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Derrida à l'œuvre: Deconstruction at Large



### Deconstruction at large

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## *Deconstruction at large*

Deconstruction is inventive or it is nothing at all; it does not settle for methodical procedures, it opens up a passageway, it marches ahead and marks a trail; its writing is not only performative, it produces rules—other conventions—for new performativities and never installs itself in the theoretical assurance of a simple opposition between performative and constative. Its *process* [*démarche*] involves an affirmation, this latter being linked to the coming—the *venire*—in event, advent, invention. But it can only do so by deconstructing a conceptual and institutional structure of invention that neutralizes by putting the stamp of reason on some aspect of invention, of inventive power: as if it were necessary, over and beyond a certain traditional status of invention, to reinvent the future.

J. Derrida, “Psyche: Invention of the Other” (23)

Deep in the history of penitence, from repentance to regret and contrition, from public avowal with expiation to private avowal and confession, from public reconciliation to reparation then to absolution, between blood and water, ...I wonder, interested in the depth of the bed sore, not in writing or literature, art, philosophy, science, religion or politics but only memory and heart, not even the history of the presence of the present, I wonder what I am looking for with this machine avowal, beyond institutions, including psychoanalysis, beyond knowledge and truth, which has nothing to do with it here...

J. Derrida, “Circumfession” (§ 17, 86-87)

The opening of deconstruction to the reinvention of the future, not as a messianic yet-to-come, but as a future that is present and seeks representation and recognition, is what we identify as the *at large* of deconstruction. Deconstruction is not merely a performance of the repressed contradictions and silenced aporias that reveal the center of the text elsewhere but is primarily an affirmation of the coming of what the text has excluded.

This coming takes the form of a difference that dismantles and transgresses the existing economy of differences and their appropriating elements. Delaying and deferring this economy, the event that Jacques Derrida calls *différance* reveals the *at large* in the following ways that become intertwined. First, the deconstruction of racializing and taxonomic binaries opens the horizon of the human to forms of being-with beyond race thinking: being with other humans, with other species, and life-forming entities such as stones. I refer here to Derrida's critique of Heidegger's taxonomy of man-animal-stone in the second volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, as well as to Elizabeth Povinelli's analysis of the neoliberal distinction between Life and NonLife in *Geontologies*. Second, the *at large* takes the form of the future-present immanent in the places and temporalities of those who arrive and do not belong yet; of those who rise against a hegemonic politics that excludes and suppresses them in order to claim their right to soil, to rights and to living well together finally; of the multitudes that represent the majority of the people on this planet and, yet, are the economic minority. Hence, the *at large* to which the text gestures and from which the text withdraws, manifests the world, where the human, the animal, and the stone are all intertwined as part of a planetary existence. Seeking out the traces of the other and mapping the process of their invention, deconstruction strategically lays bare the architecture that masks such invention as reason and unearths the injustices, binaries and radical opposites that such an invention consolidates as the most natural order. While dismantling the center

This coming takes the form of an unleashing of and an exposure to what has been discouraged or differed through being economical with one's words, to what has been shaded or left out in preparing, writing and publicizing (publishing, reading aloud, teaching, sharing with interlocutors) one's own texts. Deconstruction *at large* draws on the experience of the way in which Derrida himself has been economical with his words—an expression which might sound somewhat unexpected vis-à-vis his reputation as a prolific thinker and the expansion that *at large* seems to point at. If "being economical with one's words" means "saying little," "going straight to the essential," or "refraining from speaking for too long," one might wonder whether this is relevant to Derrida who, as any of his readers know, takes his time both in the body of his texts and in his preliminary remarks. He often does so, moreover, in order to take all the necessary precautions before venturing into the wild forest of the complicated questions he addresses each and every time (if I remember correctly, it was Hélène Cixous who used this metaphor in reference to Derrida's strategy). Finally, this selfsame strategy which, at first blush, may seem contradictory to an economy of words is more or less repeated when Derrida, notably, in certain of his lectures, and after having launched into long preparatory remarks, seems to lack the necessary time to fully develop his reasoning, says that he is constrained to an abbreviated version, or that he defers a more complete treatment, and thus contents himself with sketching the broad outlines of what such a treatment might have been. Deconstruction at large would then be what exceeds the

of the structure to release its aporias and double-binds, deconstruction aspires to “invent the future,” to open “over and beyond a certain traditional status of invention” (Derrida, “Psyche: Invention of the Other” 23). For Derrida, the world is not only out there but also symptomatically present in the text often manifested at its threatening limit and constitutive outside. In other words, the world is the place that marks the borders of the “conceptual and institutional structure” (23) of the text and operates as its exterior where otherness—figurative, symbolic and real—is exiled while it is simultaneously contained in the text as a supplement.

Forgetting or putting the *at large* under erasure can result in a deconstruction that runs the danger of becoming complicit with the reduction of the world to the colonial divisions that reshape it as a place with hardened borders. Instead, Derrida has insisted on dismantling the reduction of the concept of the human to Man and radicalizing the being of being human, animal, and rogue by examining the metaphysics and politics of sovereignty that have consolidated the taxonomic divisions between them. What we call deconstruction at large is one of the possible ways of inheriting Derrida’s work in the present that attests to the development of new racisms that try to limit if not completely efface the reinvention of living together well with strangers, even with those strangers that are not like us and that we do not necessarily understand or like. In the *tRace* conference on race and deconstruction (University of California, Irvine 2003), Derrida declares that deconstruction has always already been about race and more specifically that deconstruction has been “through and through...a deconstruction of racism” (Hesse, “Derrida’s Black Accent: Decolonial Deconstruction” 5). Rather than a belated confession about his reticence to claim deconstruction as a direct attack on the racist and

economy of one’s words; what is rendered necessary by them; what threatens their eventual respectability and conventional propriety; and even what better keeps their promise than they themselves do.

