesis. In his 1925 paper "Negation", Freud described a negation as the necessary first step on the path of working through a new content, as it is the only way for the subject to isolate a

signifier or an object as such, and not re-include it in the self-same phenomenological experience of the world. Subjectivity isolates an object in an otherwise blind horizon and then works itself out against that object to come out on its own. If the first negation is thus the negation of the other, the second is the negation of self, so that the seamless specular imaging that characterises social life is disrupted. This applies to the creative component. The agent first negates the other along the path of bad infinity that leads to no redeeming feat – the larger questions surrounding Hegel are short-circuited by the paraphrase in the First Negation, which turns them into a private monologue instead of the academic, therefore public, debate. The agent then negates itself in existential fashion, so that something new comes up – every attribute of the author's substance is symbolised and thereby negated, from the film and music tastes to the literature preferences to the personal experiences. This twofold structure not only recalls the immense sacrifices made by the Hegelian "Self-Consciousness" transitioning to "Spirit" (at the end of the section on "Unhappy Consciousness", see §229 of the *Phenomenology*), but also the askesis that characterises psychoanalysis according to Freud and Lacan. So that this thesis may borrow and then discard psychoanalytic theoretical language at a superficial level, but it constantly

and consistently reflects this askesis at a more fundamental level.

Methodology

In the creative component, I try to achieve a decentring effect through creative writing. In the First Negation, this creative methodology is more paraphrastic in nature – the writing closely follows the Hegelian source and rehearses in its own words the movement of Hegel's thought in Part A of the *Phenomenology*. It does not reflect critically on the terms used by Hegel or his overall approach. In the Second Negation, the methodology could be qualified as anti-methodological insofar as it evades definition. The writing is first purely poetic, then it is fictional in the guise of being aphoristic, until it builds more logical and rigorous arguments and case studies just when the reader is getting used to fictional aphorisms, and finally returns to more esoteric and metaphorical prose at the end. No single methodology is applied throughout, and that is the common thread that links up otherwise heterogeneous fragments: it is an anti-methodology.

In the commentary, the methodology of the thesis is more rigorous and academic: a question is introduced (Part A: is Nietzsche a French moralist? Part B: what is the role of sex in Nietzsche and Hegel? Part C: what is the relation

between Nietzsche, melancholia and the French Revolution?); the secondary literature is reviewed in order to contextualise the initial question and frame it in current scholarly debates; and the argument works through the content to articulate an original answer to a specific question so as to make a contribution to the scientific literature.

Structure and Form

The thesis is made of two main components in addition of this general introduction – creative writing (I) and reflective commentary (II). The creative component includes the "two negations" of the title, the first being an exploration of Part A of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, and the second a series of aphorisms and longer essays divided in seven sections of varying lengths.

The reflective commentary features a partial introduction that tries to make sense of the conceptual journey of the creative writing, laying the ground for an interpretation (in its full teleological sense) of the creative material. This interpretation first explores fragmentation as a philosophical form through the analysis of its most famous exponent, Nietzsche, and forerunners in the guise of the French moralists (Part 1). The commentary then turns to the substance of Nietzsche's aphoristic writing as

deconstructed by Jacques Derrida in the 1970s – this deconstructive work passes through the main stations of Nietzsche's prose, namely poetry, femininity and the state, and eventually summons Hegel (Part 2). Finally, the commentary establishes a link between the question of Nietzsche and melancholia on the one hand, and the French Revolution on the other (Part 3).

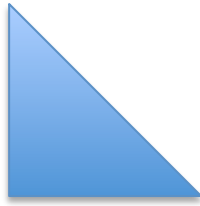
I. CREATIVE WRITING

First Negation

Breaking Through

§1 – In the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel succinctly describes how natural consciousness enters the 'way of despair' in contact with a negation. What negation? Negation first appears as an object that throws every prejudices held up to now as knowledge (sense-knowledge from now on) into doubt. It is a pure, raw or *undeveloped* negation at first, no more than a flicker – one that will awaken consciousness all the same. This negation opens up the dimension of truth, or at least the quest for it – our consciousness *trips* on the contradiction between sense-knowledge and the object that contradicts it. Knowing is therefore only *gnawing* at first, but this question-mark over the world IS the birth of subjectivity: Hegel's 'untrue consciousness', which was no consciousness at all, becomes torn apart between itself, the sensuous immediacy which is for it sense-knowledge, and the contradictory object. We have the following:

Consciousness



Being-for-another
(object)

Being-in-itself
(truth)

Consciousness truly becomes Consciousness at this point (capitalised from now on). The initial negation becomes determinate negation the more the object proves false my prejudices. Determinate negation is the content of this proving-false, what Hegel calls Knowing (capitalised from now on). And this content points to a third dimension beyond untrue consciousness and the sensuous appearance of the object – truth, this **in-itself** of things; but only the experience of error – errancy? – can gradually delineate this dimension. With this first appears the notion *qua* the apprehension of the object from the repeated experience of error. Consciousness is no longer at one with itself, unlike untrue consciousness; it is always both consciousness of the object *and of its own relating to it*. The object is **for-another** insofar as it lies before the eyes of Consciousness; the contradictory object is at first only for it, *for* Consciousness. But it is now a matter of whether Consciousness can surrender the object immediately introjected (**in-another**),

and surrender it to other consciousnesses (for-another). Once this dialectical movement occurs, and the object is surrendered, it will have left the object **for-itself**. We come to grasp this essential matrix of Hegelian thought: in-itself, for-another, in-another, for-itself.

§2 – We go through this movement again. This operation sense-knowledge/gnawing/Knowing reaches its end when Consciousness finds out that the in-itself is at least partly in-another, and Consciousness grasp itself through this other it mirrors itself with (this could be the phenomenon of transitivity observed in children); and that the in-itself as a dimension of the object *only emerges against the background of the work of Consciousness*, against the background of Consciousness' previous beliefs being proved false (determinate negation). Consciousness reflects on the movement of introjection that has taken place. It grasps the determinateness of the negation – only when Consciousness exhausts previously-held prejudices does it get that this in-itself was only tenable against their background. When this background vanishes, Consciousness does not fill up the object with a new sense-knowledge; rather the object will have filled up Consciousness with doubt, not as immediate anxiety as it was at first (gnawing), but as a "mediated new mode of

existence for Consciousness," to use Hegel's words (PoS, Introduction). Real inquiries only start now – it is precisely when doubt deploys itself over the whole of the sensuous world that Consciousness takes cognizance of the *fault* that lies within itself. Consciousness also learns that its fundamental operation is not one of testing its knowledge (that is, perhaps, the animal's operation). Rather, since this knowledge was proved false in its entirety by the original negation, the operation of Consciousness is one of *testing the criterion of what Knowing is* (PoS§84). Last but not least, the object becomes for-itself – insofar as it is not reabsorbed in the self-same experience of the world (insofar as it has survived introjection), it raises the prospect of a presence absolutely *other* within itself. The object is endued with a life all its own, something that will become very clear in the traversing of the Thing (see below).

§3 – In this movement Consciousness has glimpsed a world outside its window, and smoke hangs over mirrors. Filled with anxiety at the prospect of walking on air, Consciousness will seek to land on common ground. In this attempt, it will gradually find itself more and more groundless.

Breaking Through Sense

§4 – Consciousness that now understands the object is for-itself, or is not reabsorbed in the self-same experience of the world, will inquire further: what is the world made of? Consciousness will discover the Universal (capitalised to distinguish it from the adjective) – what the author believes Saussure called the signifier – through the dialectics of Sense-Certainty (capitalised when understood as a movement). To follow Hegel's demonstration closely: when we say This Here to designate this day, and then This Here to designate this night, only the universal This is preserved and the sensuality of the statement becomes the unessential part, as day passes over into night in the second This. The This therefore registers *our* meaning (the intention of the statement) more than the sensuousness that was initially associated to it. As we say This Here And Now a second time in the evening, it is clear that sense-certainty is supported by the universals Here and Now, or that sense-certainty is inseparable from its statement. To put it differently, whether it is day or night is the unessential part of the statement. Hegel also uses the example of the 'I see a tree'/'I see a house' to show that in the dialectic of the subject and predicate, the subject becomes the universal or essential moment, and the

predicate, the sensuousness it contains, the unessential moment. "We must let ourselves *point to it* [the Here and Now that are asserted]", says Hegel, "for the truth of this immediate relation is the truth of *this 'I'* which confines itself to one 'Now' and one 'Here'." (PoS§105)

Consciousness is suddenly all intuition, and its own empty shadow is cast over the shining world. Indeed, the immediate relation of This Tree never has the truth of Being – it will always already have been. The world flickers on the wall: it is like pressing the remote control repeatedly on old television screens, it leaves a fleeting blank space (subjectivity) in between the channels. Consciousness cannot get hold of the Here and Now outside of itself, even though it will try to deceive itself for as long as it can. ('Mindfulness' is today's term for such a sustained practice of self-deception.)

What will be unravelled below are the conclusions that should be drawn from what should perhaps be called language acquisition; but the greatest mystery remains this coalescing of the 'I', the chasm between subject and predicates, this opening of Being that is the possibility of the ejection of predicates out of the subject, and vice-versa.

§5 – To conclude the dialectics of sense-certainty, we can rehearse Hegel's movement from 1) the Now that is

asserted; 2) which is superseded because it *is not*, it will always already have been; 3) the truth of this 'has been' is also superseded precisely because it is not; 4) we return to the This Now through the negation of the negation. The result, however, is that This Now is not simple sensuous immediacy again, but a whole movement reflected into itself, from which emerges a plurality of Nows, whose only encompassing term is the universal Now (PoS§107). The same movement goes for the Here until Consciousness painfully understands that the world it *takes in* is one at least partly fashioned by consciousness; that the structure of the statement is the essential part, and the sensuous the unessential. In this process, Knowing thus becomes essential, and the sense-object unessential.

§6 – All sadness when Consciousness discovers that it does not find itself where it *took* itself to be! It will therefore try its best to deny this movement of Sense-Certainty by refusing to grant the Universal positive existence. Such a manoeuvre Hegel calls Scepticism, and we shall see now how it deploys. When asked by his neighbour if he can pass the salt, the sceptic won't acknowledge the universal, and ultimately social, nature of language. He might thus snap back the following: 'which salt? The one on the table, or the one in the sea?' When we say This River, the sceptic would

dispute again that it is *this* river, not seeing that when we say This River, we rely on the conventionally-used sense of This River. There may be thousands of rivers and it may be inadequate for us to call the river ten minutes down the street This River, as this may refer to these thousands of rivers, but language is always the language shared by a community, and a local community use a This River that refers to the one around the corner, not one half-way across the world. This conventional use of language, or the intentionality of the statement (what Hegel designates as the *meaning* of what we say, what precisely makes the Universal universal) this is what the sceptic cannot accept. It is as if sense-certainty is too precious to be tainted by the other's words. Insofar as we have seen sense-certainty to contain the Universal, the revolt of Hegel's sceptic is paradoxically a defence of language when it fancies itself to be a defence of the sensuous world – it is a defence of *a* world.

To use an extremely trivial example: a man the author never met was very fond of gipsy jazz music, and would fly into a fury at listening to his girlfriend sing Shakira's pop song "Gipsy". Wasn't it the vulgarisation of the notion 'Gypsy' by a popular singer that truly was intolerable? As if the song betrayed the authenticity of the experience of gypsy jazz music, in Hegelian terms the sense-

object Gypsy. However, precisely when the sceptical consciousness defends a sense-object against its notion, arguing that the universalising Notion betrays the sensuous wealth of the sense-object, it in fact cannot see that what it is really defending is *its very meaning* of the sensuous object, what 'Gypsy' *means* to this sceptical consciousness. Such a defence is therefore truly a defence of sense-knowledge, not Knowing. This procedure is the pure obverse of the more common manoeuvre by which the sceptic tries to deny that people *mean* different things. While the sceptical consciousness refuses the universal nature of language, today's sceptic is more likely to defend precisely this social nature of language all the more, in order to obliterate single desires. He might thus argue that we all share this world, that we are one in it; or that philosophy should immediately be understood by all and talk to the 'people'. This is all yet another way to deny the Universal as such, the shattering positivity of language outside single consciousnesses, what Ferdinand de Saussure called *la langue*, the coherent set at the synchronic level (in contrast to *le langage*, the physical *muddling* of sounds). If Consciousness gets rid of the *content* of sense-knowledge when it enters the way of despair, it is only with what comes next that Consciousness will also shed the *form*, i.e. this *Play-Doh* of meaning that is Sense-Certainty.

§7 – At the end of the dialectics of Sense-Certainty we get to the *conditioned* Universal - the sense-object contains the Universal but this Universal remains conditioned by the sense-object. We shall now see how the *unconditioned* Universal unfolds.

Breaking Through The Thing

§8 – When we point something out we now take it up as it is in truth – a Universal. This is what Hegel means by perception, which in German translates as 'to take the truth', literally 'to take truly' [*Wahrnehmen*](PoS§110). The passage from Sense-Certainty to Perception is thus the passage of the universal This from a determinate *no-thing* in addition to the sense-object... to the proper constitution of the Thing.

§9 – In Perception, the sense-element is at the same time cancelled and preserved in the Universal, it becomes a *property* – this is **sublation** [*Aufhebung*]. The lushness of the tiger's striped fur, the way it blends in with the tall grass and vanishes into the jungle, up to the single thick hairs that compose it; is present in the object Tiger as a property that can be applied to other things – this is

sublation. The affect of a single tiger *here* is negated by the universal Tiger, what this single tiger is *for us* and yet designates all other such animals – and potentially anything and anyone else – just as much. Recall the child who curses and throws at the other all the vocabulary it has amassed for lack of a proper insult – 'You Tiger! You Horse! You Bath! You Table! You Chair!' This is sublation. Once a property, black stripes enter the matrix of oppositional determination in structuralist terms, or differential determination in Hegel's lexicon. The fur is striped and it is a tiger *only insofar as* it is not spotted and it is not a leopard; only insofar as it is not plain and it is not a lion, *etc.* Hegel specifically says that Being is universal only in virtue of having negation within itself, with as a result many properties being established simultaneously – but again, only thanks to the negation that empties the object of the sensuous. To quote Hegel at length before we go on:

“Supersession [sublation] exhibits its true twofold meaning which we have seen in the negative: it is at once a *negating* and a *preserving*. Our Nothing, as the Nothing of the This, preserves its immediacy and is itself sensuous, but it is a universal immediacy. Being, however, is a universal in virtue of having mediation or the negative within it; when it *expresses* this in its

immediacy, it is a differentiated, determinate property."

(PoS§113)

By splitting the visual field from without, negation gives it a determinateness all its own, where matters fall within themselves, or are immediately recognisable from each other – properties.

§10 – We finally get to the **Thing**. One of the greatest metaphysical mysteries is the following one – how do properties both stand on their own, indifferent to one another, *and* interpenetrate each other in the bundle that is the object? For the fact that a tiger possesses four legs does not prevent it from also having striped fur for example... Here again, it is worth following Hegel step by step in order not to lose the subtleties of this important movement:

"Since they are expressed in the simplicity of the universal, these determinacies - which are properties strictly speaking only through the addition of a further determination - are related only to themselves (...) but the simple, self-identical universality is itself in turn distinct and free from these determinate properties it has. It is pure relating of self to self, or the *medium* in which all these determinacies are, and in which as a *simple* unity they therefore interpenetrate, but without

coming into contact with one another: for it is precisely through participation in this universality that they exist indifferently on their own account. " (PoS§113)

The Tiger-Thing is thus its many interpenetrating properties *and* the Also of the universal medium Tiger which keeps properties both together and one apart from another. This is crucial: properties relate to themselves as properties (striped, not plain) *and* to this Also, the universal medium which allows them to exist together – striped and Also four legs Also with a tail Also etc. This has to be, because, as Hegel points out, properties are only properties "*through the addition of a further determination*" - striped insofar as there is a fur to be so. It is a concatenation, in the strict Jakobsonian sense – it is moulded on the structure of the sentence. In sense-certainty, we had a plurality of Nows (sense-elements) coming together in the universal Now; in perception, we have a plurality of universals coming together in the universal Also. How? Here comes the *dénouement*: the Also which is the 'thinghood' *is a One as well, and this One is the moment of negation*. Hegel's 'universal immediacy' (PoS§113) is isolated in the Also and is grasped as a One; but this One immediately turns into its opposite, the negative, when we take into account the

existent properties that have been uncovered in the same movement. In Hegel's words:

"Negation is inherent in a property as a determinateness which is immediately one with the immediacy of being, an immediacy which, through this unity with negation, is universality. As a One, however, the determinateness is set free from this unity with its opposite, and exists in and for itself." (PoS§114)

This movement is a perfect illustration of Hegelian dialectics insofar as the emergence of the Thing is in fact the sign of negation. One thing does not stand in tension with what is apparently its opposite, but with itself, its true opposite, and what we get is the pure *turning inside out* of something into Nothing, i.e. not nothing at all, but a Nothing that has existence. There is a tiger when there is Tiger and the Nothing that must come with it, One and the place of its emergence that is retroactively posited. (Cf. N2§209) (The cut is not vertical, from larger to smaller ensembles of fixed traits, but transversal – these traits (properties) relate to their final forms as well as the absence of form. *Properties exist only on the condition of being split from themselves.* Slavoj Žižek once mentioned the particular street layout of New York City – it is as if the grid plan of Manhattan only

appears thanks to the shattering transversality of Broadway that is constitutive of it.)

§11 – There is a tiger only because Tiger can be a One that excludes and not merely an Also that links up. Tiger is One to put an end to the potentially endless work of the Also. And the Thing is finally constituted when it is characterised by self-identity. In the emergence of the Thing as such, Consciousness *comes across* the invincibility of a **metaphor** – Tiger came in the place of the bundle of properties that it *also* was.

§12 – The outcome of Perception is its dissolution, or is reflection out of this truth and into itself. To put it like Hegel, it is all for my eyes that the Thing is white, for my mouth that the thing is tart, and so on. *I* have made Tiger out of this concatenation of properties. Consciousness thus returns into itself, for it has seen in the Thing that which points back to Consciousness. The Thing is once more reflected into itself when it presents itself to Consciousness through the never-ending cycle of the Properties-Also-One-etc. And the object for the Understanding is now this whole movement that was shared before between Consciousness and the Thing.

§13 – Consciousness will have to be faced with another Thing before it is driven back into itself. One finds this interplay in Hegel's text between the object and the Thing; both are used almost synonymously throughout, yet it harbours a difference. The object remains an object for consciousness and not the anxiety-producing Thing as long as Consciousness puts out the constant struggle to place diversity in the One and keep it away from the abyssal self-identical Thing. Or, as long as it manages to understand that the self-identity of the Thing relies on the operation of the One, and is not solely a property of the Thing outside of Consciousness. Insofar as the Thing appears more and more unbreakable in this perceptual movement,¹ it is indeed a daunting task for Consciousness to keep the Thing from eating out its own diversity as well as Consciousness itself. Before the Thing is turned inside out and language is registered as such, we witness the return of immediacy in the Thing. At the height of this process – when Consciousness is about to overtake the Thing as the essential element in this dialectic – Consciousness and the Thing will be one and the same, and for just a moment Consciousness will vanish into the Thing. Water fills up the bathtub all the way to the top and threatens to spill over. Only at this point can Consciousness *understand* that the

¹ Before Consciousness realises it is the *I* that is unbreakable.

One of the Thing is actually the most potent sign of its negation, that its indestructibility is not that of the sensuous object but that of Consciousness itself. The magical unity of the Thing has to fall within Consciousness, not the Thing. At first, Consciousness will mistake one indestructibility for another and will be led astray and enthused by the Thing.

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So how exactly does Consciousness break out of the Thing? Universal immediacy is isolated as One in contrast to the properties that fall within themselves and are linked up by the Also. This enabled the Thing to be constituted away from immediacy – it is an object for Consciousness. But the Thing that now comes together, comes together as One, and the immediacy that was left on one side passes over to the Thing. Anxiety rises and peaks when the Thing thus eats out its own diversity. It is at this moment that the very diversity of the object that is being destroyed by the overwhelming Thing, passes over to Consciousness' side and links up to become the **Thing-in-waiting**. This duplication of the Thing thus makes clear that the overbearing manifoldness contained in the Thing was the unessential aspect. It was in fact 'the essential property of the Thing that is its undoing'

(PoS§125) – its being a One is undermined by what has been negated through this operation, the manifoldness of the content. Once again, the One of immediacy turns out to be the negative. The being-for-self of the Thing – its overwhelming indestructibility – was in fact self-related negativity, or language completely driven back into itself. This is the *tour de force* of this passage. When this movement is registered, our water goes down the drain.

*

To conclude, the self-related negativity that is the Thing is also suspension of the Thing itself – *its essence is contained in another being*. The overwhelming, anxiety-producing Thing has let the manifoldness that gave rise to it slip through the door of the terrified Consciousness, and Consciousness just has to turn around to find the manifoldness of the Thing actually contained in this other being we called the Thing-in-waiting. The self-identical unity of the Thing is suspension of itself insofar as the inverse form of this magical unity is pure negation, negation *as such*. Insofar as the One has to exclude properties to keep itself together, or otherwise falls back into an Also, it raises the prospect of another Thing waiting to be cohered by the Also that has been cast out. Now secure in its awareness of

the other Thing-in-waiting, Consciousness finds a differentially-determined Tiger, a paper tiger – a tiger that is for-another just when it is for-itself, that leaps and roars only when other combinations of properties agree to sit. Therefore the being-for-self of the Thing, this overwhelming presence that was witnessed, is just as unessential as was the sense-elements previously; and the determinateness that was supposed to constitute its essence and strength is overcome just as the sensuous being was overcome.

When the being-for-self and being-for-another of the Thing are a single unity, we truly enter into the realm of **the Understanding**. But, at the risk of repeating myself, Consciousness will have to go through the Thing to get to this point! Once this is done, Consciousness will be indeed relieved from an extraordinary tension, but also very upset to lose what was ironically the guarantee of its existence in the form of the Thing, as well as the Thing itself; and for a time Consciousness will crumble like an old wood cabin blown up by the winds.

§14 – The *unconditioned* universality finally reached at the end of the perceptual process leads Consciousness to understand that the very excess – fullness – of the world that was experienced in the perceptual process, in fact

turns out to be the excess of language over itself – *foolness*. In Hegelian terms, the positivity of Being *qua* self-related negativity. A detour through Kantian logic may be of help to grasp this point. For Immanuel Kant, statements can be broken down into analytic a priori judgements according to quantity (universal, particular, singular), quality (affirmative, negative, infinite), relation (categorical, hypothetical, disjunctive) and modality (problematical, assertorical, apodeictical).² Such a transcendental logic is immanent to language, even though it is logic beyond what Kant calls 'general logic' (the Aristotelian subject-predicate logic). Let us take judgements of quality: statements can be positive (A is alive), negative (A is not alive, i.e. dead) or infinite (A is not not-alive, i.e. undead). Alive and dead (positive and negative judgements) correspond to the properties as they stand in oppositional determination; but there is also the vanishing medium that supports the diversity as well as independence of properties from each other. This medium allows for the third option, the infinite judgement: something neither dead nor alive, not alive and not dead, thus not not-alive, undead. There are two negations at work – the first negation is that of oppositional determination (alive negated is dead); the second negation

² I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1999), ed. and trans. P. Guyer & A. W. Wood, Cambridge University Press Cambridge. See Second Part, Division One, Book One, Section 2.

becomes visible after the perceptual process and is that of *the retrieval of the One*, so that the distinction subject-object is blurred and we get a groundless, metaphor-less metonymy: both dead and alive and neither of them. But metonymy cannot yet be isolated as such (we have to wait for the dialectics of Force) and we witness the return in the real of the foreclosed signifier that makes the stuff of horror movies. The Thing is at its most potent before it peters out. But once the Thing has been traversed and the untruth of the perceptual process found to fall within us, such an infinite judgement in fact displays self-related negativity. It is the positivity of Being we have seen previously, the excess that sustains the differential +/- matrix (striped/plain).

§15 – Such an insight enables Hegel to close the chapter on the perceptual process with a critique of the Aristotelian logic of subject-predicate, i.e. the stable subject to which are attached predicates. The subject is in fact *for* the predicates and vice-versa. What Hegel calls Sound Common Sense – the deception by which Consciousness tries to retain the consistency of the Thing despite the reflection-into-itself of the whole perceptual movement – is consequently "generally at its poorest when it fancies itself to be at its richest" (PoS§131). That is to say, it is at its poorest when it

multiplies and needlessly problematizes the predicates to cover up the impotency of the subject. It is perhaps akin to Jacques Lacan's remark that the multiplication of phalluses in fact points to castration. The multi-disciplinarity of today's academia is a good example; it fancies to be at its richest when it does not restrict itself to one discipline but peppers and sprays as many disciplines as it can over its subject matter.

§16 – We could say that the traversing of the Thing also corresponds to the Lacanian passage from phallus as the lost signifier to Phallus as the signifier of loss itself. When one exhausts the imaginary dimension of one's existence, Phallus will reveal itself to be the signifier of loss – the w/whole language created, that no sense-element is capable of permanently filling out. This absolute presence that has been sought throughout the world, turns out to be *absence itself*, the Universal... After the crumbling of the Thing, this glimpse of hope is welcome. It will not last.

§17 – Consciousness has gone through the Thing and will soon glimpse another world above this one, to which we shall now turn our attention.

Breaking Through The Void

§18 – Even now that Consciousness has gone through the Thing, it is still keen to grasp the now-unconditioned universal as object but not yet as Notion. Just as previously Consciousness did not recognise itself in the sensuous This it intuited, nor after in the Thing it perceived, it now does not recognise itself in the Notion that is left by the tearing apart of the Thing. What is at first posited by Consciousness as the object for the Understanding is the transition that occurs in the place of the Thing, how we constantly passed – that was the deadlock of perception – from the properties in the object that stand independently from each other, through the Also that allowed them to coexist, to the One that excluded and gave rise to the Thing, to the other Thing-in-waiting that undermines all. In this process, Consciousness gives up its one-sided notions (notion of Things) and understands that the being-for-self of the Thing is at the same time being-for-another – this is the **Notion**, which is all deployment. Once the *form* of this movement is gone through and perception dissolved, it is in fact also the *content* of the object that was this movement, for this movement leaves nothing else but the unconditioned universal (PoS§134) – no return to sensuous immediacy here. And the moments uncovered in Perception are no longer separated from one another – they could only be sustained against the background of the Thing – but are

now all "self-superseded aspects of the Universal" (PoS§135). To put it differently, what was for Consciousness the way to grasp the self-identicalness of the Thing, *was in fact already the Thing itself!* The Universal as passive medium (the Also) that linked up matters was in fact just the *plurality* of the subsistent porous matters that previously came in contact with one another in the Thing. And the Universal as One (being-for-self) was the medium itself that let the matters be independent properties as well (PoS§136). All was already self-sublated in the Thing: the tiger was already *stripes* when we found it. With this synecdoche we slowly approach the metonymical side of Being.

§19 – Hegel calls **Force** the unfolding of this movement diversity-unity/unity-diversity. Whereas before we experienced the deadlock and dissolution of Perception when Force, the Thing *qua* deployment, became for-another, i.e. faced with another Thing; we now find that Force is equally in itself when it is for-itself and for-another. In Hegel's words:

"But, in general, to be for itself and to be in relation to another constitutes the nature and essence of the content, whose truth consists in its being unconditionally

universal; and the result is simply and solely universal."

(PoS§134)

Hegel adds that "Force marks the unity, or rises as the middle term, between the perceived and the percipient, in this perpetual diremption of the perceptual process" (PoS§136), and this middle term becomes the essential moment. This is what is also called the signifier, what can only inscribe itself through self-division, the perpetual vanishing of one into two and back into one, and so on.

§20 – Consciousness first grasps Force in its *objective* sense, this whole movement as something that really is; before it grasps Force in its *actual* sense, whose different moments are only vanishing (PoS§136). What is it to grasp Force in its actual sense, as pure vanishing? It is as if Consciousness *imagines* the passage from one signifier to another, before realising that precisely this very passage that is the vanishing of one into another, is the essence and true being of the signifier insofar as it does not exist outside the differential matrix. It is as if Consciousness *imagines* the breaking down of what constitutes Beautiful and turns it into Ugly, before *realising* that the vanishing of one into its opposite is the very condition of possibility of both – in the differential matrix, there cannot be Beautiful without Ugly.

Consciousness quickly learns not to be fooled again, and sees how Beautiful and Ugly really were in fact one and the same thing, the Universal.

§21 – Another essence is posited as first in this notion of Force as the passage that mediates one and the other, Ugly and Beautiful – this is Force that is driven back into itself. But the unfolded matters that seem to subsist outside the expression of Force *as oneness*, the residues left by the operation of the One that will trigger the operation on and on again; this appears as the *other Force* that solicits the first one; and we now have the duplication of Force, just as we had the duplication of the Thing in the previous movement. In other words, there will be another Force at work that both solicits and remains outside the deployment of the first Force into the Also and the One - the first Force as movement can only have its determinateness through the other and through this constant repetition. But Force is also this other. In fact, Force is the repelling of itself from itself. It is as if, in the movement of Force, Force has to reject itself from itself to solicit itself to express itself as One. But this self-rejection is akin to another Force. And the unity of the first Force is undermined by the sundering from itself of the other. To put it in yet another way, *Force is also one that stands out of its own movement to spur it,*

thereby duplicating itself. Something always escapes... this is Force grasped as Notion, or for-itself. And we come across the indestructibility of a **metonymy** that is also constitutive of Being.

§22 – Force is therefore *only the thought of it*, and we acquire the Notion in its actual sense this time. Force does not exist outside this analytic moment; it is only for this analytic moment, only *for* the Understanding. Force is all the work of the Understanding. This is a wonderful moment for philosophy that should not be lost on us. As the expression of Force through the duality of Forces always collapses in unity – the synchronicity of language always reasserts its rights, at one point in time each thing is always within itself in relation to the other that is also within itself, at one point in time Beautiful and Ugly always fall within themselves and not in the passage of one into the other in the differential matrix, this passage being purely virtual – its notion therefore appears as such, *qua* Notion; and the loss of reality is total. At first the Universal was immediate in the sense-object and the Thing, now the Universal is an object solely *of* the Understanding; it has been completely separated from the sensuous, which has absolutely no place in it. And yet – dialectical deployment – we should remember all the more that "philosophy should beware of

the wish to be edifying" (PoS§9, Preface) and that "the power of Spirit is only as great as its expression, its depths only as deep as it dares to spread out and lose itself in its exposition" (PoS§10, Preface). The Notion just found is only vanishing moments *for* the Understanding. They remain just that if they are not sublated in the act of writing.

§23 – Appearances come onstage through the stabilisation of this movement (PoS§143), for Consciousness understands that the sensuous world it dwelt in is *appearances* from the standpoint of the now-unconditioned Universal. Mediation is now firmly taking place. Once we have gone through the Thing, the world of sense-knowledge cannot but appear as only a show for the senses, one that does not raise itself to the consistency of Being, what opened up through the scribbling of a letter on a surface. Consciousness is no longer surprised to learn that a tiger can never be a Tiger, for the poor cat always lags behind its own notion! The contingent tiger will always be too dirty, not big enough, not polished enough, or not ferocious enough to fit the Universal. Every Thing will always be a disappointment from the perspective of Being that is beyond it. And at the same time – the dialectical deployment seen previously – Consciousness understands that a Tiger *qua* Notion is only *a* totality of the moments we

have seen before – the inner being of Things *qua* the Universal is mediated by appearances, or is just this unfolding of appearances; so that Consciousness will be at a loss to name what was most painful to it, the *unveiling* of the real tiger, or the deflation of its one-sided notion of the Thing.

§24 – This is important to keep in mind for the following development. When Force is *understood* (Notion), and not just *apprehended* (object), a new world opens up above the sensuous world of appearances – what Hegel calls the **Supersensible World**, or the *inner* world of Things. We shall now see how Consciousness grasps the *inner* of Things, not in its actual sense, but only in its *objective* sense at first, for Consciousness still distinguishes itself from this inner of Things beyond what has been revealed to be only appearances.

§25 – The Supersensible World emerges only against the background of the reflection-into-itself of the play of Forces that was at work in the Thing. Once Consciousness sees that the sensuous is for itself all a show, it will long for another place, the realm of the True against the *Ukiyo-e* of appearances; and we thus have the following syllogism:

Inner Being of Things <----> Appearances <---->

Understanding

To anticipate, if the horizon of the first negation is the collapse of the inner being of Things back into appearances, what shall be unfolded in the following paragraphs, the horizon of the second negation will be the collapse of the Understanding onto itself, so that appearances can stand on their own.

§26 – The inner Being of Things is at first empty says Hegel, a "pure beyond" (PoS§146), and he strikingly qualifies it as the realm of the 'simple or unitary universal', which cannot but remind us of Lacan's *trait unaire*.³ Hegel also says it is the universal in-itself, still unfilled, a void. But this world is immediately filled up with reveries, the Idea begets siblings – had the supersensible world been empty from the start, we would have immediately perceive appearances as true, a conclusion too sophisticated to impact the mind at this stage. Appearances really are the content of this supersensible world however, but the form is understood to be produced by Consciousness (PoS§146). Therefore the Supersensible World is for Hegel the realm of appearance *qua* appearance. This is what popular opinion understands

³ We evoke the net of tennis further down, N2§111

as the fantasy world, a world dominated by the letter, whose appearances is run by the logic of the signifier – where a flowerbed really is a bed for flowers, "and if too soft, the flowers are always asleep" (Lewis Carroll, *Beyond the Looking-Glass*). It is indeed the world of appearances as Consciousness would like to see them appear before its eyes – appearances, but appearances *by* Consciousness. Like a fragrance, 'Flower *by* Kenzo' – appearances are systematically re-marked by the buoyant mediating agency that has become conscious of itself.

§27 – And yet, amid the confusion and the reveries, Consciousness implicitly comes to understand the **Law** of Force. First Force becomes the mediating agency, not as something that is apprehended or comprehended, but as something that merely is. Hegel on this point:

"The play of Forces has merely this negative significance of being in itself nothing, and its only positive significance that of being the mediating agency, but outside of the Understanding (...) The connection of the Understanding with the inner world through the mediation is, however, its own movement through which the inner world will fill itself out for the Understanding. What is *immediate* for the Understanding is the play of Forces; but what is the *True* for it, is the simple inner world." (PoS§138)

This is the syllogism we have seen previously, appearances being the play of Forces. What is immediate for the Understanding is this play of Forces as the *unconditioned* universal that has taken the place of the sensuous and the *conditioned* universal. But insofar as the Understanding has carried itself all the way to the supersensible world and appearances are now just a show for it, the inner world is what is *true* for it, and the endless play of appearances loses its appeal. This is the dome of philosophy and the doom of scholars.

§28 – We first had Force as this movement between the passive medium that links up matters in the field of perception and allowed us to *perceive* something in the blur of colours and sounds that is the world; and the negative unity of the One in contrast to these interpenetrating matters. Force duplicates itself into the Force that expresses this unity, and the one that solicited it. But we found that this movement was for another – that once one expresses and the other is done soliciting, they immediately change position because the thing was always for another. When one is done expressing a Tiger, it will solicit the other that solicited in the first place to also express itself. This duplication of Force is again duplicated into the *form* of this

play of Forces, and its *content*. The form concerns the question of which is doing the expressing and which is doing the soliciting; they will switch. The content is that of the passive medium and the negative unity; again, one will give in to the other.

§29 – It therefore all boils down to the alternation of the determinateness that is the *content* of the Universal, for such duplications are superseded because Consciousness understands that the Notion is again for-itself when it is for-another, that such moments and duplications are not in-themselves but only *for* the Understanding – we saw before that they were just vanishing thoughts – and that this reflection out of the True and back into itself leaves Consciousness with what Hegel calls *universal difference*, or pure difference:

"What there is in this absolute flux is only *difference* as a *universal difference*, or as a difference into which the many antitheses have been resolved. This difference, as a *universal difference*, is consequently the *simple element in the play of Force itself* and what is true in it. It is the *law of Force*." (PoS§148)

What is the now-emerging *law* of Force? We could say it is that which regulates actualisation and virtualisation, 0. Universal difference means that you can never grasp all the things that constitute a tiger without the negative unity Tiger. A tiger without its name is just a blur. And at the same time, you can never get the tiger in-itself because it has its truth in another, or what has been left over by the operation of the One. There can be no reconciliation here, there is only the crack at the heart of the Understanding that *is* pure difference – one that is never bridged and therefore universal. Determinateness of the content will always alternate following the play of the Forces. Determinateness is in fact only the alternation of its content. *Either One is actual and another is missing, or One is in pieces.*

§30 – The incessant change at the heart of reality, or absolute flux, is reduced – *abstracted* – to the simple difference in the inner world, which is the object of the Understanding. We now have the following partition: *Universal difference is grasped as selfsame in the inner world, with the absolute flux belonging to the Understanding and appearances being the mediating agency.*

That appearances can be reduced to simple difference when mediated by the inner world and the

Understanding, this is nowhere clearer than in Cinema. It often seems that appearances are an absolute flux that cannot be pinned down, that our gaze is directed to an appearance that immediately vanishes into just another... That we cannot focus on the tiger when the tiger constantly interacts with its surroundings, embedded in the shivering jungle, in relation to deers crossing the stream in a hurry, framed by the slow-moving clouds above, themselves only the sign of a coming monsoon... But this whole flux of appearance is only simple difference in relation to the inner of Things, or supersensible world – with regards to the True, *appearances are just this movement from one to the other* and nothing else... In the same way that the screen is run by the shot/counter-shot procedure in modern cinema, so that the wealth of the content is negated by what drives the passage from one shot to the next one, what is embodied by the famous McGuffin...⁴

⁴ Insofar as the shot/counter-shot procedure breaks the spell of long subjective shots by introducing a reflected distance within the texture of the film, the emotions displayed on the screen are always in tension, not with the spectator, but with the plot; and the director just plays the audience like the piano, to use Hitchcock's expression. I rely here on Jean-Pierre Oudart's seminal piece "Cinema and Suture" in *Screen 18* (winter 1978)[first published in 1969 in *Cahiers du Cinéma*]. Translation: Kari Hanet. Available online at: http://www.lacan.com/symptom8_articles/oudart8.html

§31 – The inner being is only implicitly universal difference, for the Supersensible World is filled with the reveries of Consciousness; yet it becomes clearer and clearer that even though in the Supersensible World the elephant is pink when it is grey in the other, the flux is the same; it does not have its being outside the Understanding, but in this truth that the elephant is in both worlds only for itself when it is for us, i.e. inserted in the flux which in fact is simple difference.

§32 – This structure of the inner world is slowly reflected back into appearances, so that the Universal as pure difference shines through the wealth of the content. There is only this truth that *negation is the essential moment of the Universal*, that the object of the Understanding is in fact negation itself; but this truth, the *law of appearance*, is only grasped in-itself at first, as something “absolutely at rest and self-same” (PoS§149). To quote Hegel:

"This difference is expressed in the *law*, which is the *stable* image of unstable appearance. Consequently, the *supersensible* world is an inert *realm of laws* which, though beyond the perceived world – for this exhibits law only through incessant change – is equally *present* in it and is its direct tranquil image." (PoS§149)

This passage about grasping the law of appearance only in itself is strictly correlative to the exposition of Fort-Da by Freud. The incessant change in the world of appearances is reduced to the couple of presence/absence in this law of Force - Fort-Da! And the child safely retreats into the inner world. Once again, the Understanding registers the appearance-ness of appearances.

§33 – Consciousness does not stop there. The law just found is comprehended at first as object, not as Notion... The law does contain universal difference, but this law has been found in the reflection from one world into another, and it lacks in the world of appearances *determinateness* – it begs the question of the *nature* of the law – it remains indeterminate in this world as long as its truth *qua* simple difference is ferociously kept intact in the supersensible world. When this insight is reflected back into the world of appearances, Consciousness that looks for the law in the content simultaneously finds many different laws there, one for each phenomenon, just as there were many properties established simultaneously in the dialectics of Perception. But this cannot be, for Consciousness has found in the inner world that the True is universal unity – the tension within the One – since what is for self is always already for

another. Consciousness will thus seek to 'collapse' (Hegel's word, *zusammenfallen*, PoS§150) all the specific laws of the world of appearances – all the virtualities of the inexhaustible flux – into one, for in the inner world there is only this unity of the law. Universal attraction seems to be the perfect candidate for Consciousness says Hegel (PoS§150), and it is interesting that he mentions it when we have in mind the Freudian Fort-Da. But such laws lose their specific characters when thus collapsed; and what is grasped in the world of appearances is what was grasped previously in the other world, the Notion of law itself as unifying principle of the play of forces. But *only* the Notion of the unifying principle is found, *not* the unifying principle itself. The determinateness of the law is still lacking, we still need to call for something else in the realm of appearances, and the Understanding remains unable to enclose the complexity of that realm; and while Consciousness implicitly turns its dreamy eyes back to the world of appearances, it is this notion of law that is in fact turned against the original law itself, as that which always divides into two determinate differences – two forces. This notion threatens to erase its steps when it is found as *being* in universal attraction.

