Pas de Substitution

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Suivons-nous ce déplacement.

—JD, "Violence et Métaphysique"

Je veux souligner que l'efficace de cette thématique de la différance peut fort bien, devra être un jour relevée, se prêter d'elle-même, sinon à son remplacement, du moins à son enchaînement dans une chaîne qu'elle n'aura, en vérité, jamais commandée. Par quoi, une fois de plus, elle n'est pas théologique.

—JD, "La différance"

Exposition à l'autre, [la sensibilité] est signification, elle est la signification même, l'un-pour-l'autre jusqu'à la substitution; mais substitution dans la séparation, c'est-à-dire résponsabilité.

—Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*

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> L'*autre* auto-destruction de la métaphore *ressemblerait* à s'y méprendre à la philosophique. Elle passerait donc cette fois, traversant et doublant la première, par un supplément de résistance syntaxique . . . par tout ce qui . . . déjoue l'opposition du sémantique et du syntaxique . . . Cette auto-destruction aurait encore la forme d'une généralisation mais cette fois, il ne s'agirait plus d'étendre et de confirmer un philosophème; plutôt en le déployant sans limite, de lui arracher ses bordures de propriété. Et par consequent de faire sauter l'opposition rassurante du métaphorique et du propre dans laquelle l'un et l'autre ne faisaient jamais que se réfléchir et se renvoyer leur rayonnement.
>
> —JD, "La mythologie blanche"

JD, WHAT IS YOUR INCALCULABLE LEGACY? I KNOW ONLY THAT YOU have left us reading and that reading you have not left us. I still don't know how to mourn your passing, how to take up your passing on, how to take up what you've passed on, other than to submit to the incalculable laws of reading, to the trace of the trace, unknowable force of *différance*. Infinite reading as a work of mourning and memorialization. Or is that infinite reading as a melancholy that cannot mourn because the other is never simply gone, departed, has not simply passed on?

All of the lessons imparted concerning the impossibility of a full presence offer no consolation—for there can be no doubt about it, you are gone. As you said of the impossible death of your inestimable friend, Maurice Blanchot (or, should I say, as you read him on the impossibility of [his] death): "Let's say that Blanchot's death has undeniably *occurred,* but it has not arrived, it doesn't arrive. It will not arrive. [Disons que la mort de Blanchot est indéniablement *survenue,* mais elle n'est pas arrivée, elle n'arrive pas. Elle n'arrivera pas]" (Derrida 2003b, 330).[1] In the text you pronounced to and for Blanchot, you declared, following his gesture, repeating his words: "let's learn this distinction between occurring [*survenir*] and arriving, happening [*arriver*] [apprenons cette distinction entre *survenir* et *arriver*]." Reading with and without you we learn and relearn the chance and the risk of that distinction.

What is this death that occurs but doesn't arrive? Can we read death? Or is it, as you elsewhere only obliquely hint, the end—that is, *the beginning*—of all reading, because it is without metaphor, without language? "Death *itself* (without metaphor)," you wrote, but still somehow thinkable—"the thought of Death *itself* (without metaphor)" (Derrida 1978, 115). But what is that capital letter, however, if not a metaphor? Without a word, death is still somehow thinkable, because without metaphor it can only be rendered in metaphor, as the wrong metaphor. Death is without *sens propre* and thus susceptible to catachresis, both as the trope that is the application of a word in the absence of a proper meaning and, more generally, as the most economical way of pronouncing *plus de métaphore.*[2] What is death's word? Can we read it? And what, if anything, would it tell us?

Mourning, I turned to those texts you wrote in mourning, as if I could learn how to mourn correctly, read mourning correctly. It was certainly not your last word on death and mourning, but in the *Avant-propos* of the French "translation" of the work that doesn't work, of the work that wasn't your work, of the work that you would "not have dared" to gather as a work, but which you, still living, already bequeathed to your dear readers and friends, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas—*The Work of Mourning*—in that work, you write of death's announcement. You tell us what you feel [*ce que je ressens*] when someone dies. What you feel "is this, c'est ceci"—you will soon tell us, but have "neither the taste, nor the strength; ni le goût ni la force" to demonstrate this experience as a thesis. You deliver the announcement of death just after the gathering pause of a colon: a stop that promises immediate clarification. After this colon, straightaway, you announce the impossible itineraries of death's announcement:

> The death of the other, not only above all, of the one you love, doesn't announce the absence, the disappearance of this or that life; death doesn't announce the possibility for a world (always unique) for this particular person. Death declares each time *the end of the world in totality,* the end of every possible world, and *each time, the end of the world as unique totality, therefore irreplaceable and therefore infinite.* [La mort de l'autre, non seulement mais surtout si on l'aime, n'annonce pas une absence, une disparution, la fin de

> *telle ou telle* vie, à savoir de la possibilité pour un monde (toujours unique) d'apparaître à *tel* vivant. La mort declare chaque fois *la fin du monde en totalité*, la fin de tout monde possible, et *chaque fois la fin du monde comme totalité unique, donc irremplaçable et donc infinie.*] (Derrida 2003a, 9)

The end of the world? Is this but a metaphor for the bereavement, sometimes almost impossible to bear, of those remaining? Is this not the very charge of metaphor—its own work that doesn't work and so works evermore? The end of the world as irreplaceable opens the field of metaphor, but a "field that is never saturated" (Derrida 1982b, 220). The impossible metaphor of death/the end of the world cannot master every remainder and therefore displaces us, uproots us from the very field of sense it tries to extend. *Plus de métaphore:* no more and always one too many, "by virtue of what we might entitle, for economical reasons, tropic supplementarity" (19). The end of every possible world—metaphor/*plus de métaphore*. The death of the other as the end of the world pitches us into an impossibility that only metaphor—as an impossible substitution, as the death of metaphor, as *plus de métaphore*—can bear, but bear without assumption, bear without being able to bear it completely, successfully, without remainder.