My understanding of deconstruction at large is based on a personal and, I think, broadly shared experience wherein Derrida’s discourse gradually installs itself, so to speak, around us or installs us within it: it sets out its rules, informs us of its conditions, warns us about problematic readings, alerts us to the difficulties it will encounter, and lays out the aporias upon which it arrives. From a certain moment onward, though, and once familiarized with Derrida’s discourse, we find our bearings therein with relative ease. Even when this is not entirely the case, and when something still feels off, we nevertheless have a fairly good idea of where we are and in what terms we hear him speak. If he does not quite make an economy of his words, we nevertheless have an idea of the general direction in which he is moving: the texts he comments on, the words and phrases he dissects, the quarrels he stages, the nuances within nuances that he invites us to observe and follow. One might say that all of this constitutes an exercise in the *oiko*-nomy of words, thereby setting the laws of a household. One might furthermore add that this is what allows us to understand in which household one settles, a Derridean one in this case. But this means feeling at home within Derrida’s thought. Even if this might be not problematic in itself, it also means feeling overly content with it in so far as this thought is perceived as a system replete with ramifications, yet mostly self-sufficient. Deconstruction at large is meant to be a shift from this position, posing the question regarding from which household one hears and speaks out, and from which household one looks around. It is meant to see a household not only as a grounding or as a situated knowledge (Zenetti), which I find legitimate, but also as a risky coziness, or even a trap.



ethnocentric impulses, attachments and origins of Eurocentric discourses, Derrida postulates that deconstruction is always already entangled with the *at large* of the world, which is segregated by race thinking and its practices and torn by the economic and political factors that perpetuate them.

Barnor Hesse persuasively explains how performing deconstruction as “a critique of foundationalism” and “as an exposition of undecidability,” affirms the “decolonial trajectory of deconstruction” (Hesse, “Derrida’s Black Accent” 6) against the mythmaking processes of “European universality” (6) that have placed European modernity at the center of the world. The capitalist and colonial invention of the world as such a Eurocentric fabulation, occasions deconstruction as the event that dispels the myths, fables and constructions sustaining that invention. The deconstruction of the reason that runs through the “fundamental concepts of ontology or of Western metaphysics” (Derrida, “Letter to a Japanese Friend” 2), “bears on” the “structure of traditional architecture” (2), which holds them together. What deconstruction struggles to attend to is the world as earth and relation, as “becoming world” (Derrida, “Geopsychoanalysis and the ‘rest of the world’” 319), as “a community or otherwise of the world” (Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign, Volume II* 8). Deconstruction at large pursues the question of being across different relations that can disrupt the vicious cycle of the racial subjection of the human to Man, which constitutes an act of foundational violence against the being of all species and of the earth.

Upon the dismantling of binaries such as human and less than human, the sovereign and the beast, black and white, *anthropos* and stone, Man and his others, which, among other structures of opposites, found the white metaphysics

Let me return to the idea of the economy of one’s words as refraining from saying too much, and to some of the contexts and situations in which Derrida says that he is economical with his words. I am not referring to those occasions where he announces a line of questioning only to say immediately afterward that he will not pursue it at that precise moment. Rather, I think one can gain insight into what deconstruction at large might stand for by referring to those times when Derrida finds himself in a delicate, even embarrassing, position, especially given that he is speaking with hindsight from a position with several years of retrospective experience.

I will begin with the text *Politics and Friendship*, an interview that was published in 1991. In this text, Derrida speaks about the years he spent at the *École normale supérieure*, teaching alongside Althusser while avoiding any dialogue with him. In a characteristic passage, we read:

I did not wish to nor could I formulate questions that would have resembled, from afar, those from the Marxism against which Althusser was fighting. Even though I thought it in another way, I could not say: “Yes, it’s theoreticism and therefore leads to a certain political paralysis.” *I thus found myself walled in by a sort of tormented silence.* Furthermore, all that I am describing was coupled, naturally, with what others have called an intellectual, if not personal, terrorism. I always had very good personal relations with Althusser, Balibar, and others. But there was, let’s say, a sort of *theoretical intimidation*: to formulate questions in a style that appeared, shall we say, phenomenological, transcendental or ontological was immediately considered suspicious, backward, idealistic, even reactionary. And since I was already formulating things in these manners, this appearance was rendered complicated to the extreme, that is, to the point of making them unreadable for those at whom they were directed. Naturally, I didn’t think those formulations were reactionary, but that *intimidation was there.* (Derrida – Springer 188; my emphasis)

A little further on, Derrida recalls:

of presence, deconstruction affirms the presence of what has been deferred and delayed: something other, someone other, still invisible to the order of politics, or unaccountable to the available frames of representation and rights. What deconstruction enables, while demystifying and dismantling the structure, is the serendipitous event of a coming—of the other, of a world yet to be revealed, of modalities of living together yet to be discovered and be fully acknowledged—that can be neither anticipated nor precalculated. The presence and perseverance of these others—racialized, subaltern, oppressed, silenced but not silent—manifest the *at large*. Their histories account for the phenomenon of the “coloniality of being” (Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom” 268), which is engendered by the political and epistemological discourses and apparatuses that keep reducing the “human to a noun” (Wynter, “Human Being as Noun? Or Being Human as Praxis?” n.p.), a fixed and immutable sign, the overrepresented Man as the paradigmatic anthropos.