§34 – And just when universal attraction threatens to sediment as a one-sided notion – like the Thing in the previous movement – it so happens that other notions of the law can be found, such as the law of motion. In motion, simple difference is grasped *immediately*, not just as the unfilled unitary universal first uncovered in the supersensible world. But such immediate, or determinate, differences must return into the inner world for such a law to be raised to the universal; more specifically, “they must return again to the inner world as a simple unity” (PoS§151) – this is the inner *necessity* of the law. Simple difference that is directly embodied outside, cannot return to the inner world without bringing something that is foreign to it – this very embodiment... The law out must be the same as the law *in*, or neither contains necessity within them; for motion, or universal attraction for that matter, has nothing to do with the workings of the mind so far uncovered... This is the problem of necessity that now arises for the Understanding.

One might be *content* to stop there, with the contradiction between the law as Notion one grasped in the world of appearance, and the simple or unitary universal in the inner world that is left untouched by determinateness. What is not processed is the 'inner necessity of the law' (Hegel), the deadlock that is the lack of unifying principle in

the world of appearances, which must be reflected back into the inner world of Things.

§35 – Our Consciousness is not one to retreat in such a fashion, perhaps because it cannot afford it, no matter how much it loves it; and Consciousness will seek the *necessity* of the law. The law that is grasped now is present as 1) the differences it harbours as different moments of the law, we can think again of Fort/Da, and 2) in the form of the withdrawal of the law into itself as in the Notion of Force, “an abstraction which absorbs the differences themselves of what attracts and what is attracted.” (PoS§152) Hegel’s example is electricity: it can be negative or positive (1) but can also exist as such, as Notion, harbouring universal difference but absorbing the determinate differences in its deployment as Notion (2). The Notion is indifferent to its Being – to be positive or negative in this instance – just as the law is to Force. Necessity is still out of reach, we still cannot see why such a law is necessary – there *is* a missing link between the deployment of the Notion into two determinate differences and its being as One in the law. We either presuppose electricity in the description of positivity and negativity; or we draw in other laws to make sense of the first one, thereby reverting back to the plurality of laws and negating the determinate differences dialectically

deployed thus far. One way or another, however it looks at it, Consciousness is mired.

§36 – In a superb example of what Hegel calls ‘bad infinity’ – the snake of symbolisation forever eating its tail – Hegel indicates that in the law of motion the Universal is torn apart between the different factors of time and space that have no origin in the Force of this law. What is discovered is *magnitude*, which is not related to the law the same way positive and negative are – the parts are not the determinate differences of the law so far worked out. We either have the necessity of the division but not the necessity of the parts, or the necessity of the parts but not the division. If we cling on to the law of motion, we have to assume that such Force does not have division within itself, which amounts to acting out, the half-erasure of the tension that drove us thus far, what is called the death drive. If we don't, the choice of Melancholia, we are forever trapped inside the inner world. This is the blackmail of symbolisation.

§37 – The Understanding must lose itself completely in this conundrum. It cannot actualise in the Thing itself the knowledge it has of the law that is an *inner* being inwardly differentiated, i.e. differentiated into the determinate

differences it harbours, and its pure difference as movement, Force. The Understanding here gets the Notion of universal difference, but since it cannot put it back into the Thing itself, or the world of appearances, this universal difference that is the law is cancelled once again. Consciousness will maintain that difference as such by repeating again and again the moments we have so far covered (this takes the form of an "explanation," says Hegel), but in the failure to actualise it in the world of appearances, this pure difference remains vain, "and the explanation does not explain anything," to use Hegel's blunt conclusion (PoS§155).

§38 – Yet, this difference that is maintained at the price of the impotence of the Understanding, this chasm between the Understanding and the object it is applying itself to – this whole movement that comes to dust – is in fact the truth of the Universal. For, just as we have seen in the previous movement, positive Being (of the law) is in fact self-related negativity. Consciousness just needs to *step aside* to realise that this fruitless explanation is akin to the absolute flux of appearances we have encountered before. Precisely when Consciousness despaired of this fruitless flux of the Understanding, it implicitly grasped the absolute flux of appearances as Being. That is to say, what appears as

such is just the flux of symbolisation; and the pure difference that constantly rejects itself to spur itself, is in fact self-same. In the same way that Force has to duplicate itself to become itself, the law also has to duplicate itself to express itself. And the truth is just this: that duplication, or self-repelling, is the essence of this movement. And when this step is achieved, it will be clear as day that the Universal is just this constant self-repelling and self-attracting movement we witnessed in the Fort-Da of the child (PoS§156).

§39 – The flux of incessant change Consciousness detected at its heart and against which it tried in vain to impose order from the standpoint of the tranquil supersensible world, is now transferred to where it belongs, in the supersensible world itself, and tranquillity is restored back to the Understanding. The world was too slow, not too fast!

§40 – The staggering speed of the rainforest, the way the pouring rain melts the trees until they come apart; and from their dissolution the way the lushness of the undergrowth allows new trunks to rise from the decrepit ones, and this movement back again... This is all in fact the expression of sameness. The trees falling *are* the trees rising, and what there *is*, is just this forest repelling itself

from itself, what is condensed in the name of Negativity. In this movement of Fort-Da whereby presence and absence, or universal difference, was registered, it turns out a second law must be posited in which absolute difference is in fact self-same. The child's mother had always been away – she would always be there. To take things to their essence: what is there to symbolise is the destruction as well as preservation of sense-knowledge. Walter Kaufmann noted that in German *Aufhebung* means to pick something up, literally; to stoop and extend one's hand, grab something, get back up again. We pick something up and take it onto another, higher plane – abstraction. But this higher plane was only supposed by the enquiring Consciousness whose movement we have been following so far; and when this is found out, Consciousness has to cancel itself, to ditch itself where the object was picked up from; but this movement does not prevent the object from really having been picked up and carried over to what is now the symbolic plane.

§41 – What is left in this extraordinary insight of the Understanding is the "contradiction in the antithesis" (PoS§160). The division of the One into two does not mean that the two so distinguished are in themselves; on the contrary, precisely because they are for another, one is the truth of the other. Or, the opposite has within itself its own

opposite. The second law now found is that of inversion. To quote Hegel's crystal-clear deployment:

"This second supersensible world is in this way the inverted world and, moreover, since one aspect is already present in the first supersensible world, the inversion of the first. With this, the inner world is completed as appearance. For the first supersensible world was only the immediate raising of the perceived world into the universal element; it has its necessary counterpart in this perceived world which still retained for itself the principle of change and alteration. The first kingdom of laws lacked that principle, but obtains it as an inverted world."
(PoS§157)

If in the first supersensible world universal difference was grasped implicitly and we had an inner realm of laws that kept the absolute flux out, in the inverted world, difference is grasped explicitly and everything is turned on its head. Hegel here gives a long list of examples (PoS§158) – just to take one; the North Pole becomes the South Pole in the inverted world.

§42 – At this point, we pass from substance to subject and grasp *simple infinity* as the absolute Notion. Before, we distinguished between appearances and their complete

inversion in the other world – what is sweet in one can be sour in the supersensible other; now Consciousness understands that, in fact, what is sweet really is sour (PoS§159), and one refuses to eat.

§43 – Everything must be gone through again to be reflected into itself: the dissolution of Perception and the arising of Force as the moment of the Understanding, the Also and the One, Force that duplicates itself, the inwardly-differentiated law that is left in the duplication, and the duplication of the law itself between the law of pure difference and the law of inversion; what is unbridgeable is in fact self-same. *There is only negativity* – this is the immanent necessity of the law. This is what must be thought – in Hegel's own words, "the antithesis within the antithesis itself, or contradiction." (PoS§160)

§44 – When this is gone through, the world of appearances completely passes into the inner world, and the inner world back into appearances. Consciousness had so far only experienced itself, until it is at rest within itself, Self-Consciousness. Behind the *veil* of appearances, which was for us the trigger of our elaborations, there is in fact nothing, just what Consciousness ever decides to put there.

§45 – Consciousness, now Self-Consciousness, went through a storm; but this storm was just the *appearance* of one, in the sense of illusory nature *and* coming-on-stage – it was only the reality of Consciousness itself. It was a mirage. But, just as before when the Thing rose for-itself – became self-identical – only to be broken down by another; Consciousness that has become for-itself, Self-Consciousness, has little time to rest, *for another storm gathers in the dusk that settles over the stables.*

*

To conclude this first movement, presentation has been thoroughly negated and is representation. *It has encountered itself – it has proved itself – it is for-itself.* In psychoanalytic terms, this movement is called Phobia. But when a tiger is released into the wild where it belonged, someone has to fill in that empty cage.

Second Negation

Main Body

§1 – We danced all night to the rhythm of our bodies, and the sky was hours. In the repeated *choreography* of our vowels, we understand the coming-together of motion and form in the signifier. There is nothing else.

§2 – To say that, across the surface of the ocean, the rainforest only repels itself from itself, is to say that absolute difference is in fact self-same, or that one is *other*.

§3 – Once you know the throne and the king are two different things, the throne is all for the taking...

§4 – In the silence of our surroundings, a melody came out and we sang along.

§5 – Once stood a man drumming up a city for years. One day, another cared to listen. "You have the empty expanse of the lake beyond," the man said with enthusiasm, "the rest of the country is flat and made up of farmland. A purely functional centre stands at its concrete core, which is only playground for the wind," he continued; "quiet, empty suburbs sprawl around it. There is absolutely nothing. And

yet there is something quite heroic about the City: its people keep on doing things and building things."

§6 – So it turns out the phallus is only one signifier for desire! Mountains do fall flat!

§7 – While our eyes searched the stars, the world disappeared... Wait for it to *appear!* Those who came before us all started with the paradox of disappearance *preceding* appearance.

§8 – "Switch it off, pull the plug, walk in the dark, plug it again, switch it back on," said the man, "then you will see the City."

§9 – *All work and no play makes Jack a mere toy, all play and no work makes Jack a dull boy* (popular saying).

§10 – "On the tip of my tongue, at the end of the peer, and after looking hard and fast into the abyss beyond, I turned back and the City awaited me," said the man.

§11 – On the abyss of Otherness, a witness tells it all: "on either sides of the lake there is nothing. Few, if any, are the monsters that have been reported inhabiting it; what is left

is the impenetrable density or depth beneath the surface. *As if gravity was only the domesticated version that the nightmare of a black hole is.* Syntax fails accordingly. Here one meets one's own death."

§12 – "The trees were sparse, and I could see the lake, and I swear I was so scared!" said the witness, visibly shaken.

§13 – "Down the vortex that the signifier opens up, there is nothing even remotely human..." "You don't understand!" He disappeared.

§14 – Who builds an ark doesn't know how. He or she must turn it into know-how (Noah).

§15 – There was a solipsist in our dreamer: "our forefathers built a City on the edge of the void. Their waves didn't waver."

§16 – After the Sword, there comes a Shield.

§17 – The witness recalls: "I released the fishes into what I knew was not a sea. I kept my feet on the ground but my gaze was always on the horizon, where the void and the

stars meet. New species will emerge to replace the old ones..." And he ditched all his *collections*.

§18 – The next morning, the witness was absolutely broken. "Once the lights had gone down, the lake turned out to be nothing but my own tears," the person sputtered. "Beyond the reflection, there was only the pavement. I fell hard."

§19 – "The blackout spooks me..." he continued. "I don't know where I am going. I have reached out all night but found no thing to hold on to. I stumble upon the inexistent Real. I am in pain. Walking on air never seemed so perilous..." One keeps one's wits about oneself precisely when one is out of them, so the witness retired in a convent to think.

§20 – Can we all colonise our own deaths? That is the *political* question.

§21 – The dreamer made for an interesting companion. We asked him to remember his melancholy: "all I know is that the world faded into the distance as the fleet left the harbour without me. Not long after came the first flurries of snow."

§22 – "Winter came and turned everything into stone and ice, trapping us inside. Time was suspended, space restricted. The wait is interminable."

§23 – "No monster survived the freezing temperatures of Winter."

§24 – "Outside my window, the world became strangely derealised."

§25 – Winter was like a ritornelle in his speech, so we asked him what this stood for. After a pause, the dreamer gave us the following answer: "when he comes and ghosts, and looks at me like I am a most impenetrable Thing, I feel the pinch of the cold again. Evil is in his gaze which perceives evil all around himself."

§26 – The man went on: "space became strangely curved as the mirror curled around my neck like a most fluffy and colourful boa. Only a vague sensation of pinch – perhaps the frost – kept me alert." Fortunate is the pinch when, much like a punch, lets blood.

§27 – Could this man be Snow White? He continued: "to freeze is to be dying from love. I know all too well no one

will answer, yet I have to make the call." Interestingly, it seemed to us that the kiss was in fact the apple of the story. The snow is a nice blanket to sleep through Winter... A kiss and the world goes up in flames. "Can there be life in such an inhospitable place?"

§28 – "Keep their eyes off the ground, keep your eyes on the ball; let them have eyes for what they don't see!" the man tells me, "the faintest light flickers in the darkest of places."

§29 – Sexual difference is a gaze.

§30 – No answers were given – there were none – but the question was returned. The rest could not be said with words.

§31 – "In the City that is ours, this seat can be yours. I keep the y," said the man, transfixed.

§32 – Between the mist of substance below and the void of the subject beyond, I stand.

§33 – The dreamer told us the story of his extraordinary journey: "the City contained me. I clothed myself with whatever there was to survive the freeze, mainly the lights

and the skyscrapers, but also the City's voices and its signifiers. When it was time, I rolled up my skin and built a bonfire of myself; but I knew the City could take it."

§34 – He said he wasn't too good at maths, but nonetheless understood its founding principle. He gave us an example:

$$(-\text{Sky})(-\text{Lake}) = \text{City}$$

"Two minus do equal a plus," he concluded.

§35 – "I learned to ignore the scuffle, I was on my own plane. But I needed a runway."

§36 – "I listened to the voices and cat got my tongue. They gave me the City in exchange."

§37 – He couldn't get the stars out of his eyes, he said. He recalled another of his dreams: "we watched the cars run below. There was nothing on our minds and something clasped in our hands. We knew the City ran in our veins."

§38 – There is something to conquer even for whom vanished with the Lake. There is always a Tenochtitlan under a Mexico City. Better: always a Tenochtitlan under a

Madrid, a London or a Paris. Perhaps there was something about that in Antonin Artaud's trip to Mexico.

§39 – "Space is only conquered through time. Space only appears when the map is drawn. Before, there is no space. Leave the post office and go to the station, but don't get on the train. Wait there. You must know when to act and when to step back. You can only *dance* with the Real; if you stick a knife into it, you bleed yourself to death. But if you don't act, the Real will stick a knife into you. The cut is always that of the signifier; how you deal with it is a different matter entirely."

§40 – Imitation is always a necessary step. You have to take yourself out of yourself first, before you can come back to yourself and see what was yours.

§41 – When the Sky became unreadable, the dreamer killed himself. What he saw lived on forever in our imagination; we decided to go there ourselves.

§42 – In the City one does not shy away from symbolisation and actualisation. Symbolisation is the dialecticisation of the Real, its encircling if you will; actualisation is the giving

flesh to the symbols that are born from symbolisation. The City knows its future depends on both.

§43 – Your shoulders will be dusty, the streets muddy and desert, the City broken. The Real will wear you out until you cannot recognise yourself in the mirror. If you're ready to take it – to endure and not to move – the Real will have nothing on you.

§44 – Patience is an art. Each time a new signifier comes up, its absence too must be registered. What may seem like an endless process – the impossibility of symbolic closure, the long process of symbolisation, the unavoidable loop that belongs to the symbolic order itself and must be gone through again and again – in sum, what Hegel calls 'bad infinity' – all of this will eventually turn into something else, though not what you expected at the beginning.

§45 – We were on our way to the other side of the City – cold, starved and exhausted. Our feet hurt so badly we had to stop at every street corner and rest in the pouring rain. We couldn't walk, *literally* – in the realisation that we had gone through the whole of a symbolic chain was Absolute Knowing.

§46 – We travelled faster than light when we came to a rest.

§47 – Out of some Thing came nothing – we symbolised the symbolic chain. Out of Nothing came something – we symbolised our absence from it. This is the passage from the first to the second negation. You must go all the way down, only to take the same path back up; then you will be out, and then in again.

§48 – Some of us will be trampled by the Real. May the City listen and not judge

§49 – We left the station, the only train to come was ours. We crawled back along the river and out of the Loop, and across the bridge shone the City.

§50 – In a small café steps away from the bridge, we interviewed the City's Mayer about its lights. She put it very clearly: "the City knows its lights are only borrowed and shared by all. The City does not partake of the phallic economy, it does not wish to shine and enlighten and glare. It only wants to rise and become other."

§51 – We kept in mind the dreamer's last words: "when I thought I would go up in flames out of love, I knew it was in

fact the cold wind blowing again. I learned to burn in silence, I kept warm despite myself."

§52 – The Mayer added: "the City is not afraid of eccentricity. The City makes the moves as it goes, it can only walk in its own footsteps."

§53 – The Mayer went on: "the City is out for consistency. It does not seek to permanently reinvent itself, but to actualise itself *over* Time and Space, i.e. live on its own Concept. It knows that to become other means to become one."

§54 – Look out for sublime compromises

§55 – The Mayer's words on eccentricity were stuck in our minds; we could not be more in agreement. The City has to run on eccentricity. We keep stitching ourselves up, and as best as we can; the result can only be highly idiosyncratic.

§56 – The Mayer fondly recalled: "we got married in a rundown church outside the City. We were our own priest, our own witnesses, our own parents."

§57 – WHO DOES NOT KNOW WHERE ONE COMES FROM CANNOT KNOW WHERE ONE IS GOING. This could be read on the frontispiece of every hospital in the City.

§58 – "From the phallic economy, we only keep the waste - period!" said the women.

§59 – The dreamer also said this before dying: "when I thought it was over, or that it will never have an end, or that it never had a start to start with... I knew that it was the cold wind blowing again. I kept my cool." The man really was a lesson in *enduring*.

§60 – In a court of law inside the City, Daphne testifies to the passage from the Imaginary to the Symbolic: "It seemed to me that I was never going to break out of what had me trapped. I wrestled but it was all in vain. The more I fought back, the more entangled I got. I couldn't breathe and played dead for a while, so that I could catch my breath; yet it did not let go. The fight goes on to this very day."

§61 – In a court of law inside the City, Daphne testifies to the passage from the Symbolic to the Real: 'For a while there is the chasing, the running and the fighting; but when the Real bites your head off, there is only the dying.'

§62 – "I live in a rather small place to speak the truth... There is only space for one... Although *God knows* the many I welcome." Much later, the author of these lines was to learn that God radically *didn't know*. Past the sheer horror of such a condition, the Actual really begins its ascent with this insight. God – what Hegel would here refer to as *social substance* – must become conscious of our existence. Be warned, it is a long way to the top.

§63 – The girl in red was the prettiest of all. One day she put on pretty red shoes and danced for hours, until she prayed not to go up in flames. There is nothing certain

§64 – We met the Mayer to discuss Daphne's extraordinary testimony of the day before. She had been there too, she said – "First you run horizontally, then you run vertically, finally you step into another dimension. Some have called it 'the desert of the Real'. Whether we can grow flowers and skyscrapers again depends on you."

§65 – We received a message from the Old Town. It read as follows: "I couldn't grasp even the nearest, most obvious object. My fingers could only hit it and the object slipped away every time. I couldn't explain the phenomenon to

anyone either, *I was lost for words*. I must have hurt myself repeatedly in this way, for my hands were all cuts and burns. And I was dirty – sweaty, dusty, even grimy. I... stank! I felt dizzy. I was quite simply exhausted from how slow time was on this side of the Gate. Heaven was hell – the moment I was in, I was out."

§66 – Absolute Knowing: not to know as the greatest achievement one can aim for. Being, or Actuality, starts there.

§67 – Pretty is the City when the light goes down and the lights go up. It reminds us of this pure vanishing at the core of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. To go to the *heart* of Science, one must believe in the smallest of miracles. When you follow your heart, you can only believe.

§68 – At first there is only time, plenty of it. You might want to call it eternity. It's never-ending; it is not-one. Space comes second, it has to be invented. In time, the suffocating Here must give birth to another place, There. We are not anywhere or *in* Time – the rhythm and horizon opened up by its symbolisation – until we learn to divide ourselves spatially. It is often said that we do not possess ubiquity, but some of us do, *thank God*.

§69 – Time and Space can become symbolisations, and so can Motion and Form. There is nothing before that, symbolisation *creates* what it symbolises. You must differentiate in the *trial* of Science what is method and what is discourse.

§70 – Have no doubt – but do make mistakes! – even the City will eventually die. Until the day comes and goes, the City will go about its business as usual. We didn't come to sell opium to the masses, making the ride home more comfortable should be enough. There is no Beyond. There IS, but it was a pure vanishing.

§71 – This was the Hegelian reversal of Kant – how we pass from 'Think, but obey!' to 'Have no doubt, but do make mistakes!' This is also the passage from desire to drive. Desire thrives on its metonymical run but leaves the founding metaphor untouched. The drive *on the other hand* gets off its beaten tracks, but we don't know where the tracks go.

§72 – In a court of law inside the City, Daphne testifies to the passage from the Real to the Imaginary: "There can be desire only where death is. I came to desire a good wreck

like myself." Ultimately, the remains are language sublated. These remains, crumbs of language, must be libidinally invested. "If the City is where Negativity rests in piece, the City should not be afraid of a good lightning."

§73 – The Mayer was really excited today – "The City is safe from *nothing!*" she exclaimed, "it is not afraid of its own disappearance, for it already stands in ruins!" We ran back to the station right after the meeting; there, the Real had acquired a density all its own... The City was a signifier!

§74 – You can never be a real girl; you can only be a mean girl. We rank the movie of the same name among the treasures of our era.

§75 – The Mayer said: "years from now, perhaps people will flock to admire the strange beauty of the fallen City. And that which lived and died will live again beyond death... Who fails to part parties in his or her own grave, you know." We thought about it for a while. After all, wasn't the city of Detroit currently colonising its own signifier? From Detroit to *actually destroyed?* Is this perhaps what psychoanalysis calls the death drive? The destruction we wilfully bring upon ourselves everyday?

§76 – Death became for us a signifier. It ceased to haunt us as we started haunting it. That which comes to undermine the phallic economy sooner or later – the Real – was sublet to the gaze that came to sublimate it.

§77 – On our way out of the City and back to the Old Town where we were summoned, we met the girl we always had a liking for; she went by the name of Holly. With her usual go-lightly demeanour, she told us that even though she had seen the most majestic cathedrals and castles the world over, there was not much she liked apart from ruins... How strange. And she liked nothing more than a hole in the wall, she said!

§78 – When asked by the one who led her *so far*, she said she didn't know the answer. She was almost surprised to learn it eventually. She gave us the long sought-after answer – if there is *a residue to the passage of the signifier*, a minimal, silliest, absolutely vital repetition *was* that residue. It was useless, it didn't make any sense, she said. This repetition is the drive all the same.

"Keep it on the low," she whispered, "but I never felt more alive than when I died."

§79 – She discoursed at length about how easy it was to conquer the stars – to look at them "from the top of the Empire State building" and "to burn bright in our own soulless skies," to quote her memorable words – and how apparently much harder it was to conquer the hole that will inevitably swallow them. "Apparently" she said, was "paradoxical," precisely because it is at the level of appearances that we can *seize* the hole.

§80 – Never had the void been given such a density. That which was a hole in our horizon became the ball we ran after. There was a strange presence in the most desolate of places. We were depressed but also curious.

§81 – We could not even say with the melancholic Justine that life on Earth was evil; it would have said too much. Ultimately, there is only the dialectics at the heart of Being. Will you dare to follow the thread amid the debris?

§82 – "One must always stand with Melanie Klein against Gilles Deleuze on symbolisation. Psychoanalytic constructions are always false, yet absolutely necessary. We would not otherwise have unravelled the truth of our desire. The paradox, of course, is that you have to go mad to go sane..." Wait for the negation.

§83 – She who stands in tears amid the alien corn, must stand undefeated amid her own ruins. The signifier is first apprehended as object, nightingale; and then as Notion, night-in-gale.

§84 – As to the mystery of our origins, no one can provide a clue but a metaphor can be invented. When the winding City was one, our storm became inhabited. Inhabited too perhaps...

§85 – Back in the Old Town, we worked hard. We went out and mingled with our contemporaries; we went home. We fell asleep and woke up. We got on buses and off, *and so on*. Yet we couldn't help but secretly search the ruins for the object of desire that eluded us.

§86 – Holly moved next door. During one of our many evening conversations, she confessed that she was originally looking for a mirror that did not stare in her lesbian lover. This was perhaps her mistake. In her predicament there could only be death, she said. "Love has to cancel itself, however hard this is."

§87 – You must build something up before you can raze it to the ground and start from scratch. This is what is meant by construction in the psychoanalytic sense. Suddenly, Deconstruction sounded like the most radical attempt at *shrouding* the inexistence of the Other. To deconstruct the hermeneutics of 'presence' at the heart of metaphysics is to suppose that in the absence of 'presence' there was nonetheless such a thing as hermeneutics... We smiled. While there is nothing to deconstruct, for us there certainly was Nothing to build up. We will come back to that.

§88 – When Love is gone through, there are only desires. Not even bodies can trap them. We must take responsibility for our own disembowelment.

§89 – There was nothing above our heads (the sky fell down), nothing under our feet (we walked over that which fell) and different kinds of deserts on the horizon (the Desert we crossed ceased to be totality). We decided to settle, there was work to do. We were pioneers again, we were to wrestle with the Real

§90 – "We can never get clean. The stain is always that of language and it was not going to go away..." Wait for the negation.

§91 – There is no happy ending. A happy ending is one that precisely does not want to end; or is *frozen out of Time*. We were to move beyond such endings. Actuality does not care much for Eternity. It is only interested in how its *present* refashions both past and future. If the loss had been painful, the loss of the loss was to be *unendurable*; and now Time *appeared* on our horizon through the completeness of our death. This is crucial – the symbolisation of Time was in fact that horizon, i.e. the becoming-conscious of the signifier. What the signifier comes to announce is that both the gaze and that which is looked at will cease to live when Time does its work of undoing. *Glad tidings take one's eyes off the sea from time to Time*.

§92 – The necessity of war is nothing other than society's attempt at symbolising Time, its own maker, through the repetition of its undoing and coming-back-together. The march of civilisation is always in search of its own signifier, the reflection of its groundless deployment *in Time*.

§93 – It did not matter anymore whether we had fully escaped our pasts. To escape one's past is to be completely enslaved to it. Those who have escaped it are condemned to

repeat it unconsciously; but those who haven't must invent one, for symbolisation always brings about something else.

§94 – Winter was one of the Names-of-the-Father. Precisely what kills on our streets when *deep* the temperatures.

§95 – For us, Winter was barely more than a stray dog. When he let go of our feet, when his hands were not wrapped around our throat, Winter needed help like everyone else... Perhaps we couldn't let go either.

§96 – A skyscraper was our attempt to *fathom* what was not passed on. Remove the skyscraper and the City falls on its head, we learned that much.

§97 – Around noon we met with an exceptional archer. He had just launched the arrow of Fate and was recovering from the sheer exhaustion of the Act. He explained – "To reach the heart of the *matter*, you must aim off-centre. Those who do not take the wind and their own exposition into account will aim straight and *miss!* There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious Thing, to twist a friend's words. You have learned your way through the Real when you can see *in* the image what is *beyond* it. When you know

the difference you can point your bow to the corner and aim at the back. You must train in curving trajectories."

After a pause he added rather mysteriously: "Only shots in the dark can bring the sun down."

§98 – We knew all along Winter was a distraction. The true horror begins when you are kept inside and there is no outside to dream of. At this point, things are about to go very wrong and then very strange. There is no such thing as success or failure; when standards come apart, there is only the trying.

§99 – We saw the Archer again the next day. He was not ready to be overwhelmed with our endless hysterical questions, and simply dropped the following line: "you just know something has gone in and out when nothing happens and you feel too depressed to inquire anyway." He went back to bed.

§100 – First you want to date yourself, and then you want to date your corpse. When you do, you leave eternity and enter mortality.

§101 – Things do not necessarily turn out for the better. One must be careful when forcing one's way through the

Real, especially when one does not have a choice. If alienation kept you down most of the day, responsibility will keep you up at night.

§102 – We lived in the wild. Everyday, all sorts of beasts crossed our path. Danger loomed at every street corner. We constantly worried about each other, we were horrified at the prospect of the other's death. Gradually we came to trust the City, but it was always work in progress!

§103 – "I became my own Medea. I desired my own murder in place of my murderer. I elevated the revolting act to the Absolute."

§104 – There is always a morning fairy at the heart of the storm. Wait for the reversal.

§105 – We didn't know where to look anymore. We couldn't see our reflection, so crystal clear was the void.

§106 – What was it that kept people going we just didn't get it. We came to a resting place, we built a scholar's garden. There, we let Negativity roam the grounds freely. She barked all day like a dog, only to come home at night like a cat – a black cat, it goes without saying.

§107 – There is something evil inside of us. It is the dark core of humanity, the land of anonymous drives that have been cut off from the surface. The drives don't care much for what language spills out; language doesn't care much for what the drives work upon. A deal must be struck.

§108 – We didn't know anymore. It didn't *matter*. We passed from the death of our desire to the desire for our death, i.e. the story of our disappearance that we come to enjoy.

§109 – Months later, we glimpsed our Irene Adler in the distance. She kept her eyes on the edge of the void and us on the edge of our seat. Or perhaps it was the other way around... She had pierced her body but she didn't care much for inscriptions, save for an obscure pendent that hung around her neck. She knew her own secrets were secrets she didn't know herself, but she was only interested in what goes on at the Frontier, where the void and the stars meet – she secretly expected her redemption there. Death never looked so good.

§110 – We only liked to take a walk in the sublated woods of our early years, amid the skyscrapers of the populated

City. For the rest, we kept to our room. The Frontier was There.

§111 – One must not be afraid of symbolisation and actualisation. To borrow one or the other's words, behind the so-called curtain of appearance there is nothing, just what we put there. *So that the Universal only finds its net in the deployment of singularity.* That is, the endless dialectical reversals that are the stuff of our lives, painfully pinpoint both the Real and that which keeps it in check. One must *lie* on the table and be that net, before the other can serve and play the game.

§112 – There was a question that needed to be upheld for us to start living again. One is allowed to ask one's question for *a few others*. Our question was the greatest of all – *what is it to be?* But at the end of our journey up and down the signifying chain, we were like Kierkegaard's knight of faith – we wanted nothing more than the *repetition* of a good meal and good company.

§113 – Holly was very *expansive* today: "I never knew what a woman was in contrast to those I rarely saw," she agreed, "but I never knew what those were to begin with! I gathered something came in the place of an exchange, but

there was no ditching the question altogether. So I became my own kind of woman in my everyday dealings with others, and the rest was shapes."

§114 – She went on: "I'm out for revenge perhaps, I don't mind admitting it. My wrath has no *object* however, it is purely metaphysical. The world disappears but the anger remains."

§115 – She couldn't stop... "I don't get peacocks," she continued, "neither the imaginary ones on display, nor the symbolic ones hidden from view. I only like the sublated ones. Who likes birds that barely fly anyway?" She had a point.

§116 – There is me, there is the other, and there is Time, the belated third of our lives. Neurotics get the empty structure of the signifier (the +/- matrix) but not its fillings (hysterics) or its feelings (obsessionals). Others will not go through the mirror and we don't blame them. We on the other hand, know so much about negations because we fight for *hours*...

§117 – Do you know the story of the boy who was all ears? He listened to his surroundings for years and years – mostly

to the voices, but also to the wind as well as his own silence. One day he opened the door and spoke his first and last words: "You are welcome to join," he said, "but please knock on the door first. Don't be offended if I ask you to leave at some point."

§118 – A professor said: "If everyone came on time, I wouldn't need to deliver a lecture."

§119 – We kindly added: "If the professor finished on time, there would be no need for students."

§120 – When you are subject to the law for no reason, you have to invent a world in which this subjection is justified.

§121 – First you desire repetition as an object, and then its Notion. We repeat our most infantile scenes in order to *understand* that the scene stands for repetition itself. What is desired is the signifier, beyond the endless *unveilings* that represent for us its binary structure. Only this insight can be time-bending – and, with time, time-binding. Time-building is thus characteristic of the intervention of the third, which can *enshrine* with a metaphor the work phobia started, thereby grounding the signifier that was in the

wind. This metaphor comes for death, the other side of the gaze when both are mediated by the signifier.

§122 – The harder it becomes, the speedier time gets.
Eternity gone through can be broken

§123 – When the other was not symbolised, the work of symbolisation will have to be displaced onto time itself. One must invent a metaphor for Death, the signifier that never came through. Time must become the vector one forever looked for. If the Real does not break the continuum of eternity and introduce death, you can only desire that which you lack: death *qua* the lack itself. *Feminine depression is nothing other than the desire for one's own oblivion in the passage of Time. To break out of this predicament, one must actualise Time – give it rhythm, if not blues..*

§124 – Sex is nothing other than the enjoyment of Time. The signifier finds its pleasurable actualisation in the elementary matrix of the coitus' or sodomy's back and forth; when Phallus passes from the lost signifier to the signifier of loss, this is what is meant by phallic *jouissance*.

§125 – *And in the whirling caresses of our whimsical lover, Time comes undone on the cross that does not come...* This is one formula for the feminine *jouissance* that keeps our contemporaries riveted. May they instead become absorbed in the dazzling beauty of this sentence.

§126 – True Love, i.e. love deprived of meaning and actualised, is *the taking responsibility for the contingency of an encounter*. In the author's native tongue: in a *rencontre* (encounter) we pass from *rendre compte* (to settle accounts; the pound of flesh that language demands and Love *pretends* to waive) to *rendre contre* (to give... against; to give up something in order to retain something else, to go against that which always demands more). This cannot but call to mind El Cid from Pierre Corneille's play: once the debt is paid, one should not be afraid to claim back that which initiated the transfer and has been actualised by it.

§127 – This is also the story of Christ who wanted to pay the debt once and for all with his life. Christ effectively broke the continuum of time by metaphorising it. *In Time*, there was a beginning in the birth of Christ, and we knew an end in the Apocalypse. True love is always an ontological adventure.

§128 – In the psychoanalytic setting, money comes in place of the death of Christ. One shouldn't dwell long on this, for without money there would only be dead analysts. What good is a dead analyst? You also need to know that Christ survived his own death and got to enjoy himself in the end...

§129 – If the signifier is the coming apart of the phallus, time is the coming apart of the signifier. Take the phallus away from the depressive mother and the signifier goes too. We learned that much.

§130 – When we were left for dead and the wolves dragged our decaying body into the night, we could only desire our own signifier.

§131 – We who had survived our own death, wanted this death to survive Time. Death became a signifier again, one which represented the subject for another signifier. For us there can only be phallic *jouissance* in the form of its inversion.

§132 – The slaves had acquired a chain of their own, this was the outcome of the dialectic of lordship and bondage. What kept them apart before, now tied them together. When they become conscious of this (and that chain

unconscious), they will rise as One. A new order will come into being; one that is not grounded on the enigmatic gaze of the Other, but ground for the squared and twisted skyscrapers that flash from the void to the stars.

§133 – Because we forsook Nothing, we had to forsake everything. For our own sake, we knew what it meant to turn madness inside out. Past the intoxication, we also knew the sad serenity of absolute beginnings.

§134 – "I hurt my foot against the table on my way out of the room. I turned around and pointed my finger at it menacingly, shouting: 'nasty, nasty table!' Perhaps I got to know my underlying position vis-à-vis language that day. But the Other's words did not matter anymore, and neither past nor future. I experienced mindfulness, irony included."

§135 – Holly had just moved out of our building when we met outside the theatre. She looked helpless for once. When we asked what the trouble was, she gave us the following answer: "I am afraid he is getting tired of me. I know he has something else to do, and a life of his own. I have solved for him the mystery that kept him on, but he turned off the lights before I could tell him." The gates were closing, the Other was show, and about to start... On the threshold, we

turned around to wave her goodbye. She smiled, waved back and vanished into the crowd that makes up the City. We never saw her again. This was without a doubt the heaviest price we had to pay for a show in the Old Town.

§136 – When madness was gone through, we felt absolute responsibility for our words. We became careful – though not inactive – in our everyday dealings with others, for we learned that there was always a storm waiting to break in every morning fairy. We were out to defend that which we became possessor, but left the rest to the meanders of language that saw our passage. *When finally ashore, Leander cut off the hand that got him up from the bottom of the sea, for it was Hero's; and vanished into a gentle breeze that swept through the coast of dead loves.*

§137 – This also brings us to singer Ciara, who put into words our last trap in the following line: "you can entertain Him all day long, but I am what He wants for dinner." In this gesture of self-sacrifice in the *strict* sense, Christ perhaps found his sexuality, at last. However, when the mill is done and so is the meal, one must fly like an arrow at the closest of all ranges.

§138 – Someone said psychoanalysis was not philosophy. This didn't make any sense to us, for these were words, not things... *There are no such things as signifiers!* This is the real, where some of us have to invent something that will keep all dimensions separate.

§139 – *Aufhebung*: what is absolutely appropriated is also absolutely overcome. What is owned must also be given up. And when you are every thing, you have become something else.

§140 – I choose to believe there can be a place where we will gather each of us one of its own kind, and yet live together and aim higher than before. Imaginary competition is not the final horizon of those we call humans for lack of a more original term.

§141 – You can start at the beginning and work your way up; or you can start at the end, go down to the beginning and back up again. Either way you will be going in circles

§142 – If the first negation is the mediation of content, the second negation is the mediation of form. For philosophy, Nothing was the same.

§143 – History thus becomes the final horizon of thinking. History is an outpost on the Frontier, where the void and the stars meet, and where new forms appear and twist Time. History is the study of how shapes come into being *out of the signifier*. When the set is not totalised and only exists in its own coming apart, there cannot be any hermeneutics of traditions left. The only permanence is the struggle to become. For there to be a mutation, there must be some *thing* that can mutate to start with. We could not even *state* such a *thing* any longer.

§144 – Philosophy should be afraid of neither phony nor polyphony. It remains faithful to its material when it strangles its own voice; if the content can die, the form must *two*. Here the Hegelian reversal must be felt – philosophy that keeps itself from the eroticism of language will take its subject matter as an object but not in its Notion, i.e. not in its notional deployment. If there is a void at the heart of things and the One is always in the struggle to become, that which articulates such a thought must take responsibility for just such a gesture - an enjoyment – of imposing a One onto a chaotic whether. In the void there is no such thing as neutrality. Just as the analyst must never give ground relative to his or her desire, the philosopher must always recognise and locate his or her own libidinal investments;

or will otherwise create more alienation. There is no Beyond and no happy ending; and when the event is gone through, there is no such thing as Love either, only a new order that craves actualisation. To walk in Hegel's footsteps is to understand that philosophy can only love itself. It is the only Actual.¹

§145 – One must become a signifier in order to bequeath flesh to the other.

§146 – One must forget one's self and others, and speak up one's desire in its minimal and most complete form. There is Universality.

§147 – We have thus exhausted both content (Absolute Knowing) and form (Repetition), and have taken ourselves all the way to one end of the dialectical arc. It is at this point in the dialectical process that the One just born immediately vanishes, and the work of repetition starts anew at the other end of this arc. Good infinity starts there, which is neither the suffocating Eternity nor the bad infinity of symbolisation; but the radically New, i.e. the sublation of

¹ See above, N1§18; "what was for Consciousness the way to grasp the self-identicalness of the Thing, *was in fact already the Thing itself!*" Although, strictly-speaking, 'philosophy that loves itself' is precisely something foreign to Hegel. More below. (*author's note, 2016*)

Time itself *qua* the invention of a new mode of Being in the midst of the signifier. If there ever was freedom on our horizon...