For Derrida, the coloniality of being is grounded in the forgetting of the colonial appropriation of being by language. In *Monolingualism of the Other*, Derrida claims that language colonizes being, expropriates being from what is most proper to it, that is, from the totality of its existence before naming and signification, and interpellates it first via the proper name and then via all its attachments. Language performs the first act of colonial violence against being, namely, the violence of the proper name. The proper name wrenches being from its dream of wholeness and thrusts it into the signification field of the proper name and of the symbolic and material attachments of ethnicity and origins. The interpellation of being by language is a foundational act of violence, an arche-violence that accounts for the persistence of the phenomenon of the coloniality

That’s why Althusser’s and the Althusserians’ discourse seemed a bit stifling to me: I sensed a new scientism in it, even the refinement or the disguising of (and this term would have made them scream) a new “positivism” that repressed the possibility of questions like “What is an object? *Where does the value of objectivity or of the theoretical come from?*” etc. Since I couldn’t formulate such questions without appearing to join the chorus of adversaries, *I remained silent*. (197; my emphasis)

There are, no doubt, several ways of approaching what Derrida recounts in this passage: as an episode in the intellectual and institutional history of France in the second half of the twentieth century; as the brief narrative of a certain tension between friendship and politics, of friendships despite politics, almost, and vice versa; or as a prelude to what Derrida would attempt in *Specters of Marx*, the multiple reactions that followed this attempt, and then his response in “Marx & Sons.” But what seems rather more relevant to me as concerns deconstruction at large is this “tormented silence” of which Derrida speaks. Far from any psychologizing understanding, I read it as the experience of the institutional or university *intime*—*intime* in a very French sense of the term, referring to secrecy, to what remains unspoken, to what would fall under the heading of the private, although, as one readily understands, this “tormented silence” has nothing exclusively or primarily private about it. It was a matter of an intimidation that stemmed from a strongly discouraged style of questioning, one that imposed a style of life that took time to reveal itself: that of an intimate enclave within an intellectual milieu; of intimacies with intellectuals (in the sense of “intimacy” or “proximity” in English this time), inseparable from an extreme vigilance; of the observation of what was being said all around, coupled with the care not to touch upon it – at least not to touch upon where it risked injury and hurt. In a context where proximity was the rule, anticipating blows and developing a strategy was essential. Elsewhere in the same interview, Derrida says:

of being. The task is not only to deconstruct the effects of colonialism but also to transgress the expropriating strategies of language; the first step in that direction is the recognition that language engenders the structure of “alienation without alienation” (Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other* 25). He thus argues that “‘colonialism’ and ‘colonization’ are only high points [*reliefs*], one traumatism over another, an increasing buildup of violence, the jealous rage of an essential *coloniality* and *culture*, as shown by the two names” (24).

Here Derrida takes the risk of an oversimplification. The language we call ours, “is the language of the other” (25). The colonial condition, Derrida avers, is a diffraction of the power of language to appropriate, alienate and expropriate being from what is most proper to it, a sense, or maybe an illusion of wholeness before interpellation. The colonial condition manifests the “appropriative madness” (24) of language in its most extreme form. Derrida does not wish to disavow the significant differences between the arche-violence of language as a general condition and the exponential destructive effects of colonial languages on the native and indigenous peoples’ oral and written traditions. On the contrary, in the section on Abdelkebir Khatibi’s poetics of bilingual love, Derrida describes the material conditions of living under “colonial censorships” (37) in concrete terms that leave no doubt that he does not defy the difference between colonial languages and the colonial nature of all languages. Derrida aligns Khatibi’s poetics of bilingual love that muses on the nostalgia for a lost origin, the mother tongue, with his memory of being forced to relate to Arabic—the language of his neighbors—as a “strange kind of alien language,” “as the language of the other” (37), albeit the nearest other to that of French. Living on “the edge of the Arab neighborhood, at one of those hidden

But one has to take into consideration a sort of overtraining in the treatment of problems from an economical, potential, algebraic standpoint —like chess players who don’t need for the game to actually advance in order to anticipate the opponent’s moves and to respond in advance virtually, to preinterpret fictively all possible moves and to guess the other’s strategy to the finest detail. All this is related to the theory of philosophical games within a tiny milieu over-trained in decipherment. (193)

A little further on, Derrida makes explicit one of the most appropriate means that were employed for the organization of this internal economy of the institution:

Some forces in this merciless *Kampfplatz* grouped around Lacan, others around Foucault, Althusser, Deleuze. When it had any, that period’s diplomacy (war by other means) was that of *avoidance*: *silence, one doesn’t cite or name, everyone distinguishes himself and everything forms a sort of archipelago of discourse without earthly communication, without visible passageway. Today the sea between these archipelagos should be reconstituted*. In appearance, no one communicated. No one was translated. From time to time, there were, from afar, signals in the night: Althusser hailing Lacan or hailing Foucault who had hailed Lacan who hailed Lévi-Strauss. There I was, the new kid—in a certain sense it wasn’t my generation. (194; my emphasis)

If earlier I spoke of an enclave, of an intimate and institutional space marked by the tormented silence that Derrida experienced for several years, one can here identify one of the forms that an economy of words might take: neither to cite, nor to rub up intimately against the words of one or another, nor to give a name to any such friction with them, nor even to attempt any contact whatsoever. Derrida’s account certainly allows us to imagine an atmosphere, even if it is difficult to imagine an impermeability so absolute or so successfully achieved. Nevertheless, we are very much within the logic of the *intime*, of a between-us, of the avoidance of superfluous intimacies, of a positioning that would be of the order of the *à-part* rather than of confrontation, whether tactful

frontiers [*frontières de nuit*],” he experiences the “efficacious,” albeit “subtle” impact of segregation. French, Derrida’s language, becomes the border that distances “Algerians, Arabs and Kabyles,” who are near and yet far away; a border that separates him from those whose bodies, languages and traditions are the most intimate compared to the French culture that is his, albeit at a distance.