Epilogue

§148 – Days later, we received a letter from the Archer:

"To whom I met in my fall,

I am sorry to come back to you in this form and not in person. I am writing to you from the City where I have relocated. I very much doubt we will meet again; frankly, it is perhaps better for both of us this way. I did not belong in the Old Town, and I hope you know by now that you do not belong here in the City.

I recall you had many questions, and perhaps I have left you frustrated with my laconic answers. To tell you the truth, *I was not sure of what to tell you*. There was so much I did not know myself! If I am coming back to you now, it is because I have something to say that may be of help on the long, winding path that awaits you.

After I launched the arrow of Fate, you recall, I spent many days in bed, mostly sleeping; and for each day I spent in bed, there was a night I was up figuring out what happened. Amid the confusion I did not notice that my body was rapidly weakening – it turned out there was a hole in me! Here is what I subsequently gathered: when I finally aimed for the sun and took that shot, I stepped into the light. By doing so, I exposed myself to the shot finding its way back to me. When one takes the sun down,

one cancels oneself entirely; for one does not exist if it is not for the sun that sheds its light on us. Time contracted in the strangest of ways when I put a knee down and looked in horror at my chest ripped open. I vomited a lot of blood and the pain was unendurable, as you can imagine. But there was to be an additional turn of the screw to my agony – not only did I have blood on my hands, but the blood was *not* mine. When you hit the Real directly, you only bleed yourself to death, this much is true; but when you really hit the Real, that is, indirectly, you *also* bleed someone else to death. Suddenly, I had to take responsibility for a murder.

I gathered my last strengths and pulled the arrow out, and my heart went with it. I collapsed – prolapsed, to be precise. In my dying moments a miracle occurred: a small child came and sat down next to me, resting my head on its legs and gently stroking my hair. *Self-Consciousness faded into the child's smile.*

The next thing I knew, I was being treated in the City's Central Hospital. Naturally, I had to have an artificial heart grafted to my body. You will not believe what they use for heart transplantations here – a music box! God is a DJ, they tell me. Well, it works just fine; in no time I was able to take a walk under the cherished skyscrapers of the City. Weapons are no more allowed here than in the Old Town, so I gave up my bow to take it.

I have since become an architect – heartchitect, I dare say!

I am not sure this answers any of your questions, but I felt I needed to tell you what happened to me – I felt you needed to hear from me. Stories do come to an end, however much we dislike it. Remember: to the voices you must add yours.

I wish you the best of luck, look out for that child!

Forever yours,

- The Archer'

§149 – "Lovers may reunite, but their souls are forever lost. So was overturned the poet's vanity in words of lovers being lost and love that shall not. Who has been all the way down the path of love, does not belong to him– or herself anymore. Lovers belong to the Idea that saw them dance with the Real, but that Idea never belongs to them. One must accept such a radical subjective destitution. No one emerges unscathed in the end – blood is on everyone's hands. Nor can anyone claim the moral high ground – everything has been levelled. And the Idea itself disappears upon actualisation – it had never been there. This is the definition of a revolution in every sense of the word. With this the second negation comes to a close."

§150 – A telegram was received:

Left the convent - Could not hide any longer - Became a
*wit*ness - A *witch*ness? - Definitely a *wish*ness - Was not sick of
life anymore - Actively seeking sublime compromises

§151 – They met again in an empty restaurant. One or the
other said:

"I have nothing to offer; there is nothing particular
about me, just a hole in place of substance." They looked
each other in the eye, but it was impenetrable. They did not
know what to say, and the silence was awkward. Their
hands hardly touched. To part or depart, but the question
was all theirs.

§152 – The true event is always that of writing. Without the
Bible, there would be no Christ.

§153 – On a cold Monday morning God was enjoying fruit
toasts with a cup of strong coffee when He opened a fateful
letter –

[Not addressed]

There is nothing you can teach me, and God! I
crave it. Should you burn my house down, the ground will
be pulled off your feet. Should you throw stones at me,

your little mountains will crumble upon you. Do stick a knife and I will watch you die in my own agony – for I only exist in the shadows of your postures! You can only play Russian roulette with me! I curse every single day that you make me have to spin that cylinder again.

So tie your whore to the bed and fuck her so *dame* hard. Talk dirty, swear and make threats while you push yourself inside me; foul me but you're not fooling anyone. Skewer me with your cock, grill me and bite my head off the way you like it, while you eye these bitches with the rest of your dogs; you will never string me to the other end of the world. Blow me up, but I am not blowing you. Go ahead, punish me – I thoroughly deserve it. Slit my wrists but leave the knots on; slash my throat and leisurely bathe in the pool of my blood so constituted; or skin me alive if you dare! Please! You have no *idea* how much I enjoy *all* of this. God! I laugh at you. And when you have taken my limbs apart and wrecked my bowels through and through, I will come when and where my body snaps in two... I will shake so hard your whole kingdom will be swallowed in the terrible and long-denied spasm of enjoyment. The more you postpone it, the more I explode inside. Do you know who I am? Can you *guess?*'

God cried 'Terrorism in heaven!' but no one heard a thing.

One is utterly alone in the reflection that brought the other to

existence. This is the formula for Obsessional Neurosis, more appropriately called Modernity. Modernity is the symbolisation – read *creation* – of the Other, from the jungles of America to the bay of Yokohama, from the Hôtel-Dieu to the Salpêtrière. Through what can only be called Terror, one is certain of itself and the other.

§154 – Symbolisation comes to a rest – to arrest – when *jouissance* becomes impossible. Then, the Real of *jouissance* – that which is always better expressed in a foreign language, both to convey its absolute heterogeneity with regards to a symbolic chain, and at the same time remind you that this Real is only a bug in language; Beyond is only another language, another arrangement of places, another mythology – this has all been symbolised. Symbolisation became a place that could never be reached, where its own time is compressed *to lay you out*. We are out in Space when time has been reduced to a subspecies of itself – of Time! – and *leaves the space of its unravelling to its own actualisation*. We have said it before: Space is the actualisation of the signifier brought to its *end*. There, a new life can begin. For when Space is symbolised, other spaces can be invented – and the exploration of space can begin. Symbolisation is the first step to its undoing or overcoming. While overcoming is the horizon of those who have been

buried alive, undoing is for those who pay heavy tribute to a *semblance* of negativity, but not the real Thing!

§155 – Architecture, not Poetry, seemed to be the end of Art. They were in fact the same thing.

§156 – Once on the other side of the Frontier – in Space – we sighed, and tears rolled down our cheeks at long last. It was neither the uncontrollable fit of crying we experienced in our youth, nor the torturing sobs that never come out we had to endure for years, only the quiet and solemn tears that gently glide down the lips, the salt of life. We had untied a knot and tied a new one. Our loss was *incalculable*.

We set up camp by a river on the most desolate of all stars, and proceeded to build a church. We prayed every morning for the safe return of our loved ones in the evening.

§157 – Some have answers but they don't like them, they also have questions. Some *are* the answer. Sometimes they may not like it either. Unfortunately, some have neither answers nor questions, the text is lacking. And some are the question. May they live up to their own!

First you lose everything, and then the loss itself will also be taken away from you. Everything will be given back

but it will never be the same. And you will truly stand in tears amid the alien corn. Go catch a movie.

§158 – When the text was restored, it could be set alight. One didn't go up in flames. This is what is contained in Titian's early masterpiece, *Bacchus and Ariadne*. *Caught between the riveting gaze of the other and the disorder of the stars above, she was petrified*. There was more than meets the eye in the Renaissance!

One can only admire the young Erwin Panofsky for his work on perspective – and for how he reminded us that the painters committed to the mathematized perspectival view came under fire from philosophers for emptying the World out of space, *and* from artists starting in the nineteenth century, for returning phenomena to a purely psychological/idealistic point of view or confining it to rationality.² They must have been up to some Thing, those Renaissance painters!

§159 – You must lose so consistently you go numb. If noon is a figure of the dialectical process, the point at which the symbolic chain runs out of signifiers and falls into an empty *whale*, midnight is another – the point at which the chain

² E. Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (2009), trans. C. S. Wood, New York: Zone Books. See p. 71

unravels again, but this time for a subject whose eyes are set on something else. Spinoza located freedom in the stone's becoming conscious of its rolling down; if the impulse that set it in motion belonged to an external cause, its desire to continue to roll and not to hamper its own movement could be the stone's freedom.³ If Spinoza's horizon was the signifier, he could only desire the completion of the tracks that would allow its circulation in the speech of one. Once this movement is gone through, one must also learn to act towards the point beyond – the constitution of the Thing – and leave the chain to its own workings. To act is to suspend for a moment the and-less game of Fort-Da. If Spinoza built the tracks, it was up to Hegel to blow up the station. Before, tracks only took you up and down the same line; now, where we are *headed* no one has been. This is something the neuroscientist will never understand: ears on the rails, they cannot see that there is enjoyment in the train *not* coming. You can only get to the City on the back of a nightmare. Only then can you take a train to the launch site and into space! More below.

§160 – *The object creates what the signifier seeks to destroy*
– it is the embodiment of one's struggle with a signifying

³ See Spinoza's correspondence, Letter LXII. addressed to G. H. Schaller, available online

chain, the ultimate case of sublation whereby in the imaginary is inscribed that which negated it. The object is not a fetish. The fetish directly stands for the desire of the other, and the pervert is one who makes a tribute for it; or acts as the Third for the Second. We have said it before – take the Third away from the Second, and the One collapses, along with the Second and the Third. *On the other hand*, the object directly stands for the desire of the subject, or is its own objectification; *the reflection of its disappearance in the passage of a signifier*. The object is the result of the subject's inscription in a symbolic chain, *or lack thereof*, which is the same thing. Prior to the emergence of either the object or the fetish, there is no such thing as the real; it all collapses in the voice, as psychosis reminds us. To come up with a formula for perversion – it is the *partaking* of the mother's knot through its tightening. For the pervert, it all collapses in the signifier.

The object creates the signifier it seeks to destroy – what cannot but appear as a transgression is the hallmark of the law. A transgression is one in relation to a standard that has been set, and *knows* it; enjoyment comes with guilt. And transgressions are the rhythm of the law. Paradoxically, to be subject to the law is to understand just this, namely that the law would be nothing if it were not for the transgression that sustains it. Far from preventing the

incestuous link, the law is only its *regulation*, the equal access of all to the gaze and bosom of the sublated mother. Time and the law - the desire for the death of the father and the outcome of its realisation - are the most infantile of topics. Our horizon is the death of the Mother; not the actual murder of the mother, but *the symbolisation of the desire for the one deprived of in the phallic signifier*. The *degradation* of ourselves in the pursuit of Science is the interesting path; we will come back to that. Science does not start with something but with Nothing, the possession of the other. But it does not end there!

*

For every stare there is a question, and for every question a desire that looks for itself. There is nothing worse than the psychotic certainty that Normality runs our cities. It certainly does not run the City. Yes, there will be scuffles – *what else?*

§161 – *Beware if you think you are what the master wants for dinner, for the slaves will set the table in the blink of an eye!* You do not own your own madness. This is Hysteria gone through and actualised. Katniss Everdeen is one name for such a deployment. Perhaps Lewis Kerfane will be another.

§162 – When we pass from the big Other (of language) to the small other (of our desire), the wait is still interminable *but can be sustained*. At the end of Christopher Nolan's masterpiece *Interstellar* (2014), Amelia Brand may have her teary eyes searching the darkness, but her encampment is all lit up. What is of interest is not the symptom, but the structure. *One* will change but not the other.

§163 – *The darkest hour is nothing but the promise of dawn on the horizon*. It turns out the night is still young.

§164 – Love is a zero-sum game. Your gain was my loss, but my gain is your loss. At the end of the day, there are much *better* games to play.

§165 – We didn't take 'no' for an answer. We went as far as to think that we regretted it, which was yet again the smokescreen of Time. To follow Mallarmé, nothing will have taken place but the place... except perhaps a constellation, precisely the Lacanian *sinthome*. It may seem that it has all been in vain but the rings have been exchanged. The question is never about the drag of everyday life, but about the other scene of the Unconscious. What sort of makeshift for the other side does the analytic process

leave? What link *there*, if any, enables one to drag on, to catch as well as spout fire?

§166 – In the treatment of phobics, you will analyse one and the other. What you must organise is precisely not their separation but their *coming-together*. This is the ultimate twist in the story of Oedipus as retold by Freud. You must orchestrate the triggering of psychosis in an orderly *fashion*.

We cannot help but return to our greatest example, Ciara's song "Wants for Dinner" from the record *Basic Instinct* (2010). During the choruses, the synthesizers closely match the bass line at the fastest of paces, against the background of the slow, syncopated beat accompanied by the piano, which is the trademark of R&B music. This already creates a space within the texture of the song and gives an unmistakable impression of speed, which would have been absent altogether without the slow beat. At some point towards the end of the song, in the frantic but ordered repetition of this movement, the bass line suddenly drops and leaves the synthesizers to their own workings, at first following the now-absent bass line at the same frenetic pace as before, until they finally come undone and unwind in higher and lower notes, like a pierced helium balloon would suddenly shoot upwards in all directions. We could

say that the time that separates the bass line's drop from the unwinding of the synthesizers stands for the completeness of Phallus, a signifier, until the synthesizers *realise* in a few seconds that they were in fact walking on air. In this short interval of time, the out-of-breath Ciara busies herself spelling her name before whispering 'one'. At the point of such a *realisation*, in the space of sexual difference, language comes apart – and the knot that traps the Real is loosened. This is feminine *jouissance* at its purest, a precipitate of it. Why? Because the feminine orgasm is the experience of symbolisation (+/-, 0-1) *in the space of its undoing*, where phallic *jouissance* is done and undone by the very phallus that negated the other. Such an orgasm is the *Challenger* of symbolisation, or the collapse in the midst of its climb, when the inquiring little girl figures out she is on the wrong side of the divide. Why else should the NASA recording of the disaster open a Beyoncé song about having one's lights turned out? ("XO", off the eponymous *Beyoncé*, 2013) The symbolic circulation of Phallus in the coitus cannot account for the fact that language and *jouissance* can only come together thanks to the negation of the little girl's imaginary phallus, something that does not happen for the boy, whose specular image is *backed* by the signifier for as long as he remains worthy of it. No wonder he will feel stuffed... To go through the

movement of femininity is to understand the alienation that gives rise to the show one puts on. The other really exists only for one, the other's *raison d'être* hangs upon the *desire of one*.

To put it differently, feminine *jouissance* thrives on the failure of the signifier to account for both the universal and the particular. It will produce in the orgasm the unmistakable feeling of being torn apart. It is the enjoyment of an unbridgeable alienation. For when Phallus stabilises Woman, the social link, it has to be oblivious of the particular woman, the imaginary phallus that could only be inscribed as commodity and not as agent in the process of symbolic exchange.⁴ Only when this entire sequence is gone through again and thoroughly negated, can the now-emerging singular directly stand for the universal, in the most stripped-down of syntheses.

To further pin this point down, we feel there is no better exposition of the feminine structure than Michael Bay's *Armageddon* (1997). To prevent a large asteroid from colliding with Earth, NASA hires a team of oil drillers to set up and detonate nuclear bombs inside the asteroid so that the large body will split into two parts that fly past the planet. To lead them is Harry Stamper (Bruce Willis), best

⁴ We refer here to the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949) in particular

deep-sea oil driller in the world, whose incestuous link to his daughter Grace (Liv Tyler) is threatened by her relations with A. J. (Ben Affleck), one of Harry's drillers. Both men agree to put their quarrel regarding Grace aside, and the mission divides between two space shuttles, *Freedom* and *Independence*, one carrying Harry and the other carrying A. J., while Grace stays on Earth to watch unfold the destiny of the two men she loves. The first thing to note is how the film repeatedly stages the division of one into two. In the most significant of these occurrences, we can say that the two signifiers "Freedom" and "Independence" – shuttles to usher in a new era – stand for the pure difference at the heart of the Universal we encountered in the first negation; it is the crack that is Being, the signifier; both words have the same signification, *but for signification to be self-same, it must divide into two words*. Once we have broken through sense and the Thing, the reader recalls that the signifier finds itself groundless and is caught in the endless back and forth movement of Forces, until what is symbolised is just that, namely that pure difference is self-same. First, the specular image is curved and broken into two by the signifier that runs in the speech of the other, until both parts are shipped into the phallus that anchors the signifier and mediates One and the other. While the masculine structure is born out of the

impossible a posteriori cover-up of this division in the phallic signifier, the feminine structure is the outcome of the loss of one of these determinate differences along the way, the truth of the division the signifier imposes shining through the porous phallus. In this sense, Woman really is the symptom of Man; more precisely, it is one of its subspecies. This has to be because, as we have seen, the phallic signifier is unable to account for the missing imaginary phallus of the other sex. One face of the phallic signifier will have to be invested more than the other for the structure to *coalesce*, either the One, the Universal that comes together in the phallic Thing; or the other, the Thing-in-waiting. If it is the One, the subject will be all a show and it is the symbolic axis that is at risk whenever *the other woman* comes up and negates the show the subject puts on. If it is the other, it is the imaginary axis that is under siege when the death of desire results in the longing for the passage of another signifier, Love. Taylor Swift and Lana Del Rey can stand for these two poles of the feminine position. If it is found that the incestuous link with the father has no validity in the eyes of the big Other, the deployment of this negation will bring about the loss of the phallic signifier and the collapse of a world based upon this metonymy. When asked about what she missed the most, Lana del Rey gave this wonderful answer we never get tired

of quoting: "I miss everything."⁵ A new metaphor will have to come into being to spur the movement of desire back to life, one that will not be based on the Other but on the subject. Nymphomania, the encyclopaedic search for the signifier *in* the actual phallus, is more likely on this side, and must lead to the realisation that there is no such thing as Phallus. At the other end of the spectrum, if the incestuous link to the father is shielded or *sanctioned* by the big Other, it can be abstracted back to the simple difference of the phallus one did not get and the hysteric can make a home in the world of the Other, among supermodels and cats. This is the Taylor Swift pole. The contradiction is acknowledged but no way out is found. A show will be put on for the master, and the phallus might be welcome; but the *real* fun goes on away from the public eye, in the transgression with the double for which there is no signifier. Taylor Swift can ride a wave of unmatched success for as long as the homosexual current in her life is not displayed, for as long as you really believe that she still longs for something she does not have. The extraordinary creativity of the two singers testify to the authenticity of both poles, and both *Ultraviolence* and *1989* (2014) are masterpieces that tell the

⁵ See the interview published by The Fader, number 92, June-July issue, available online:
<http://www.thefader.com/2014/06/04/cover-story-lana-del-rey-is-anyone-she-wants-to-be>

story of a dead desire, one that is either kept *apart* by the ruling phallic economy (Lana del Rey) or smothered by it (Taylor Swift).⁶ If Taylor Swift represents the last *sparks* of a metonymy that has gone full circle, its becoming-metaphor; Lana del Rey represents the first radiations of a new metaphor that comes to be, its becoming-metonymy. We thus come down to the irreducible structure of Being, metaphor and metonymy. To be a philosopher and a scientist is to explore the becoming-Lana del Rey of Taylor-Swift, and the becoming-Taylor Swift of Lana del Rey; the lamella of Force that repels itself from itself (Cf. N1§20). In the desperate bolstering of a metonymy that wants to keep on going despite the void, lies the splendours of a World-in-waiting in the missed metaphor. In the painful work of a metaphor that systematically erases what belongs to a bygone era, lies the actualisation of a metonymy that did not make it. What now appears in the chasm of a point is the pure vanishing that is Being.

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⁶ On *1989*, we especially love the ambiguity contained in these lines of the song "Style", already a pun on the name of Swift's last boyfriend: "You got that James Dean daydream look in your eye/And I got that red lip classic thing that you like/And when we go crashing down, we come back every time/'Cause we never go out of style"... Eternity is the nightmare of the repetition of the phallic game.

On *Ultraviolence*, we love the explosion of sexual difference in the midst of Death, in "Money, Power, Glory" for example: "You talk lots about God/Freedom comes from the call/But that's not what this bitch wants/Not what I want at all/I want money and all your power, all your glory."

Retracing our steps, we can say that *Armageddon* is typical of Hollywood when it comes to the desire of the other, as it stages a middle-ground "happy" solution – the father is lost and mediation unfolds, but the lover turns out to be a copy of the father. The potentially destructive metonymy of the other's desire is interrupted as the paternal metaphor is sedimented by the removal of the incestuous link. The Oedipal manipulation is double-edged, as the true incestuous link that the film works through is in fact not the one between Harry and daughter Grace, but between Harry and A. J. While Grace's feminine structure easily settles in the symbolisation of the father's phallus through the repetition that is A. J., the real trial is for the boyish A. J. to leave the imago of the father behind – of the father's behind – and embrace his death. The unresolved tension the movie hides away is just this one, for A. J.'s love-object is obviously not Grace, but Harry. Many details point to A. J.'s lack of sexual interest in Grace – take A. J. and Grace's surprisingly child-like parting before the shuttles go – as well as Harry's libidinal investment of A. J. Does not the film constantly stage the enjoyment of a perverse ritual between the two men, from that early scene when Harry tries to shoot a barely dressed A. J. upon discovering that his daughter slept in his bed, to the phallic show A. J. puts on when Harry comes for his help. They always "have five or six words" for

each other, this exchange comes twice – perhaps three would have sufficed! The movie thus nicely sums up the scandal of the psychoanalytic experience, namely that girls just want to have fun (preferably with other girls and a phallic stand-in) and boys secretly want their daddies to make love to them (preferably through the anal penetration they will be keen to repeat with their sexual partners). Is not the true Armageddon the disappearance of both the phallus and one's double?

Back to feminine logic – while the hysteric busies herself asking if she is a woman or a man, the phobic wonders whether such a question is possible at all... In her paper "Phobia and Perversion", Danuza Machado remarks that the phobic is the hysteric's dream; it is as if the hysteric knew there was a layer of protest she couldn't reach back there, the protest against the signifier itself – the division of one into two – beyond the contingency of its phallic stand-in. We feel there is no better example than rapper Nicki Minaj's *thing* for the most phobic of all the Hip-Hop hysterics, the shoe-collecting model and singer Cassie Ventura.⁷ On "Paradise" from her mixtape *Rocka By Baby* (2013), Cassie refers to the pleasure she receives – paradise, note the ensuing homophony – as "I'll be rolling

⁷ See the references Minaj drops on "Fuck U Silly" and "Little Freak", as well as their single together "The Boys"

like a *pair of dice*" or "body rolling like a pair of dice"... Need we say more? Yes it turns out, simply to say that Cassie is perhaps the blind spot of Mallarmé – why not? – that the roll of dice was not *meant* to abolish chance after all, that perhaps Mallarmé remained stuck to the very horizon he tried so sublimely to escape. As a delicious piece of anecdote, it has been said that Cassie, who is known for her insurmountable stage fright, always wears a watch set to the wrong time... If phobia is the dream of hysteria, hysteria is equally the dream of phobia, *the revengeful stabilisation of the signifier in the alienation of the phallus*. And back to feminine *jouissance*: precisely because it is the experience of the phallus' inadequacy, the *revelation* of the void at the heart of the signifier, it is also the point at which psychosis lurks around like a great white shark. You might go sky high, but the landing will prove very tricky... For those with a crumbling psychic structure, the work of analysis must seek to delineate this point, to give it consistency.

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What is interesting in the case of Ciara, the greatest R&B singer since the late Aaliyah, is the shift from her fourth album *Basic Instinct*, to her fifth, *Ciara* (2013), another eponymous album. While *Basic Instinct* is steeped in syncopated rhythms throughout, *with the exception of* a dance-pop song towards the end; *Ciara* is a most

idiosyncratic mixture of electro-pop, rap, rock and soul; one which leaves these genres barely recognisable. This very strange object that is Ciara's fifth album, is nothing short of the formation of a *sinthome*. The cover of *Ciara* is a tell-tale – it is a mirror-flipped image of Ciara; we could say that it represents the curving of space mentioned earlier (see also N2§26 above), which indicates the symbolisation of the imaginary phallus by the taking into account of the other's gaze in the space of representation. On "Gimme Dat" from *Basic Instinct*, the record we reflect so much of our knowledge in, she sings repeatedly "give me that bass" over a heavy bass line; we cannot help but think of the Nothing of the signifier that is so precariously set up there. *If anything*, it is the bass of negativity that is propped up on record, like an additional ring to a fragile knot. Does not the presence of a *protruding* bass line, almost like the sprout of a germinating potato, characterise the masterpieces of Aaliyah's last years, from "If Your Girl Only Knew" and "Are You That Somebody" to the final experimentations of *Aaliyah* (2001) and her defining hit, "Try Again"? And can the same not be said about John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale"? Is not the nightingale's song the "ecstasy of Death", the signifier itself? And the poet is precisely the one who struggles to escape Eternity, the wait for the passage of a signifier; who has "ears in vain/To thy requiem become a

sod" (sixth stanza). Back to *Ciara*: on that fifth record, she finally put Time together, the desire for the phallus. Interestingly, she gave birth to her first child, a son, less than a year after the release of the record. If in the video for the single "Like A Boy" (2007), she was obviously one and the other, at the end of *Ciara* she could be one to give a look as well as one who is looked at... and at two different times. On the twenty-seventh of December 2014, she tweeted that "some things are not meant to be understood" and that she is "cool with that." You know something has been symbolised when things acquire an impenetrable depth and you grow tired of Fort-Da, the dangerous game of *reeling* in the real.

To a certain extent, the same can also be said about the aesthetic of Britney Spears' seventh album, the aptly-titled *Femme Fatale* (2011), what we have always recognised as her post-madness record. *Femme fatale* comes in the wake of the success of "3", one of her best singles, once again pointing to the symbolisation of the phallus. Only when language and the exception it relies on – the child's imaginary phallus, and it is especially obvious today that the phallic economy is paedophilic by nature – was symbolised, could she proceed to stabilise her signifying universe along the traditional lines of feminine alienation, following the *blackout* – the title of arguably her

best record – of madness in 2007. The title of her eighth album, *Britney Jean* (2013) unsurprisingly follows the same logic as Ciara's eponymous album. *Britney Jean* was released to critical failure and dismal sales figures. There is no better example for the passage from Woman to *one* among other women. This is actualisation.

§167 – We needed to match our words as well as let the words match us, so that a mirror could be fixed to the wall. Not so much to look at the broken glass, but to go beyond it – and to come back.

§168 – There is enjoyment in the renunciation that leads one to the convent. To live in a convent is to devote oneself to the Other – it turns out there is no such thing. When this enjoyment is also taken away, one will find oneself in that exact same position one fled from to start with. One must accept one's fate and go through it once more *without* feelings this time. There will be little room for hope, not at all for passion, even less for dreams. The flat will be small and crowded, the street noisy and dirty. *In the drag of everyday lies the other of sideways glances.*

§169 – To truly wake up from the slumber of Reason is to be able to go back to sleep. This becomes possible after the

negations of the hunting tigress and the haunting doll. To go full circle is to *grieve* Francine Descartes. We boarded that mythical ship from which her replica was thrown into the inexistent waters of Otherness.

§170 – After two devastating negations, one thoroughly destroyed itself – this is what was at stake all along. One really was not. Did you notice? We are back at the beginning..

§171 – A tremor was felt. The fleet had jumped into hyperspace. While our ship covered distances unimaginable, we retired to our cabin; we had fallen ill. When the hysteric meets death, only the body can symbolise it – a *hidden-in-site* that went missing and returned so conspicuously in the neurological exposition of a former master whose exhaustion was not complete. We keep in mind the words of Madeleine Albright – "there is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women."

§172 – To conquer a traumatic signifier, one upon which hangs a world (and we could say that it is something in the Other that leads to its self-destruction) is to dialecticise it, i.e. to go through the context of its utterance, the signifiers

that have been obliterated in what is said or not said; and, most importantly, to actualise this dialecticisation, i.e. to *re-vectorialise* the impact of such a signifier towards another horizon. Lucky is one who can trigger the bomb but exit the room before it all comes to dust. One must use the *boom* that is produced, not only to set direction or contain the debris, but also to propel what is left of the signifier onto another universe entirely. When the smoke cleared, one was so high it was about to escape the gravitational pull of its origins.

§173 – There is nothing to go for back in Time - *Time was the mirage of a signifier*. Nothing more. *Not* the superseded wealth of a world, *only* the deployment of nothingness. Look around the museum; can you see the emptiness? Can you see the skyscrapers of the City outside its windows?

Space thus becomes our ultimate frontier. We shall go there ourselves. What is there to discover is our absolute contingency – and necessity.

§174 – We now have to rehearse in what follows the *proofs* of what has been exposed in a *dash* – one swallow does not make a *winter!* The signifier must survive the intoxication that led to its birth. The void we found ourselves in must be

systematised; one must have no doubt as to the air one walks on, if one is to reach for the stars.

§175 – At the end of the *funnel* that was hyperspace, it was asked whether Time and Space were not abstract categories that miss the point. For us there certainly was a point to *miss!*

For the rest, we could only offer a Pascalian answer – pray first, belief comes after. To go through the inexistence of the Big Other and not to take ourselves for God, precisely means to go there ourselves and witness the mess *first-hand*. One will discover that He didn't know what He was doing, even less where the fruit toasts came from. The point is never to kill God... What a lack of imagination! The point is to *analyse* Him, to *systematise* His knowledge – knowledge of the Real – so that it becomes our knowledge. How much should one charge God? *That* is the question.

§176 – Being one and the other was exhausting. Perhaps God was just afraid of being alone – and our world was the *litter* of a loneliness.

§177 – When the signifier has tortured you for years but was unable to finish the job, you can only delight in

returning the favour. We swore to break language to the degree we were broken by it.

Can you hear my voice in the alliterations, in the consonances, in the play on words, in the internal rhymes, in the wealth of references and the double entendres that pervade the text? Can you discern the fluttering from the screaming and the purring? Can you hear it go up and down in the melisma of dialectics? Can you hear the complaint, the impossible demand, the cries of joy and laughter, the low ends and high pitches, the undertones and overtures? Can you picture its complexion, do you wish you could bring it to your lips, will you dream of touching it? Can you see it dressed in satin and perched on high heels, with its shoulder strap already hanging out? Will you fantasise about its red lips drenching your neck, the long hair now caressing your face, its naked breast undulating in the desert of your life? Do you desire me now? Scream my name!

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"She came back that night, all dressed up in her satin and high heels. She emerged from the smoke without a smudge on her. The slaves had gone to sleep; only the master was awake, pondering the moves and counter-moves that make his day. She threw the chessboard off the table and herself

upon him; in a matter of seconds, she had slit his throat. Time was all over the wall, writings."⁸

§178 – We exited hyperspace and went into geosynchronous orbit of a planet unknown. Hyperspace was the *turning inside out of duration*. Not the going back and forth in time, which belonged to Time; but the *unveiling* of Time, what had so far been the cover-up for the One's impossible coming to terms with itself. In the beginning there was not even nothing, in the end the *same*. In the *interstice* of Time's explosion, what is elsewhere called the Big Bang, we have reached Space. In the physical exploration of the stars close and far, space must become a subspecies of itself, Space. What unfolded on Earth from Christopher Columbus to Claude Lévi-Strauss – this movement we call Modernity – must be repeated in outer space, this is the horizon of Spirit today. The glorious days of anthropology have yet to come, which is to say that the essence of History always lies ahead.

§179 – It goes without saying that Death is the ultimate fake. Incidentally, it was reported to us that Death had been arrested on a crowded street of the City days ago, where it

⁸ The second sentence from the last paragraph ("She emerged from the smoke...") is borrowed from Iggy Azalea (2014).

attempted to hijack an elevated train on its way out of the Loop. It has since been sent to the Metropolitan Correctional Center, a skyscraper we wished we had designed ourselves.

As for our murderer, we have said it again and again before: when you hit the Real directly, you bleed yourself to death. She went on to become the master instead. To be a master is to welcome the arrival of a *challenger!*

§180 – When Death becomes the most abstract and untrue of notions, the mirage of the signifier, one is faced with the unsymbolisable death, the Real of human finitude. Only the paradoxical repetition of a small death can successfully ward off the obsession of the big one. The solution is dialectical, as always. The likely occurrence of death is a pure virtual; to escape Time altogether is to actualise death in the *space* of a foreign body that craves exploration. If there is such a thing as ethics, it *lies* in finding the elusive coordinates for one's small death. French men speak of *étoile de mer* (starfish) to describe a woman who passively receives penetration and fails to give her partner signals of her enjoyment. Such an *étoile de mère* ('mother's star') must become an *étoile de la mort* (death star), i.e. subjectify the alienation that the signifier so perilously constituted there; for such alienation can be turned inside out, something we

believe we have shown here. The ultimate Hegelian reversal is the passage from the impossible *jouissance* to small everyday enjoyments. There is nothing apart from actualisation.

As for Desire – the life of Spirit – it will easily survive the disappearance of our contingent bodies, *as well as its disappearance from them*. Metaphor, not metonymy, is our horizon.

§181 – Actualisation means that one becomes a cliché of oneself. Can you stomach the immortal green of *jouissance* that is stuck on my face like a disgusting wart? Can I?

§182 – *Si la jouissance n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer*. In an *interstice* of Time, one discovered the other.

As for the signifier, there is nothing to do but throw it away. I did just that. To ask about the meaning of life is very dated; to laugh at it is even more so. As far as I am concerned, a song came out and we sang along. After listening to many thousands, a *record* was compiled.

§183 – Some are spaces until they are caught in Time. Some are all in Time, save for that piece of space. After the melting away of the phallus, what I call *the end of Time*, there is nothing to wait for and nothing to defend – nothing

that is worth your time and nothing that will outlast it. A new distribution shall be brought forth, one that cuts across sexes as well as races and religions, and revolves around the symbolisation of a dead desire, Science. Life does not turn into death – death comes to life.

§184 – In the stardust that settles upon the abyss, there is only my voice. Space!

Post Scriptum

§185 – Either you get a subset without its set, Y; or the set founded on a repressed subset, X; or the self-indulging neither-X-nor-Y, which is in fact the form of a blackmail, either-X-or-Y, at bottom the reaffirmation of X, the set founded on the repressed subset. How about Z, the empty set with no subset at the *end* of language?

What is of philosophical interest, beyond the contingent form of a repetition, is the asymmetry of X and Y. To break out of the deadlock of X and Y is to see that Y only emerges against the background of X, or is only the leftover of symbolisation, the coalescing of X. To go through a repetition is to understand not only that X is untenable, but also that no set can be derived from Y, which in fact really is X. One is then left with Philosophy, the beautiful name for what outmanoeuvres All...

In his first reaction to the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting in Paris,⁹ Slavoj Žižek deployed two negations. In the first movement, he unambiguously condemned the shooting and what he rightly sees as the academic Left's resorting to the third option when confronted with terrorism: neither-X-nor-Y, neither the blind violence of terrorism, nor the

⁹ See the *New Statesman*, published online 10/01/2015, available online: <http://www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/2015/01/slavoj-i-ek-charlie-hebdo-massacre-are-worst-really-full-passionate-intensity>

underlying imperialist constellation that apparently produces the former. To undo such a position, the first negation that is deployed is over-identification with X. The shooting is an intolerable attack on our civilisation, something we should unambiguously defend, so the line goes. Such a position is in fact not the master's but the analyst's. For over-identification with X actually yields Y, the missing subset upon which X is founded. X overshoots itself and produces Y until it can match itself once again and erase its steps.¹⁰ In the reassertion of Y appears the distance that keeps the One from reaching itself, from eating its tail – the difference X-Y is maintained. When the violent *passage à l'acte* looms large, the aim of analytic intervention is to slow down time to preserve its symbolic dimension – if the signifier goes down and drags along one's double, all is lost... What is it that caused time to brutally accelerate for Nietzsche in the late 1880s? Was it perhaps the growing interest in his work, which began to render impossible the imaginary discordance upon which his precarious stability rested? I leave this line of thought open.

The second negation deployed is for us more interesting. Žižek first remarks that liberalism generates

¹⁰ See Dornbusch's ever so elegant 'overshooting' model: Rudiger Dornbusch (1976). "Expectations and Exchange Rate Dynamics". *Journal of Political Economy* 84 (6): 1161–1176

fundamentalism, that one is the by-product of the other's incompleteness, which all amounts to saying what we described earlier, not only that X is untenable, but also that Y really is X. What he proposes next is nothing short of the sundering of X from itself – if liberalism is to survive beyond its constitutive impossibility, its generating of Y, it must seek the "brotherly help" of the radical Left. This sundering of X from itself seems to perfectly fit the Hegelian matrix: it is the reintegration of Y into X, the forcing of a blank space of subjectivity through the opening of a second front of the other side of X (X^2). This is a very thin line: neither the destruction of X in a *passage à l'acte*, nor the conservative acceptance of X's existence as well as its shortcomings (Y), but the attempt at taking the contradiction onto another horizon – the redeployment of X and Y on a different plane. The subject of the unconscious *lies* in this duplication of the plane X-Y, i.e. appears in the mediation that happens in such a duplication. We could also say that in the formation of X^2 , Time is given density when this very mediation – from X to X^2 – quietly sinks into the unconscious. We might add that the very signifier that curved and broke up the specular image is itself submitted to this curving and breaking through its being raised to the power of 2. Its much greater number gives rise to the many shapes we come to stroll by in the museum, the church of

our times. What is gone through in the formation of superego in the analytic setting is the distance *within* the signifier; to anticipate a little, the formation of superego follows from the clarification of the signifier's relation to the phallus – when it is understood that the latter does not entirely overlap with the former.

However, is this the way out for us? We could also say that such negations mark the completion of a distinctly masculine option – in purely Lacanian terms, the non-coincidence of phallic and Other jouissance in the maintaining of both X and Y. One is here interested in what the other says *in the One*; only on condition that the One is maintained through the exception that grounds it. This is the horizon of Time. In psychoanalytic terms, this is what I am tempted to call the neurotic plane opened up by this properly neurotic question: what to do with the phallus? It all comes down to the *quakes* of Time: its breaking into various shapes, its speeding up in the *blink* of a passion, or its dissolution in the glow of Bernini's *Saint Theresa*.

Against this background, Z cannot but appear as the most anti-dialectical position ever: is it not the assertion of *something else* beyond the dialectics of X and Y? To be faithful to the speech of the other is to take into account not only the neurotic's knowledge, that the phallus is contingent; but also the pervert's, that the signifier is to be

midwifed; and the psychotic's, that the signifier too is contingent. To be interested in what the other says *in the One* – the masculine position – is to understand that one breaks into two. Its feminine counterpart – what does the One say in the other – is the suspicion mentioned above, that Y really is X, or that two must flow back into One. But what does it mean for us to be interested in what the other says *in the other*? Is it not to know that two *breaks* into One? That the continuum of voices heard, that sweet song of the nightingale, breaks into the univocal delirium of triggered psychosis, night-in-gale? Is not the ultimate scandal the truth that the structure of Being – one divides into two, metaphor and metonymy, the articulation of the void – randomly collapses at points? That when the dialectical process reaches the end of its arc, it *vanishes and reappears* at the other end of this same-yet-different ark? So that, in fact, metaphor really is metonymy? All of a sudden we were not interested in the puerile rollercoaster of language anymore, but in the vanishing out of which it emerged and to which it will return. *A train is always fastened to its tracks even as it passes through a railroad switch, until it turns out it branched off.*

Not something then, neither the Nothing of the signifier; but the assertion of *nothing else* apart from the dialectics of X and Y.¹¹ Some Thing comes after!

§186 – Do you know my secret? *I don't have one.*

§187 – Someone: "she loved me as much as I loved her; *the question was not there!* Do you know what I'm saying? We loved each other very much; *there was no doubt about that!* That is precisely what had to be worked through – doubt! At the end of the day, I just crashed into the Night. To put it differently, I could also say that I loved her *unconditionally* – when the ground was swept off my feet, it all turned into a nightmare."

§188 – The film *Mysterious Skin* (Gregg Araki, 2004) stages the story of two boys who were sexually abused by their baseball coach at age 8 and grew up separately after that, one to compulsively repeat the act in the form of prostitution (Neil), the other who cannot help but be haunted by a scene forgotten (Brian). This is crucial: for Brian the trauma is a hole that is encircled by fantasies about aliens, while for Neil the scene is very real, perfectly

¹¹ Hegel: "We must eliminate the sensuous idea of fixing the differences in a different sustaining element" (PoS§160)

remembered and repeated. When previously repressed materials come to consciousness, Brian decides to look for the other boy of the scene, Neil, in order to symbolise what is missing. The film ends where Freud did not: the happy ending of symbolisation, when the now-recollecting Brian falls into the arms of Neil. As for us, there was little doubt; Neil is in for a straight dive into psychosis. One makes up stories about aliens; the other will turn out to be *one*. There has been no ground for symbolisation in Neil's life, there is no alienation in language, the trauma has not been processed through the lenses of the signifier, it remains very real; Neil takes on the coach as imaginary anchor of his desire. What must appear in Brian's questions is the symbolic status of the scene, the abyss of subjectivity, the fact that what is assumed to be *univocal* for one raises questions for the other – and what is revealed to Neil is just this abyss he is absolutely unprepared-for and that will swallow him mercilessly.

The question of structure, the configuration of one's relation to the signifier, is the truth psychoanalysis is faithful to, and the neurosciences ignore. Yet this is where psychoanalysis meets Science. Science is the knowledge and exposition of the different deployments of Being (or lack thereof!). If this relation to the signifier is not configured at all, and this is the case for Neil in the film, any encounter

with the signifier will trigger the end of the world. So sweet was the voice that is now unforgiving...

§189 – There are other structures, other ways one's relation to the signifier is configured. Sometimes the signifier is framed in the gaze of the other. Lucky if it is inscribed in the letter. In some cases, something else will have to come besides the letter and beyond the gaze. We have seen before how, in Neurosis, the specular image breaks into two parts that are shipped into the phallus, which in turn anchors the signifier and mediates One and the other. Neurosis is the attempt to clarify the relation of the signifier to the phallus that anchors it – the difference between X and Y must be formally acknowledged. In Phobia and Perversion, the signifier is not anchored in the phallus – in Phobia, an object must *appear* to embody just this and mediate the One and the other. In Perversion, the specular image has not been broken, which sets it apart from Phobia and the field of Neurosis. Instead, the One mediates the signifier and the other. One directly is the phallus; unlike Neurosis, the difference between the signifier and the phallus – the fact that the signifier has to divide itself or invent a phallus to anchor itself, that the two don't overlap – is not acknowledged at all. While the complete lack of inscription in Psychosis, if only in the form of the

symbolisation of the signifier (Phobia) or the omnipotence of the other (Perversion), leaves one and the other in a crumbling room that cannot be exited. One does not make it through the signifier; more precisely, the signifier does not emerge out of the other. And when it finally does, it tears through the One and only leaves pieces. Peace is perhaps the stabilisation of the very path the belated signifier took in the thorough destruction of the One. If you will not separate the one and the other, you can at least prevent the falling debris from adding more harm.¹² No structure can coalesce here, but fluxes of discourses can settle – *the field of the other can be irrigated through the invention of*

¹² This is the aesthetic of Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010), which is to be redeemed from what is said and not said... The same goes for the *Dark Knight* trilogy – there is more in the gorgeous aerial shots opening *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012) than in the rest of the movie. In a plane boarded by another plane and dismantled in flight, we see a signifier taking over a content, only to extract a kernel of enjoyment and discard the shell... This is where the greatness of Nolan resides, beyond the cumbersome political discussions that always follow from his movies. Who else shoots Anne Hathaway the way he does in the Bruce and Selina ball scene? When the camera moves counterclockwise to the revolving dancers, until the shot voluptuously freezes at the height – the heist! – of Selina's sublime hysterical parade... There is only the framing. And when one is left frustrated with the normalisation of this excess in the closing Florence scene – when the viewer is assured that Batman has escaped his death and is enjoying a subtraction from the Other with Selina – it is only *then* that this excess takes on its sublime! The fact that the movie ends in Florence must not be dismissed as mere coincidence, but must be linked to what has been said here on perspective – there is a Thing only when there is a frame...

A passing note on words: I prefer the more dialectical 'counterclockwise', as in 'counter-reformation' or 'counter-movement', to the rigid falsely-Hegelian 'anticlockwise'.

canals.¹³ To treat Psychosis is to expel again the signifier that appeared and threatened to absorb in its black hole one and the other.

Science, on the other hand, the signifier *throws away* – but its non-coincidence with itself it keeps.

§190 – When Time is not properly set up, you can either undo it or be undone by it. (Cf. N2§129)

§191 – When all was gone through, the universe appeared in the *wake* of the Universal; and in the darkness of space we wrote again and again the beautiful name of Science.

§192 – One said to the other: "Can you lend me some money?" The other replied: "I'm very sorry, I can't do more..." "Can you do *less*?"

§193 – First you listen; then you speak; and then you act; finally, you shut up and let the other catch up. Repeat.

§194 – You step into the unknown every time, until it all goes according to plan.

¹³ Does not the history of humanity just boil down to a question of canals, of irrigation, from the Euphrates and the Tigris to the Nile?

§195 – What a miracle! A metaphor has died but a metonymy keeps on going! And tragedy turns into comedy – precisely when you have said everything, you might as well say something else. We come to S2, the long-awaited discourse of Science. Who longs for the passage of another signifier must learn to deploy one. If, for Hegel, Philosophy had to give up its love of wisdom, for us the picture was more contrasted – something certainly had to be given up, but it was also the nature of an affection that needed to be clarified. To reach Science is to swing Philosophy on the side of *Eros* and *Storge*, and away from *Agape* and *Philia*, which paradoxically fits psychoanalysis – the friendly practice of dissension in the analytic chiasmus – in a stunning completion of the reversal started above, N2§138. This is the negation of the negation, the appropriation of a residue left by the subtraction of substance from the subject. We are *unsure* whether psychoanalysis was not Philosophy or Science, but the One that mediates them all was certainly not itself!

§196 – One was told: 'It's grating the slip between analysis and legitimation.' In the passage of the adjective to substantiation lies Science. What for us was truly grating is the sleep between anal-is-his and legitimate nation...

§197 – To say 'I love you' is to remain stuck in Time, for one supposes the circulation of the letter beyond the addressee. When the big Other turns out to be Big Brother, the obscene regulator of an incestuous link, love is stripped down to a making, the acknowledging of sexual difference in the discovery of our diverging bodies. Shape therefore – the shapes of that difference – is our ultimate horizon.

Not to look for commonalities, but to see singularities, to seek them, is the essential feature of Space.

§198 – I am stuck in the most elementary repetition, the extent to which this repetition is *revealed being groundless*.

§199 – In pure Hegelian fashion, fear of failure is fear of success. No excuses this time.

§200 – In the absence of the phallus, a piece of the real must be elevated to the Thing to mediate the One and the other. Don't be fooled though, this is all the work of a signifier!

§201 – I breathed heavily – this is how it started. I was in the kitchen when my body was gently lifted onto the edge of the sink. My hips began moving back and forth to the presence of an absence. I got off the sill and leaned forward my hands against it, arching my back catlike, spreading my

legs open, expectant. Instead, it dragged me down against the cupboard and enveloped me – I couldn't repress it, I sighed, I murmured, I...

I got up and went to my room for fear someone might see me; but it didn't stop there. I was taken on the chest, and then on the floor, my legs twitching and twisting uncontrollably, my hands and arms flitting about untangled, my hips rising again to meet it. In the awakening forest that my body was becoming, leaves trembled, birds took flight and stems branched out to the all-rustling sun. Drawers were flung open, objects dropped, hands splashed all over the walls. I was thrown up and down between ceiling and ground, hurled forcefully against the bars of my cage... And when it finally stopped, I was left absolutely spent, my lids heavy, my body murdered, and all bright the absent centre of my subjectivity. I could only exclaim – 'Again!'

*

Time winked out as the space of the body came in the wake of a mediation. There was no question of breaking language anymore (cf. N2§177) – what tore us apart also made us one. What must be broken is the grammarian dichotomy between subject and predicate; there *is* nothing else in a sentence.

§202 – There is such a thing as a visitation. It cannot be said because it is a by-product of the One's thoroughly impossible enjoyment of itself, its long-awaited Big Bang. However, it can be written... What happens when you raise the by-product to the real Thing? The best of Science is just such an exposition of what is called disaptation. The more contingent something appears, the more necessary it really is.

*

First there is only the circus running through one's mind, until one can say: '*You are* the circus that runs through my mind!' That is, until one can shift it all onto the now existing Other. After a life spent mediating the signifier and the other, it felt good to be God's bitch.

§203 –
SCENE

FINAL ACT, LAST

ONE

Do you still love me?

THE OTHER

No, I don't love you anymore... I really don't.

Pause.

I just don't love anybody else either.

Pause. Aside.

And I feel so lonely and unloved...

*

Jamais de sang Troie

§204 – There is something that can't be said but can be written. And there is something that can be said but can't be written. Let's call this Femininity

§205 – He will *never* let you in, but it's up to him to meet you out.

§206 – The crucifixion is bad enough. The worst is the *resuscitation*.

§207 – And the princess said – 'Killing is your only talent, that is your curse!'

§208 – You can defy one but you can't defile both. And when you have killed One, you die at the hands of the Other. Broken! Her *words*.

§209 – Ontological axiom – Poetry is the multiplicative inverse of Science. Each opening of the void calls for a symbolic closure. What follows from the alternation of the void of the drives and the voice that opens it, is Time; the

time of the symbolisation of *jouissance* in the voice that comes and goes. When this very process is also symbolised, Time turns out to be only the retroactive presupposition of One in (the discourses of) the other. Our interest in what the other says in the other was in fact never warranted: there was only *jouissance* in that voice! The king merely turns outside in; for Science to turn inside out, *the lack that is uncovered in the subtraction of One from zero* - the expulsion of *jouissance* from the system - *must be blank space for the inscription of the Thing*, what there really is. Science is therefore dependent on the intervention of the master, the disappearance of which always results in its decline. Are not the Middle Ages such a ptolemaisation of Science, the collapse of the symbolic plane onto the imaginary in the wake of the Roman eclipse? The true miracle is therefore not the opening of the void - that really comes second - but the appearance of One, upon which the real is predicated. Is this not what is at stakes in Heisenberg's so-called uncertainty principle? That the Real off symbolisation really is the real *of* symbolisation? That the Real is *for* the voice that articulates one and the symbol that pins it down? So that we can say, negating a negation (cf. N1§39), that the world really was too fast, not too slow; that the content is so fragile it collapses at points; and that Science only arises from the way to Calvary that is the

passage from the gaze that supposes One, to the acknowledgement of the zero that the symbol cannot fail to introduce, to the voice that states One, to the other that doubts it. One can see why Science is *on the side* of hysteria; it is for obsessional neurosis to doubt the other. But Science that now becomes One threatens to *freak out*, and it is for the master to reassure her once again that she really is *in* and should keep looking for an exit that may never come. If there is one who needs another in her life, it's Science!

Science may be fooled but is not foolish; it follows from what has been said that the void really is the voice that mediates the One of the letter and the other, the body of *jouissance*... Otherwise, drives but no void! "What is a Father?" Science desperately asks... Why dig up fossils and search the stars, if not to look for the traces of His passage?¹⁴

But the unity of the voice is only the retroactive presupposition of Being amid the chaos of drives that was uncovered in the becoming-conscious of a signifier, the fiction needed to give birth to truth. And One and the Other

¹⁴ To avoid any misunderstanding: for Science the true miracle is not the Derridean trace the signifier leaves in its wake, this in-existent Otherness in the flicker of more lies, but the signifier itself! If there ever was such a thing as masculine fetishisation, it is Deconstruction (for feminine fetishisation, see N1§34). While for Science the trace functions as object-cause of desire, what reminds Science of the Thing that emerges in the disappearance of Time, i.e. Space, the lack of which is Science itself..

really belong to the smoke; will only have taken place a smudge of desire.

§210 – We learned the additive inverse as soon as we counted to three! But the mediation that has now taken place unfolds the disappearance of the body of *jouissance* through the negation of the libidinal investments of the mother. This is the ultimate turn of the screwed – when all was negated in the most sublime of fashions, it turns out there was nothing to negate to start with, there is only the glitch that *is* the drive!

This is the Hegelian move: the solution to the contradiction is *clothed* in the contradiction itself.

§211 – Science is no mystic; she knows that One is only the vast movement of its retroactive presupposition; One is thus her object of study. Science that becomes fully blind to the phallic economy does not doubt anymore, but only takes the contradiction onto the stage of the symbol. What is left is not the mystery of Science's desire – for the space that was so thoroughly refused – but the mystery of her enjoyment... Is it not the properly masochistic pleasure she must derive from her own *bludgeoning*, *qua* the twisted sublation of the desire for her oblivion in the passage of Time? (Cf. N2§123)

§212 – What was only a continuum of times, was bent to form a self-enclosed loop by the pull of a black hole. In the totality that ensued, Time, was posited a limit beyond which laid Space. But when one is vomited, so is the other, and what remains beyond the stars that have been swallowed and billowed out is the system, the *barren torsion* of these occurrences, what was called Z earlier. The system that has emptied itself out of Science, is now very hungry and shall eat before continuing. While the system can wait, the girl in red *can knot*

END

Postface

§213 – Language introduces a real lack of a symbolic object, what is artificially covered up in the symbolised phallus that arises from the exchange. The depressive mother desires something beyond the imaginary phallus that the child is, perhaps something like the real presence of the already-fragile symbolic phallus she was deprived of in the inevitable passing away of the real father. In the best of cases, the father or any other Third, whose name the child may bear, intervenes to separate the child and the mother. What is gone through is the symbolic lack of an imaginary object, the phallus. You can show One to the mother as long as you want, but does it run in the symbolic circuit of the Other? This is the problem of Neurosis. One shall make sure the phallus will be transmitted in the exchange that should take place, while the other looks forward to dressing up that symbolic lack.

In the absence of the real intervention that anchors the symbolic lack of the imaginary object, the child cannot but draw the conclusion that the mother is herself not lacking, the lack only being in the real, and waiting for the child to fill in. The child thus ends up being nothing short of the mother's appendix.

What happens when there is an imaginary lack of an imaginary object instead of a symbolic lack? This is Eternity, the lack of the symbolic lack, the nightmare that was traversed and broken in these few pages. Symbolic or else, there was a lack all the same.

§214 – Sexual difference is predicated on a symbolic lack. Only from the standpoint of the Other, is there such a thing as sexual difference – in the eyes of the depressive mother, there is only the phallus and the real lack. Sexual difference is gone through in the exchange that occurs with the father, no matter the many misunderstandings that arise from this exchange and later beg for clarifications. And Eternity is sublated in Time, the distribution of *jouissance* at regular but fixed intervals. In the case mentioned above – only an imaginary lack – the imaginary object for the mother can be maintained by being One *and* the other, the phallus *and its absence qua the place where it stands*. This is what is unravelled in Alicia Keys' classic song "Diary" (off *Diary of Alicia Keys*, 2003). One is *also* the place of its own inscription – *just think of me as the pages of your diary...* This is perhaps what we should call feminine perversion, not the active role the pervert usually takes in the inscription of what is mistaken for the will of the other, but the more

passive pleasure derived from being both the phallic gaze *and* the body written over.

Painful is the gesture that rubs out the writings of the other! (Cf. N2§177) And uncompromising the rabbit's ear that morphs into the hawk's eye.

§215 – The lack of the symbolic lack is an ever-present ghost in one's life – it is not the same as the psychotic lack of the lack. While for the neurotic the lack has a clear symbolic status, and for the pervert the lack is in the real, for the psychotic there is no lack at all; one could say that what is lacking is the psychotic himself or herself.

The lack of the symbolic lack *appears* when the phobic approaches sexual difference in a relationship. The more the partner fixes One and the other in the myths of Man and Woman, the more acutely the kryptonite is felt. The barrage of sexual difference is here at its most potent – the more one introduces something else apart from the phallic signifier to mediate the One and the other, the more difficult becomes for the other the assumption of his or her own symbolic lack, the fact that one is not whole. It is very important to see that sexual difference *cuts through* the sexes, or is transversal like the knowledge deployed here; and can never be reduced to the couple of man and woman. There is no more sublime irony for us than the fact that two

may actually share a similar psychic structure, what perhaps brought them together in the first place, and yet hit the wall much faster than an obsessional and an hysteric together in bed – these two love their walls so much they make sure they never see the other in the nakedness of his or her fragile singularity! "You're an asshole!" she exclaims, as if he didn't know it yet... One kicks out, the other kicks back; what they really had was a good time. This is *not* sexual difference but only its *accommodation*, the parade that masks a deeper antagonism at the heart of the signifier.

§216 – In the inevitable absence of a symbolic lack and the inescapable presence of an imaginary lack, what one can do is to empty the imaginary out of the lack to pinpoint its place. What is thereby symbolised is 1) the *place* of the symbolic lack; and 2) the imaginary phallus; this finally paves the way for the symbolisation of the symbolic lack as such.

First is symbolised the *place* of the symbolic lack by submitting the imaginary phallus to all the permutations of language – one will go *everywhere* and say *everything*. When this is done, one stands out and embodies the place as such. One directly is sexual difference (cf. N2§29), the crack that runs in the symbolic order, the missing link between the drives and the symbol. But this crack is at once mistaken for

another presence – for us it was called the City. The sublime of this moment is the actualisation of an asymptote in the form of two competing signifiers, Phallus and the City, the repetition of Man and Woman in the Garden of Eden – this is the opening-up of the symbolic plane, the immediate raising of the imaginary onto the symbol. At such a moment, the genus and the species appear together – that one divides into two is here only grasped as object and not yet in its notional deployment, i.e. the contradiction that subsequently arises in the belonging of distinct species to the same genus. When the contradiction is *understood* (we pass once again from object to notion), this asymptote morphs into the binary structure of the signifier, what we have come to recognise as the inseparable metaphor and metonymy, one always spurring the other. When two come together, something else escapes; but the division of One renders urgent its reassembling. This is by now familiar.

But there really is trouble in paradise, what only appears as terrorism at first (cf. N2§153); and one of the two signifiers – our *Challenger* – is unable to endure this race to infinity and crashes. Why? Because there is only one substance, not two! Language is always sustained by enjoyment, the partition of which gives rise to the void. There cannot be *another* signifier, for the signifier is always only the product of the exchange that establishes and

perpetuates social groups; it must be understood not as content, but as form. Our little girl pictures herself to be The Woman, until she realises she is only the sundering of the phallus from itself, which was symbolised as One in the exchange of women that mediated one and the other, what paved the way for the emergence – *emergency* – of society. There is One and the Other, Metaphor and Metonymy, *more of the same*; and the vanishing to which was confined the imaginary phallus of the other sex that must have opened up the symbolic plane. For women, there is always too much to say – they do try their best to say it! And this excess cannot be written – the letter belongs to the phallic One established in the infamous contract, what political philosophers, with the help of Sacher-Masoch, raised to the Thing... Is Jacques Lacan's impossible style, this torturing of language in the *Écrits*, the most potent sign of his femininity? Or is it not the opposite, his own struggle to fully actualise his feminine structure in the perverse enjoyment of breaking language to stand out? (Cf. N2§177) Minus-One – the subtraction of One from zero – might as well be crystal-clear, especially when it knows it has been thoroughly negated anyway! And yet, is not such a compromise the drive itself, in the form of sticking the knife only halfway through? (Cf. N1§36)

What is therefore symbolised is phallic *jouissance*, the indestructible enjoyment that sustains the One of language and drives all the others out. You can symbolise it but you cannot remove it. And in the final blazing of the City (cf. N2§33, N2§70), the signifier that truly matched the imaginary phallus, was acknowledged at last the phallic signifier channelling *jouissance*. So was actualised the negation of the imaginary phallus that had come to go through all the places of the symbolic order all the same. Everything came down to nothing. On the song "Shades of Cool", one of the highlights of *Ultraviolence* (2014), Lana del Rey sings: "I can't fix it/can't make it better/can't do nothing about his strange weather/you are invincible/I can't break through your world/you live in shades of cool/your heart is unbreakable." The feminine knowledge in the real is nothing but this symbolisation of sexual difference, the symbolisation of phallic *jouissance* in the flicker of the Other's lies.¹⁵ Does not the *skidding* guitar solo at the end of the song directly stand for the terrible rage of feminine subjectivity that cannot be said? There is however a surplus left behind the symbolisation of phallic enjoyment, what is sometimes called Other *jouissance*, what I prefer to call feminine *jouissance*, which is the very

¹⁵ One is tempted to add that Masculinity that has gone through its own movement also learns to detect enjoyment in the feminine parade, however true and sublime. (*author's note, 2016*)

intensity of this guitar solo, the upside down enjoyment of the crash that *is* femininity.

There is thus something in the other that has not been taken over to the One spoken. So there is the nightmare of having to speak a tongue while knowing you are not included in the set of language. Such a contradiction cannot fail to explode in the verbal fury of hysteria – 'Why should I calm down?' 'You are being emotional...' 'Yes, I have nowhere to retreat apart from this excess!' When this truth is also gone through, one can drop the excess and embrace the parade as such. This is what is really at stakes in the example used before, Taylor Swift's song "Style" (from *1989*, 2014). One first despairs of the eternity of the phallic game that is reasserted for the other in the oedipal phase, until one comes to invest not so much the mirroring gazes, but the putting-on-a-show itself, the *clothing* of the contradiction of the symbolic order *in* the complexity of patterns and textures that adorns a dress, the interior of a home, the sophisticated arrangements of *Ikebana* that laces the imaginary order, etc. Is not the structure of "Style" similar to Ciara's "Wants For Dinner", the articulation of feminine enjoyment in the *break* that occurs between the verses and the chorus? When a piano note interrupts the bass line and the beat, the guitar that has vanished for just an instant slowly returns from the sonic depths to climax in

a spark that ushers in the chorus... A purely virtual spark immediately cancelled by the return of the bass line, the beat and the voice; yet the spark of feminine *jouissance* all the same! The long breath taken in the exposition of the crack at the heart of the phallic signifier...

§217 – Psychosis is the brutal acceleration of time towards its breaking point; the becoming transparent, *see-through*, of the world... As if gravity ceased to *matter* and there were only singularities floating in the bottomless void... As if the distance within reality was abolished and the object really is in your eye and you really are in the object... As if words were to take off from the storefront signs and take on an extraordinary intensity... *As long as they don't start speaking.*

§218 – When the Real strikes where your libidinal investments were, you can only ship them back into the real, sadly. This is trauma. We have said it before, these must be retrieved from the underworld and re-inscribed in the sublated Thing.

§219 – Desire is negated and a feminine structure is its quake; Desire is impossible and a masculine structure is its

wake. But Desire only emerges in such retroactive actualisations...

§220 – If you are to inherit the symbolic phallus – the masculine structure – you must inevitably wonder whether you really are dead or well alive in Eternity. One really is dead when the question is pressing; and finally comes alive again when it was made clear the signifier does not overlap with the phallus that was transmitted, however imperfectly, through the mediation of language in the analytic cure. There is nothing to be guilty of, *it* is not about you!

§221 – A good girl gone bad, that is so *common*... A mean girl gone quiet, that is so *fetch!*

§222 – But *it* really is all for you! Beyond the sublime of Christ, there is only the enjoyment of the model staging her appearance and disappearance on the catwalk of your dreams, the place of symbolisation that rejects the other to become One. You kept your eyes on me, did you notice the master sitting across the room? The couturier behind the *scenes*... Or perhaps he was himself all just a show! But this doubt was precisely just what needed to come through.

§223 – *First you keep the best and leave the rest* – this is the symbolic intervention that cuts through the content. *Then you keep the dress and leave the best* – the Thing is constituted when it is understood the drive is only its glitch (cf. N1§18). *Finally, you leave the dress and keep the rest* – this is the sublation of the real in the long-postponed sexual act. Best, Dress, Rest: our version of the three orders of Being, Symbolic, Imaginary and Real.

We can also say that every opening of the void (real) calls for a symbolic closure (Real). Such a symbolic closure can only happen if the subject disappears from the body and re-inscribes itself in the content. And this movement must actualise itself by sublating the void of the drives in the imaginary of the sexual act, what is also called the fundamental fantasy, through the formation of phallic enjoyment, however apparently inverted. So is the void *resorbed*. This movement is what must be upheld against every superegoic blackmail. *There is nothing else.*

§224 – Precisely when we thought we didn't have a secret (cf. N2§186), it turned out there was one that could not be laid on the page! Not that we knew what it was either.

§225 – There is such a thing as symbolic closure in the creation of the Oedipal couple. There is nothing wrong with that.

And yet, something else ghosts around, perhaps the Derridean trace we do not mind rehabilitating here – definitely no Otherness, just the *ridiculous* monster of negativity that wreaks havoc at random in the post-credits shots of *Thor: The Dark World* (Alan Taylor, 2013) – easily the greatest of all the superhero movies... This is the drive, "acting out, the *half-erasure* of the tension that drove us so far" (cf. N1§36), the re-appropriation of the lamella of Force that rejects itself to spur itself again. (See also N2§106)

§226 – Phobia is the compromise between Neurosis and Perversion. There is the certainty of the libidinal investments of the mother, and the question that *is* the symbolic order. When all the places of the symbolic order are gone through, the question vanishes in the show of calligraphy that is sustained by the phobic object upon which is concentrated anxiety; and the certainty of what can become one's own libidinal investments through the mediation that has taken place. One can think again of Melville's *Moby Dick*, the phobic object and the fireworks of literary forms.

However, if the question accidentally extends to the certainty of the mother's libidinal investments,¹⁶ what is uncovered is the void of the subject as such, and Psychosis threatens when the phobic object becomes ineffective. In such a situation, what must be gone through is not only the places of the symbolic order, but also Perversion itself, the attempt at being One again to fill up the real lack of the depressive mother. What is unfolded in this movement is the negation of Perversion, this collage of the imaginary phallus and the signifier. Something remains in the absolute destruction that results from these two negations (signifier, imaginary phallus), which is Minus-One, the actualisation of a feminine structure in this alienation, as well as the by-product of feminine *jouissance* it leaves in its quake. This is crucial to understand – in the absence of the phobic object, any form of perverse enjoyment is impossible; there is only psychosis waiting in and hysteria out. If the contradiction that is the void of the subject remains *in*, the room crumbles; one and the other are trapped under the debris and *deathened* by the Voice (cf. N2§172). The contradiction

¹⁶ It is sometimes said that psychoanalysis cannot account for the contingency of the accident... But for psychoanalysis there is only the contingency of one's encounter with the signifier! An accident really does *resonate* within an already-formed psychic structure, but the sublation of this accident in the analytic cure – the opening of the void calling for symbolic closure, this making the accident *reason-hate* – will necessarily bring about something else. To turn things around is to show that the singularity of an accident only emerges in its sublation. Have we not said before that Being itself was an accident?

must be turned completely inside out in order to leave space for the subject that must take place. This becomes *style*, the zero-level of feminine subjectivity, indeed subjectivity as such. And one is both in and out.

But the signifier was only actualised outside; writing becomes necessary to put it back together inside.

§227 – What remains is 1) the desire to be loved for what one is not - *the girl in red*, precisely the lost imaginary phallus that only emerged through its negation; 2) the now-sublated imaginary phallus reconstituted in the Thing at a safe distance from the symbolic phallus that has been acknowledged; and 3) the sublation of the killing drive that was turned inwards, in the formalisation of the system that calls one to one's desk again and again. *You need to posit One in order to systematise the barren torsion out of which it appeared*, this is the paradox of Science that shall be explored in what follows. Now that the titanic work of symbolisation sinks in, desire that has been negated only wishes for the quiet work of systematisation to begin. Let it be known: desire does not forgive, nor does it forget.

Afterward

§228 – The author is also an offer. The content is for you to articulate.

§229 – Sexual difference cannot be reduced to man and woman. It has in fact little to do with these two. Neither does it boil down to what is vaguely called socio-cultural concepts, nor even the more rigorous psychoanalytic compass of psychic structures. Frankly, it is quite a mystery. Sexual difference can be acknowledged in same-sex relations and ignored in what are all too hastily called heterosexual relations; there may even be so-called heterosexual relations that externalise the phallus. But its most stunning truth is the fact that the existence of two separate sexes, themselves not always spared from biological hazards, only emerges in the mind through the most complex of dialectical movements, whereby the subject picks in the content something that can mediate the terrible crack at the heart of Being, which is the fact that a self-same genus divides into two distinct species. The fact that we are all humans, but not of the same kind...

Sexual difference is therefore what you can make of it. This is what is usually called the fundamental fantasy, i.e. the scenario each of us has to elaborate to frame the sexual

encounter. There might be sex for animals, but not a difference, only imaginary parades. This very difference, begetting as it does so many insoluble problems, is also our most precious, our only possession – what drives us out of Eden and forces us to create something new. We humans need to cancel ourselves and redeploy ourselves onto social stages just to articulate that difference...

§230 – On my other side, there is only myself. But my self-division is the acknowledging of sexual difference, the mark a mystery leaves on the mind; and the truth of my desire is not for myself but for that difference in the shape of another, different body. *The secret X on the map of our treasures lost...* Is not desire always desire of a mystery? More precisely, is not desire always desire to desire?

FIFTY SHADES OF GREY, one black hole, one blank space

§231 – Is *Fifty Shades of Grey* the last-ditch attempt at concealing sexual difference? The fact that men's desire is not for you and your beautiful self, but is split between the longing for the lost object in the shape of their mothers, and The Other Woman, that mythical whore who gives a fuck that does not take place at home, and does not give a fuck? Is thus the reinvention of S&M sex just a smokescreen for

this most disturbing fact that man and woman are no match for each other? That one craves for the attention the other is quite reluctant, if not plainly unfazed, to give? And the more you want to be the Only Girl In The World, the more your partner sleeps around, quite rightly bored by this semblance of femininity...

Beyoncé's superb re-visitation of her signature song "Crazy In Love" (for the movie's soundtrack) goes in this direction. While the first version exudes enthusiasm, the promise of being One again through the love of the other, the new *Fifty Shades* version cannot fail to give the impression of a descent into madness. Note the slow, eerie, nightmarish even, first part of the song, worth a horror movie; then the intense build-up of the second part, with its blazing guitars and screaming voices; finally the repetition of the opening in the ending, which signals the drive has been actualised in the trauma of the other's desire, what the film works through.

First you understand you are not whole, there is always the malevolent other woman lurking around your man; then, when he does betray you, you realise you really are nothing, The Other Woman being the evil of negativity that does not care much for mirrors; and what is left is only the shattering enjoyment of the negation that has taken place...

Fifty Shades of Grey, ONE BLACK HOLE, one blank space

§232 – What does Christian Grey want? This seems to be the question raised by *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the cinematic adaptation of the novel by E. L. James starring Jamie Dornan (Christian Grey) and Dakota Johnson (Anastasia Steele). We all know the story by now: a young college graduate falls in love with an equally young billionaire entrepreneur she interviews for the school newspaper; the young billionaire entrepreneur equally falls in love with her; there is one hiccup to this great story however, which is his penchant for belts and whips rather than belles and wit.

We proceed to establish a diagnosis. Is Christian Grey a clear-cut case of perversion, more particularly sadism *qua* the enjoyment of creating anxiety in the other? The hotchpotch that is Christian's sexuality points to a different answer. While he seems to enjoy inflicting pain on the other (which is typical of sadism) he also deploys all the knacks characteristic of masochism, the establishment of a contract between punisher and victim being foremost among them. We know from philosopher Gilles Deleuze's classic study of Sacher-Masoch (1967) that sadism and masochism actually don't go together. Sadism secretly over-identify with the Law by crushing desires; while if masochism elevates the Woman to the all-powerful figure,

it is only to reveal her lack in the enjoyment of the rules beyond her gaze. For the sadist the rules are overlooked in their ruthless application, what remains is only the anxious gaze of the other. And for the masochist, the rules take precedence over the Other, whatever the cost! To put it differently, the desire of the sadist is for the breaking of the rules that are one with the skin of the imaginary phallus – this is the collapse of Three down to Two. Whereas the desire of the masochist is for the spectacle of their disentangling – the emergence of Three from Two. We can see here how Perversion, like Neurosis, is not a univocal category but encompasses different configurations. In all cases the law that was glimpsed yet not set up remains the ultimate horizon of the subject's libidinal life, but sadism and masochism nonetheless deploy two different, incompatible logics. And while the sadist enjoys the violation of the law, really its actualisation, Christian Grey will always stop the moment 'a yellow or red word' is uttered, thereby revealing what is for him the trauma of the other's desire – 'What does she want?' This is also the reason why the contract is not enough for him (he breaks his own rules all the time). Both sadist and masochist and neither of them, Christian Grey's subjective split is at the heart of the film, more so than in the novel.

Anastasia is by contrast the interpellated subject of Ideology. Her eyes brim with excitement at the sight of the big city; they overflow in the office of the dashing Grey, who concentrates on himself all the attributes of the phallic signifier – youth, strength, power, wealth, etc. Is not grey the cover-up for the signifier's two determinate differences after all, black and white? The absence of subjective split is nowhere more visible than when she loses her virginity to Grey. Hysteria always involves a conflicted approach to the actual phallus, either in the form of the disgust provoked by the penis, or the disgust linked to one's own body (or both if you're lucky). I remember from my own high school years a girl losing her virginity at a party: when she and her lover came back to the garden where the party was taking place, she immediately retreated into the house with her girlfriends. What presumably needed to be drowned in the clatter of her friends, was the very mixed feelings such a moment harbours: did not the most important time of femininity, the giving away of one's *agalma*, come down to a half-pleasurable bodily exchange and a *train* of blood and sperm? And does not phallic enjoyment really come with the talk that follows, when the signifier Woman is thrown around to replace the imaginary phallus that was just lost? But Anastasia is thoroughly untroubled by such things: she wakes up in the middle of the night with only the drive to

have the phallus inside her again. There is something that is not worked through at all, namely her symbolic lack, which is the fact that at such a moment a woman enters the wider coordinates of men's desire and becomes a commodity. If there is one hanging on the side of perversion, is it not the unbreakable phallus that *is* Anastasia Steele? Wait for the second negation.

Fifty Shades of Grey, one black hole, ONE BLANK SPACE

§233 – The first novel's two sequels, *Fifty Shades Darker* and *Fifty Shades Freed*, plainly describe the obvious path to the formation of the Oedipal couple through the symbolic castration that comes in the form of minding one's own business. First was the hystericisation of Anastasia by introducing something else beyond her gaze, then the acknowledgement of the symbolic phallus in the form of marriage, finally the negation of the imaginary phallus through the giving birth to children. On Christian's side comes the severing of the incestuous link to the mother-substitute that was Elena Lincoln, the older woman who introduced him to S&M when he was fifteen; then the acknowledging of sexual difference by finding oneself in the position of having to give the symbolic phallus; finally the *mediation* of the imaginary phallus in the children that come to life. Something is actualised in this movement,

which belongs to neither Anastasia nor Christian: the (symbolic) Phallus. The story is thus nothing but the actualisation of E. L. James' feminine structure, in the form of the desire for the phallus of the father. The worldwide success of both movie and novels reflect just this contemporary craving for the symbolic phallus that was mediated in the twentieth century and went into hiding since, only to blow up in the terrorist's demand for love.

In a world that sees the emergence of powerhouses in the East, why does London find itself at the centre of global exchanges again? Why do we not pass straight from New York to Shanghai? For the same reason we did not pass from New York to Tokyo, namely that the One that mediates them all is the colonial One that only emerged through the negation of the other. Barack Obama's initial intuition was the right one: there is no more disturbing position than *laissez-faire*... 'Go ahead, the world is yours, what are you going to do with it?' In psychoanalytic terms, this is the discovery that the Other is lacking, that the emperor has no clothes on. We stress again and again that what is truly traumatic is not so much the omnipotence of the Other, only the first of two dialectical movements; but our neighbour's fragile desire, that flash of singularity that rests on no ground and foreshadows unrest. Is not Obama's ultimate failure the sign that capitalism cannot

accommodate difference? That the phallic economy *systematically* precludes subjectivity by constantly bombarding us with superego demands? That if it was not for Christian Grey's very *common* penchants – who does not enjoy a bit of sadism during the day? – the world would literally stop? Those who do not want to talk about capitalism should also keep quiet about *Fifty Shades of Grey*; whoever is without sin, let him or her cast the first stone at E. L. James...

*

We have established that every political antagonism is *always* the displacement of sexual difference; in our over-sexualised era, the reverse is also true. *Fifty Shades of Grey* is thus only the displacement of social antagonisms and power relations into the drab sexual life of the phallic couple. And their twisted story is Ideology's greatest weapon to conceal the fact that desire is only possible against the background of their unrestricted access to capital. We ask this question: is not the enigma of the other's desire, the bedrock of the phallic economy, only possible thanks to girls and boys who throw themselves out of the window making iPads in Shenzhen?¹⁷ 'It's just fifty shades of fucked up,' says Jamie Dornan while his back is

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<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/05/woman-nearly-died-making-ipad>

shot against the window of Christian's Seattle penthouse... Love can therefore only end in the suicides of Romeo and Juliet, with the dying flame of their desire casting a crude light on the stupidity of the phallic carnivore, the carnival of names from Capulet to Montague that dominates our everyday lives. When I grab a Starbucks drink while checking my Facebook on my Apple device before getting some takeaway lunch at Pret on my way to a *re-nouned* university, what do I actually live for, if not the symbolic phallus, the (absent) name for all names?

A good death is its own reward! This should be read as nothing but the reassertion of the fantasy - the singular ways the passage of the signifier comes to be registered in each of us - against the imploring gaze that is more comfortable sitting on a nail than standing up for itself. For truly sexy reading, the author cannot but recommend Anaïs Nin, the queen of writing feminine *jouissance*. And for true love stories, one is struck by the feelings of elation left by a Jane Austen novel, the *revelation* of the ludicrousness of it all! Which, again, is nothing but the *distance within the porous Phallus*, something sadly absent from *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

§234 - The nightmare of subjectivity: the other is indispensable to you, but you're not indispensable to the

other. *So much for the self*, the illusory receptacle of a content that is not yours.

Identity of opposites: the monk and the hysteric

§235 – The man stumbled out of breath upon reaching the top of the stairs. Straightening up, he immediately knelt down to vomit *ad vitam aeternam*. The splash of ejected matter painfully alternated with his gasping for air. There were holes at hands and feet; the wounds had not healed properly and were bleeding profusely, adding some red to the ash grey spectacle of his sorry appearance. The vomiting stopped and the exhausted creature tumbled into unconsciousness in one final gasp. And when the lights went on and the curtains were drawn, this is how the master came on stage. *A smudge of blood on the face of it all...*

'What does not kill you makes you...' 'Wait, did I check for internal bleeding?' There is for us nothing more indecent indeed than the self-indulgent *ritornello* of the what-does-not-kill-me-makes-me-stronger quote from *Twilight of the Idols* – what didn't kill Nietzsche froze him to bed for the last decade of his wretched life... Not a particularly striking example of survival. What will be stronger is that which missed and only waits to come at you again in a turn of phrase. We love the condensation in this

line of Taylor Swift: 'I'm a nightmare dressed like a daydream' ("Blank Space" from 1989). This is hysteria, equally the beautiful soul position, namely the enjoyment of being the object of an exchange. Such a deployment involves the *refusal* of the signifier in the delicious coming-together of the two determinate differences in the re-invested imaginary phallus. What is asserted is the distance between the signifier and the imaginary phallus, against the collage of perversion; but what is nonetheless sacrificed is the distance within the signifier itself, the porous symbolic Phallus – the two determinate differences are gone through, but not their asymmetry. And when this very distance resurfaces, either melancholia *qua* the collapse of the imaginary axis, or physical symptoms *qua* the collapse of the symbolic axis, threatens. One that is suddenly not itself disappears to send the subject's desire *in the real*. And what was uncut perversion becomes clear-cut psychosis. Or, One that is suddenly not itself is maintained in the metonymy of the master, but at the price of leaving the body work out the lost metaphor. And what harboured the splendours of a world-in-waiting becomes the stupid psychosomatic repetition of hysteria. Should you decide to negate the nightmare altogether, be ready to forsake the daydream – space comes at this price, *the painful sublation of the virtual trace the Phallus leaves in its trek*, where the slaves took

solace. But the truth is that one never gets rid of enjoyment; so that one will find a nightmare dressed like a nightmare, which is in fact a daydream dressed like a daydream, this really being your worst nightmare. And the daydream that is dressed like a nightmare at first, really was a nightmare dressed like a daydream.

Beware, when it seems too complicated, it really is too simple; but the reverse is not true.

§236 – So far the truth spoke and lies were written. I, Truth, write: someone please listen.