Multiple racisms mark the body of the other: the Algerian Jew and the Arab are forced into a dialectic relation regulated by the language of the master, French, which is both mother and colonial language that circumscribes Derrida’s access to the native Arabic and Berber languages. The “organized marginalization of those languages, Arabic and Berber” reinforced the “colonial policy that pretended to treat Algeria as a group of three departments” (38). But just as Derrida describes the strategies of division and rule that result in the marginalization and weakening [*exténuation*] of the native languages, he insists that the colonial conditions he analyses are not simply the defining features of colonialism; rather, they reflect culture itself, because “all culture is originally colonial” (39). Derrida cautions that his provocative claim might be mistaken for an attempt to collapse the radical difference between culture as a colonial condition in general and the brutal realities of colonialism, or even worse as a justification for its so-called civilizing mission.

Such a gesture could institute a politics of forgetting rather than an affirmation of the *at large* of deconstruction. To deconstruct the colonial condition of language in general as the all-encompassing reality wherein official colonialism is its byproduct, runs the risk of the forgetting of the politics of colonial violence that Frantz Fanon underscores when he describes its impact on the colonized particularly in “On Violence” in *The*

or not, whether accompanied or not by the shivers that the attempt to brush up against a foreign domain and to experience one’s own limits can provoke. Deconstruction at large takes Derrida’s narrative in *Politics of Friendship* as a warning against turning inward upon oneself, performing a theoretical self-sufficiency (in other words, performing deconstruction within a deconstructionist enclave), thus practicing predictability and avoid rubbing oneself on the other. Therefore, deconstruction at large might also aim at addressing institutional anchoring and, rather than reading and thinking Derrida from the outside in, aim at reading and thinking from within Derrida out.

Without referring to specific cases of institutional anchoring, Derrida returns to it in the *Rapport bleu*, the publication on which the founding of the *Collège international de philosophie (CIPh)* was based. The first text included in the *Rapport bleu* is a collective one, co-written and co-signed by the four delegates of the Ministry of National Education in the 1980s (François Châtelet, Jean-Pierre Faye, Dominique Lecourt, and Derrida himself), whereas the four texts that follow are each signed individually. In the collective text, which justifies the necessity and explains the logic of a *CIPh* that would not be like the Universities, and that would do more than merely fill in the gaps, one reads:

Each time one must ask oneself: why were such and such lines of research unable to develop? What stood in their way? And who? And how? Why? With a view to what? The *Collège* could play, up to a certain point, the role of a theorico-institutional revealer...It is by definition impossible to provide *a priori* a reasoned list of these exclusions, foreclosures, prohibitions, or marginalizations (discreet or violent). (Châtelet–Derrida–Faye–Lecourt 45–46; my translation)

What returns here, if only indirectly, is the question of silence (here in the form of discreet marginalization) and the question of intimidation (here in the form of foreclosure or violent prohibition). The text assigns to the soon-to-be-born

*Wretched of the Earth*. This could be one of the moments when the search for an arche-violence could blur the material conditions of the ongoing violence of colonialism and neocolonialism, whose impact has not afforded the colonized with the luxury to search for the origins of coloniality in the unevenly shared condition of “alienation without alienation” (Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other* 25). However, Derrida insists that one crucial aspect of coloniality at large that must be deconstructed, is the fabrication of the master as the sovereign being and the consolidation of his language as the dominant means of representation and signification. His proposition that the issue here is language as a profoundly colonial apparatus that expropriates and colonizes being before colonialism proper, aims at questioning the basis of coloniality, namely the presupposed superior essence and prior role of the master and his governance:

For contrary to what one is often most tempted to believe, the master is nothing. And he does not have exclusive possession of anything. ...Because the master does not possess exclusively, and naturally, what he calls his language, because, whatever he wants or does, he cannot maintain any relations of property or identity that are natural, national, congenital, or ontological with it, because he can give substance to and articulate this appropriation only in the course of an unnatural process of politico-phantasmic constructions, because language is not his natural possession, he can, thanks to that very fact, pretend historically, through the rape of a cultural usurpation, which means always essentially colonial, to appropriate it in order to impose it as ‘his own.’ (23)

Ultimately the power that any master exerts on his others, his naming of the world as his possession, and his accumulation of land and resources “through the rape of a cultural usurpation” (23), are all inventions that make his sovereignty appear natural and thus incontestable. “The master is nothing” (23), does not mean that his power

*CIPh* the role of an institution claiming a renewed lucidity and a perspicacity meant to identify what systematically escapes already existing institutions, or what these institutions exclude. The question is to know which words escape the economy of these institutions and for which they prove themselves too economical. It is worth noting that the vocabulary adopted in these pages of the report is that of *limitrophie* (an institutional bordering, so to speak). In the case of “external” *limitrophie*, one reads that “such an advance may first bring to light a site or a theme that no determined discipline, as such, will have recognized and treated up to now” (45). In the case of an “internal” *limitrophie*,

...it is within a single discipline, within an already organized theorico-institutional apparatus, that the question of limits may arise. This is the moment when such and such a positive body of knowledge encounters within its autonomous field difficulties or limits that its own axiomatics and procedures do not allow it to resolve. (46)

If the logic adopted here is not that of transgression or of border crossing, it is, at least, that of porosity and of an exit from habitual delimitations. This does not only concern elective affinities, an attachment to this or that philosophical or other work, as we have just seen, or the avoidance of certain others. What Derrida calls into question—and what can also be perceived as part of the task of deconstruction at large—is what is delimited as philosophical, and maybe the idea of institutional delimitation itself.