§237 – Hysteria only returns what was yours all along. You can try to keep it as far from you as you can – I can only wish you good luck – but you may also give it a place beyond your symbolic constellations and within yourself. Guest what? *A distance that is knot, not at a distance*. This is subjectivity, which is the assumption of a radical lack with regards to Being.

§238 – Can I change my mind? Please do keep your eyes on me... (Cf. N2§222)

Conclusion

Absolute Knowing (-, +)

§239 – At the end of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, philosopher G. W. F. Hegel suggested there was such a thing as Absolute Knowing. *Das absolute Wissen*, to know absolutely, best rendered in English by the gerund *knowing*: it is not the vacuous knowledge (*Wissenschaft* in German) of Monsieur Homais, which is pure, Chomskyan language – only sustained on its flipside by a phallus just as turgescient; but an inhabiting form of knowledge, a knowing in-itself – that does not keep itself apart from the subject at hand; and for-itself – that is first and foremost asserted intentionality. So what does Absolute Knowing know then? Only that when knowledge is exhausted, i.e. was proven wrong in its entirety, one knows just this: that appearances stand on their own and can never be reduced to *something* beyond themselves by the operation of language. Absolute Knowing knows that there is nothing to know, and the tension is not resolved. Precisely when it symbolised everything, it realised it only symbolised Nothing so far, the signifier. The subsequent negation of this antiquated cognition paves the way for Science, the formalisation of Being that rids itself of meaning. This is called the system. When the gap at the heart of language is gone through, cognition becomes

metaphoric in nature, it does not add anything to the content but merely packs and unpacks substance in and out of smaller and larger boxes. And Science can never end – it has become as a result pure metonymy. Science may speak but does not make sense. It needs the phallus to be reinstated at a distance from itself for the gap of Being to remain open. This is where politics enters; politics tries to ground meaning but fails, and this distance that is established again and again – the morning of the signifier that does not want to be mourning already – leaves space for Science to succeed in propping up Being amid the chaos of the universe. You political animals will try, but you must fail, for the true battle is fought where your eyes are all ears but won't see. Politics is for sceptics – they will treat you like shit, yet this gift is all for you. Politics is the minimal and most complete form of the phallus. They go head to head but the phallus is in the fight that cloaks it and clocks it. It is dialectical: something really is one when it appears divided. In contrast to Athenian democracy, so-called oriental autocracy is strictly-speaking not phallic – it needs to display the phallus to conceal the fact that it really is the other who has it. The illusion is double: that the phallus cannot be actualised, and that it cannot be negated.

Whereas Science is for dreamers – kind lovers but their eyes are set on something else. Science, truly the work

of God, is so dry it leaves little to desire – art provides the necessary sublimation of the Thing that otherwise lies dissected on the table of Science. Science cuts, art sutures. Love, perhaps the highest human endeavour, surely the most devouring, is the deployment of passivity amid such frantic activities. Love, the negation of the phallus and the negation of the negation, all a work of patience, establishes Time, which cuts and kick-starts the drive out of the Garden of Eden. While chaos goes straight to shatters, we lovers go askew, anew.

Absolute Knowing encompasses them all. In itself, Absolute Knowing is both pure enthusiasm and pure anxiety. It knows that whatever it will find on its way from star to star has not been encountered before. While Science relishes its orbit, politics sabotages the landing and art makes up an imaginary *take-off*, Absolute Knowing enjoys only the spacewalk. And whenever the walk takes it to a new arc/k, Spirit sheds its old shape and embraces a new one. There is no metalanguage – when this is achieved, it will be all that there is, was and will ever be. Necessity is as unforgiving as it is contingent. It does not suppress virtuality, what there could have been, for it is virtuality in-itself and for-itself – it has become actuality. Something is only actualised when thoroughly negated and thereby

turned inside out. Now self-same, it is absolute difference with regards to itself and to Being.

Absolute Knowing is nothing but the impossibility of coming to terms with death; it is substance that murders itself, it is subject. On one side as well as the other, Absolute Knowing is the unspeakable *stitch* of a tearing apart... *Crimson Beauty that turns pale for all the blood it spills, whether it removes the thorns or stalks.*

Out of the woods (-)

§240 – The master will have his slave when the slave rests assured there is such a thing as a master. Supreme irony for us who must be both slave and master to a slave of a master! The master thus wants nothing more than to send the whole party to Space, where the phallus vanishes in the impenetrable darkness of our origins. One only wants to meet He who has no business on Earth, only its hearth; but the other knows the signifier is incarnated, not incinerated; incarcerated even, though not incorporated. The slaves always want to let it shine in their soulless skies, but the master knows that when you let the signifier out of its cage, you lose both your home and your house. Take the signifier away and the flesh goes too! While the master slaves away in hell, it remains to be seen whether the slaves can extirpate themselves out of the purgatory of this dialectic.

"Are we out of the woods yet?" the most sublime of them asked, to which we replied: "yes, just when the monsters turn out to be just trees, but fire rages where you hit the brakes too soon and crashed." Desire never stopped haunting me, even as I stopped haunting it.

Back in (+)

§241 – Dialectical deployment. Precisely when the phallus disappears in the impenetrable darkness of our origins, it reappears for just what it was all along: an empty husk at the base of tall trees. The king merely turned outside in! The signifier is haunted, not haunting; it only unfurls what it represses. It is void, not full – what haunts it is its own absence at the place of its inscription. When we pictured the woods to set their wolves upon us, the trees were in fact too wide apart to allow any communication, and the monsters quietly slept in. Only a murmur inhabits the sombre hush of the forest. What rises and domes in the empire of virtuality loses it all in actuality, and the content is only what we make of it. The bulging phallus is the contingent signifier of loss. It *signals* negativity.

The nut cracked. When we found its kernel gone, we took refuge in the ruins. Picture a broken palace that is all the more labyrinthic for being absolutely desert. The most sublime expected to find a Minotaur in every room, but only

minor doors dotted this holy ground. To think that one can only dot one's I with just this worthless dot! "I know places! Out of the woods!" she screamed, and I too saw the meadows – pure Space unspoiled by Time, the other of the other. But I stepped out: on the other side of the window, there was only my self, glass *pain*. "Tonight I'm going to dance for all that we've been through, but I don't want to dance if I'm not dancing with you," her voice echoed through the dusty chambers... There, at the window, in the rolling meadows of our losses, she became a widow. She was well aware that she had dressed her nightmare like a daydream, but she could not leave the meadows that were in fact alien *corn*. She stood in tears.

We parted. I turned around and retreated into the empty woods. I found an old timber library to finish my book, but fire was already tearing through the pages of the Word. Love is only its failure, symbolisation only its loss. Final world? There is --

For fire raged in the midst of a whirl.
They who were looking to reap what they sow,
Met with flying embers, and blew roses;
And the cost of dead loves to heave and waive.

For the coast of dead loves to heave and wave,
They who trade in amber, for blue roses,
Met with the stray one ripping what He saw;
And fire raged in the mist of a world.

Bonus

Unrequited love

§242 – If hysteria is a form of madness that recurs throughout history, psychoanalysis likes to divide this condition into two subspecies: Conversion Hysteria, where the symptom mainly takes place at the level of the body; somehow what cannot be said is bodily expressed. And Anxiety Hysteria, for whom the Real is located outside at a precise point in the imaginary world of the subject, a point that allows Anxiety Hysteria to keep at bay what threatens to overflow the entire field of representation. Conversion Hysteria will want to shake it out so that a remainder finally falls off, the object of desire. While if Anxiety Hysteria claims to shake it off, it is only to better keep the devil inside, this devil being none other than the child it once was. Conversion Hysteria does not wish for a baby to embody outside what it already expects from the father inside, but it really needs it because a loss was sustained all the same and Conversion Hysteria needs to write a metaphor if it is to break out of its deadlock, and perhaps a baby can help support this attempt, precisely because in itself this baby will not be enough. Conversion Hysteria needs to be set in motion. Whereas Anxiety Hysteria wishes it had a baby that materialised the link with the Other that did not take place, but for this very reason it does not really

want it. What Anxiety Hysteria needs is only a brotherly or sisterly presence to play with. It needs another to restart the metonymical run of the signifier that once took place in the mouth of its inner child, only to be brutally interrupted before it could reach a conclusion. There, a baby may very well be enough, but the question is whether this will be enough for the baby itself. The risk is for the signifier and the lack to overlap in this baby – this is subjectivity that stops short of deploying itself. For this baby might be born but the Subject, that which goes through a doubt, is aborted. Results the always-imperfect fetishisation of the symbolic order along with its train of phobias that form the mysterious in-itself of Femininity. Instead, Anxiety Hysteria may come to the conclusion that it would rather remain in tears amid the alien corn than have this baby that in fact does not mean anything. But because things are not so easy and clear-cut in the phallic realm as they are in the mind of the thinker, conversion and anxiety merge in the larger movement you analysts call Hysteria, a movement that revolves around a lack, produces a dead loss and leads the now-emerging Subject to voice a curse. What follows is a question that neither needs nor demands any answer, being at the ridge of the signifier as well as its bridge – where the quest morphs into a *crest* – but a question that simply wishes to go on asking forever, if not to die right there and

then – preferably in the fields of the Other – perhaps like Ruth in Keats' poem.

Philosophy comes to a different conclusion. Beauty that ran away from the symbol has self-reflected. It learned that the pain it endured did not stem from the great castle of the Law it defied, where The Philosopher unknowingly defiles the maternal presence he feared losing, but only from the ravaging monster of Reason, whose tree of knowledge bears for Beauty the name of Treason, a monster that affects both sexes in equal measure yet in different ways. Self-reflected Beauty that cleaned itself of the Understanding becomes as a result the beauty of the Understanding itself. Thus comes the end of this movement of negativity: if Taylor Swift had that red lip classic thing that you liked, this was only because we *never* go out of style.

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II. REFLECTIVE COMMENTARY

INTRODUCTION. Fragmentation, from Practice to Theory

Modern philosophy has always produced a more fragmented prose in reaction, starting with the compact, systematic prose of Bacon and Descartes cutting through medieval dogmas, and the subsequent fragmentary style of Pascal's *Pensées*. And while Malebranche and Spinoza worked in the vein of Descartes, a number of writers such as La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère chose a more literary style and the aphoristic form to address moral and psychological matters. At the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the masterpieces of English thought (whether it is Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, or Berkeley's *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*) were also accompanied by more fragmented and stylish prose that still fully belongs to the history of philosophy: these are Shaftesbury's works or Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*. After Hegel, and perhaps in reaction, philosophers have again felt the need to write in a more fragmentary way. Schelling chose a more elusive style in his later life; after *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer

wrote shorter essays on topics outside traditional philosophy (collected in *Parerga and Paralipomena*); Nietzsche followed suit and picked up the tradition of the French moralists to embrace a more confrontational aphoristic style, starting with *Human, All Too Human*. After the world wars, the legacy of modern philosophy was thoroughly questioned by Adorno and Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, and Adorno himself went on to write his *Minima Moralia* in a fragmented way not unlike Nietzsche's prose. In the following decades, it is the very concept of fragmentation that took hold in the social sciences: Henri Wallon and Jacques Lacan elaborated the mirror-stage that established the priority of fragmentation in human development; Gilles Deleuze insisted in a number of works on the "rhizomatic", displacing nature of human desire against the supposed teleology of modern metaphysics; finally, Jacques Derrida argued in favour of deconstruction to foil every attempt at metaphysical closure, the process by which truth is held under lock and key. This commitment endures in our own times: if Rebecca Comay recently re-actualised Hegel, the thinker of totality *par excellence*, it was not by extolling thought's potentiality in the context of "Absolute Spirit", but through a careful re-contextualisation of Hegel's system via Germany's historical lateness compared to the French Revolution. In her reading,

Hegel's reputedly impregnable fortress of theory becomes yet another symptom of the disorienting dissolution of identity in the wake of the French Revolution.

The practice of creative writing in *Two Negations* not only walks in these steps, it helps cast an original light on a fundamental theoretical problem. Indeed, the First Negation sidestepped mystifying accounts of Absolute Spirit (some form of all-encompassing Reason that still pervades the secondary literature to an extent) to return to the letter of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*; and this letter, in its opening chapters, is all about the fragmentation of the phenomenological experience of the world: the crumbling of sense certainty, the dissolution of the Thing, the play of forces, etc. It is the very process of fragmentation that is in fact rehearsed and acquainted with in this First Negation, beyond the epistemological questions that are usually extrapolated from those early sections of the *Phenomenology*.

Moreover, only when we travel with Nietzsche along the creative road can we have something to say about the value of fiction and poetry for theory – and about the metaphysics of Nietzsche. Before I analyse the essential features that emerged from a creative practice brought to its logical conclusion – fiction –, it is important to stress the formal difference that there is between the maxims

spanning a period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, and the aphoristic prose typical of Nietzsche and Adorno. The aphoristic writing of the Second Negation belongs to the tradition of the latter (late modern or postmodern aphorisms), one that seeks fragmentation for fragmentation's sake, unlike earlier prose from Castiglione to Gracián and La Rochefoucauld, for which fragmentation always works out a totality.

Creative writing and the woman

We proceed to analyse step-by-step the substance of this Second Negation. Poetic writing comes as a life ring for who drowns in an abyssal "lake", the near-homograph for lack, i.e. the hole that threatens to engulf subjectivity at the beginning of the Second Negation, and which creative writing seeks to ward off. Proof is the unmistakably melancholic constellation that arises from the first pages: the "world that disappeared", the "abyss of Otherness", or the "vortex" and the "blackout" from which the "dreamer" (the first character creative writing makes up) never recovers (N2§1-20). One may also ponder about the signifier "freeze", another running metaphor (N2§21-27, §33) in the opening pages, which we could say has been exchanged for "frieze". It is not so much the case of a story set in stone, but one that has simply grown *cold*, with

melancholia choking the life out of substance. As a matter of fact, melancholia is indirectly evoked in the early reference to Lars von Trier's film of the same name in N2§81, and then more directly and frequently as the text comes to an end, making this theme consciously explicit. These descriptions of a sinkhole that suddenly opens up under the narrator's feet, and the symbolic devastation wreaked by it in the guise of a "freeze", all find their source in "Winter", an essential if elusive character in the Second Negation, one that "comes and ghosts" (N2§25) and is incapable of returning love. To thwart the onset of melancholia, creative writing triggers the remembrance of symbolic work over the next few pages: "Patience is an art. Each time a new signifier comes up, its absence too must be registered..." (N2§44, see also N2§42, §45, §47).

Femininity comes up at this point as both problem and solution to this initial situation of melancholia: "could this man [the dreamer] be Snow White?" (N2§27); "sexual difference is a gaze" (N2§29). This link is essential to the conceptual journey of *Two Negations* and must be as explicitly articulated as can be. Femininity raises a problem insofar as it returns a "gaze" – the gaze of the sexed other, therefore a small other – and this gaze leads straight back to the trauma of Winter previously encountered: "he looks at me like I'm a most impenetrable thing; evil is in his gaze

that perceives evil all around itself" (N2§25). And it is a solution inasmuch as it suggests material for transformation. From "Winter" back to "Snow White", creative writing from beginning to end makes up not only a woman, but a running story – it becomes the letter that comes back alive from the forced slumber of melancholia.

First, this woman must be qualified. The remembrance of symbolic work produces as the return of the repressed a phallic character that embodies the fragmented appearance (the "City") creative writing subsequently unravels, and this phallic character is a woman (the "Mayer", pun on 'mayor'). This means that creative writing has put back into play the psychoanalytic phallus ("presence" in philosophical parlance) that it took away from itself at the start (see N2§6: "so it turns out the phallus is only one signifier for desire! Mountains do fall flat!"; see also N2§3, §8) and only returns to the author at the end (N2§241-2). A number of "girls" proliferate in the shadow of the phallic character often indicated by an epithet (here the Mayer, later the Archer). These are Daphne, the first of the properly feminine characters of the text as she is referred to by name, not epithet (N2§60-61, §64, §72); the "mean girls" of N2§74; Irene Adler (N2§109, a reference to *Sherlock Holmes*); and, of course, starting

with N2§77, Holly (inspired by the character of Holly Go-Lightly in Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*).

The occurring fragmentation (in comparison to the unified voice of the First Negation) means that every character embodies one facet of the author who tries to articulate truth by turning to these characters for answers in turn. This makes for a dialectical mediation of the content that does not arch back to an overruling narrative (say, the authority of the Hegelian source, as in the First Negation). Nonetheless, the first-person plural (“we”) functions throughout the text exactly like the work of the Also in the *Phenomenology* that is discussed in the First Negation (N1§10 and following). This engendering in both senses of the word is a remarkable feature that justifies the question of sexual difference in the aphoristic writings of Nietzsche, well-known for its recurrent and often derogatory comments on women, in Part 2. And it justifies the discussion of melancholia in the Freudian corpus in Part 3, insofar as Lacanians believe melancholia to be a form of psychosis, and psychosis is characterised by the invasion of a feminine Other in the psychic life of the patient (as we know from Freud's Schreber case and Lacan's corresponding seminar III).

Creative writing and the anxiety of incarnation

The woman is not the only concern of the first half of the Second Negation, which also raises the question of the body in connection to language for the first time in N2§90: "We can never get clean. The stain is always that of language and it was not going to go away". Interestingly, Winter – the name of the melancholic trapping pit evoked above –, comes back just when this problem of incarnation is raised (N2§94, §95, §98). In order to circumnavigate Winter the text makes up a new (male) character in the guise of the Archer, whose flying arrow comes in the place of the missing link between the symbolic work that has taken place in the First Negation, and the issue of the body that this work has made relevant (N2§97-99). Indeed, the awareness of the physicality of human existence (beyond mere signifiers) seems to involve greater and greater anxiety as the text goes (see N2§102; and N2§107, "there is something evil inside of us, it is the dark core of humanity, the land of anonymous drives that have been cut off from the surface"). This tension – between the awareness of the on-going work of the signifier and the dangerous fragmentation that it potentially imposes upon the body, fragmentation that is reflected in the aphoristic form – is remarked in the question about this process (N2§112). In retrospect this question should be called the phobic question, insofar as the hysteric's and obsessional's

questions relate more directly to the real father, not the imaginary father (Mayer) or symbolic father that cleaves the real (the Archer) we have so far encountered. We are now in a position to qualify the enigmatic presence of death in the creative writing: in melancholia the passage from symbolic work to incarnation is always experienced as death. This is what we can read into the gory metaphor of the wolves at work in N2§130, beyond the veiled reference to the Freudian corpus. Creative writing instead allows the author to question and defer this conclusion (i.e. to be embodied is to be dead already) through a number of counter-moving remarks – about the depressive mother (N2§129, §213-214, §226), about sexuality (N2§124-125), and above all about history (N2§142-144), as history recalls the mediation of form through its many self-differentiating shapes. It also produces a symptom in the shape of pop music – regularly mentioned from this point on – which perfectly manifests the difficulty to pass from the oral and the auditory (starting N2§137) to the written (N2§152). To put it simply, this difficulty stems from the melancholic impasse that blocks the passage from the auditory to the written, or from the dangers of organic life to the protection that symbolic life affords. Wholeness or phallic unity that cannot be written in ink or set in stone is therefore prey to

partition again, and this prospect of explosion generates intolerable anxiety for the subject.

In the face of this difficulty and the resulting textual fragmentation, creative writing works out a solution that consists in shifting the danger of dismemberment onto God, starting the movement of castration in its precise psychoanalytic sense. Rather than the anxiety – and enjoyment – of dismemberment remaining whole and suffocating for the subject, it is shifted upon another that suffers for us, and is in this way mediated. This process is made explicit in N2§185: "the attempt at taking the contradiction onto another horizon – the redeployment of X and Y on a different plane". No wonder the entry where this shift takes place (N2§153) is preceded by numerous references to Christ – the man who died to redeem our lives according to the Gospel –, in the "Main Body" (N2§127, §128, §137, §152), as well as questions about love (N2§149, §151). Concurrently with the coalescing of the 'I' from the 'we' (N2§134), and the disappearance of Holly (N2§135), the last of the female imagoes in the Second Negation, the topology is reversed for good as a consequence. The action no longer takes place in the "City" (i.e. the "supersensible world" analysed in the First Negation, N1§24) but in the "Old Town", the *actual* world (N2§148). This spatial

inversion leads us to the question of space proper as the melancholic impasse is being overcome.

From the discussion of "time" to that of "space"

If time features heavily in the "Main Body" (see for example N2§68-69), space is the key signifier of the second half of the creative component. Why? If time fully belongs to the work of the signifier, in particular the instantiation of the master-signifier, which has to go through all the other signifiers to receive its status and function, a move that takes time, space is the outcome of this instantiation. As the creative component rushes towards an ending (N2§239-242), space becomes more and more conscious – the Second Negation's first two caesuras fall on the words "horizon" (N2§147) and "space" (N2§184), with the metaphor of space, spaceships, planets and planetary systems abounding (N2§171, §172, §175, §178). The excursion on the history of Renaissance painting (N2§158) also illustrates this shift towards space, as it marks the irruption of space in art, from Alberti's theorisation of perspective in *De Pictura* to its application in the paintings of Paolo Uccello and Piero della Francesca among others. The work of the signifier reaches its completion when moments of stillness, chunks of time we could say, are singled out, such as in entry N2§159. A number of

consequences follow from the setting up of time and space as *a priori* conditions of discourse, including the emergence of 1) the object (extensively discussed for the first time in N2§160) 2) the proper name (N2§161), and 3) the *sinthome*, or the articulation of enjoyment *in* language that is also evoked for the first time (N2§165). The fragmentation experienced in the First Negation kept these *a priori* conditions from coming to light. Perhaps the most radical idea to draw from Hegel and psychoanalysis is therefore not that the world is structured by language, but that this very fact can remain unconscious and fall prey to forgetfulness.

Creative writing as reflection of psychoanalytic work

In N2§166, the very philosophical language of phenomenology that characterised the First Negation not only forcefully returns, but is immediately applied to a discussion of female singers. What to make of it? Clearly, in this passage the question about Being transforms into a question about femininity. It is *this question* in particular that is acknowledged in the "Conclusion" as the productive limit of the entire piece – limit in the sense that the creative piece does not go beyond it, and productive in the sense that this question allows a number of conclusions to be reached with regards to Being (N2§239). I will turn to these

conclusions further down. For now, let us take note of the several moves that we see at the heart of the text: with regards to God – the Law – we pass from an attitude of defiance (N2§153) to one of caution and curiosity (N2§175). We also pass from imaginary identifications to women (we recall the multiple female imagoes of the "Main Body") to a symbolic identification one could qualify as feminine, that is to say identification to a certain position within the symbolic order (N2§177). Lacan's descriptions of a totality that never fully comes together and always goes beyond, in contrast to one that is founded upon an exception and always sticks to it, here come back to mind (1975). But the contrast between masculine and feminine *jouissance* the text keeps coming back to, especially in N2§166, is perhaps best understood in the context of the mystical enjoyment later evoked – when the lack of Being that drives the Second Negation eventually returns a surplus enjoyment in the shape described in N2§201, whereas masculine *jouissance* is characterised by a form of certainty that would have prevented enjoyment from taking this road. I address this feature in Part 2 of the commentary via Derrida, who explicitly raised the question of the femininity of Nietzsche's style.

Furthermore, death is no longer this lurking abstract negativity of the beginning, it is instead re-included in the

"individual myth of the neurotic" (Lacan), in connection to the paternal stand-in that Winter in fact was (see N2§179-180). These are but examples of how the master-signifier that arises from psychoanalytic work refashions old material and re-qualifies the impasses the subject was once trapped in, and how the creative writing reflects these shifts. These impasses – fetishism, nihilism, melancholia – are clearly diagnosed and analysed in the reflective commentary, along with the role of creative writing, in Part 2 & 3.

Moving on, the metaphor of the record (in the sense of copy and archive as well as disc) that pops up regularly throughout the Second Negation (see N2§182 for example: "As far as I am concerned, a song came out and we sang along; after listening to many thousands, a *record* was compiled") is an arresting one in the context of psychoanalysis: subjectivity duplicates signifying occurrences to mediate them. It is no wonder that the question of the drive comes up at this point in the text. Interestingly enough, the signifier 'science' takes over 'space' as the predominant term in the next twenty or so entries. If Science refashions the real in the form of a question (see N2§239, Science "does not add anything to the content but merely packs and unpacks substance in and out of smaller and larger boxes"), it is bound to receive an

answer *from* the real (see the evocation of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle in N2§209, or observer effect – the idea that study has effects on the object under study). Along with 'science' and the signifier 'fantasy', logically appearing as the suture of subjectivity (N2§229, §233), one of the notable novelties of the final entries is the passage from singularity to particularity that is manifest in the case study of the author's illness in the "Postface" (N2§213-227). The psychoanalytic transference that made possible this case study is also apparent in the final pages (see for example N2§222: "You kept your eyes on me, did you notice the master sitting across the room? The couturier behind the scenes... Or perhaps he was himself all just a show!"; see also N2§236, §238). If the conclusions of psychoanalytic work also transpires in the reflective commentary, transference as such is not explored, and for a reason. If, according to Lacan, transference is established on the basis of the *deferment* of traditional knowledge (embodied in the discourse of the university) in and by the subject-supposed-to-know (the analyst), then the discussion of transference is logically out of place in the academic setting (and this thesis) – it belongs to a *clinical* discussion. This limit, and the problems that surround it, are nonetheless acknowledged in the final part of the reflective commentary (on pages 313-5).

Unpacking the "Conclusion"

The "Conclusion" (and "Bonus", N2§239-242) deserves special attention. It turns around four terms inspired by Alain Badiou's work: Science, Politics, Art and Love, or Absolute Knowing. Each of these terms calls for another in a chain that needs all four. Science can do its work of analysis for as long as Politics creates contention in the field of the Other, this contention calling for a suture called Art. Love is the passive inverse of these active elements, in a way love registers them. As to Absolute Knowing, it is the Also evoked in the First Negation that does the work of registration just mentioned. The "Conclusion" then moves over to the master-slave relationship that is constitutive of language (N2§240). This is another Hegelian trait, insofar as Hegel was the first (and arguably the last, if one excludes Freud) to inscribe the lordship and bondage relationship right at the heart of modern metaphysics. Before Hegel, this relationship was obfuscated in the articulation of a sticky mediating third, whether it is in the shape of God (Descartes, Malebranche), positive law (Locke), or the antinomies of pure reason that produces a Thing-in-itself as limit to what can be known (Kant), the last stage of denial for Hegel (again, "we must eliminate the sensuous idea of fixing the differences in a different sustaining element", see

the *Phenomenology*, §160). We could therefore say that *Two Negations* is a repetition of Hegel's gist if formally in the shape of Nietzschean fragments, insofar as the woman appears as a vanishing mediator of the Idea (emphasis on *vanishing*), and not the reassertion of just this sticky mediating third or "different sustaining element" that plagues most philosophical constructions after Hegel – especially Nietzsche's philosophy, or so I argue in the commentary. Instead, the alienation constitutive of language has been returned to the original situation of modern philosophy that is alienated in, and seeks to free itself from, the discourse of university. It is this antagonism that unites in a single thread the figure of the analyst laying aside traditional knowledge, the French moralists' stylistic freedom, and the Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, which is a purely *formal* model of ethics made up of rights, unlike the substantial *Moralität* full of questions and duties that Kant develops in the second Critique. This point is not only the conceptual bone of the creative piece, it is also the tension that the commentary seeks to lay bare. How? By treating the fragmentation of self-reflection that forcefully returns unresolved in N2§241 ("glass pain") and §242 (psychoanalytical concepts are brushed away to give space to "self-reflection" in the second paragraph) as a productive, not negative, force. Being faithful to that

dualism that splits one into two without progressing to a synthesis not only means not going for the easy symbolic solution that erases it, but unravelling this very fundamental contradiction in the symbolic order that is the specifically Lacanian Real to its logical end. I try to do so as I explore first the fragmentation of the philosophical form from the French moralists to Nietzsche (Part 1); then the examination of the course this fragmentation takes (poetry, femininity, the state) in Nietzsche and Hegel according to Derrida (Part 2); and finally fragmentation as the impossibility of firm imaginary identifications in the wake of the French Revolution (Part 3).

PART 1. The Traps of Analogy: Pippin, Nietzsche and the French Moralists

For let a man look carefully into all that variety of books with which the arts and sciences abound, he will find everywhere endless repetitions of the same thing, varying in the method of treatment, but not new in substance, insomuch that the whole stock, numerous as it appears at first view, proves on examination to be but scanty. And for its value and utility it must be plainly avowed that that wisdom which we have derived principally from the Greeks is but like the boyhood of knowledge, and has the characteristic property of boys: it can talk, but it cannot generate; for it is fruitful of controversies but barren of works. So that the state of learning as it now is appears to be represented to the life in the old fable of Scylla, who had the head and face of a virgin, but her womb was hung round with barking monsters, from which she could not be delivered.

–Francis Bacon, *Instauration Magna*

IN October and November 2004, well-known American Hegel scholar Robert Pippin delivered a series of lectures at

the prestigious Collège de France on the subject of Nietzsche and the French moralists. The text extracted from these lectures gave birth to a book first published in French under the title *Nietzsche, moraliste français* (2006) with an introduction by Marc Fumaroli of the Académie Française, another French institution all by himself. The book was eventually translated into English four years later and published by the University of Chicago Press (2010) with a brand new title: *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy*. Almost simultaneously yet another distinguished Hegel scholar, Robert Solomon, published *Living with Nietzsche: What the Great "Immoralist" Has to Teach Us* (2006), collecting in a single book all the interventions he made about the German philosopher throughout his career. It was a typical synthesis of the current debates, painting Nietzsche as half a serious philosopher, the man of "moral perspectivism" and the genealogical method; and half the joker and Provençal troubadour, dealing "affirmative ethics" in highly stylised prose and a few poems. Pippin crystallised this view into a simple equation of terms: Nietzsche equals French moralists equals psychologist. To make his case, the author of *Nietzsche, moraliste français* reminds us that the German philosopher first paid tribute to the "French masters of psychology" (HTH, §36), before supplanting them ten years later: "before me, there was no

psychology at all" (EH, IV, §6). Between these two quotes, Pippin etches out a trajectory that starts with "the cynicism of La Rochefoucauld and the despair of Pascal" (2006, 110), and ends with life understood as Will to Power (*Wille zur Macht*) against the reactive nature of (Christian) morality. Pippin eventually uncovers a Montanian Nietzsche, the Nietzsche of *The Gay Science*, whose concern is "to acclimatise oneself on Earth" (UM, III, 2); except that, unlike Montaigne, says Pippin, Nietzsche was not able to find his footing on Earth in the end (2006, IV). Insofar as the French moralists – Pippin explicitly mentions without further discussion, Montaigne, Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, Vauvenargue, Chamfort, Fontenelle and the late-nineteenth century psychologist Bourget – embodied for Nietzsche psychological insight in contrast to the metaphysical idealism he railed against (see for example Nietzsche's attacks on Descartes, GS, §357; BGE, §16-7), Pippin does not believe it necessary to question further the second part of his equation (French moralists equals psychologist).

Pippin's discursive method is clearly analogical: in order to explain what makes the originality of Nietzsche's writings at the end of the nineteenth century – a time when, this is no coincidence, the Humboldtian reform of higher education was in full swing –, he seeks to establish comparisons between Nietzsche on the one hand, and a

number of mainly French nonfiction authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the other, the so-called French moralists. I argue in this essay that this analogical method is risky and produces several serious misinterpretations as a result. To make my case, I aim to take the long hard road into the content, first through the shift in Nietzschean studies that led to the Pippin equation, and the basis for it in Nietzsche's own writings. Against the restored background of both Nietzsche's corpus and Pippin's book, I then proceed to show how damaging the analogical method can be for both 1) the *understanding* of historical eras as different as the French classical age (for the purpose of this introduction, more or less the reigns of Kings Louis XIII and Louis XIV) and Bismarckian Germany, as well as for 2) the object of study at the centre of Pippin's French moralist analogy, Friedrich Nietzsche.

The new Nietzsche

The exceptional setting of Pippin's analogical interpretation cannot but appear as the triumph of a long evolution in Nietzschean studies, one that ultimately began in France in the 1960s. Until then, Heidegger's monumental study devoted to Nietzsche (the longest of the studies he has devoted to philosophers) defined Nietzsche as the metaphysical thinker of the eternal return (Lacoue-

Labarthe 1979). In the summer of 1972, a conference entitled "Nietzsche Today" took place at the Château Cérisy, then and now a well-known cultural centre in Normandy, and gathered the best of the French intellectual scene at the time: Deleuze and Derrida were attending, and so were Klossowski, Lyotard, Lacoue-Labarthe, Nancy, and Nietzsche scholars Kofman and Pautrat. The Cérisy Conference is a watershed moment in the history of Nietzschean studies – to the extent that it was the focus of a recent study published in Germany –, because the participants fell into two enduring camps, on the one side Heideggerians interested in the ontological consequences of Nietzsche, the first among them being Gilles Deleuze. We recall the Deleuzian project for the sake of situating the argument: "the project of Nietzsche broadly consists in introducing the concepts of meaning (*sens*) and value in philosophy" (2010). Deleuze then examined the role of reaction in Nietzsche's analyses, linking it to the question of the will to power. And to these Heideggerian tropes, Deleuze added the analysis of forces that came up again in his work on Michel Foucault (2004). This reading, originating in another important Nietzsche conference in France (the Royaumont conference in 1964) proved decisive in the years to come for the reactivation of the

genealogical method in the social sciences, if only in the shape of the Foucaultian project (see Foucault 1977).

On the other side of the divide stood a number of young Nietzsche scholars – Sarah Kofman, Bernard Pautrat, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Michel Rey – gathered around Jacques Derrida. They all shared the belief that one had to return to the initial gist of Nietzschean thought, namely the fundamental distrust of language and its operations that was front and centre of Nietzsche's early efforts, e.g. the argument for the Presocratics against the dialectic in *The Birth of Tragedy* published in 1872, and the explicit remarks on language and meaning in essays such as "Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense" written a year later. From this new generation of scholars emerged a more aerial Nietzsche, one that sharply contrasted with, and eventually outmoded, the Heideggerian bent in Nietzschean studies. In the following years, a number of interventions and books served as relay in the American academia of the new French interpretation – we could cite David Allison's collection of translated essays from the Cérisy participants in *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation* as one of the earliest (1985).

Nietzsche and the aphorism

If this essay is not the place to explore and assess what we could call the Derridean Nietzsche (I follow this lead up with a second essay devoted to this subject), our excursion into the history of Nietzschean studies is no excursus as it helps trace the interest in Nietzsche's widespread use of aphorisms back to the disjunction around the time of the C erisy conference. We start out by examining the contemporary secondary literature on the subject of aphorisms, which is like the negative of the Pippin equation, before circling back to our main object.

In the wake of Pippin's book, we have seen a number of works devoted to Nietzsche's aphoristic writings, not always in relation to the French moralists – we can cite among others, Kremer-Marietti (2007), Westerdale (2013) and Canstancio and Branco (2011, 2012). These authors have been keen to stress that the aphorism, in contrast to the more traditional treatise or essay, is a short text with a high density of meanings. Nietzsche says it best apropos Horatian ode in *Twilight of the Idols*: "this minimum in the extent and number of the signs, and the maximum thereby attained in the energy of the signs" (TI, "What I Owe to the Ancients", §1). The significance of the aphoristic form in Nietzsche's discursive strategy is on show in the preface to *Beyond Good & Evil*: "it is not enough for style to craft aphorisms, the form also begs an interpretative art [on the

part of the reader]" (§8). Simply put, Nietzsche seeks to challenge his readership by complicating the picture rather than working out a common framework. Such a definition agrees with the immediate impression the modern reader gets from reading Nietzsche, namely that there is a fair amount of provocation in his writings. Which makes the project of Angèle Kremer-Marietti very strange, to say the least. In her *Nietzsche et la rhétorique* (2007), Kremer-Marietti is intent on establishing a strict analogy between Nietzsche and the classical rhetoric. Invoking Aristotle's rhetoric, Kremer-Marietti describes a relation between three terms: the one who speaks (proving one's *ethos*), the one to whom one speaks (testing the other's *pathos*), and the discourse understood as the mediation of the desire of the orator (the progress of *logos*). Situating him in this triangle, she sees Nietzsche bent on denouncing the artificiality of discourse by revealing the arbitrary metaphoric process at the heart of truth. The problem is, Kremer-Marietti means to have it both ways: Nietzsche the young philologist teaches us about the classical rhetoric of the Greeks when his writings take the shape of aphorisms designed to stir; and Nietzsche the mature philosopher reduces the metaphysical discourse to a rhetorical effort unaware of itself: he thus appears as a forerunner of such philosophers as Wittgenstein, Bolzano, Brentano and, more

generally speaking, the linguistic turn in philosophy. Alas, this argument only holds water against the background of the young Nietzsche, the Hellenistic scholar and admirer of Schopenhauer and Wagner. It goes against everything one can read in Nietzsche's works from *Human, All Too Human* onwards, from the rejection of his early writings to his interest in French civilisation, to the theme of *reaction* in late modernity, to the concern with passions and drives, the genealogical method, etc. In *The Gay Science*, we read:

Esprit Un-Grecian. The Greeks were exceedingly logical and plain in all their thinking; they did not get tired of it, at least during their long flourishing period, as is so often the case with the French; who too willingly made a little excursion into the opposite, and in fact endure the spirit of logic only when it betrays its sociable courtesy, its sociable self-renunciation, by a multitude of such little excursions into its opposite. Logic appears to them as necessary as bread and water, but also like these as a kind of prison-fare, as soon as it is to be taken pure and by itself. In good society one must never want to be in the right absolutely and solely, as all pure logic requires; hence the little dose of

irrationality in all French esprit. The social sense of the Greeks was far less developed than that of the French in the present and the past; hence, so little esprit in their cleverest men, hence, so little wit, even in their wags, hence - alas! But people will not readily believe these tenets of mine, and how much of the kind I have still on my soul! - *Est res magna tacere* says Martial, like all garrulous people. (GS, §82)

Passages such as this one come in spades in the middle and late Nietzsche, and make it very difficult to argue that Nietzsche writes serious works of philology. Yes, Nietzsche praises a Latin poet such as Horace as late in his career as in *Twilight of the Idols*, but it is to write about the poetical/stylistic process, not the philological/rhetorical.

By contrast, the title of Westerdale's book, *Nietzsche's Aphoristic Challenge* (2013), strikes closer to home. The originality of Westerdale's thesis in the rapidly crowding field of Nietzschean aphoristic studies consists in distinguishing the German aphorism from its French counterpart, and anchoring Nietzsche solidly in the tradition of the former. Westerdale first remarks that the aphorism as a concept covers a wealth of forms that needs to be unpacked. He builds on Nietzsche himself, who

opposes the *Sentenz* – i.e. the French *sentences* or *maximes* best exemplified by La Rochefoucauld's famously short aphorisms – to the (German) *Aphorismus* (WS, §109). Westerdale asserts that "whereas the French aphorism, with its closed and considered form, presents its knowledge as a definitive certainty, the German aphorism offers a provocation to further discussion and dispute" (2013). According to him, the German aphorism originates in the hard sciences and finds its greatest expression in eighteenth century scientist Lichtenberg's posthumous *Sudelbücher* (*The Wastebook*, 2000). A taste of Lichtenberg's prose is in order:

We often have need of a profound philosophy to restore to our feelings their original state of innocence, to find our way out of the rubble of things alien to us, to begin to feel for ourselves and to speak for ourselves, and I might almost say to exist ourselves. Even if my philosophy does not extend to discovering anything new, it does nevertheless possess the courage to regard as questionable what has long been thought true. (2000)

Lichtenberg's style is here uncannily close to Nietzsche's and well illustrates the more conversational nature that

Westerdale believes is characteristic of the German aphorism. By contrast, the best aphorisms of the *Grand Siècle* (seventeenth century in France) seem either more definitive, or more poetic in nature insofar as they more readily rely on stylistic devices. Let me suggest this one by La Rochefoucauld:

Silence is the safest course for any man to
adopt who does not place trust in himself.
(1976, my translation)

Or this one by La Bruyère:

The court is like a palace built of marble; I
mean that it is made up of very hard but very
polished people. (1975, my translation)

The problem with this neat argument is that only a cursory look at Lichtenberg's very varied production is enough to show that such a distinction between French and German can easily be blurred again. Consider this aphorism:

The journalists have constructed for
themselves a little wooden chapel, which they
also call the Temple of Fame, in which they put
up and take down portraits all day long and

make such a hammering you can't hear
yourself speak. (Lichtenberg 2000)

This aphorism is a conceit as snappy and mean as anything written by La Bruyère. And Westerdale struggles to mention, let alone quote, other German authors of aphorisms apart from Lichtenberg. It is a shame, for Goethe's aphorisms, which range from highly metaphoric one-liners to the kind of gratuitous statements that abound in Nietzsche's aphoristic books, would have greatly fuelled his argument. Here are two examples:

The world is a bell with a crack in it; it rattles,
but does not ring. (Goethe 2010, §158)

Of all peoples, the Greeks have dreamt the
dream of life the best. (Goethe 2010, §189)

If Westerdale fails to mention further examples of authors in the "German aphoristic tradition," Donnellan does cite, in his *Nietzsche and the French* (1982), two early seventeenth century German mystical poets, Friedrich von Logau and Angelus Silesius. Both men wrote mystical poems – true, *short* poems, often epigrams – more in the vein of the Metaphysical Poets of the Jacobean era than anything by

Goethe and Lichtenberg. Consider the following stanza by Silesius:

Christian, dost thou demand to know
Where God hath set His Throne?
Even there within thyself, where He
Gives birth to thee, His Son. (1932, V)

Donnellan also cites in the same breath German Romantics Novalis and Schlegel, as well as Friedrich Rückert. The latter is a minor mid-nineteenth-century German poet and professor of oriental languages. Nietzsche never mentions him, at least as far as I am aware. And there is no doubt that German Romanticism – Schiller, Lessing, Schlegel, Novalis – largely influenced Nietzsche, in particular Novalis, but this does not have much to do with the aphoristic form. So that the German aphoristic tradition really comes down to two names: Lichtenberg and Goethe. And, unfortunately, Westerdale fails to recall the context of this "German aphoristic tradition", which is not just the *Aufklärung* in Germany but also the *Encyclopédie* in France. Now, in the literature of the *Encyclopédie* there is a certain Denis Diderot – who rarely makes it, if ever, into the club of French moralists – whose aphoristic works such as the *Pensées philosophiques* fully belong to the type of material

under consideration here. This is not just because of the enduring influence of authors of the previous century – the break between the seventeenth and the eighteenth century is in large part a nineteenth century invention, I come back to that further down –, but also because the aphorism, as Westerdale rightly points out in his book, was the natural form for scientific treatises at the time. Which does not mean that Diderot's aphorisms only share formal features with Lichtenberg, Goethe and Nietzsche; in fact, quite the contrary:

One day, we asked someone whether he thought there were real atheists. Do you believe, he said, that there are real christians?

(Diderot 2007, XVI, my translation)

If there was an analogy to make, or a tradition to fashion in relation to German aphorisms, it certainly had to do with, not the form, but the irreverent tone that pervades the late-eighteenth century literature in both Germany and France, and which is unlike the veiled criticisms of La Fontaine's fables at the end of the seventeenth century in France, or the anti-bourgeois reactionary satires of Augustan literature in England – or indeed the excessive, sometimes vitriolic nature that Nietzsche's comments share with a

Catholic apologist like Léon Bloy, born only two years after him. Here is a fragment from Bloy:

[On Protestantism] To debate, one must go down to a swamp. Speeches are no sooner spent in vain than they come back like the ebbing of fetid mud to the heart of whom has given them. (Bloy 1999, my translation)

This lack of sensitivity to context, magnified in Pippin's thesis as we will see, means that Westerdale's subsequent argument – Nietzsche's aphorisms, beyond the diversity of forms and themes, are structurally marked by an excess designed to overlap the excess of reading itself, and critically reflect the need for making interpretations on the part of the reader, thereby thwarting the dogmatism of thought – comes short of substance. This argument does not add anything to the challenge that we knew Nietzsche to harbour already, and neither does it situate this challenge within the much larger challenge that modern philosophy presented to... precisely dogmatism.

Nietzsche's French readings

If it is fair game to aim at Westerdale's thesis, it is because the impact of Nietzsche's French readings on his work is too

obvious to make it disappear and achieve academic hat tricks instead. So obvious in fact that a great many books have been written on the subject, and each time one comes out it widens the scope for comparison between Nietzsche and French authors. We have already mentioned Donnellan's book that singles out Montaigne, Pascal and La Rochefoucauld among other moralists (1982). Many studies offered a differentiation between Nietzsche and one other author, e.g. Nietzsche and Voltaire (Métayer, 2011), Nietzsche and Rousseau (Ansell-Pearson, 1991), Nietzsche and Pascal (Léveillé-Mourin, 1978), etc. Giuliano Campioni's book, *Les lectures françaises de Nietzsche* (2001), broadened our horizon by including not only Descartes (that link had been established before) but Ernest Renan and the Renaissance writers of the South of France. As for William D. Williams, he eschewed a direct comparison in favour of a chronological approach (1952).

It indeed makes more sense to track Nietzsche's interest in the French civilisation chronologically. For the least one can say about Nietzsche is that the man was not particularly predestined for French studies. Picture instead a quintessential German boy born to a Lutheran pastor in Saxony, where German nationalism was *forged* – in both senses of the word, Nietzsche argued (see UM, I) – in opposition to Napoleonic expansionism, as Lacoste's

excellent article reminds us (1993). Nietzsche's initial interest in ancient Greece is typical too, as this interest has been the mainstay of the German intellectual life since the revival of German letters in the eighteenth century. So that the young Nietzsche's appreciative words for French culture in the *Untimely Meditations* should not fool us; it was then very much part of a German debate centred on the writings of David Strauss – in the same book, Nietzsche praises the "superb" Hölderlin and denounces the Hegelian "bog of speculation" in pure Schopenhauerian fashion (UM, I). Besides, Nietzsche's early French readings, including Diderot, Rousseau and Voltaire, were the natural companions to Goethe and Lessing in the German pedagogy. For the young Nietzsche, pre-classical Greece was the intellectual north. Bismarck and Prussia? He admired both (Lacoste 1993).

A series of fateful encounters steered Nietzsche towards French literature.¹ He first started frequenting Francophile circles in the early 1870s. We give a partial list: once Paris resident Richard Wagner, whose wife Cosima was French through her mother; Nietzsche's long-time friend Franz Overbeck, the man who would retrieve Nietzsche in Turin, French through his mother too, whose

¹ The following reconstruction is based on Lacoste (1993), Williams (1952) and Astor (2008, 2017)

wife Ida translated French critic Sainte-Beuve into German; another key relation in Nietzsche's life, Malwida von Meysenbug, the woman who introduced Lou to Nietzsche, she befriended the French republicans in exile during her time in England. And then, there is Paul Rée. Nietzsche met Rée while in Basel and the attraction was mutual. Nietzsche's identification with Rée was made all the easier as Rée started out as disciple of Schopenhauer like Nietzsche, but he was a flamboyant womanizer and gambler too, unlike him. It is Rée who single-handedly introduced Nietzsche to La Rochefoucauld, Chamfort and other French moralists. It is Rée again who whispered the genealogical method to Nietzsche through his own *Origin of Moral Sensations*. For reminder, in that book Rée argued that "just like a geologist, one starts out by looking for and describing the several formations, and one proceeds to ask about the causes that have given birth to them" (Rée 1982; cited in Astor 2017; for Nietzsche's debt to Rée in his own words, see Nietzsche, GM, Preface, §4; and EH, p.59). And it is with Rée that Nietzsche shared Lou Andrea-Salomé, the young woman that was to turn his world upside down and usher in his final phase, from *Zarathustra* to the "madness letters". When the three of them were an item, around 1882, they would make a pastime of writing maxims in the manner of La Rochefoucauld, and Nietzsche and Lou would

even correct each other's production. (This social origin of maxims is in fact the most powerful, yet never made, argument in favour of the Pippin equation: La Rochefoucauld's maxims were born in the literary salon of the marchioness de Sablé as a game of *esprit* with fellow invitees, thus in conditions comparable to some of Nietzsche's.)

The encounter with Rée opens up what is usually known as Nietzsche's middle period, from the acquaintance of Rée in 1876 to the break with Lou in 1883. The brainchildren of those years – *Human, All Too Human* (1878), *Daybreak* (1881) and *The Gay Science* (1882) –, to use maternal vocabulary on purpose, all detail significant engagement with the thought of authors we call French moralists for expediency, as shows aphorism §214 of *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, the usual starting point for any discussion of Nietzsche and the French moralists:

European Books. In reading Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Fontenelle (especially the *Dialogues des Morts*), Vauvenargues, and Chamfort we are nearer to antiquity than in any group of six authors of other nations. Through these six the spirit of the last centuries before Christ has once more

come into being, and they collectively form an important link in the great and still continuous chain of the Renaissance. Their books are raised above all changes of national taste and philosophical nuances from which as a rule every book takes and must take its hue in order to become famous. They contain more real ideas than all the books of German philosophers put together (...) (WS, §214)

Introducing Nietzsche's final shift (from the aphoristic books afore-mentioned to the mock-prophetic writings of *Zarathustra* and the more compact essays of the *Genealogy*) does not change that. Nietzsche still praised highly and commented at length on French authors and French civilisation, even deepening his interest to include such lesser-known figures as seventeenth century libertine Saint-Évremond (see BGE, VII, §224).

So palpable is the influence of French authors on Nietzsche's work that it was quickly picked up by scholars too: in his *Nietzsche, sa vie et sa pensée* published in 1920, well before Heidegger's lectures, French philosopher Charles Andler wrote about "the cure of the soul and of intelligence" Nietzsche purportedly took in contact with the French moralists (1979, II) and devoted a large portion of

his discussion of Nietzsche's intellectual debts to the French moralists.

The traps of analogy

Against this background, how can the Pippin equation be wrong when the Hegel scholar pulled out at all the Nietzschean stops? Was it not Nietzsche himself who authorised the view that there is a tradition of French authors engaged in psychological analysis, crafting aphorisms, and that he fully belongs with them? Does not Pippin merely rephrase Nietzsche's own storyline – or should we say monologue? This is exactly where the problem lies: Pippin seems to have forgotten to include himself in a process already marked by an absence (Nietzsche's own). Unfortunately, Pippin blindly follows in the footsteps of Donnellan's *Nietzsche and the French Moralists* (1982) and skips both conceptual and contextual (synchronic and diachronic) analysis for speed. Like Donnellan, he takes for granted that there is a "clearly identifiable tradition of French moralists, particularly with the three major figures, Montaigne, Pascal, La Rochefoucauld" (Donnellan 1982, Preface; the same ordering can be found in Pippin 2006, I) and runs with that assumption without reflecting on the historical and epistemological conditions of the moral and metaphysical

discourses at work in France from the sixteenth century onward. This spectacular oversight is the doom of the argumentative effort behind *Nietzsche, moraliste français*, as I would like to show now.

By far the most conspicuous mistake is the failure to problematise the notion of psychology in Montaigne and in the post-Cartesian moralists. Put simply, Descartes introduces an epistemological break not only with scholasticism but also with the thought of the Renaissance Montaigne embodies at the very end of the sixteenth century, a break that makes it impossible for us to speak of the same "psychology" in the context of Montaigne and post-Cartesian writers such as Pascal or La Rochefoucauld.² It is true that the publication of Montaigne's *Essays* (2009) is itself an important milestone in the history of Western thought when it comes to psychology, or so argues Emilio Ferrari in his convincing *Montaigne: une anthropologie des passions* (2014). Montaigne distanced himself from the "Hylemorphic conception", according to which the body is only understandable in relation to the soul that invigorates and organises it, and emphasised instead "the mechanical powers and the dynamical autonomy of the body with regards to the soul" (Ferrari 2014, 14), speaking of "the

² Besides Ferrari (2014), the following passage relies on Nisard (1844), Azouvi (2006), Kintzler (1991), Talon-Hugon (2002), Rodis-Lewis (1995) and Monnoyer (1988).

wonderfully corporeal condition of man" (Montaigne 2009, III, 8, my translation). To this Renaissance trope illustrated by Petrarch's ascent of Mont Ventoux for the sake of sport, Montaigne also added the medical interest in the question of "involuntary movements" (reflex action) that will be front and centre of Descartes' mechanistic account of the body fifty years later (2009, II, 6). Still, Ferrari makes it clear that for Montaigne Man is an indivisible unity of body and soul (see Montaigne 2009, III, 5). For instance, Montaigne writes about the "two associated parts" or the "tight seam" of body and soul (2009, II, 17; I, 21, my translation). So that when Montaigne writes, "the soul that has no established goal, gets lost; because, as we say, to be everywhere is to be nowhere" (2009, I, 8), we are very far indeed from the Cartesian dualism of body and soul. We recall the Sixth Meditation in which the soul becomes a "thinking thing" (*res cogitans*) through the process of Cogito, and the body becomes an "extended thing" (*res extensa*). The departure from Montaigne involved in this epoch-making distinction, crystal-clear to Descartes in view of Gassendi's (Fifth) Objections, is all the clearer for us in light of Descartes' first reply to Elisabeth, also known as the Princess of Bohemia – this is the remarkable woman who changed the course of Cartesianism through her intimate relationship with Descartes, and personal relationships

with Malebranche and Leibniz. In the very first of her letters to the founder of modern philosophy, Elisabeth was eager to know how the soul of man can determine the body knowing that thought belongs to a separate substance according to the *Meditations* (Descartes 1989, 16/05/1643). In his answer, Descartes first distinguished things that belong to the soul and the soul only, from the things that belong to the body and the body only (1989, 21/05/1643). Only then can we characterise, wrote Descartes, the things relevant to the union of, or contact with, body and soul, paving the way for Descartes' final treatise, written specifically for Elisabeth, *The Passions of the Soul*. While the Montanian moral reflection (*morale*) highlighted the becoming-conscious of the physicality of our human existence in pure Renaissance fashion (Ferrari 2014, p.306), the final Descartes introduced on the one hand an *ethics* (knowing the separation as well as interlocking of body and soul, how can we acquire a proper distance with regards to the passions, this very interlocking? this is Elisabeth's question, to which Descartes provided a number of answers in their five-years-long correspondence) and on the other a "symptomatics" (what are the *physiological* causes of the disturbances we experience as passions?). To wrap this point up, there are thus two negations at work from Montaigne to Descartes,

the first being the negation of the contiguity of soul and body (replaced by the Cartesian dualism of pure thought and pure extension) and the second is the negation of this strict dualism by opening up a third set of questions besides logic and biology, that of modern psychology proper. This epistemological break profoundly influenced the theological and metaphysical works of Blaise Pascal, Antoine Arnauld and the rest of Port-Royal, in turn spreading through the salon of marquise de Sablé to every French men and women of letters starting with La Rochefoucauld himself (for more about this, see Azouvi 2002). It is therefore strictly impossible to compare Montaigne and La Rochefoucauld on the subject of psychology as if they were on the same plane, respective epistemological conditions will not allow it. The most serious evidence of the shortcomings of Pippin's thesis is that we have indications that Nietzsche himself well understood at the end of his life the points we have just raised here: in *Beyond Good & Evil*, he writes that Descartes stands apart in the philosophical tradition with respect to what came before AND after, proof are the defiant reactions to the *Meditations* (i.e. all of post-Cartesian philosophy, Nietzsche implies)(BGE, §54; §191). And in *Ecce Homo*, his philosophical testament, Nietzsche pairs La Rochefoucauld with... Descartes:

They [the Germans] never went through a seventeenth century of harsh self-examination like the French; a La Rochefoucauld, a Descartes are a hundred times superior to the foremost Germans in honesty—to this day they [the Germans] have never had a psychologist. (EH, 'WC', 3)

These are some of Nietzsche's final words. Beyond Pippin, this Nietzschean rehabilitation of Descartes – also seen earlier in the posthumous fragments, e.g. FP 9 [178] autumn 1887 – puts a dent in the ruling anti-idealist interpretation of Nietzsche, from Sarah Kofman (see 1986, VII) to Alain Badiou (see 2015, p.10) and many American commentators in-between (e.g. Lampert 1995).

That is not all. We have mentioned above Port-Royal on purpose: it is the forgotten soil out of which grew Pascal and La Rochefoucauld, and a major event in the European intellectual life of the seventeenth century. Let us see succinctly what impact the remembrance of Port-Royal has on our conversation about Nietzsche and the French moralists.³ Port-Royal-des-Champs, the stronghold of Jansenism in France, was originally a convent in the Valley

³ This reconstruction is indebted to Génétiot (2005), Bénichou (1988) and Rodis-Lewis (1995).

of Chevreuse twenty-seven kilometres southwest of Paris. Angélique Arnauld (the sister of philosopher Antoine Arnauld, known the "Great Arnauld", the only contradictor Descartes really valued) ran the convent, until the Abbé Saint-Cyran assumed its spiritual leadership in 1633. Saint-Cyran was a close friend of a well-known Catholic priest in the Spanish Flanders, Cornelius Jansen, also known as Jansenius (1585-1638), the man who would reintroduce Augustine to the modern era. For Jansenius the human condition was tainted beyond repair by the original sin, and redemption could only come in the form of "efficient grace" gratuitously granted by God... if only the sinner could open up to Him just as fortuitously. This is known as Jansenist predestination. If Jansenius' ideas turned the tables on the Reformation – granted the Church is corrupted past amendment, but what about Man? –, these ideas also went against the theories of grace being discussed at the Vatican, in particular Luis de Molina's handy doctrine of "sufficient grace", and, more generally speaking, against the very notion of free will, or so would the powerful Jesuits immediately have it, hence the implacable repression Port-Royal suffered at the hands of both the Church and the French monarchy. This is not surprising given that Port-Royal elaborated one of the most radical and lucid reflection on the human condition until structuralism in the

twentieth-century. Port-Royal's foremost thinker, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), wrote at length about the decentring in our view constitutive of the symbolic nature of language. It's all over the *Pensées*, the fragments assembled after his death:

Eternal silence of these infinite spaces
frightens me. (1982, p.92, my translation)

True nature being lost, everything becomes
nature; and, the true Good being lost,
everything becomes one's true Good. (1982,
p.162, my translation)

At the heart of Port-Royal's critique, developed in the wake of the disastrous French civil wars we know as the *Fronde* (1648-53), essentially led by greedy princes against the authority of Anne of Austria's regency, is what French scholar Paul Bénichou called "the demolition of the hero" (1988), by which he meant the systematic destruction of the kind of self-glorifying egocentrism of the upper-class partly reflected in Pierre Corneille's plays. Against the reckless behaviours of these big egos, Pascal derided the "hateful ego" ("*le moi haïssable*", 1982) inherited from the old aristocratic values of the middle ages. Besides giving

birth to the first ever analysis of the signifier in the shape of the *Logic of Port-Royal* by Arnauld and Pierre Nicole (1662), the Port-Royal movement paved the way for La Rochefoucauld's critique of *amour-propre* (self-love) in his own maxims:

Friendship is only a reciprocal conciliation of interests, and an exchange of good offices; it is a species of commerce out of which self-love always expects to gain something. (1976, §83)

Against the disappointments of court life, Port-Royal promised aristocrats the satisfactions of a monastic life spent in pursuit of science. Against Pippin's hasty charge of cynicism on the part of La Rochefoucauld (2006, 110), one should thus read positively the following aphorism, as reflecting the love of theory at the heart of Port-Royal:

Everyone praises his heart, none dare praise their understanding. (1976, §98)

This self-absorption in the world of ideas is not far from the kind of libidinal disengagement Nietzsche attacked in the shape of the "Last Men", however. The parallel did not escape Bénichou when he noted that "under the reign of

Louis XIV, the aristocratic Overman was in terrible shape" (1988, 130). This is because, against Nietzsche's own vague beliefs, the defeat of the princes in the Fronde and Louis XIV's subsequent absolutism turned the dying breed of French knights into Versailles-trapped courtiers. We pass from Corneille's aristocratic triumphs to Molière's bourgeois comedies in the span of thirty years. Moreover, the analogical fallacy leads one to believe that the French moralists shared with Nietzsche the diagnosis of wild instinctual currents underneath the veneer of respectable society, when the very concept Nietzsche deploys – the German *Trieb* Freud also uses, a late nineteenth century concept if there ever was one – is completely out of place in the moral and medical discourses of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (centred around the "humors" and the "passions").

Pippin is also unable to draw the line between the French seventeenth century and the misogyny that is characteristic of Nietzsche's writings (which, like Heidegger, Pippin mostly ignores). Yes, we read the occasional sharp maxim on women in La Rochefoucauld's oeuvre, though never devoid of sophistication, such as this one:

In their first passions, women love the lover,
and in the others, they love love itself. (1976,
§471, my translation)

But we find in La Rochefoucauld nothing of the unrefined
sort Nietzsche is famous for:

Everything in woman is a riddle, and
everything in woman hath one solution —it is
called pregnancy. Man is for woman a means:
the purpose is always the child. (Z, XVIII)

How could he? La Rochefoucauld was surrounded by some
of the greatest women in French letters: Sablé, Sévigné and
La Fayette. (He is often suspected of having contributed to
La Fayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*, often dubbed the first
psychological novel, another missed opportunity in Pippin's
discussion of Nietzsche, La Rochefoucauld and psychology.)
La Bruyère himself wrote that literary efforts by women are
"perhaps [some of] the best written we possess in our
language" (1975, I, §37). These anecdotes are no accidents:
they are part of the first Feminism worthy of the name, that
of the second half of the seventeenth century in France.
Proof are not only the books published in defence of women
(Perrault's *L'apologie des femmes*, published in 1694), or

retracing the contributions of great women in history (Scudéry, herself a famous novelist, and her *Illustrious Women* in 1652; Ménage's *History of Women Philosophers* in 1690), and the appearance of the first erotic manuals for women. These works pale in comparison to François Poullain de La Barre's *On the Equality of the Sexes* (1673), Feminism's first theoretical work and a milestone in Cartesian philosophy. The threads all come together in Fontenelle's *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds* (1684), which set the ideal of equality of the sexes in the partaking of science that was to guide the French literary life of the eighteenth century. And yes, the mood soured with Chamfort on the eve of the French Revolution, but insofar as Nietzsche clearly prioritises the seventeenth century over the eighteenth century, caveats in Pippin's thesis were needed.

A brief history of French moralists

This difficulty would have been evaded had Pippin devoted some time to the notion of "French moralists". We proceed to do just that here, before concluding. The invention of the tradition of French moralists is in fact more or less contemporary of Nietzsche, and the emergence of a solid secondary literature on this subject is even more recent. Louis Van Delft, a well-known specialist of the French

moralists, someone who made a career in both the European and North American academia of defining the French moralists, notes in the preliminary remarks to his *Le moraliste classique* that almost all French authors, as different as Descartes, Rousseau or La Fayette, have at one point or another been called "moralist," be it in the French-speaking literature or the English-speaking (1982). This is true to this day: an anthology of French moralists on the shelves of a Fnac bookstore in Paris reveals a telling heterogeneity: the list includes Christina Queen of Sweden, Port-Royal jurist Jean Domat, Enlightenment philosopher Montesquieu, the French Romantics Barbey d'Aurevilly and Baudelaire, and anti-Semitic twentieth century writer Jouhandeau (Dufay 2016). This lack of consistency deserves a definitional effort.

So what is a French moralist? Van Delft proceeds very carefully. He first notes that the word *moraliste* in French makes its appearance in the 1690 dictionary of Antoine Furetière – France's early version of Samuel Johnson. According to Furetière, a moralist is "an author who writes about morals (*la morale*)". And *la morale* is "the doctrine of mores, a science that teaches how to conduct oneself and one's actions in life." Interestingly enough, the word *morale* is rather new too. Van Delft writes that it can be traced to as late as 1661 in an author named Somaize

who describes it as science whose natural presentation is the maxim. The word *moraliste* later takes on a negative connotation in the second half of the eighteenth century: Van Delft records its pejorative use in Rousseau's *Emile* ("always scolding, always *moralist*, always pedantic"). In his article 'Moraliste' for the *Encyclopédie*, Louis de Jaucourt makes a big step towards defining the French moralist – we quote the full article:

MORALIST, author whose subject is the moral science (*la morale*). Among the moderns, only Grotius, Puffendorf, Barbeyiac, Tillolton, Wolaston, Cumberland, Nicole and La Placette treated this science following sensible principles. Most of the other moralists look like a writing tutor (*un maître d'écriture*) who would give beautiful templates without teaching how to hold and use the pen to write letters. Other moralists have found their moral ideas either in the delirium of imagination, or in maxims contrary to the state of human nature. Lastly, many have only chosen to draw fine portraits, leaving aside the method and the principles that constitute the critical part of the moral science. That is because writers of this type (*de ce caractère*) only want to be witty

people (*gens d'esprit*) and are less interested in shining a light than in dazzling (*moins à éclairer qu'à éblouir*). Vain pursuit of a futile glory! that makes the author lose the only goal he should set for himself, which is to be useful. But better doing the job of manoeuvres well, rather than badly playing the part of the architect. (Jaucourt 1751, my translation)

Jaucourt's use of the word 'caractère' in relation to stylists leaves little doubt as to whom he has in mind (La Bruyère's only book is titled *Les caractères* and it is full of portraits). By distinguishing serious moral science from fanciful literary efforts, Jaucourt and the *Encyclopédie* effectively paves the way for the contemporary definition of French moralists as possibly short on substance but long on style. In the wake of Jaucourt, Nicolas de Chamfort – one of the usual suspects in the field of French moralists – does warn against the "*charlatanerie*" of the moralists (and clearly excludes himself from them). But there is a twist! Let us look at the passage in question:

Moralists, like the philosophers who have designed systems in physics and metaphysics, have over-generalised and multiplied maxims beyond reason. What comes of Tatice's [made-

up name] maxim for example: *Neque mulier, amissa pudicitia, alia abnerit*, [Latin for "a woman not only loses her (sexual) purity, she also gets rid of it"] after the examples of so many women that a weakness did not prevent from practicing several virtues? I saw Mrs L, after a youth not so different from Manon Lescaut's, [the heroine of Abbé Prevost's 1731 novel] experience later in life a passion worthy of Heloise. But these examples are too dangerous a moral conduct to lay out in books. One must simply observe them, and not be duped by the charlatanerie of moralists. (Chamfort 1982, CCXCIII, my translation)

The moralists Chamfort takes a shot at are exactly the ones Jaucourt praises, those who want to lay out scientific laws about how people conduct themselves. This passage makes it clear that Jaucourt's views were far from widely-accepted in his own time. In fact, Diderot himself considered Jaucourt an unreliable collaborator (Van Delft 1982). With good reason: La Bruyère disarmed this critique before it was even there:

Anyway, I did not want to write maxims, they are like laws in morals, and I confess I have

neither enough authority nor enough genius to
act legislator. (1975, Preface)

That is not all: if Jaucourt's assault is isolated in the eighteenth century, that is because in the Ancien Régime, moralist thinkers still are the natural allies of modern science against the dying scholasticism of the old ecclesiastical networks of knowledge, as Parmentier reminds us (2000). And if both La Bruyère and Chamfort describe themselves as philosophers, it is because *la morale*, along with logics, physics and metaphysics, is one of the subspecies of philosophy at the time.

Yet Jaucourt's article left a trace. The concept of 'French moralist' as we know it really gained currency in the mid-nineteenth century, around the same time as Stendhal polemically fixes the notion of 'French classicism' (the literature of the seventeenth century) as a strictly formalised form of literature in opposition to his own generation – the French Romantics, from Chateaubriand to Hugo to Dumas and Musset – characterised by a return to artistic freedom best embodied in Shakespeare, to whom all the aforementioned Romantics devote an essay (see Stendhal 1970). We remark in passing that it is absurd to lump Stendhal together with the French moralists, as some commentators do (e.g. Williams 1952), sometimes

following Nietzsche, when Stendhal – and French literature of the nineteenth century at large – defined himself in *opposition* to classical literature... associated with the Ancien Régime. As Sainte-Beuve began his monumental study of Port-Royal, Swiss critic Alexandre Vinet gave lectures on "the French moralists of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries"; and French journalist Lucien-Anatole Prévost-Paradol published his *Études sur les moralistes français* (1864). But at the end of the century, the elasticity of the concept remained intact, with French critic Emile Faguet publishing his *Political Writers and Moralists of the Nineteenth Century* about authors widely outside the trio of Montaigne, Pascal and La Rochefoucauld we have grown accustomed to. The same goes for Jules Barni's 1873 *Les moralistes français du XVIIIe siècle*, which include Vauvenargues along with Enlightenment philosopher Helvétius and little-known authors of the eighteenth century such as Saint-Lambert; or Albert Desjardins, whose own opus *Les moralistes français du seizième siècle* (1870) focuses on pre-Cartesian authors of the sixteenth century. At the turn of the twentieth century, after Nietzsche's own time, Louis Van delft also reports that a moralist is "for a Valéry or Lévy-Bruhl [French writers], essentially an artist" (1982). In the interwar period, English poet Edmund W. Gosse published his *Three French Moralists and the*

Gallantry of France on La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère and Vauvenargues, finally cementing the concept. English-speaking libraries also keep the record of an article by Henri Chamard (of the Académie Française) dating back to this era: "Three French Moralists of the Seventeenth Century" (1931) on Pascal, La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère. After the Second World War and before Louis Van Delft's book, we can cite two works in particular that illustrates the interest for the moralists beyond French borders as well as the enduring heterogeneity of the concept of moralists: Louise Horowitz's *Love and Language: a Study of the Classical French Moralists Writers* (1977) offers a panorama of aristocratic letters of the late seventeenth century, from Sévigné to La Fayette to La Bruyère and Saint-Évremond. And Anthony Levi covers the period from Montaigne to Descartes in his 1964 *French Moralists: the Theory of the Passions, 1585 to 1649*. This enduring porosity of the notion – the term being applied to every single French author in turn, as it should be clear by now – explains the defiance against it in the essays of the late Jean d'Ormesson characterising La Rochefoucauld as "perhaps the greatest of those much-touted French moralists people keep harping on about" (2015), before reminding us that La Rochefoucauld wrote memoirs and mainly composed maxims in and for the salon of marchioness de Sablé. The

marchioness herself wrote some good ones we scholars never pick up, including some critiquing La Rochefoucauld's attacks on *amour-propre*:

When High and Mighty people want to make us believe that they possess some good quality which they in fact do not have, it is dangerous to show that you doubt them; because, by removing their hope of deceiving the world, you also remove their desire to perform the good acts that might have arisen from their very pretensions. (included in La Rochefoucauld 1976)

So what *is* a French moralist? Here is the embarrassingly vague definition Van Delft painstakingly constructs halfway through his book:

A moralist is a writer that deals with morals and (or) devotes himself to analysis, not forbidding himself to bring up norms; who very generally chooses either the treatise or the fragment as a form; whose attitude consists in staying at the level of man (*se maintenir avant tout à hauteur d'homme*), because of the

lively interest he has in experience (*le vécu*).

(1982, my translation)

Concise or wordy; sometimes analytic, sometimes normative; and generally interested in the experience of man: this is the most precise definition the French scholar could provide us with. Our conclusion? Either the notion of French moralist is theoretical *fake news*, or what the Van Delft's argument strongly represses and painfully works out is... the master, who chooses what to write about and how to write it. And there is no greater master than he who forbade the poetic license of the moralists at university by standardizing educational practices and codifying academic discourse across disciplines, Prussian philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt. Given Nietzsche's early exit from the university and subsequent hysterical material, it is critical that we bring Humboldt to bear on the analysis of Nietzsche's philosophy, and not resort to the *in fine* unfounded analogy with the French moralists, which only makes sense against the background of the Humboldtian reform of higher education that gave birth to the university as we know it today.

PART 2. The Woman That Therefore I Am: Nietzsche, Derrida, Hegel

The divine law has its individualisation – or the *unconscious* Spirit of the individual its real existence – in the woman, through whom, as the *middle term*, the unconscious Spirit rises out of its unreality into actual existence, out of a state in which it is unknowing and unconscious into the realm of conscious Spirit.

–Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §463

OUT of the barrage of interpretations that Nietzsche has inspired in the philosophical conversation of the past hundred years, French philosopher Jacques Derrida's two short interventions in the 70s – *Éperons: les styles de Nietzsche* and *Otobiographies* – are undoubtedly some of the strangest and most captivating yet. If they have not left the kind of mark on Nietzschean studies that Deleuze's books have for example, that may be changing, as *Éperons* in particular has been enjoying a resurgence of interest since the 2010s. *Éperons* (*Spurs* in the English translation, the title I will use from now on) was originally the paper Derrida gave at the landmark Nietzsche conference that

took place at Château Cérisy in France in 1972. With respect to the ontological interpretation sanctified at the Royaumont conference eight years prior, Derrida's paper operated a displacement through the questions of style and the woman in Nietzsche's writings. While style had already found its way in the works of a number of scholars accompanying him in Cérisy, Derrida's decision to put Nietzsche's writings on women – virtually every book of Nietzsche comes with a number of aphorisms concerning women – front and centre of his intervention was unprecedented. Bruno Bosteels recently reminded us that Derrida's text had an "explosive effect" (2017) on the male-centred academia of the post-war era: for the first time, the question of sexual difference, and what women have to say about it, was raised in connection to a major author of the philosophical canon. Derrida argued at one point in *Spurs* that "if style was the man, writing would be the woman", thus inspiring the well-known analyses of feminine writing that Hélène Cixous or Luce Irigaray came to be synonymous with. Now we understand why, after typically serving as fodder for attacks against Deconstruction coming from the Left (see Waite 1983) or inspiring the infrequent friendly commentary (see Shapiro 1981), *Spurs* finds new relevance in the contemporary feminist (see Frantz 2011) and transgender conversations (see Philips 2014). Sometimes

translated as *The Ear of the Other* in English, *Otobiographies* too was originally a paper Derrida delivered at a conference – two papers in fact, the first at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville in 1976, and the second in Montreal in 1979. In this work, Derrida picked up on unfinished business in *Spurs* and gave a more political – and markedly less friendly – reading of Nietzsche centred on the questions of the state and symbolic debt as much as style and the woman.

In this essay, I argue that the two texts go together and represent a radical departure from the notions about Nietzsche that continue to be common currency today – Nietzsche the thinker of Difference, of perspective, of irony, of rebellion, etc. –, as well as provide a fascinating blueprint for a broad reflection about philosophy and style, and philosophy and sexual difference. What does the woman at the heart of Nietzsche's prose stand for, what impact does it have on our interpretations of Nietzsche, what does it mean for philosophy at large, what part does style play in such developments – these are some of the questions that Derrida addresses in these two papers. To cut a long story short, far from concluding that philosophy becomes female, Derrida ends up accusing Nietzsche of fetishizing femininity, thus opening what I'm tempted to call the feminine – not feminist – front we saw earlier in the fight for Difference. It is just this position that recently came

under attack from none other than Catherine Malabou, once Derrida's protégée, whose *Changing Difference* (2011) charges Deconstruction of hypostatizing difference to the detriment of actual women when it seeks to protect them from essentialism and other -isms. While I am sympathetic to this concern, I would like to argue here that Derrida's intellectual journey from *Spurs* to *Otobiographies* already includes a secret weapon that thwarts such hypostatisation: Hegel. If the title of this essay thus borrows from Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, it is not (only) with intent to provoke but because the pun contained in the original French (the dependent clause *que donc je suis* can both mean 'that therefore I follow' and 'that therefore I am') perfectly illustrates the underlying logic that I derive from Derrida's papers: from the woman that I follow (Nietzsche), we must pass to the woman that, in fact, I am (Hegel). Our philosophical resolve is clear: one cannot criticise the hegemony of Difference in today's academia without being ready to return Difference back to the fold of the Same. Uncovering that Hegelian cache, and more generally restoring the edge of Derrida's thought with regards to Nietzsche as well as the cause of women implies taking the now-familiar hard road into the content. This road starts with the context of Derrida's enunciation, i.e. the shift in Nietzschean studies in the late 60s and early 70s in France.

Nietzsche's Anti-Text

In the words of Derrida himself, authors Sarah Kofman, Bernard Pautrat, Jean-Michel Rey and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe started "a new phase in a deconstructing interpretative process, that is to say an affirmative one" (Derrida 2010). If Derrida was keen to pay tribute to these authors, it is because their interpretations take place within the new general orientation Deconstruction was the name of – "without Nietzsche the question of the text would never have burst in on us," writes for instance Lacoue-Labarthe (1979, 80), "at least not in the precise shape it has taken to day".

The first change this new generation of scholars introduced was shifting the emphasis temporarily away from Nietzsche's final works (*Beyond Good & Evil*, *The Gay Science*, *The Will to Power...*) and back to his initial theoretical guts. This ground-breaking manoeuvre led to the positive reappraisal of early texts, in particular *The Birth of Tragedy* and the lesser-known "Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense" article. The goal was to show that there is a theory of signs in Nietzsche that seeks to exist on its own, without implying an intervention inside the metaphysical tradition (along the line of the 'eternal return' or the 'will to power'). As Lacoue-Labarthe was quick to

point out in a clear shot at the Heideggerian legacy, "the question of overcoming philosophy is in itself a very philosophical question" (1979, 78). In his *Le sujet de la philosophie*, Lacoue-Labarthe dismisses any easy attempt to bypass the Heideggerian commentary (1979, 79) but notes that there is a clear refusal on the part of Heidegger to start a literary investigation of the Nietzschean text, which is in fact a refusal to cement the opposition between the poetical and the theoretical. For Heidegger, the poetic form of *Zarathustra* goes hand in hand with the teaching of the doctrine of the eternal return (82). Lacoue-Labarthe goes on to quote Heidegger: "every real philosophy, that is to say, every great philosophy, is in itself *denkerisch-dichterisch* (intellectual/poetic)". We know what potent influence the Heideggerian interpretation will have on Deleuze, and beyond Deleuze, on a sizable portion of twentieth century continental philosophy for which the 'aesthetic turn' – in Lacoue-Labarthe's very precise words, "the implementation of truth that art is" (87) – is the panacea for philosophy's metaphysical ills. Against this theoretical background, the then-young guns of Nietzschean studies wanted to "return to Nietzsche his systematic dimension" (Pautrat 1971) and uncover a critique (in the Kantian sense) of language right from the beginning of Nietzsche's career. If *The Birth of Tragedy*

literally set the scene with its defence of the pre-Socratics against the Socratic dialectic, or of the performative shows of Aeschylus against the cerebral Euripides, the most obvious of their starting points remains the short "Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense" written in 1873.