In the personal text that Derrida contributed to the *Rapport bleu*, entitled “Coups d’envoi,” he writes the following lines:

In all cases, sites of reflection must be instituted wherever the question of the end of ends of the philosophical as such can take place, wherever what is at stake is the limit, the borders, or the destination of philosophy, wherever there is reason to ask: philosophy with a view to what? From where and up to where? In what and how? By whom and for whom? Is this decidable, and within what limits? In fact and

has no real consequences on what he has appropriated as “his own” (23); instead his aphoristic statement suggests that the dire effects of the overextraction of resources, of the colonization of other peoples and their lands, and of the enslavement and dehumanization of the his others, do not reflect the master’s superior essence but rather the arbitrariness and emptiness of the presupposed priority of his sovereignty and of his right to govern. The absence of the prior essence of the master’s governance, before and after colonialism, sheds light on the *at large* of the coloniality of being in a manner that explains the persistence of the phenomenon not only as the product of the colonial and neocolonial apparatuses, of the racist and neo-racist discourses and politics, but also as the ongoing effect of a politics of naming and appropriation that language, all languages, enable.

The power of the master relies on this arbitrary politics of naming as appropriation. However, appropriation is frustrated by its object, the expropriated being, whose resistance and unaccountability to the master and his concept of property, reveal that no process of expropriation can ever run a full circle. No politics of dispossession and enslavement can ever be eternal and permanent as the histories of struggle and resistance of the oppressed have shown time and again. The subject of the master and its foundation on property and the exclusion of others, is deconstructed and given to the “question of justice, and to the related questions of democracy and hospitality” (Balibar, *Equaliberty* 93) by those who succeed in transgressing their expropriation even as they remain colonized and dispossessed. The persistence of the phenomenon of coloniality should not be mistaken to be evidence of its perpetuity. The histories of dissent, mutinies, revolts, and revolutions, including the inconspicuous acts of resistance, especially the acts

in law, these *topoi* will also be vigilant sites of the *Collège*’s reflection on itself: on its own finality, on its destination (today and tomorrow) as a philosophical site, on what legitimates it and subsequently confers upon it its own power of legitimation, on what decides its politics and its economy, on the forces it serves and makes use of, on its national and international relations to other institutions. (107)

Here too, the vocabulary is striking. The new household that the *Collège* was meant to form would be situated upon the borders of the borders of the philosophical, where those borders themselves might be liable to disappear. If the Derridean enclave at the *École normale supérieure* was home to a tormented silence and harbored a certain pressure, it would seem that this new household invites the unfolding of a turmoil that has hitherto remained reasonably contained. Derrida suggests that a delimitation of the philosophical would itself be at the limit of the decidable and the undecidable, and that this should not be perceived as a problem. It is important to recall that a “problem” is not only, or not so much, what must be addressed and studied, but rather a *problēma*, “that which one poses or throws in front of oneself...so as to hide something unavowable-like a shield (*problēma* also means shield, clothing as barrier or guard-barrier) behind which one guards oneself *in secret* or *in shelter* in case of danger” (Derrida, *Aporias* 11-12). Deconstruction at large would then be more than a new economy of thought and discourse to be developed vis-à-vis the problem of relating to philosophy, or even an attempt to no longer remain behind a shield: the shield of doing deconstruction in a self-affirming way, as an affair of the specialist, indulging in the pleasure of studying it while refraining from the pleasure of experimenting with it. If my understanding of what Derrida is saying is not entirely mistaken, the questions “by whom and for whom?” on the one hand, and “from where and up to where?” on the other, can only overlap: by non-philosophers for non-philosophers, perhaps, by crossing or brushing up against the philosophical.

of performative disobedience—such as Bartleby’s “I’d prefer not to”—attest to how expropriation can never fully empty being of its potentiality. Expropriation, as the different histories of struggle have shown time and again, is resisted at the beginning of its development. Grounded in the nothing that the master is, expropriation is simultaneously haunted by ex-appropriation as “a negative characteristic that affects the subject” of property and property relations and “communicates at least theoretically, speculatively, with a community that itself has no ‘property,’ and thus no common good (no *res publica* or commonwealth) to preserve, appropriate, or identify with” (93).

The acts of dissent, resistance and revolution against the master and their process of expropriation, generate what Derrida calls ex-appropriation. Ex-appropriation is not the opposite of expropriation but rather its beyond. The letter “a” that resonates with the letter “a” in *différance*, signifies the ruptures, gaps and fissures in the processes and discourses that aim at the dehumanization of human beings, at the utter commodification of their bodies and at the deracination of being from what is most proper to itself, interpellated as it is by the language of proper and properties. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida refers to exappropriation as what reveals “the radical contradiction of all ‘capital’” (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 112); the bodies and subjects, their flesh and relations transgress the limits of “all property or appropriation,” including that of “free subjectivity” (112), at the same time that they are being subjected to its commodifying processes.

After his analysis of the ten “wears and tears” (*usures*) that continue to define our age of neoliberal derangement, Derrida proposes deconstruction in a certain spirit of Marx, or Marxist

The question “from where?”, more specifically, seems to me to be the among the most important for deconstruction at large, as it signifies something else than a point of departure. It rather signifies a movement, from what is not easily sayable in a given context, toward an outside that would not be given in advance, but which rather constitutes an outside one must grope toward—toward a destination yet to be found. Here again, we are within the logic of *from within out*: from the turmoil that would no longer be silenced toward whoever or whatever might be able to hear it or feel themselves addressed by it. In a text that is literally foundational of something (the *CIPh*), one distances oneself from the pure logic of objects, philosophical or otherwise. The initial question was not which objects, or which questions had not yet been addressed by and within conventional institutions, but rather which types of research had not yet been undertaken, and in which aporias, institutional or other, one had found oneself. Deconstruction at large adheres to this very logic.

If, at the moment when the *Collège* was created, Derrida speaks from within such aporias out, one finds a similar positioning in his reflection, several years later, in “The Future of the Profession or the University Without Condition.” Derrida distinguishes “*stricto sensu*, the university from all research institutions that are in the service of economic goals and interests of all sorts, without being granted in principle the independence of the university” (Derrida, “The Future of the Profession or the University Without Condition” 27–28). He describes this university as “an exposed, tendered citadel, to be often destined to capitulate without condition, to surrender unconditionally” (28), and he proposes a first definition of the University without condition in the following terms—it is:

...the principal right to say everything, whether it be under the heading of fiction and the experimentation of knowledge, and the right to say it publicly, to publish it...It distinguishes the university institution from other institutions



analysis in a certain spirit of deconstruction, by way of bringing together the Marxist critique of the alienating effects of capitalism as an economic-political and ontological process of expropriation and alienation, and deconstruction as the affirmation of what such a process can never fully foreclose nor subjugate, namely, being in all of its potentiality for resistance and transformation. The event of exappropriation as something that always remains and returns to haunt property relations, dispossession and alienation, is symptomatically manifested in Derrida's deconstructive reading of the commodity-table, where he unsettles the clear boundaries between the use-value and the exchange-value of the table to demonstrate how the use-value of a thing like a table is never pure, nor uncontaminated by what exchange-value profits from, which is its transformation into a commodity:

... any use-value is marked by this possibility of being used *by the other* or being used *another time*, this alterity or iterability projects it *a priori* onto the market of equivalences...In its originary iterability, a use-value is in advance promised, promised to exchange and beyond exchange. It is in advance thrown onto the market of equivalences. (203)

The presupposition of an originary moment of use-value uncontaminated by the exchange value that capitalism consolidates as the dominant condition to measure things and beings, is analogous to the presupposition of a language that is uncontaminated by the colonial force of alienating being through the proper name. In this analogy, the *at large* of deconstruction takes the form of a critique of the language of purity: There is no commodity whose use-value is so pure that it does not presuppose exchange and is not meant for equivalence; there is no language that does not interpellate being and does not wrench it from its existence through the violence of the proper name. Capitalism does not erase nor

founded on the right or the duty to say everything, for example religious confession and even psychoanalytic "free association." But it is also what fundamentally links the university, and above all the Humanities, to what is called literature, in the European and modern sense of the term, as the right to say everything publicly, or to keep it secret, if only in the form of fiction. (26-27)

This reference to the right to both say everything and to not say everything (one position complementing and reinforcing, rather than opposing the other) is found at times in the text (28), including when Derrida speaks of the connections of the new Humanities and of literature to this self-same right in the fourth installment of his project for a university without condition (52). Its place is, without the slightest hesitation, defined by Derrida: "this principle of unconditionality presents itself, originally and above all, in Humanities. It has an originary and privileged place of presentation, of manifestation, of safekeeping in the Humanities. It has there its space of discussion as well as of reelaboration" (29). And it is also here that Derrida situates his own approach, saying that

...deconstruction (and I am not at all embarrassed to say so and even to claim) has its privileged place in the university and in the Humanities as the place irredentist resistance or even, analogically, as a sort of principle of civil disobedience, even of dissidence in the name of a superior law and a justice of thought. (29)

The right to say everything and to not say everything (in other words, the right to make an economy of one's words, and thus to practice literature as Derrida imagines it, and, I would add, perform deconstruction at large) is somewhere inside, *within*, in a kind of speech or (here again) tormented silence, where what enters the University without completely entering it takes place, and which, being inside, risks bursting forth toward an outside (a beyond-Humanities as well as a beyond-University). Deconstruction at large claims its vital space in this understanding of the University and of the Humanities, thus

destroy the ideal context of use-value but only capitalizes on what is already there, a use-value promised for and destined to exchange. Colonial language does not contaminate a pure mother tongue, the native and indigenous languages as the language of innocence, uninterrupted by violence; instead, it capitalizes on the power of language to alienate and appropriate being.

The absence of this pure origin before capitalism, before colonialism, before the wears and tears of neoliberal age, does not justify the exponential violence of capitalism and colonialism. Exappropriation as the force that emanates from the resistance to servitude, commodification and appropriation, “does not justify any bondage” (112): “It is, if we may say so, exactly the opposite. Servitude binds (itself) to appropriation” (112). And exappropriation, we may add, is intertwined with the potentiality to transgress the politics of appropriation and expropriation by way of resistance against and delinking from the politics and discourses of servitude in all its forms. Exappropriation thus takes the form of “an injunction to make place for alterity” (Balibar, *Equaliberty* 93), another name of the *at large* that the deconstruction of the subject as property and as co-belonging with the same can enable. Via the affirmation of exappropriation as the emptying of the proper, deconstruction can thus gesture to “a community without community that has nothing in common but non-property, the resistance of its own members to identifying with some ‘proper’” (93). This is another name of the *at large*, a community without community, a community that moves beyond a community of the same.

Against the racist and xenophobic politics, against the transparency of nationalisms and the exile of all presences and manifestations of otherness that signify ambiguity or opacity,

contributing to a certain *mise en œuvre* of this University and these Humanities. It follows what Derrida alludes to when he speaks of

...an event that, without necessarily coming about tomorrow, would remain perhaps—and I underscore *perhaps*—to come: to come *through* the university, to come about and to come *through* it, *thanks* to it, *in* what is called the university, assuming that it has ever been possible to identify an *inside* of the university; that is, a *proper essence of the sovereign University*, and within it, something that one could also identify, properly; under the name of “Humanities.” I am thus referring to a university that would be what it always should have been or always should have represented, that from its inception and in principle: sovereignly autonomous, unconditionally free in institution, sovereign in its speech, in its writing, in its thinking. In a thinking, a writing, a speech that would be not only the archives or the productions of *knowledge* but also performative works, which are far from being neutral utopias. And why, we will wonder, would the principle of this unconditional freedom, its active and militant respect, its effective enactment, its *mise en œuvre*, be confided above all to the new “Humanities” rather than to any other disciplinary field? (34-35)