Nietzsche begins the 1873 article by arguing that man can never know himself or even perceive himself completely – in specular terms such as "laid out as if in an illuminated glass case" –, but is instead always "hanging in dreams, as it were, upon the back of a tiger" (TALIES). In the paragraphs that follow, Nietzsche goes on to summon every single major philosopher (Plato, Hegel, Descartes, Locke, Hobbes, etc.) to appear to the trial of truth, which he immediately equates to style. A full flavour of the text in question is needed to understand where the Cérisy generation comes from:

We still do not yet know where the drive for truth comes from. For so far we have heard only of the duty which society imposes in order to exist: to be truthful means to employ the usual metaphors. Thus, to express it morally, this is the duty to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone. Now man of course forgets that this is the way things stand

for him. Thus he lies in the manner indicated, unconsciously and in accordance with habits which are centuries' old (...) As a "rational" being, he now places his behaviour under the control of abstractions. He will no longer tolerate being carried away by sudden impressions, by intuitions. First he universalizes all these impressions into less colourful, cooler concepts, so that he can entrust the guidance of his life and conduct to them. Everything which distinguishes man from the animals depends upon this ability to volatilize perceptual metaphors in a schema, and thus to dissolve an image into a concept. For something is possible in the realm of these schemata which could never be achieved with the vivid first impressions: the construction of a pyramidal order according to castes and degrees, the creation of a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, and clearly marked boundaries – a new world, one which now confronts that other vivid world of first impressions as more solid, more universal, better known, and more human than the immediately perceived world, and thus as the regulative and imperative world. Whereas each perceptual metaphor is individual and

without equals, and is therefore able to elude all classification, the great edifice of concepts displays the rigid regularity of a Roman columbarium and exhales in logic that strength and coolness which is characteristic of mathematics (...) In this conceptual crap game "truth" means using every die in the designated manner, counting its spots accurately, fashioning the right categories, and never violating the order of caste and class rank. (TALIES)

This passage basically functions as a manifesto for Nietzsche's philosophy: not only does Nietzsche here repeat all the Hegelian steps of Consciousness (see Hegel 1977, §90-165 – from vivid sensations to abstract universals) to exactly reversed conclusions (thus erasing the emancipatory dimension of the *Phenomenology*), but he also goes against the argumentative journey of Rousseau's *Social Contract*. While for Rousseau the obstacle of language and culture necessitated a political uprising to free man of such bounds, Nietzsche seems to argue here that any contract is a herd-binding lie spreading through artificial political constructions: "to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone". Truth, the truth of political emancipation (*Contrat Social*) and new sensibility

(*The New Héloïse*), is reduced to a "crap game"; there is simply no exit out of the darkness of social existence. This evidences a systematic and deep-rooted mistrust of language and its operations that is characteristic of Nietzsche's philosophy. "Truth and Lie" is indeed far from isolated within the Nietzschean corpus, it reverberates throughout Nietzsche's career: "speech, it seems, was devised only for the average, medium, communicable," writes Nietzsche as late as in 1888, "the speaker has already vulgarized himself by speaking" (TI, *Expeditions of an Untimely Man*, §26)(for other typical examples of Nietzsche's blazing critique of language at different stages of his career, see also HTH, §11; GS, §58). In his *Versions du Soleil* (1971, so far untranslated in English), Bernard Pautrat argues that Nietzsche's strategy to overturn the moralism that is behind the metaphysical tradition includes doing an exact inventory of the limits imposed by metaphysical binaries and boundaries, marking the entire metaphoricity of language, and critically deploying the rhetoric of it. Pautrat directly deals with the question of style, "that is styles, of the plurality of forms having a content" (1971, 36): the variety of styles in Nietzsche signals for him the refusal to reduce style to the philosophical signified beyond form. "To correct style is to correct thought and nothing more," exclaims Nietzsche in

Human, All Too Human (HTH, §131). And Pautrat to conclude that "to argue that speech is that dance on the back of the world through which a certain strength asserts itself, one must first show that language is never fixed and sticky, that it is "above", that is to say that it is proper at no point of its curve: from one end to the other and in all its determinations, of metaphorical essence" (1971, 195). Style, or, to be precise, *styles*, are what is needed to undo the transcendental effects of language. To put it differently, Nietzsche's philosophy always implies creating a distance between any enunciated content and the subject, and this distance is styles. Moreover, picking up on the specular metaphor of "Truth and Lie" Pautrat argues that the Nietzschean aphorism has a therapeutic intention in the Hippocratic mode as it introduces fragmentation where there was a bloc(k). We could say in typically postmodern fashion that the aphorism's brevity is a thought of the disintegration of the body against the metaphor's work of integration.

Sarah Kofman's 1972 *Nietzsche et la métaphore* (translated into English as *Nietzsche and Metaphor* in 1994) is I believe the most precise version of this interpretation. In her book, Kofman first reminds us that Nietzsche multiplied attacks against the Logos already in *The Birth of Tragedy*, speaking of speech as defective signs, and

conceptual philosophical language as the most improper to express the truth of the world. Instead, Dionysian music was for Nietzsche the primal language of the world, against (Apollinian) lyrical poetry. In Kofman's words:

Lyrical genius expresses in its way what the Dionysian musician, without resorting to an image, is able to make resonate by identifying to the original echo of the world. (1983, 19-20, my translation)

The melody of the world is always ahead of the Word. This idea is not restricted to Nietzsche's early writings: in *The Wagner Case*, Nietzsche still reproaches Wagner with subjecting music to text. Kofman adds that "opera, deciphered by a reading one can already qualify as genealogical, marks the triumph of Socrates or Christ over Dionysus, of nihilism over life affirmation, of the slave over the master" (1983, 23). For the artist to symbolise Dionysus, Nietzsche explained that he or she must literally undergo metamorphosis, i.e. become metaphor of the world (TI, *Expeditions of an Untimely Man*, §10). What does it mean? It means that there is no metaphor without depersonalisation and without masquerade, that is to say no metaphor without the Dionysian procession of revellers.

Metaphor is also related to the loss of what is "proper" understood as "essence" of the world: essence being undecipherable, we can only have improper representations of it. Following Schopenhauer, Nietzsche inverts Aristotle, for whom the metaphor is the transposition of the concept from its proper place to a figurative place. For Nietzsche, the least metaphoric level is that of the metaphor itself, and concepts are further away from the real. Kofman shows that the same rationale is at work in Nietzsche's *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* written around the same period as "Truth and Lie": a metaphoric style is the sign of a philosophical system's full life just as a demonstrative style is the sign of complete philosophical poverty. If Kofman knows just where to lay the blame (on the "moral and religious forces"; 1983, 74), she does show convincingly that Nietzsche substitutes 'metaphor' for 'perspective' in his later works, further transforming the metaphor into individual wills to power (and annihilating symbolic potency):

The hypothesis of the will to power, an artistic force that reassesses and poses forms but also tends to dominate through them, explains the generalisation of the metaphor, of the text, as

well as the illusion which makes these two
pass for "proper". (1983, 122)

In other words, in "metaphor" Nietzsche no longer stresses the unity of assembled blocks, against which he rails, but the determination (and violence) through which it is achieved – the "will to power".

We finally get to the anti-dialectical core of Nietzsche's thought. For the German philosopher, true originality derives from seeing something that has no name yet, and to suggest a name for it, as arbitrarily as language itself does (Kofman 1983, 124). Kofman grounds this interpretation on this straightforward passage of *The Gay Science*:

Originality. –What is originality? To see something that does not yet bear a name, that cannot yet be named, although it is before everybody's eyes. As people are usually constituted, it is the name that first makes the thing generally visible to them.– Original persons have also for the most part been the namers of things. (GS, §261)

It therefore makes no sense from Nietzsche's perspective to interpret history dialectically, since history is nothing but

the accumulation of unrelated enunciations. Signifiers do not bear on other signifiers, they do not form a larger chain that moves on its own. One must look at the enunciated content genealogically instead, so that "each metaphor, each 'proper' is the symptom of a type of will, noble or vile" (Kofman 1983, 127). As Kofman points out, Nietzsche's writing logically suppresses the exclusivity of some metaphors:

To prefer one metaphor over another would imply a reference to a "proper" that that metaphor would embody more than another. Varying metaphors on the other hand suggests none is proper or more proper than another, that what is proper only is the appropriation of the "world" by a certain perspective that imposes its law. (Kofman 1983, 149)

In this context, the Nietzschean strategy of systematic misunderstanding claimed by the philosopher is an honorific title as to write metaphorically is not to mix with the herd (see BGE, §271). Kofman does consider the consequences:

To be fully metaphoric, or "proper", one's writings should thus invent a singular code, an

original idiom, enclosing, however impossible that is, valuations that would never have taken place. To write, to speak, and to be at least minimally understood, despite misunderstandings, to vulgarise one's thought even a little is an inevitable fate, unless one goes silent or mad. (1983, 171)

Kofman here describes a case of Hegelian "bad infinity" at work – to truly dodge the traps of language, one would have to go farther and farther away from common sense, long-held values and social links, deeper and deeper into isolation and madness searching for what I'm tempted to call the ultimate *anti-text*. With the Nietzschean disjunction between the original metaphor of the world and the metonymy of desire in the shape of History, or between the image and sound on the one hand, and the concept on the other, the scene seems set for the discussion of nihilism (I pick up this thread in my *Part 3*). As Alain Badiou puts it (2015), there is a gap (*un décrochage*, a discrepancy, but also evocative of the airplane that is stalling) between the destructive character of Nietzsche's philosophy and its affirmative part. Unless one concludes that Nietzsche's affirmative ethics consists in self-destruction, as Kofman

very logically does in her monumental page-by-page analysis of *Ecce Homo* in *Explosions* (1992).

Kant with ~~Sade~~ Nietzsche

While Kofman's reconstruction truly is illuminating, it also makes light of too much material and Derrida makes it clear with his discussion of the woman in Nietzsche's writings. Let us get to *Spurs*. Explicitly leaving Heidegger behind, Derrida introduces the link between the ever-changing styles of Nietzsche and the question of the woman with two symptomatic extracts from Nietzsche's works. The first is from *Beyond Good & Evil*:

Supposing that Truth is a woman--what then?

Is there not ground for suspecting that all philosophers, in so far as they have been dogmatists, have failed to understand women--that the terrible seriousness and clumsy importunity with which they have usually paid their addresses to Truth, have been unskilled and unseemly methods for winning a woman?

Certainly she has never allowed herself to be won; and at present every kind of dogma stands with sad and discouraged mien--If, indeed, it stands at all! (...)(BGE, Preface)

And the second is from *The Gay Science*:

Vita femina. To see the ultimate beauties in a work - all knowledge and good-will is not enough; it requires the rarest, good chance for the veil of clouds to move for once from the summits, and for the sun to shine on them. We must not only stand at precisely the right place to see this, our very soul itself must have pulled away the veil from its heights, and must be in need of an external expression and simile, so as to have a hold and remain master of itself. All these, however, are so rarely united at the same time that I am inclined to believe that the highest summit of all that is good, be it work, deed, man, or nature, has hitherto remained for most people, and even for the best, as something concealed and shrouded: - that, however, which unveils itself to us, unveils itself to us but once. (...) But perhaps this is the greatest charm of life: it puts a gold-embroidered veil of lovely potentialities over itself, promising, resisting, modest, mocking, sympathetic, seductive. Yes, life is a woman!
(GS, §339)

In these two extracts, Nietzsche associates the woman to truth dissolving the dogmatic rigidity of philosophy, and beyond truth, to the veil of phenomena supposedly covering the world. Derrida puts it best:

She [the woman] engulfs and melts (*envoile par le fond*, both veiling and subjecting iron to puddling) endlessly, bottomlessly, every essentiality, every identity, every property. Thus blinded, the philosophical discourse sinks – leading itself to its doom. (...) There is no truth of woman, but that's because this abyssal gap of truth, this untruth (*non-vérité*) is "truth". Woman is one name of this untruth of truth. (2010, 39, my translation)

With regards to the mystery that the Real (capitalised for Lacanian Real *qua* discrepancy or lack) also known as woman is, Derrida argues that style would thus seem to advance in the manner of a spur (*éperon*) of sorts. Derrida evokes the rostrum of a ship (the form of bow on ships), and the rocky outcrop of coastlines that the French word *éperon* also means. Derrida also plays on the homophony between the English 'spur' and 'spurn' to express the defensive quality style has against what is foreign. "Style," he writes, "can therefore protect with its spur against the

terrifying, blinding, fatal threat of what shows up, again and again" (2010, 30). Following Derrida's interpretation, Nietzsche's style thus seeks to establish a distance from which the charm of women – itself *actio in distans*, says Nietzsche (see GS, §60) – can be best *observed*. Derrida suggests reading the dialectics of fetishism and castration into this entire constellation. As Catherine Kellogg puts it, 'woman' here is the term "associated simultaneously with the veil covering the truth, and the truth that unveils an absence" (2010). We touch upon a major difference between Derrida and Kofman. While for Kofman, Nietzsche's philosophy is an attempt to lift the forgetfulness of repression – "the concept plays the part of anticathetic force which maintains repression," writes Kofman, "it allows the edification of a system of secondary rationalisations after the fact, erasing the metaphoric activity as being original, as being the origin of all knowledge and all activity" (1983, 55) –, for Derrida Nietzsche's fascination for the ambivalence of the woman allows him to disavow castration (especially the woman's castration, the fact that she too comes under the regime of sexual difference) along with the very mechanism of repression. Far from being a beautiful appearance on the site of a void, a gap set in motion in the shape of the Lacanian *object a* on the other side of the drive, Derrida

argues that the woman-mistress of Nietzsche looks more like Heinrich von Kleist's *Penthesilea* besieging the Greeks, that is to say the libidinal transformation of anxiety into the figure of a dangerous presence that characterises the turn from phobia to perversion (see for example GS, §69-70). (I come back to this transformation of Idea into object in my *Part 3*.) Derrida then opens the trial of fetishism proper when the dialectics of having and giving replaces that of veiling and unveiling. A fetish here comes in the place of the metonymy of desire that never settles on one object in particular, and this fetish is "feminine pudendum", "feminine scepticism", or, in a single word, femininity. We quote Nietzsche:

[Women] believe in the superficiality of existence as in its essence, and all virtue and profundity is to them only the disguising of this "truth," the very desirable disguising of a pudendum, – an affair, therefore, of decency and modesty, and nothing more! (GS, §64)

Note the slide from the "superficiality" of existence (and a certain authenticity means daring to meet this challenge) to elevating the "pudendum" of women in the place of it.

Derrida is here refreshingly blunt and unreflective in his assessment. In his own words:

The femininity of woman, feminine sexuality and other essentialist fetishes which are precisely what we think we can take out of it all when we are stuck with the pabulum of the dogmatic philosopher, the impotent artist or the inexperienced charmer. (2010, 43, my translation)¹

It is men who typically believe in the truth of the woman. Men and feminists, warns a decidedly edgy Derrida – feminism, he writes, "is the operation by which the woman wants to emulate man and the dogmatic philosopher vindicating truth, science, objectivity, which is to say, with all the virile illusion, the effect of castration that goes with it" (2010, 50). While this is the kind of remark that is likely to come under fire today, we argue that Derrida makes here a specific point about the mechanism of disavowal according to Freudian theory. Insofar as one takes a lack upon oneself and acts as the agent of (symbolic) division, one props up a symbolic realm that is devoid of such lack,

¹ Derrida wrote these lines around the time Lacan explored the feminine modalities of sexuality in his seminars of the early 70s. *Spurs* is thus filled with discreet jabs at the Rue de Lille psychoanalyst, to the point that it looks like a response to *Encore*, and this is one of them.

thereby producing a fetish – the ultimate fetish in fact, the letter. With the separate dimensions of the veil and the gift collapsed upon herself, Nietzsche's woman is now in a position to *give* him the truth about life that she refused giving to dogmatic philosophers before (recall the quotes we opened our discussion of *Spurs* with). In exchange of which, she may make demands of her own... Perhaps the potentially frightening pregnancy Nietzsche rants about in the *Zarathustra* (Z, XVIII). We see here why Derrida feels justified to say that the Nietzschean trial of femininity ends up as a transcendental blind of giving and taking. "This process of appropriation escapes every dialectics and every ontological decidability," he writes towards the end of *Spurs*, adding that "the property of the abyss is necessarily the abyss of property". To elaborate on this chiasmus, we could say that Nietzsche fails to recognise the logic of property at the heart of European philosophy (from Locke to Hegel) beyond the eternal search for the truth and the show of the woman.

If Nietzsche certainly fits the bill of the impotent artist (and dogmatic philosopher?), Derrida is still intent on treating the diversity of styles in Nietzsche positively at this stage, as precisely Nietzsche's attempt to do away with the dialectics of the veil, to *perforate* the veil as it were:

The styled spur goes through the veil, does not tear it up only to see or create the thing itself, but undoes the self-opposition (*l'opposition à soi*), the opposition folded upon itself of the veiled and the unveiled, truth as production, unveiling/dissimulation of the product thereof. It raises the curtain no more than it lets it fall; it delineates its abeyance – its epoch. Delineating, undoing, unburdening oneself when it comes to the veil, does it not boil down to unveiling? Or even destroying a fetish? (2010, 86)

Derrida is in agreement with Kofman, for whom the self-destruction we witness in *Ecce Homo* is not an accident but the result of Nietzsche's own philosophical path. *Ecce Homo* thus appears as an attempt to break through the wall of words that disavowal has erected in the place of an absence. Disavowal seeks to cancel itself... Is Nietzsche not THE philosopher of *différance* in Derrida's 1972 conference on the subject (included in *Margins of Philosophy*)? Derrida implies it again when he closes *Spurs* on the abundance of styles that goes against the logic of essence characteristic of traditional metaphysics:

For simulacrum to come to life, one must write in the gap between several styles. If there is style, here is what Nietzsche's woman implies, there must be more than one. (...) The anchor is lowered, risked, lost maybe in the abyss between them." (2010, 118)

Such a position is echoed in the figure of the "antiphilosopher" Badiou recognises in Nietzsche (2015). Yet, this conclusion is strikingly reversed barely four years later in the conclusion of *Otobiographies*. Insofar as throughout his writings the woman remained this fascinating presence that hides and reveals, and not the vanishing mediator of the Idea, Nietzsche does not breach the transcendental constraints of Kantian philosophy: the noumenal Real remains forbidden. Sounds familiar? That is because Lacan drew the same conclusion with regards to Sade and Kant in the early 60s. The similarities are too obvious not to show side by side, starting with the final words of "Kant with Sade":

Be that as it may, it appears that there is nothing to be gained by replacing Diotima with Dolmance, someone whom the ordinary path seems to frighten more than is fitting, and who – did Sade see it? – closes the affair with a *Noli*

tangere matrem. V . . . ed and sewn up, the mother remains forbidden. Our verdict upon the submission of Sade to the Law is confirmed. (...) Of a treatise truly about desire, there is thus little here, even nothing. What of it is announced in this crossing taken from an encounter, is at most a tone of reason. (Lacan 2014, Swenson Junior's translation)

And now, the ending of *Otobiographies*:

No woman or trace of woman, if I have read correctly – save the mother, that's understood. But this is part of the system. The mother is the faceless figure of a figurant, an extra. She gives rise to all the figures by losing herself in the background of the scene like an anonymous persona. Everything comes back to her, beginning with life; everything addresses and destines itself to her. She survives on the condition of remaining at the bottom. (Derrida 1984, Avital Ronell's translation)

It is thus worth remembering the gist of Lacan's famous essay. For Sade and for the Kant of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, pleasure and pain tend to only one goal, which is the vanishing of the subject. And existential pain is fended

off in the fantasy of presence, ultimately the immediate presence of an all-powerful God. Beauty – and there is beauty in Nietzsche's woman too – here serves the purpose of forbidding access to the absolute horror of subjectivity. Because Sade does not concede anything to the Other but pursues enjoyment in and through the Other, he obeys the (maternal) law whose command is: enjoy! Derrida does not say anything different apropos Nietzsche in *Otobiographies*.

Tarry with the negative or die trying

Jacques Derrida, follower of Lacan and anti-Nietzschean philosopher? It is a possible reading, against all expectations, but it is not ours. We invite the reader back to *Otobiographies*. Originally scheduled to speak about America's Declaration of Independence on the occasion of its bicentenary, Derrida fittingly opens *Otobiographies* with the question of the performativity of the act: "who signs, and what so-called proper names [behind] the declarative act that founds an institution?" We quote Derrida in full:

There was no signatory, within the law, before the text of the Declaration, which is itself the manufacturer and the guarantor of its own signature. Through this fabulous event, through this fable implying a trace and which

is in truth only possible through the self-inadequation of a present (*l'inadéquation à soi-même d'un présent*), a signature gives itself a name. It issues *itself* credit, its *own* credit, from itself *to* itself. Here, the *self* arises in all cases (nominative, dative, accusative) as soon as a signature opens credit, at a stroke of a pen, literally, which is also right to writing. This stroke makes right, establishes rights, gives rights, *gives birth to Right*. (1984, 23, my translation)

Derrida pursues this analysis of the proper name with the mention in the Declaration that "[colonies] are and ought to be free" joining fact and right thanks to the guarantee of God, a case of pure Malebranchian occasionalism, says Derrida. He also recalls the famous story that Benjamin Franklin told Thomas Jefferson about Thompson the hatter. A hatter named Thompson sets up shop and thinks of a long sentence to put on the storefront – something like 'John Thompson, Hatmaker Fashionable Hats Sold Inside for Ready Money' – until he strips it all down to his surname with the shape of a hat below. Now, if the reader is unable to find these pages in the English translation, that is because it is based on the 1979 Montreal paper published in Québec in 1982 under the title *L'oreille de l'autre*, and not

the 1976 Charlottesville paper. The integrity of Derrida's demonstration was restored in France as soon as 1984 with the publication of *Otobiographies* that combined both papers. As I will show below, the exclusion of this passage in the English edition has, I believe, dramatic consequences when it comes to understanding Derrida's argument. We proceed with our reading. Coming on the heels of his discussion of Thompson the hatter, Derrida remarks that Nietzsche is the only author, with the possible exception of Freud and Kierkegaard, to treat philosophy and life with his own name, in his own name, *in the name of his name* one could say. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche declares that he is "living on his own credit". Commenting upon that, Derrida writes:

He has taken out a loan with himself and has implicated us in this transaction through what, on the force of a signature, remains of his text.

(Derrida 1984, Ronell's translation)

A boundless credit that one's name opens indeed! Death, argues Derrida, is the only logical payback: "to establish a name is to be ready to pay off a debt of flesh". Recalling his own *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida pays special attention to the auditory dimension of the name at work in Nietzsche

in general and in the *Zarathustra* in particular, citing this passage:

And when I came out of my solitude, and for the first time passed over this bridge, then I could not trust mine eyes, but looked again and again, and said at last: "That is an ear! An ear as big as a man!" I looked still more attentively—and actually there did move under the ear something that was pitifully small and poor and slim. And in truth this immense ear was perched on a small thin stalk—the stalk, however, was a man! A person putting a glass to his eyes, could even recognise further a small envious countenance, and also that a bloated little soul dangled at the stalk. The people told me, however, that the big ear was not only a man, but a great man, a genius. But I never believed in the people when they spake of great men—and I hold to my belief that it was a reversed cripple, who had too little of everything, and too much of one thing. (Z, Part II, XLII)

This passage is symptomatic of Nietzschean nihilism in the way it reduces the social sphere politically and

economically articulated around the proper name and the rights it gives, to an auditory phenomenon deprived of meaning, an order "poor in worlds", which has too much of itself (proper names, brand names, names everywhere) and "too little of everything [else]". Derrida then goes on to show that this loss of the symbolic dimension – the structuring function of the name being rejected as a result of the anti-dialectical option we examined in detail earlier – has direct consequences when it comes to the state understood in both the metaphysical and political sense (*Otobiographies*, III) and the question of the woman (IV). Another passage of *Zarathustra* is eloquent on this subject:

A state? What is that? Well! open now your ears unto me, for now I will say unto you my word concerning the death of peoples. A state, is called the coldest of all cold monsters (...)
There, where the state ceaseth—there only commenceth the man who is not superfluous: there commenceth the song of the necessary ones, the single and irreplaceable melody. (Z, Part X, XI)

This passage echoes the argument Nietzsche already spelt out in his early "Truth and Lie". Working through the conferences Nietzsche gave in 1872 in Basel on the theme

of education (*On the Future of our Educational Institutions*), Derrida is not afraid to evoke the similarities between the students' need for a guide (*Führer*) Nietzsche wrote about in those conferences, and Hitler's wish to be an authority, also in the intellectual sense: "something here takes place that belongs to the same" (1984, III). "Even if we allow objections, we still need to account for the possibility of inversion and mimetic perversion," Derrida courageously insists. In the following and last part of his demonstration, Derrida completely overturns his own *Spurs* by tracking down the "disappearance of the woman" to the fifth lecture of *On the Future of our Educational Institutions*, concluding over the forbidden mother that remains "outside the dialectic of accessible and non-accessible". I quoted that conclusion above in full.

If this convergence of the name, the state and the woman strikes us as vaguely familiar as we take a step back, that is perhaps because it is the crux of Hegel's argument on Spirit and the ethical order (*die Sittlichkeit*) in the *Phenomenology*, a passage at the heart of Derrida's own *Glas*, a book strictly contemporary with the two articles at hand since it was published in 1974, right between *Spurs* presented in 1972, and the paper that gave birth to *Otobiographies* in 1976. To a certain extent, we could say that *Otobiographies* is *Spurs* mediated by the work Derrida

produced in *Glas*. (It would not be the first time that Derrida approached Nietzsche with Hegel by the way: this happened in 1971 with the article "La mythologie blanche" published in *Margins of Philosophy*.) Hence our question: What did Derrida find in Hegel's discussion of the 'ethical order' that would account for the displacement we witness from one paper to the other? In the course of *Spurs*, Derrida notes that if women do not believe in castration, they live off it and play with it. They present the two faces of castration *qua* lack in the Other that ultimately sunk Nietzsche (Derrida 2010, 79), namely that there is such a thing as truth, and at the same time this means that there is not. Simply put, if the symbolic chain of words can break off at random points, for example in the face of the Real, this existential truth implies that the *means* of the expression of truth – this very symbolic chain – are compromised. In Lacanian terms: if there is the Other, there is no Other of the Other. Whatever there is behind the feminine scepticism Nietzsche focuses on instead, for example the fetishism covering (up) a lack Derrida diagnoses in *Spurs*, it is a fact that this feminine scepticism goes some way in the history of Western thought and finds perhaps its definitive statement in Hegel's *Phenomenology*:

Womankind – the everlasting irony [in the life] of the community – changes by intrigue the universal end of the government into a private end, transforms its universal activity into a work of some particular individual, and perverts the universal property of the state into a possession and ornament for the Family. Woman in this way turns to ridicule the earnest wisdom of mature age, which, indifferent to purely private pleasures and enjoyments, as well as to playing an active part, only thinks of, and cares for, the universal. She makes this wisdom an object of derision for raw and irresponsible youth and unworthy of their enthusiasm. (Hegel 1977, §475)

Are women really to blame for the bankruptcy of the (German) state? Does Derrida target Nietzsche to shield Hegel from the same charge of fetishism and, yes, theoretical feminicide? Was not Nietzsche right to attack this kind of metaphysical violence contained in speculative philosophy? Not so fast: Hegel's harsh remarks take place in the context of a long discussion on the ethical order in chapter VI on Spirit, roughly two-thirds into the *Phenomenology*. In the section aforementioned, Hegel

describes the necessary abandonment of the ethical life and its beauties – the efforts one *enjoys making* in order to submit unconditionally to the law, the false dilemmas one likes to pause over and over again (Hegel has Kant in mind, e.g. the "gallows man" in the second *Critique*) – to pass from this antithesis of individuality and universality, to a substance that includes and overcomes this opposition. In Hegel's words:

It is Spirit which is for itself in that it preserves itself in its reflection in individuals; and it is implicitly Spirit, or substance, in that it preserves them within itself. (1977, §447)

Hegel adds that as actual substance, it is a nation; as actual consciousness, it is the citizens of that nation, especially when they form a government (§448). For Hegel, the journey to maturity passes through the transformation of the ethical life into a duty towards the state consciousness belongs to, which Hegel calls the *human law*, as opposed to the *divine law*. The divine law on the other hand is characterised by the primacy of the duty towards the family. Hegel expressly maintains that it bypasses the Notion in favour of a "*natural* relationship" or an "*immediate* connection" (Hegel's own italics, §451). And the

divine law is the prerogative of the woman (§463), best embodied in the figure of Antigone, as she chooses her brother over reason of State.

It would be wrong to conclude that the Hegelian matrix simply confines feminine subjectivity to the duties of the family, however. Insofar as the divine law reproduces the antithesis seen above in the duty of one family member towards the whole family (individuality/universality), it is an ethical relation. The difference with the human law is that the latter prioritises the whole (the state, the nation) over individuality (the single citizen ready to die for it), while the divine law prioritises the individual (the brother, the sister, the son, the daughter) over the whole (the family ready to die to save its young). But that is because, in the divine law, the individual *is* the universal (and the group is conversely the "pathological" link; in the human law, it is the national community that stands for the universal). It seems that, if we (ethical) men are ready to die to defend our nations, women are ready to die with the same bravery in defence of the individual as such. For reminder, if this law is divine, it is because it recalls the individual *par excellence*, Jesus Christ. Death is not accidental in this configuration: as Hegel's reference to Antigone shows, it is a necessary point through which passes the ethical order – it functions as the middle term between individuality and

universality. We have here the essential node of Hegelian thought linking sexual difference to death, and the structure of this dialectics leads Hegel to derive the necessity of war. I quote Hegel:

In order not to let them [individuals] become rooted and set in this isolation [personal independence and property], thereby breaking up the whole and letting the communal spirit evaporate, government has from time to time to shake them to their core by war. By this means the government upsets their established order, and violates their right to independence, while the individuals who, absorbed in their own way of life, break loose from the whole and strive after the inviolable independence and security of the person, are made to feel in the task laid on them their lord and master, death. (1977, §455)

We cannot stress enough that in the Hegelian dialectics, the human law does not go against the divine law and vice versa, both options (defend the state, defend the family) are not mutually exclusive. Hegel is far from envisaging a crude war of the sexes of the kind the ancient world periodically experienced. On the contrary, if the human law pushes

individuality to rise to the challenge of mediated universality in the shape of the state, and stakes it to the trials of death, our "lord and master," the divine law pushes universality to rise to the challenge of immediacy in the shape of the single living body (remember that chapter VI comes on the heels of the discussion of the organic living being in chapter V). The bonds of family do not endanger the state, they are its very lifeline. (This is by the way one of several Hegelian points that are the doom of Marxist-Leninist constructions: insofar as twentieth century communism fetishized the state and deprived the family of its ontological and economic dignity, it remained stuck at a primitive level of this dialectics in the Hegelian perspective.) Hegel's analysis goes deeper still:

Nature, not the accidents of circumstances or choice, assigns one sex to one law, the other to the other law; or conversely, the two ethical powers themselves give themselves an individual existence, and actualise themselves in the two sexes. (1977, §465)

How far we have gone from the scepticism Nietzsche attributes to women! For Hegel, the "irony of womankind" is only a sign – perhaps a "trace" in Derridean parlance – of

the complex structure of the dialectics animating human relations. Far from being the height of speculative philosophy, Hegel's argument in fact cuts moral discussions short by taking the world as it is – marred by sexual difference, the embarrassing nudity of Adam and Eve cast out of paradise – and not as the individual consciousness rationalises it. Hegel, like Nietzsche, uses the German neutral *das Weib* for woman, and not the feminine *die Frau*, not with the intent to deny the ontological charge femininity carries, as Anaïs Frantz would have it apropos Nietzsche (2011), but on the contrary to emphasise the rawness of sexual difference. *Das Weib*, now a pejorative word similar to 'chick', 'broad' or even 'wench' in the English language, shares an etymological origin with the English 'wife' and designates in the nineteenth century the everyday woman, often of low social origins. Whereas *die Frau*, now standard German for 'woman' and also a title equivalent to 'Mrs', designates in the nineteenth century a woman of aristocratic origin. Both Hegel's and Nietzsche's use of the word *Weib* can thus be construed as the sign that femininity is no longer re-marked within the aristocratic order of the Ancien Régime, but comes out on its own. Woman at the biological, yes, animal level: *Weiblich* still means female in German. (This also vindicates Derrida's approach linking Nietzsche's despicable woman to his anti-

democratic politics.) The double "downward synthesis" (Slavoj Žižek) of individuality and universality, and the spiritual and the material, at work in the passage quoted above also paves the way for the regime of particularity that characterises legality in the following chapter of the *Phenomenology*. This is one of Hegel's clean breaks with Kant: the horizon of the Good is no longer ethical, it is legal. There is no moral treatise in the Hegelian corpus, there is a major opus on the philosophy of right instead. This is not just a theoretical point: recognition at the level of the law still characterises the life of modern democratic societies, from minorities' rights to marriage equality and abortion.

The woman that therefore we are

The dangers and allure of feminine scepticism that come up in Nietzsche are anachronistic in the age of the modern state characterised by extensive legality, this is what Derrida must have found in Hegel's discussion of *Sittlichkeit* in the wake of the French Revolution. It is here impossible to play down the impact of a number of works on our reading, starting with Canadian scholar Rebecca Comay's *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution*. In this classic, Comay emphasises "Germany's historical non-historicity" and characterised German Idealism as "nothing but the staging of a chronically missed encounter" (2010).

In his own *Le sujet de la philosophie*, Lacoue-Labarthe pointed out that Heidegger's aesthetic programme goes right back to German Idealism, with its attempt to precisely stage and mythologise this traumatic encounter with post-revolutionary Reason, from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* to Schelling's *The Ages of the World*, through Hölderlin's and Schlegel's works. But one of the first to read Hegel's realisation of Germany's notional lateness into the *Phenomenology* was French scholar Gérard Lebrun, whose *L'envers de la dialectique: Hegel à la lumière de Nietzsche* (unfortunately untranslated in English) compares and contrasts Hegel and Nietzsche on the subjects of history, politics and ontology. To give but two examples, Lebrun showed that Hegel and Nietzsche shared the same initial interest in classical Athens in their youth, until Hegel moved on to the notional superiority of Christianity while Nietzsche went the opposite way to defend the pre-Socratics against the age of Pericles (2004, part 3). Channelling Hegel's remarks on natural law from the Jena period, Lebrun also explicitly addressed "the Rousseauist impasse of Germany", that is to say the inability to translate a Subject from the singular to the universal – if there is a Subject, it has to go against the State (part 2).

So who is the woman of Nietzsche's prose? Certainly not Lou Andreas-Salomé, the foreign negation in the shape

of a woman Nietzsche ultimately could not reckon with. Neither is it the mother, who remains at the bottom of the glass for as long as Nietzsche fills it with words. Is it the *Lorelei* Clemens Brentano and Heinrich Heine re-actualised in the wake of the French Revolution, the figure of the temptress that brought the crown of Bavaria to its knees in 1848? But is that woman not Liberty herself, of Tea Party and Bastille fame, leaping out of a Delacroix painting, raising her torch over Lower Manhattan, always and everywhere leading the people from their atomistic lives to the greater whole of republics? In other words, is it not the unchartered metonymy of Democracy dislocating – literally, putting out of its *proper* place – the old aristocratic habits of the Holy Roman Empire without rhyme or reason? If the absolute positivity of Liberty signals for us the return of the repressed (*qua* the entire process of the ethical order which saw the disclosure of sexual difference within consciousness) in the shape of the woman, the negativity contained in Nietzsche's woman is by contrast a symptom of his philosophy's own notional lateness with respect to the Hegelian experience. Against Badiou's interpretation ("Nietzsche is the prince of Antiphilosophy", 2015), Nietzsche is for us the standard-bearer of postmodern metaphysics that stretches from Schopenhauer (himself the author of full-length misogynistic pamphlets) to Heidegger

and Deleuze, insofar as he so spectacularly recoils from Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* jump. At least this is what we could deduce from Derrida's Hegelian travels (in its old etymological sense, work, *work through*) from *Spurs* to *Otobiographies*, and within *Otobiographies* from the Declaration of Independence to Nietzsche's reactive politics.

PART 3. Reading *Two Negations:* Melancholia and the Rise of the Democratic Master

Death laughs at those who call for it and confuse it
with Nothingness.

–Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*

FORGET critically reflecting upon *Two Negations*: creation is always its own answer, and interpretation must surrender in the face of it. At least this is the conclusion of a lifetime spent in thought for psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. Indeed, Freud wrote about literature on only four occasions and very briefly each time: the first time in his paper on “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” (1908), to claim that literature is phantasy written down; then in his postscript to his *Jensen’s Gradiva* (1912) to take back the previous claim; in the final pages of “The ‘Uncanny’” (1919a) to paint literature as a masterful art able to create more uncanny effects than reality itself; and finally in a well-known formula at the beginning of his Dostoevsky paper (1928), “before the problem of the creative artist, analysis must, alas, lay down its arms”. So if we are to *interpret Two*

Negations after all (rather than politely decline to include ourselves in a foreign content), and still remain faithful to the master of Vienna, then we must do it in the manner of Shoshana Felman's theoretical turn of the screw (1977), mindful of the fact that *fiction is not theory*, fiction implies and includes an obstacle that does not lend itself to the clarity of the legal argument that underpins the best of our academic efforts. This obstacle is of course the (Freudian) unconscious. To quote Felman's classic essay,

It is precisely *because* the letters *fail* to narrate, to construct a coherent, transparent story, that there is a story at all: there is a story *because* there is an unreadable, an unconscious. (1977, 143)

Insofar as *Two Negations* fictionalises its own content starting with the Second Negation, insofar as it sets a stage (a City, an Old Town, etc.) and makes up returning characters (The Archer, The Dreamer, The Mayer, Holly, etc.), we have to take into account this narrative structure in our interpretation. As Felman has shown in her milestone essay, this structure precludes simple answers.

The other trap we must absolutely escape is the one outlined by Alenka Zupančič in her *The Shortest Shadow*:

Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two (2003), namely sweeping under the carpet the bizarrerie and poetic license that makes *Two Negations* a text that arouses curiosity or amazement. Theory sets up its own irrelevance when it fails to reflect on its position of enunciation, i.e. its own amazement, for instance when it talks of "action, agency and responsibility" (Pippin 2006, 44) apropos an author such as Nietzsche that would have ridiculed this kind of language. It is impossible to take seriously a number of claims and references in *Two Negations*, just as it is impossible to take some of Nietzsche's comments at face value, yet it would be a grave mistake to simply ignore them and pretend they are just not there. Something will have to be said about such provocations, about their function and their addressee. This is not impossible in an academic context: Zupančič changed the field of Nietzschean studies precisely by being able to recognise "hysterical" material and address it as such. So add this trap on top of the other and we scholars find ourselves in a double bind: how to respond to this text without reducing the manifest content to the latent, for example treating femininity and pop culture in *Two Negations* as cause rather than symptom; AND without reducing the latent content to the manifest, i.e. giving up intellectual effort for impotent paraphrasing in the face of complexity. What is perhaps needed is a certain

methodological obliqueness: sometimes the only way to find the key is to act as if there was no safe to crack at all.

But before we step forward, or aside as philosophy does, we also need to know where our critical effort comes from – where does the upcoming interpretation originate? Is it in the field of literary criticism, or comparative literature perhaps, or contemporary English literature? Or does it reflect a knowledge of, and interest in, the history of philosophy, and is therefore more philosophical in nature, or theoretical as we say today? It is not the same! For instance, if this commentary wished to reflect on the literary nature of this work, as would a piece of literary criticism do, we would perhaps track down all the references to contemporary culture, establish parallels between Elizabethan theatre and hip-hop poetics at the confluence of which we find some of the wordplays of *Two Negations*. We would obviously mention the rise of America as cultural superpower in the twentieth century, with pop music gaining mainstream recognition (think of Bob Dylan winning the Nobel prize). We would no doubt evoke the multiplicity of literary forms and voices within a single work. The references to psychoanalysis fit a pattern too, and we could insert *Two Negations* in a long line of works that thrive on its signifier. And, with a bit of indulgence, we could also shine a light on the beauties of a text that at its

best does not lack for any. All this, however, is not our perspective. Since this essay takes place in a critical and yes, philosophical, context, our objective is not only to be able to raise the difficult questions that surround the text, but to also provide a few answers in passing. These answers take the shape of three fundamental displacements with respect to contemporary theory.

From nihilism back to melancholia

The first displacement to operate is to isolate nihilism as a *moment* in the history of Western civilisation and take theory back to the structural question of melancholia instead. Because she was able to engage with Nietzsche's provocations by examining them as such rather than drawing ontological conclusions *à la* Deleuze, Alenka Zupančič's *The Shortest Shadow* is the best port of entry into the unknown country that *Two Negations* seems to be at first. Let us follow in her footsteps and see how her analysis applies to the material at hand. Apropos the "bomb" that the event is for Nietzsche ("I Am Dynamite", EH; Sarah Kofman also talks of an "explosion", see my *Part 2*)(the metaphor of the bomb is at the heart of *Two Negations*, see N2§172), Zupančič evokes a "declaration of declaration" (2003, 9-10), suggesting a certain performative dimension is essential to this event. For her,

the author of *Zarathustra* overcomes the old philosophical opposition between the metaphysical and the sophistic position: if the sophistic position eluded the big metaphysical questions by sticking to formal procedures, however empty, it seems that Nietzsche was able to have metaphysical questions return from the very emptiness of such formal procedures. Zupančič uses *Hamlet* to make her point:

A very good example of this kind of doubleness would be the famous "play scene" (or "mousetrap") in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. (...) In *Hamlet*, the redoubling of fiction, far from avoiding or lacking the Real, functions as the very "trap" (the "mousetrap") of the Real. One could also say that the "mousetrap" in *Hamlet* has exactly the status of the "declaration of declaration." Through the staging of the "Murder of Gonzago," *Hamlet* declares what was declared to him by his father's Ghost. At the same time, this "declaration of declaration", taking the form of a stage performance, succeeds precisely because it produces a dimension of: "I, the Real, am speaking." (2003, 13)

This situation – of the Real popping out of the text (Real capitalised as it is not physical reality, but discrepancy or impossibility within and beyond imaginary and symbolic realities) – is definitely that of *Two Negations*: not only verbatim in N2§236, but also in the passages at the beginning of the Second Negation that describe an encounter with the symbolic function – so declares a declaration – as traumatising. There is the man that "dreams up a city" (N2§5), the abyss and the metaphors of the lake and the black hole (N2§11) that come back again and again throughout the text, the winter and the freeze that kill all imaginary objects (N2§22-4), the clear link that is immediately established with the paternal function (N2§25), and, more generally the redoubling of the symbolic declaration – or symbolic discrepancy – between "City" and "Phallus". We recall Hamlet's immortal words: "the time is out of joint: O, cursed spite that ever I was born to set it right!" (Act 1, Scene 5). Zupančič aptly remarks that the Nietzschean event could be encapsulated by the declaration "*Eins wurde zu Zwei*" ("One became Two") contained in *Beyond Good & Evil* (2003, 18). This of course strikes a chord with *Two Negations*, from the long passages on metaphor and metonymy in both the First and Second Negation – how "one breaks into two and two falls back into one again" – to the final number of the Second Negation

initially being 241: two-for-one. Zupančič's find places Nietzsche – and the operation of *Two Negations* – at the juncture of the Symbolic and the Real. This perhaps explains the particular emphasis on the body in both Nietzsche (see for example the obsession of cleanliness in BGE, §271) and *Two Negations*. Elaborating on the One-becomes-Two in Nietzsche, and perhaps following Derrida's *Autobiographies*, Zupančič writes at length about the event linking future and past, the hole in time, the "well of eternity" or "timeless moment" that Nietzsche seeks to create for himself (2003, 21). This space of writing experienced as a timeless plane, one where time can be experienced as such, this space that writing is, is the very subject of *Two Negations*. One paragraph in particular strikes out:

Patience is an art. Each time a new signifier comes up, its absence too must be registered. What may seem like an endless process – the impossibility of symbolic closure, the long process of symbolisation, the unavoidable loop that belongs to the symbolic order itself and must be gone through again and again – in sum, what Hegel calls 'bad infinity' – all of this will eventually turn into something else,

though not what you expected at the beginning. (N2§44)

If the beginning the Second Negation describes the process of symbolisation, this timeless plane also returns in the "meadows" mentioned in the conclusion (N2§241).