Following this logic, deconstruction at large finds itself—somewhat strangely, it must be admitted—not entirely *within* a University (a laboratory-University, an amphitheater-of-anatomy University, or a University working on objects), but within a University, allowing events to arrive *through* it (a passage-University, a University which translates, and maybe even boosts, the turmoil, silenced or other). This University would, as we see again here, be situated between the undecidable “from where” and “up to where,” not only of philosophy (as we saw in the *Rapport bleu*), but above all of literature as the site of saying-everything and not-saying-everything. This university through which deconstruction at large occurs surpasses a conception of the archives and requires performative works; it should dis-orient itself from the “sovereign mastery of its interior”

deconstructing to pave the path to the *at large* is a political and rebellious act. Against the politics of fear that misrepresents the migrants like a plague of illegal humans, the effort of deconstruction to flesh out the beyond within the very texts that try to foreclose it, to dismantle the racist discourses and politics by way of unconcealing the necessary invention of the other upon which they rely, is a politics of affirmation. This reactionary politics preempts the radical potentialities of living well together with others: other beings, species, even life forming entities such as stones and rivers that often lie outside the order of what politics allows to be visible and thus worthy of political and social recognizability. Elizabeth Povinelli deconstructs the hierarchy of beings, species and elements to affirm the significance of life-forming materialities such as stones and rivers, among others, and stress the need to invent a new geoontological framework to relate to *gaia*, to the earth. Her deconstruction of settler colonialism and its “governance of the prior” (Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment* 36) releases the at large of indigenous modalities of inhabiting the earth that do not replicate the taxonomy of beings, species and materialities. Povinelli’s work is an anthropological example of how deconstruction strives for the at large, which is neither utopic nor messianic but very real and present, a possible future that is already here lived and pursued by the “part that has no part” (Rancière in Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment* 73), the indigenous, the racialized, the multitudes.

The field of *at large* is signposted by the following: First, by the event of the world as Relation without one center. This suggests that the world is always in becoming and dependent on what Édouard Glissant identifies as the chaos and mess of everything that makes the world, of the world as everything, “Tout-monde.” This

(55). It is thus that, as Derrida says at the end of his work:

One thus touches on the very limit, *between the inside and the outside*, notably the border of the university itself, and within it, of the Humanities. One thinks *in* the Humanities the irreducibility of their outside and of their future. One thinks *in* the Humanities that one cannot and must not let oneself be enclosed within the inside of the Humanities. But for this thinking to be strong and consistent requires the Humanities. To think this is not an academic, speculative, or theoretical operation; it is not a neutral utopia. No more than saying it is a simple enunciation. It is on this always divisible limit, it is at this limit that what arrives arrives. (55)

How to make an economy of one’s words in this context? How to exercise this very literary right to say everything or to not say everything, and, by way of that, to deconstruction at large? What I see is that, for Derrida, the University would be not an economic place, one which saves the words that do not seem to fit, but would rather be the site where the question of economy arises: not the question “what to say?” and “what to omit?”, but rather the question “how to organize the *oikos* in which, in principle, many more words could and should fit?” or even “how to temporize so that more than what one could imagine eventually fits in, at one moment or another?” If deconstruction at large attempts to respond to these questions, this process should be channeled by the University imagined by Derrida (once again, *through* the University rather than by the University as agent).

Moving toward my conclusion, I would like to go *through* the passage that I quoted in my epigraph. It is from “Circumfession,” perhaps the most atypical text by Jacques Derrida—a confession on circumcision in fifty-nine paragraph-periods written at the age of fifty-nine, aiming to respond, in a wonderfully organized and terribly an-economical manner, to “Derridabase,” the text with which Geoffrey Bennington presented, in an admirably economical way, the first twenty-

resonates with Nancy's proposition that the world should be reimagined from the viewpoint of the "fragile skin" of all its elements, natural and technological, lifeful and life-forming (Nancy 85-93). Tout-monde, the world as Relation (Glissant), is grounded in the places and temporalities that transnational corporate politics and the political sovereignties that protect them, have identified as the exterior periphery to the global centers.

Exteriority is Enrique Dussel's term for the vast majority of indigenous, racialized, gender discriminated multitudes, of the poor and unemployed populations across the world. Banished to the peripheries of the economic and political centers that run the world, they nevertheless are the at large of the world. From the space of this exteriority, a different making of the world is in process against the processes of globalization that systematically develop policies of overextraction that deprive human beings of their right to soil while policing and restricting their mobility. Second, the decolonial conception of the human as a being that is constituted by the non-hierarchical and rhizomatic relations between different individuals, collectivities and entities.

Both manifestations of "at large" set deconstruction to the task of the invention of new critical idioms and concepts that do not only dismantle what Barnor Hesse calls "the onto-colonial formulations of race" (Hesse, "Racialized Modernity" 658) but also transgress its aesthetic, philosophical and political discourses to fabricate conceptual and aesthetic frameworks that afford space to the new forms of belonging that are emerging because of the various planetary crises and that form part of what it means to "live together well in the present" (Derrida, "Avowing—The Impossible" 22). The knowledges and discourses that misrepresented themselves as

five years of Derrida's thought. In paragraph 17, we read:

I wonder, interested in the depth of the bed-sore, not in writing or literature, art, philosophy, science, religion or politics but only memory and heart, not even the history of the presence of the present, I wonder what I am looking for with this machine avowal, beyond institutions, including psychoanalysis, beyond knowledge and truth, which has nothing to do with it here... (Derrida, "Circumfession" § 17, 87)

In a similar undertaking to that which we read in "The Future of the Profession or the University Without Condition," Derrida here seems to deviate from institutions; it is quite hard to imagine a less academic rhetoric than that of confession. But he also deviates with respect to knowledge *stricto sensu* and the archive. Nevertheless, there is more than one paradox in this excerpt. Derrida says that he is not interested in everything on which he has written at length, including literature, as the site of saying-everything. At first glance, such a declaration leads us straight outside institutions, which are hardly tolerant of those who are not concerned with what would constitute their objects—the very objects around which the economy of their words would be organized. Moreover, this declaration justifies experimentation with a format such as that of "Circumfession," far removed from any model of academic writing and even more difficult to teach. Yet Derrida (who is not here interested in things that usually happen, or are directly considered, in the University) raises questions concerning what he is doing "beyond the institutions." I would dare to say that he does so almost as if the atypical, and tormented, discourse of "Circumfession" would be better placed within one institution or another; as if he were making an economy of his words with respect to the institutions, that is, where they would be most appropriate or useful; as if these words were not going to flourish entirely outside the institutions; or, again, as if, in the end, he would not find his fulfillment anywhere other than within an institution.

universal and global and that “conceived of Man as truly predictable of all men in one and the same sense without realizing that the name and idea they had for a given species of living organisms was only theirs” (Mignolo 204), have run out of the imaginary force to invent belonging beyond race and colonialism, implicated as they have been in their consolidation.

Deconstruction and decolonial thought can engage the ontological and political discourses on the human from two different but supplementary perspectives that can be combined to posit the human as “the being for whom the different ways or possibility of being human are a problem” (Balibar, *On Universals* 104). The human as a problem, opens the path of thinking being-with as the new universal that arises from the multiplicity of the world in view of a humanity at large that is no longer the single agent making and authoring history at this age of climate crises and changes that foreground “various entanglements” (Chakrabarty 7) of species, elements and materialities. Deconstruction and decolonial thought offer a different path to positing the human as being-with in the present in both local but also planetary terms that transform the politics of belonging and the existing order of politics to remain open to the future-present.

In my attempt to describe my conception of deconstruction at large, I evoked the tormented silence of the enclave, a site of intimidating intimacy, in which Derrida at one point found himself. I emphasized that Derrida identifies the necessity of establishing an institutional reveal that will tell us wherefrom reflection takes place and the extent of its reach. I also emphasized the porosity of the Humanities: “One thinks *in* the Humanities that one cannot and must not allow oneself to be enclosed within the interior of the Humanities” (Derrida, “The Future of the Profession or the University Without Condition” 55). The same holds for deconstruction at large: it should permit all outside contaminations and expose them to the challenge of surpassing the usual economy of academic discourses.

In perhaps a similar sense, Sara Ahmed, articulating a critique of the University, spoke of feminism as housework, homework, launching in her own way an *oiko*-nomic reflection (cf. Ahmed 7-10). Several autotheoretical texts over the course of the last two decades have done the same. Personally, I have tried to show how, in order to think (in terms of) deconstruction at large, one would need to rethink doing from the starting point of neglected intimacies—*from within out*. Derrida said that we require “a thought, a writing, a speech that would not be merely archives”; the point is to grope and to hear. Perhaps one can, upon deconstruction at large, transpose what, Sam Bourcier recently said about the archive—which I here paraphrase: “[Deconstruction at large] is not necessarily synonymous with memory in the sense of turning toward the past or exhausting oneself trying to represent, excavate, and restore. [Deconstruction at large] gains nothing from being equated with visibility and the visual. The eye is not everything. Let the ear and touch take their full place” (Bourcier 144).

Facing the limit of texts, discourses, disciplines and institutions, deconstruction opens the path towards an encounter with what remains walled in them

and vies for recognition. The remainder often resonates with the voices and silences of the lives that seek ways to represent themselves, to be seen, touched and heard in the political sphere. In other words, the remainder conjures the political, aesthetic and social lives of those whose presence has yet to be acknowledged. The entrance of the dispossessed into hegemony is ultimately the aim of any theoretical and philosophical analysis concerned with injustice, with the decline and abrogation of democratic practices and rights and with the political and social destitution of the marginalized and the internally excluded. In Derrida's words,

A deconstructive thinking, the one that matters to me here, has always pointed out the irreducibility of affirmation and therefore of the promise as well as the undeconstructibility of a certain idea of justice (dissociated here from law). Such a thinking cannot operate without justifying the principle of a radical and interminable, infinite (both theoretical and practical, as one used to say) critique... open to the absolute future of what is coming...given up to its waiting for the other and for the event. (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 112)

Deconstruction is not invested in exotifying its object of analysis, the invented other; instead, it is open to their coming that will interrupt its field of play, will demand recognition and mandate change. The event looms in the horizon of the analysis as the possibility of radical change of the very terms and conditions of the analysis. To crib from Gayatri Spivak's analysis of the subaltern, the intellectual task should aim at the forced entrance of those excluded into hegemony instead of maintaining them as radical others. Otherwise, radical critique, even of the Marxist kind, runs the "danger of appropriating the other by assimilation" (Spivak 283). Deconstruction takes the risk of reading "catachresis at the origin" of its own critical effort (283); it destabilizes its presuppositions and stakes by drawing inspiration from the at large, that is, from the aesthetic and political imaginaries and frameworks engendered by the excluded and banished others in their effort to disrupt and transform the dominant discourses and politics. Taking apart the economy of words that house disciplines and discourses to transgress their limits that have systematically excluded and misrepresented others, deconstruction at large—inheriting from Derrida's thought but also digressing from it to ask the questions that matter in the present—can contribute to the current theoretical, aesthetic and philosophical efforts to imagine and create symbolic and material places of refuge and sites of hospitality, where a new commons has been nourished and a democratic politics can be reinvented.

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