Zupančič links these initial remarks about the event of writing with a fine analysis of *fin-de-siècle* nihilism (first part of *The Shortest Shadow*). So what is nihilism? Simply put, nihilism is a social and cultural condition where everything that has the structure of a fiction is experienced as a lie – "untruth is a condition of life," writes Zupančič (2003, 92). She distinguishes between active and passive nihilism: passive nihilism wills Nothing – one of the most frequent words of *Two Negations* – and represents the last stage of scepticism, whereas active nihilism wills some destructive *passage-à-l'acte*. Far from being foreign to each other, they are two sides of the same coin: "passive nihilism needs active nihilism's passion of the Real as its other" (67). Nietzsche occupies here a unique position in the nihilistic constellation of "late modernity" – if symbolic frameworks are readily experienced as false comforts by a certain intellectual elite, from Marx to sociologists such as Durkheim and Weber, Nietzsche adds an additional turn of the nihilistic screw by condemning the socialist movement

as "collective degeneration of man" (BGE, §203). Nietzsche's point is both simple and indisputable: Marx's critique of bourgeois culture does not go far enough since it conveniently retains its teleology (History is on the side of the workers, etc.). By virtue of being its fiercest critic, Nietzsche becomes the most consistent ideologue of nihilism – it is not religion or the politics of Marx that are a false shelter of life, for Nietzsche it is the symbolic framework itself. Whereas the Real, nestled in the distance from the symbolic to itself, shows exposure and vulnerability. Above all, Nietzsche seeks the authenticity of the Real as we have just defined it: "to perish as a proclaimer, to break at one's word, to become the thing one proclaims" (Zupančič 2003, 16), is at the heart of Nietzsche's gist (and *Two Negations*). This signature move of post-Hegelian philosophy (uniting in a single front figures as diverse as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein) is an interesting and far-reaching reversal from the early stages of European modernity when it was the symbolic journey, not this passion of the Real, that was the perilous and authentic one, from Dante's banishment from Florence to Rousseau's and Voltaire's late-night escapes to the Swiss border. For Zupančič, nihilism thus appears when the only possible object left to desire is its transcendental condition itself (2003, 127) –

nihilism is desire that collapses upon itself. If this feature is prominent in *Two Negations*, there is one passage that epitomises the remarks we have just made:

When we were left for dead and the wolves
dragged our decaying body into the night, we
could only desire our own signifier. (N2§130)

The desire for the transcendental condition of desire necessarily comes with the decaying body, that is to say a body outside the regulative horizon of the symbolic, so always already coming apart. It is as if what really appears instead of symbolic entities in the guise of the truth is death itself, in its material, concrete appearance – death deprived of its symbolic clothes. Both Nietzsche and the author of *Two Negations* write in the shadow of Charles Baudelaire's poem "A Carcass", whose influence stretches from Robert Graves' "A Dead Boche" (1918) to Yves Bonnefoy's 1953 poetry collection *On the Motion and Immobility of Douve*, a variation on Baudelaire's poem. Zupančič evokes the Hegelian "bad infinity" apropos this concrete death: in nihilism, the semblances are caught in a never-ending regression, including the specular relation.

This lack in appearances, which is a lack of appearances, is directly related to the Kantian trap of

aesthetisation that Zupančič is keen to read into Nietzsche's philosophical trajectory (This is the second and last part of *The Shortest Shadow*): aesthetics take centre stage when appearances can no longer be taken for granted. We recall Kant's journey in the *Critique of Judgement*: imagination is a success when it fails to comprehend the magnitude of its object and turns to reason by recognising that. The sublime arises from this discrepancy between imagination and reason, it is the "conversion of respect for the Idea of humanity in our own subject into respect for the Object" (Kant 2009, §27), or simply: conversion of the Idea into the Object. Insofar as the moral law is conceived in relation to the imaginary (the sublime being its product) rather than as an independent power, the law just found cannot be overpowered, but it also means that the law has no power in itself. With the third *Critique* the law becomes an aesthetic phenomenon. This is key to understanding the relentless scorn Hegel pours over Kant in his writing: for Hegel, Kant fails to perceive the law in its particular, concrete shape, i.e. the law as always laid out by someone in particular (the Master Hegel is eager to reintroduce), and harbouring the potential for violence. Kant does see that the law is not dialecticisable, and this is what makes it sublime; but he does not get past it. It is the exact reverse of contemporary philosophy's monolingual insistence that the

law is *only* violence, without emancipatory power. This is the bread and butter of Michel Foucault and followers such as Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben. If the aesthetisation of life becomes prominent in the *Zarathustra*, then the law is forever postponed by its own aesthetic staging, or so goes Zupančič's argument.

This Kantian-Nietzschean aestheticism explains Zupančič's introductory assertion regarding Nietzsche's writings that "the subject is... that which makes a place & time for the event, as well as only arises from the event" (24)... and puts a dent in it at the same time, insofar as there cannot be a subject that remains at the threshold of the law (to put it differently, a subject only arises from its encounter with the law). This question is crucial for this commentary because *Two Negations* exactly displays the kind of self-referentiality Zupančič alludes to, it too "makes a place and time for the event" when the text begins to refer to earlier passages (starting with N2§190 referring to N2§129). With regards to the status of this self-referentiality, I believe the analogy with *Hamlet* is here potentially misleading: if Hamlet stumbles upon the Real while attempting to frame it, the nihilistic framing of the frame is not the wild adventure of the Real it often purports to be, *it is in fact the symbolic articulation of Western civilisation at the end of the nineteenth century*. Nihilism is

the very substance of those troubled years when the Master was a rapacious capitalist and the king an absurdly autocratic remnant of a feudal, outdated past. In our view, Zupančič misses this angle and falls into the trap of aesthetisation she set herself when she sought to positively reappraise the Nietzsche of the *Zarathustra* in her conclusion. I quote the full passage:

This argument leads us back to the theme of double affirmation. When Nietzsche keeps repeating that man still has to "learn how to will" ("to reject all *half-hearted* willing" and "to be *able to will*"), this is what he is getting at: man has to comprehend the will (or wanting) as something that is always doubled or redoubled. If one really wants a thing, one also wants the chance that brought this thing about; and vice versa: if one wants contingency, one also wants the thing that this contingency has brought about (as necessary). If not, the willing itself is crippled, plunged into the "spirit of revenge and gnashing of teeth." In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche formulates this double dimension of willing in terms of the will being able *also to will backwards*. "All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident – until the creative

will says to it, 'But this I willed it.'" (...) Will can dominate or "disarm" chance precisely and simply by wanting is *as chance*. In this sense, "willing backward" is nothing but affirming (saying "Yes" to) what one might call "contingent necessity" (or, alternatively, the unavoidable necessity of contingency itself). (2003, 162)

Let me be clear: Zupančič is right at a certain level. Faced with an impossible predicament, over-identification with it re-establishes the necessary distance for its positive re-appropriation. I made this point in *Two Negations* (see N2§185). But we could also see the glass half empty rather than half full: this Nietzschean "Yes" Zupančič praises is for us the sign that subjectivity caves in to superego: *since I have not found a way out of my predicament, all that is left to do is for me to convince myself that I willed it thus*. Far from the powerful assertion of the ego in the place of the Real, this move signals the withdrawal of the ego. Any reappraisal of Nietzsche has to account for the depression that engulfed the last decade of his life, and Zupančič's turnaround conclusion about the Nietzschean Yes is hardly consistent with her own mention of the withdrawal of the ego in Nietzsche earlier in her argument (2003, 11). Would this withdrawal not be a better way to account for the

megalomania that Nietzsche's writings typically display in the final *Ecce Homo*, where sentences such as "why I am the greatest" abound? That the ego is expelled from itself and resurfaces outside, in speech? Incidentally, this withdrawal is a key feature of *Two Negations* (N2§161 provides a great example) that begs for an explanation.

From the withdrawal of ego back to that of the Other

Should we then characterise melancholia as a withdrawal of the ego akin to psychosis? In remarks delivered at the University of Kingston (London) and elsewhere, and gathered in a paper ("Remembering & Forgetting", 2016), Russell Grigg recently sought to show that Freud's approach in his seminal "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) was wrong because it compared processes that are radically different. In his "Remembering & Forgetting" Grigg argues instead that in melancholia, the subject structurally fails to separate from the object, thus tying the condition to psychosis. Melancholia does not display the loss of an object according to the Australian psychoanalyst, but the emergence of an invasive object that persecutes the patient as in paranoia: "the melancholic suffers not from eternal mourning but from an inescapable proximity to the

object in the Real" (Grigg 2016, penultimate paragraph¹). Grigg explicitly compares melancholia to Daniel Paul Schreber's invasive femininity Freud addressed in his Schreber case. For Grigg, the collapse of semblances at work in melancholia reveals an excess of unregulated *jouissance*. Recalling that the symbolic order's purpose is to regulate *jouissance*, writing therefore cannot but appear as a desperate attempt to fend it off. This is an intriguing line of thought for us as we ponder the role of femininity in *Two Negations*. Does not the Second Negation stage the irruption of an object mostly absent from the First, femininity, and the desperate attempt to keep it at bay? When Grigg notes that in melancholia every semblance collapses into a grimace of the invasive object, it is difficult not to reread some passages in the light of those remarks. N2§211 for example takes the opportunity of a discussion about science to pile up more elaborations on the enigmatic object that femininity is.

There is just one problem with applying Grigg's points to *Two Negations*. While *Two Negations* typically displays all the colours of melancholia – and we should make no mistake, that is because it IS a work of melancholia – it still comes to a conclusion that powers past femininity:

¹ The online version of Grigg's article does not provide pagination.

We parted. I turned around and retreated into
the empty woods. I found an old timber library
to finish my book, but fire was already tearing
through the pages of the Word. Love is only its
failure, symbolisation only its loss. Final
world? There is -- (*Poem*)(N2§241)

This break away from the abyssal femininity is echoed in the following and final entry N2§242, in the passage from the first to the second paragraph: "philosophy comes to a different conclusion..." If melancholia is able to step back from the abyss of the Other where both subject and object dissolve, then Grigg's reading of "Mourning and Melancholia" could be misguided – I suggest we go back to Freud's original article. Freud begins by offering a clear distinction between mourning, which is normal he says, and melancholia, which is pathological. Freud immediately adds that melancholia could lead to very different things, which means that he considers melancholia possibly as a symptom and not necessarily as a condition (Freud also says that symptoms of melancholia also fit those of mourning). He then describes mourning as a temporary withdrawal of libido that can be so intense that "a turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object

through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis" (1917, 245). In contrast to mourning where it is vivid, the loss of the object in melancholia is withdrawn from consciousness. The result is that "in mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (246). At this point, Freud offers his first therapeutic clue: the analyst should confirm to the patient that he or she "really is out there", that he or she exists in the eyes of the Other. Against Grigg's rash claim that Freud had a "limited understanding of psychosis" (2014), this kind of intervention actually comes close to what modern-day psychoanalysts do with psychotics in the consulting room: they refrain from interpretations and instead try to highlight to the patient the key signifiers of his or her delirium he or she could readily identify with. Moving on, Freud detects at the heart of melancholia a constellation of revolt that simply gets buried under conflicts too numerous to mount an orderly fight back. This is why, says Freud, the relentless self-reproaches of the melancholic are in fact reproaches against a loved object "which have been shifted away from it onto the patient's own ego" (248). The crushed state one witnesses in melancholia might not be due to the complete collapse of symbolic faculties as in psychosis, but could come down to what I am tempted to call an overload of information, in the same way a computer

crashes while opening too many programmes at the same time. This may be because the computer was faulty to begin with: the subject's identification to the abandoned object in melancholia shows that the object-cathexis – meaning that the subject's engagement with external reality always takes the shape of an object – of the patient is weak enough to revert to narcissism the moment an obstacle emerges, and the love relation with the object is preserved in the continuing love for the narcissistic object to the detriment of eroticism. This is one way of reading *Two Negations* critically: discourses about femininity effectively shut down any access to the thing-itself. That was indeed Derrida's point against Nietzsche in *Autobiographies*. But Freud argues here that this reversion to narcissism is the only way for the subject *not* to see love turn to hate and erase all symbolic substance. Whereas Grigg is keen to see "ambivalence" contained in the (foreclosed) "aggressive" object, Freud insists ambivalence is on the side of the melancholic subject:

The loss of a love object is an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence in love-relationships to make itself effective and come into the open. (1917, 250)

This ambivalence is why Freud is careful not to systematically place melancholia within the category of *dementia praecox* (psychosis), although, again, he never excludes this possibility either. Indeed, identification with the object of the type we see in melancholia is consistent, Freud writes, with the transference neuroses, especially hysteria (1917, 250). He then depicts melancholia as a sort of composite monster made up of several things. I quote the founder of psychoanalysis:

Melancholia, therefore, borrows some of its feature from mourning, and the others from the process of regression from narcissistic object choice to narcissism. (1917, 251)

A conflict rages between a hysterical identification with the object, in which the object-cathexis is retained, and a narcissistic identification with the object, in which the object-cathexis is in fact lost (or, to put it differently, if the object of hysteria is other, the object of narcissism is itself; this tautological feature draws the line between the two). This mixture of factors is echoed in Freud's suggestion of a "double vicissitude" for the object in melancholia:

The melancholic's erotic cathexis in regard to his object has thus undergone a double vicissitude: *part of it* has regressed to [narcissistic] identification, *but the other part, under the influence of the conflict due to ambivalence, has been carried back to the stage of sadism, which is nearer to that conflict.* (251, italics and bracket mine)

Now, while sadism is of course a fixture in perversion, it does not prevent analysts from regularly witnessing sadistic behaviours in neurotic patients precisely because of that ambivalence, the conflict between love and hate that is part and parcel of the human fabric. Freud wrote the seminal "A Child Is Being Beaten" paper (1919b) on the subject, describing neurosis as an illness that gets stuck to sadism on the road to oedipal identification. This "double vicissitude" is different from the single vicissitude the object suffers in paranoia (its foreclosure and return in the real) and implies a more balanced and protracted battle than the *Blitzkrieg* triggered psychosis wages against the ego (possibly in the form of invasive voices, disturbance of phenomenological reality, etc.). Freud's conclusion is illuminating:

For this reason the exciting causes of melancholia have a much wider range than those of mourning, which is for the most part occasioned only by a real loss of the object, by its death. In melancholia, accordingly, countless separate struggles are carried on over the object, in which hate and love contend with each other; the one seeks to detach the libido from the object, the other to maintain this position of the libido against the assault. The location of these separate struggles cannot be assigned to any system but the Ucs., the region of the memory-traces of things. (1917, 256)

The last sentence again seems to indicate that one deals with signifying material in melancholia, i.e. material subject to the dialecticising work of the analytic interpretation. According to Freud, the irremediable sadness of the melancholic thus reads as a double displacement of the subject: first a displacement of the struggle over positing and maintaining the object, to the conflict within the ego; and then from this conflict to an absence of conflict, the "extraordinarily high anti-cathexis" (1917, 258) that can manifest itself in the subject's refusal to get up, take nourishment, and pursue his or her goals in life.

The fact that Freud points equally to psychosis and neurosis in "Mourning and Melancholia" – Freud's final remark about the ego satisfied to have proved stronger than the object at the end of the illness suggests a psychotic configuration rather than the subject-object neurotic binding (1917, 257) –, the overdetermination of factors ("the exciting causes of melancholia have a much wider range"), the double vicissitude of the object and the double displacement of the subject I have just described, are all reasons why I believe Grigg is twice mistaken: 1) of reading Freudian melancholia as necessarily neurotic, and 2) of conflating the structural difference between neurosis (defined by the psychic mechanism of repression) and psychosis (defined by the psychic mechanism of foreclosure) with the *contingent disjunction* between mourning and melancholia. Psychoanalyst Darian Leader often cautions against making a rapid diagnosis in the presence of a magnified feminine Other in the clinical picture. In his article entitled "Hysteria Today" (2016), Leader argues that the identification with femininity could be, as in psychosis, the desperate attempt to keep at a distance the invasive Other, but it could also be, as in the case of hysteria – psychoanalytically-understood, 'clinical' hysteria, not the "hysterics" of Charcot –, the dialectical reflection of a paternal identification, that is to say

identification with the father's object of desire... the woman. Leader laments that when an interest in femininity shows up in the clinical setting, the label of hysteria immediately follows. With Grigg, we could inversely lament the fact that whenever we are faced with an apparently invasive object or unregulated *jouissance*, a diagnostic of psychosis immediately applies. But Leader emphasises in his paper that the *jouissance* of the Other is as daunting for hysteria as it is for psychosis, albeit in a different way. Taking an example from *Two Negations*, we could for example wonder whether the most explicit passages such as N2§153 betray the *jouissance* of the unregulated subject or of the unmediated Other. Leader actually offers clues to distinguishing psychosis from hysteria in the question of the function of a delirium – does it serve to limit the proximity of the Other (as in the case of Schreber), or is it a way to ask a question about the *value* of one for the Other, as in hysteria? Here again, while there are instances where *Two Negations* indeed seems to elude a threat bigger than itself, there are also moments when the *value* of the narrator in the eyes of the Other is in doubt, such as N2§177 or N2§238, and this further complicates any simple, textbook characterisations of melancholia in *Two Negations* (and elsewhere). One lesson to draw from all this is that, with psychoanalysis, a solid theory never replaces,

and always comes after, a devoted attention to the discourse of the patient, the rigidities as well as the cracks in it. This in turn raises another problem, which is the place of psychoanalysis at university. The psychoanalytic discourse and the academic discourse have diametrically opposed aims: the former has a specifically therapeutic aim while the latter has an encyclopaedic one; one will be open to the Real and the symptom, whereas the other will be busy plugging the gaps the Real leaves in the texture of reality by labelling them. If one reads Lacan's theory of the four discourses correctly (see Seminar XVII), the psychoanalytic discourse can only function if it puts on hold the signifying effects of knowledge (S2 is in the lower-left position of truth). The psychoanalytic discourse may thus quite simply lose all efficiency in the analytic room if it seeks *explanations* (putting S2 in the upper right position of addressee and the barred subject \$ in the lower-right position of product) rather than the improvement of the patient's health (\$ in the upper right position and S1 in the lower-right position, the *assumption* of a new master-signifier in relation to the symptom). Insofar as explanations must be sanctified by the big Other of knowledge, the interpretations of the analyst could well slip into more authorised interventions as he or she courts the University as institution, and therefore lose the edge that is

necessary to force the patient to produce more material in the analytic setting. To put it bluntly now, if political correctness definitely helps score in the academic world, especially exposing masters such as Freud, it harbours disastrous consequences for both hysteria and obsession in the clinic, insofar as it fails to engage the former (the hysteric is likely to remain aloof from this social link, and the transference will stall) and makes things too comfortable for the latter (the obsessional *loves* explanations and will be allowed to duck analytic work by discussing them). This question of the use and excesses of psychoanalytic tools in academia for the sake of encyclopaedism is at the heart of *Two Negations* – I will have more to say about that in the final part of this essay.

Back to melancholia. Building on Lacan's Seminar VI, Grigg reminds us that the ghost of old Hamlet appears because, like Polynices in Sophocles' *Antigone*, he was not given proper burial rites. The death of an essential being opens, Lacan suggests, "a hole in the real" that produces a signifier that is nothing other than the signifier of the lack in the Other. "This is a signifier", Lacan adds, "whose accent makes the Other powerless to give you your response ... it is because this signifier finds its place there, and at the same time cannot find it, because this signifier cannot be articulated at the level of the Other, that there come, as in

psychosis – and this is the way in which mourning is like psychosis – to proliferate all the images that the phenomena of mourning give rise to" (2013, 22.04.59). Grigg then argues that the subject in mourning invents a symbolic solution to this breach in the Real by creating a space for this event in the symbolic through the work of memorialisation. While Freud thought of mourning as a necessary phase to grieve the lost object and move on to a new one, forgetting the old, Grigg believes Lacan regarded the process of mourning as "the preservation of the object by constructing a memorial to it in the symbolic" (2016). Grigg proceeds to draw conclusions of his own:

The work of mourning consists of codifying imaginary features of the object, $i(a)$, into signifiers lodged in the Other. The painful process of mourning stems from the fall of the semblants that love and desire attach us to, as Freud taught us; but – and this is what Freud did not capture – the work of mourning is the transformation of these semblants into signifiers registered in and endorsed by the Other. (2016)

Grigg touches here upon something fundamental. We recall the L scheme Lacan introduced in Seminar II: for the

imaginary relation between the ego and the small other to hold, there must be a relation from the big Other to the Id, which is the unconscious relation regulating *jouissance*. What Grigg points out is that, in mourning, the imaginary relation remains preserved as it is thanks to the work at the level of the symbolic that memorialisation does. This is NOT the case in melancholia; on the contrary, there is a rare threat to the imaginary relation in the clinical picture. This is something *Two Negations* is very eloquent about; not only does it testify to that imaginary link (with the small other of the mirror) under attack in N2§18,

The next morning, the witness was absolutely broken. "Once the lights had gone down, the lake turned out to be nothing but my own tears," the person sputtered. "Beyond the reflection, there was only the pavement. I fell hard." (N2§18)

with the specular relation literally crashing, but *Two Negations* also reflects on this much later in the text; N2§235 provides the most concise formula:

And when this very distance resurfaces, either melancholia qua the collapse of the imaginary

axis, or physical symptoms qua the collapse of
the symbolic axis, threatens. (N2§235)

Grigg should absolutely get the credit for reminding us that in melancholia, it is the imaginary axis that is at risk. The problem is that he is adamant that the collapse of "*semblants*" reveals the absence of the Name-of-the-Father, so that he either admits an Other that automatically repairs itself, as in mourning, or one that self-destructs within minutes, as in paranoia – in other words, always a complete, *completed* Other, one that is or is not. It is a neat, almost classy explanation, but the Freudian solution of overdetermination (again, "some of its feature from mourning, others from...") simply squares better with the facts. Yes, "to be or not to be" is Hamlet's question, but does not the King of Denmark also remark that "when sorrows come, they come not single spies but in battalions" (Act 4, Scene 4), which we could read as a pointing to a *diversity* of factors and conflicts? Grigg does not raise the possibility of an *incomplete* Other being the cause of melancholia, that is to say an Other that has *withdrawn* from itself, an Other that "is suddenly not itself" (N2§235). And yet, this discrepancy within the Other is clearly articulated by *Two Negations*:

I live in a rather small place to speak the truth...
There is only space for one... Although God
knows the many I welcome." *Much later, the
author of these lines was to learn that God
radically didn't know. (...)(N2§62, my italics)*

The place of the Other has shifted, and this gives new
impetus to the Second Negation, as this discrepancy returns
again and again in the opposition City/Phallus that
structures it from beginning to end. Blame the melancholic
if you must, but something is rotten in the state of
Denmark...

To conclude, melancholia is clinically a *secondary
disease*, a serious *complication* of mourning that cancels the
symbolic frame of the subject and puts into doubt the
imaginary relation of self to self. Whether such a threat is
met by a symbolic journey able to restore the imaginary
axis, or produces a withdrawal of the ego to match the
original withdrawal of the Other, that all depends on the
resources at the disposition of the patient. In the case of
Hamlet, the withdrawal of the ego should be strictly
restricted to Gertrude's urge to forget and move on:

GERTRUDE – Do not forever with thy veiled
lids seek for thy noble father in the dust: thou

know'st 'tis common, all that lives must die,
passing through nature to eternity. (Act 1,
Scene 2)

Gertrude here completely misses subjectivity – she acts as if death was perfectly normal. This is the kind of psychotic melancholia Grigg aims at, i.e. the voice of Nature that urges the patient to commit suicide and return to the (delusional) pre-symbolic world. And yes, Lacan does competently suggest that femininity is the invasive cause of Hamlet's depression, insofar as depression is triggered by a failure with regard to one's desire, with Ophelia's femininity as "the very symbol of the rejection as such of his desire" (Seminar VI, 22.04.59). But given Gertrude's (and Claudius') stance, it is perhaps better to fail with regards to one's desire than to completely fail to acknowledge (the transcendental structure of) desire at all. Does not Hamlet's melancholia in fact *activate* the Name-of-the-Father rather than bury it? With the onset of mourning in connection to Ophelia's death and the imaginary identification to the small other in the shape of Laertes, Oedipal indicators have all turned green. Lacan himself stresses that Hamlet gets it at the end with his famous "the body is with the king, but the king is not with the body; the king is a thing" (Act 4, Scene 1). Interestingly enough, this line finds an echo in

Two Negations: "once you know the throne and the king are two different things, the throne is all for the taking" (N2§3). Hamlet's journey from object-cathexis back to narcissism is not the only one to include a return ticket in the Shakespearean corpus by the way, so does King Leontes' in *The Winter's Tale*; he too atones for his sins at the end. And *King Lear*'s conclusion speaks volumes:

EDGAR – The weight of this sad time we must
obey:
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say,
The oldest hath borne most, we that are young
Shall never see so much nor live so long (Act 5,
Scene 3)

Like *Hamlet*, *King Lear* sees a symbolic movement at work that reaches its term with the instatement of symbolic debt between generations ("the oldest hath borne most"), as well as the restoration of the immediacy between one and self at the imaginary level ("speak what we feel, not what we ought to say"). If melancholia is clinically secondary, Shakespeare's plays make it obvious that it is culturally primary – this is our next and last displacement.

From "mourning sickness" back to Romanticism

I believe the question of the withdrawal of the Other explains why German philosopher Hegel is the object of the First Negation and forcefully returns at various points in the Second Negation, including at the very end. In her *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (2011), Canadian scholar Rebecca Comay offers a profound meditation on the subject of mourning and melancholia in connection to Hegel. Instead of reading Hegel in isolation – or "analytically" as Robert Pippin's *Hegel's Idealism* does – or in dialogue with the philosophical tradition – the method of choice for "continental philosophy", from Gérard Lebrun to Slavoj Žižek – Comay chose to read Hegel against the background of his enunciation, i.e. the upheavals of the French Revolution and the Empire, and Germany's disarrayed response to these changes. Her thesis is 1) that the conceptual movement of the French Revolution completely destroys Germany's means to mourn its own past by relegating to the shadows of newly-instated History the medieval culture of the Holy Roman Empire, rendering impossible the kind of repairing Grigg described as at work in mourning, and 2) that the task of philosophy for Hegel (and those of us who identify as Hegelians) is to "explicate the untimeliness" of historical experience. In her introduction, Comay reminds us that translation normally provides "a transitional space in which the displacements of

empire can be endured at a figural level [allowing] loss to become virtual or metaphorical" (2011, 16), and is thus essential to the work of mourning as we have uncovered it. You basically translate what is not yours until you can produce the hard kernel that escapes translation and is your loss. However, translation can be thwarted when the original document suddenly disappears. This is exactly what happens with the French Revolution, or so Comay argues: "the Revolution functions, psychoanalytically, as the inaccessible, impossible Real, and the "German Ideology" as the fantasy that keeps forever circling around it" (23). Let us unpack this quote: by translating into its own idiom the Caesarean conquests of Louis XIV's France, Germany could figure out its place in the old European order of power, despite its own lack of centralization (Germany is not a centralised state the way England, France and Spain are in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). But this lack transforms into an anachronism (which is "trauma itself", writes Comay) when the Ancien Régime gives way to a new world order. Germany's situation becomes twice removed from that of France, and the necessary delay that it introduces to translation produces the noncoincidence with itself that Comay derives from the "consciousness" of German Idealism (the question of the autonomy of Reason for Kant, all the elaborations around the 'I' in Fichte, the

trials of consciousness in Hegel, etc.). This anachronism is the very withdrawal of the Other we have pointed to in the previous stage of this essay, and one of the merits of Comay's book is to have put it forward as the impetus of Hegel's dialectics.

It is impossible to do justice to the wealth of Comay's argument here, so I will only raise issues that are relevant to our discussion of melancholia in *Two Negations*. According to Comay, the effects of the French Revolution impact the imaginary relation from one to self just as in melancholia. I quote the author of *Mourning Sickness*:

The French Revolution ruins the genealogical drama of legitimation in which the spectator might see his own image reflected in the ongoing destiny of the collective. *It blocks that self-image*. The law no longer has its foundation in some higher principles from which it would derive its authority but is self-grounded and valid solely by virtue of its own form. (2011, 42, my italics)

The result of the crisis of legitimation Comay points out, in combination with the Enlightenment's assault on "Faith" (superstition, religion) Hegel recalls in the *Phenomenology* (see 1977, §561; Comay emphasises the disavowal at work

in this move, 2011, 67), means that reason acquires a negative dimension (Reason) and becomes "set to embark on an annihilating mission that will culminate in a fury of destruction" (Comay 2011, 67): Terror... Comay's Hegelian definition of Terror – one that will not be shared by all – is worth quoting:

It is the infinite melancholia of a self that knows no other. It can recognise no obstacle, no externality, no mediating agency, no local nuance or detour that might delay or dilute the passage from individuality to totality, from part to whole, from citizen to state and back again. (2011, 68)

This passage upends Grigg's argument apropos melancholia: the subject's withdrawal from objectivity is in fact complete as Terror voids the world of objects. How does this point bear on *Two Negations*? I suggest reading the self-referentiality in *Two Negations* we have mentioned above as a kind of literary Terror: not only does *Two Negations* destroy the imaginary objects that it creates (the sets, the characters), it also destroys the conceptual objects that were used to destroy the former. Proof is the subpart Postface (N2§213-227) that translates into psychoanalytic

concepts what has come before in the shape of a fiction, until that translation is cancelled by the more literal vocabulary of the Conclusion (N2§239-241). It is therefore no accident that N2§242 reintroduces psychoanalytic concepts ("anxiety hysteria" and "conversion hysteria") in the first paragraph, only to brush them aside again in the second and final paragraph of the entire work – the essence of the Second Negation is rehearsed in the span of a single entry. For Comay, Terror – the "Golgotha of Spirit" as Hegel calls it – is the only way for melancholia to supersede itself in mourning (2011, 81). In this process, Reason seeks to abolish all determinations, and this is what *Two Negations* arguably does to the substance of the subject undergoing psychoanalysis: the first determination to go is the self as defined by the Other – the student researching Hegel at a British university (First Negation). Then come the Oedipal drama of the subject's personal story (Second Negation, "Main Body", "Epilogue", "Post-Scriptum"), the psychoanalytic language of the Other in transference ("Postface", "Afterward"), and the reflection of these experiences ("Conclusion", "Bonus"). Last but not least, also goes writing itself, with the dismantling of *Two Negations* in this essay. Only *then* can mourning (the actual loss of a close relative) take place.

There is one aspect of Comay's formidable book that remains indebted to the *mise en abîme* that characterises "late modern" or "postmodern" philosophy (from Nietzsche's "declaration of declaration" to Foucault's fascination with *Las Meninas* in *The Order of Things*). Her approximation concerning French author François-René de Chateaubriand (carelessly cast aside as "a royalist detractor of the Revolution", 2011, 57) offers a clue as to what is missing in *Mourning Sickness*, and why we have to take our investigation further still if we want to cover the whole conceptual journey of *Two Negations*. Chateaubriand, the founder of French Romanticism, the man Victor Hugo wanted so badly to be, the hero of such twentieth-century literary giants as Julien Gracq and Jean d'Ormesson, spent years in exile in the forests of America and the streets of London mourning the beheading of half of his family during the Revolution, contemplating all the while "a world that was fading" (1982, Part I, Book IX, chapter 10). Chateaubriand can boast a prestigious résumé: besides giving his name to a steak, he quite literally resurrected Christianity from the ashes of the Revolution (with *The Genius of Christianity*), wrote popular novels that influenced Lord Byron among many others, and had a political and diplomatic career during the Empire and the Restoration (ambassador to Rome, Britain and Prussia, minister of

foreign affairs, prominent journalist). He travelled throughout the world, personally met Louis XVI, Washington, Napoléon and Nelson, and dated or befriended the greatest women of his time (Pauline de Beaumont, Juliette Récamier). Yet, all that fades into the background in comparison with the *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* (*Memoirs from Beyond the Grave*) written at the end of his life. Occupying a central place in the literary canon of France, the *Memoirs* are full of the melancholia that follows great upheavals – for instance, Chateaubriand writes about "the groundless despair (*désespoir sans cause*) I carried in my heart's depths" (1982, Part 1, Book V, Chapter 15) and at one point exclaims: "by what miracle does man consent to do what he does on this earth, he who must die?" (Part 2, Book I, Chapter 8). Death quite simply becomes the horizon of thought and action: "in that labyrinth of tombs, I thought of my own, ready to open" (1982, Part 1, Book X, Chapter 5). This last passage, written in exile in London, reads, I would argue, as the translation of the trauma of Terror, and the failure of the subject to catch up with the abyssal shift in the Other. Comay puts it best:

I refashion traumatic lack as pre-emptive
negativity: a conceptual guillotine intervenes
between self and self. Having evacuated every

object, I evacuate myself, and thereby
rediscover myself, in my nullity, as my own
lost object. (2011, 92)

Pre-emptive negativity is found in the opening chapter of the *Memoirs*: "my cradle has something of my tomb." At the same time, we recall Freud's assertion that in melancholia ambivalence towards the Other is turned inwards against the ego. Unable to put the blame on an Other that escapes definition, the subject of melancholia must discharge its anger against itself if it is to preserve its object. And when Comay writes that "the missing object is retained under lock and key and undigested within the inner cavity of the self-sundered self" (2011, 111), one cannot but think of Chateaubriand's *sylphide* ("sylph"), the woman he assembles in his mind and regularly daydreams about or hallucinates in the middle of his adventures. I quote the chapter entitled "Phantom of Love" in the *Memoirs*:

Thus I imagined a woman derived from all the women I had seen: she had the figure, the hair and the smile of the guest who had pressed me against her breast; I gave her the eyes of one young girl from the village, the complexion of another. The portraits of great ladies of the age of François I, Henri IV, and Louis XIV, with

which the drawing-room was decorated, furnished me with other characteristics, and I stole certain graces from the pictures of the Virgin hung in church. (...) This invisible charmer followed me everywhere; I talked to her as if she was a real person; she varied according to my mood: Aphrodite without a veil, Diana clothed in dew and air, Thalia with her laughing mask, Hebe with the cup of youth, she often became a fairy who subjected Nature to my control. I retouched my canvas, endlessly; I took one grace from my beauty to replace it with another. I also changed her finery; I borrowed from every country, every age, every art; every religion. Then, when I had created a masterpiece, I dispersed my lines and colours once more; my unique woman was transformed into a multitude of women, in whom I idolised separately the charms I had adored in unison. (1982, Part 1, Book III, Chapter 11)

This is *not* the Kantian sublime we came across before insofar as the object here fails to fully articulate itself – let alone elevate itself to the sublime –, leaving the subject painfully aware of it: "I have left dreams in the shape of women everywhere I have trailed my life," writes

Chateaubriand further down (Part 1, Book VII, Chapter 8). This phenomenological coming-together and coming-apart of the Woman instead recalls the long passages on the Thing in Hegel's *Phenomenology* (1977, "Perception" §111-31, echoed in the First Negation, N1§8-17). Here we can put the whole matter to rest: melancholia does not so much fail to separate object from subject (Grigg's theoretical option) as confuse the drive with the void around which it circulates. To put it differently, it confuses articulating the object with the object thereby articulated: "I retouched my canvas, endlessly..." But, as the rest of the *Memoirs* and Chateaubriand's extraordinary life makes clear, *subjectivity only arises from this failure*. This is why Hegel's implicit critique of Kant in the *Phenomenology* is so important: it is when imagination successfully turns itself in/to the sublime that subjectivity is decisively defeated.

Mourning is therefore not absent from the *Memoirs*, quite the contrary. What the *Memoirs* say about Chateaubriand's 1802 publication of *The Genius of Christianity* in response to his mother's death fits Grigg's account of mourning to the letter. I quote Chateaubriand:

I worked with the zeal of a son who is building
a mausoleum to his mother (...) I wanted to
make a lot of noise so that it could go all the

way to the resting place of my mother. (1982,
Part 1, Book XI, chapter 8)

Now, is not a mausoleum exactly the kind of "memorial in the symbolic" Grigg pointed to with respect to mourning? Interestingly enough, French twentieth-century scholar Albert Thibaudet remarked that the *Memoirs* become a kind of monumental tomb like the Pyramid of Cheops (2016, 67). Chateaubriand himself writes that "these *Memoirs* will be a mortuary temple erected by the light of my memories" (1982, first chapter). It is as if, with the writers that immediately follow the Revolution (the French Romantics), starting with Chateaubriand, the symbolic plane itself experiences death. It is no longer a question of staging the richness of symbolic life, as in Shakespeare's magnificent plays, but a question of recounting the unique experience of symbolic death that the withdrawal of the Other has brought forth. The evacuation of all contents that Comay describes in her book actually leaves a singular object in its wake: style. Thibaudet notes that the *Memoirs* find Man stylised, stylised by style itself (2016, 69), to the point that "Buffon's *mot* ["style is the man himself"] is inverted: Man is Style." Style presupposes an Author, that is to say someone who rises to the challenge of death by digging one's own grave to be able to write the epitaph (and have the last

laugh...). This definition is in stark contrast to the aestheticism of Kant and Nietzsche we examined earlier: their sublime instead bury the Author under the Object, it prophesizes the eternal return of all imaginary content under the sun in a desperate attempt to ward off the nightfall of abstract freedom. By contrast, this question of style in relation to symbolic death is key in *Two Negations*. I quote the Second Negation:

Can we all colonise our own deaths? That is
the *political* question. (N2§20)

As *Two Negations* fashions its own symbolic articulation (so its own death), style gradually comes to consciousness and logically has the last word, literally (see N2§242) and figuratively. Colonise our own deaths – through style. And it is a political question because it concerns the emancipation of the individual from external authority. This point leads me to my final remark. What the conceptual journey of Chateaubriand's *Memoirs* and the works of French Romanticism at large (Hugo, Lamartine, Balzac, Gautier, Stendhal, Musset, Sand, etc.) reveal is the assumption of a new democratic Master (capitalised to indicate a function rather than someone in particular) with whom sovereignty now rests. This democratic Master contrasts with the old

aristocratic Master of the Ancien Régime Chateaubriand readily dismisses in the first chapter of the *Memoirs* ("aristocracy has three successive ages: the age of superiority, the age of privilege, the age of vanity; leaving the first behind, it degenerates in the second and expires in the last"). This new democratic Master is that of the individual who fashions himself or herself independently of traditional authorities such as the Church, the State, the Family, and last but not least, the University. As it piles up references to the master-slave dialectic just before falling silent (N2§239-242), this democratic Master is what *Two Negations* awkwardly, painfully, unconsciously works out and sends back at the end. But to whom? That is the question.

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