"The end of the world as a unique totality, thus irreplaceable and thus infinite." Death announces the end of the world as the global possibility of englobing everything without end. This end of the world as a unique totality announced each time by each death in turn announces the death of the unique world as a world unsubstitutable, irreplaceable, and infinite, "as if the repetition of the end of an infinite whole were still possible." How does the once, once and for all, repeat with every death? Repetition of what takes place only once. This world is a singularity and the announcement of its absolute end by every death repeats traumatically, ever again, and for the first and only time. This impossible experience articulates our survival as the very question of its possibility, and thus we survive only *provisionally*:

> As if the repetition of the end of an infinite whole were still possible: the end of the world itself, of the sole world that there is, each time. Singularly. Irreversibly. For the other and in a strange way for the provisional survivor

> who endures this impossible experience. Voilà, that which 'the world' would mean. This meaning is conferred only by what we call 'death.' [Comme si la *repetition* de la fin d'un tout infini était encore possible: la fin du monde *lui-même,* de seul monde qui soit, chaque fois. Singulièrement. Irréversiblement. Pour l'autre et d'une étrange façon pour le survivant provisoire qui en endure l'impossible expérience. Voilà ce que voudrait dire 'le monde.' Cette signification ne lui est conférée que par ce qu'on appelle 'la mort.'] (Derrida 2003a, 9)

Death submits the one who remains (the one who survives only "provisionally") to an impossible experience—the repetition of what cannot be repeated, the repetition of a unique end. Each unique end different, and yet still the repetition of an end of that which, unique, permits no repetition. Death announces the would-be signification of the world, if not of you, and me: singular, irreversible, finite, and by that very singularity susceptible to nonidentical repetition. Death announces the world is/as the end of the world.

"Voilà, that which 'the world' would mean." Voilà. Bereft in the wake of the death of the other, Derrida gives us the would-be meaning of the world as the articulation of death. Voilà—the meaning of "the world." Voilà—but where? There, in all that precedes the unveiling of the *voilà*—from "as if" to "the impossible experience"—is that the meaning of "the world"? Already the world comes under the tenuous hold of quotation marks. Is this *the* world—the world at large? Or is the text quoting itself, reading itself, tearing itself, referring to the paragraph just above that first articulated "the world" as a lost world, as the end of the world, announced in and by death, by what "we call death"? And if this is the meaning of the world conferred by death, is there another *vouloir-dire* of the world outside death's conferral of meaning? Does the determination of the world by death as the end of the world leave something behind? Perhaps this is the impossible experience—to be here (where?) still, even after the end of the world.

The insistence with which Derrida pronounces that death marks the end of the world pushes against our thinking of this pronouncement as merely a metaphor; indeed, elsewhere, writing of this end of the world, Derrida

says that he does so "without the facility of a hyperbole," as if to forestall a simply figural understanding of this grave pronouncement of the end of the world (Derrida 2005a, 140). And yet, as the grieving one knows, the death of the other also abandons us to a world obscenely here, living, persisting beyond the disappearance of the departed one. The loss of the one and only, unsubstitutable. The end of the world: *plus de métaphore*.

Let us continue to read this end of the world with Derrida, drawn along by the aporetic tension of an impossible metaphor: world/death. Let us continue to read the *Avant-propos* of that work known in the English-speaking world as *The Work of Mourning:*

> This book is a book of *adieu*. A *salut* and no longer a *salut*. But this is an *adieu* to a *salut* that resigns itself to saluting without resurrection, as I think every *salut* worthy of the name is bound to do, the always open possibility—even the necessity—of a possible non-return, the end of the world as the end of every resurrection. [Ce livre est un livre d'adieu. Un salut, plus d'un salut. Chaque fois unique. Mais c'est l'adieu d'un salut qui se résigne à saluer, comme je crois que tout salut digne de ce nom est tenu de le faire, la possibilité toujours ouverte, voire la nécessité du non-retour possible, de la fin du monde comme fin de toute resurrection.] (2003a, 11)

An *adieu/un salut*—a goodbye and a greeting, a hailing, a benediction, a saluting and salutation without return, response or resurrection. An adieu without God, without return, without consolation.[3] Yet the palimpsests of traces that both *adieu* and *salut* mark also trace a resurrection without resurrection. Tasked with remembrance, we who remain, provisional survivors, must somehow retain the other despite the obliterating forces of time, forgetting, and mourning itself. But how? How, especially when your *Avant-propos* proposes death as that which leaves us nowhere, with no place, no chance: "But death, death itself, if there is, leaves no place, not the slightest chance, neither for a replacement, nor for the survival of the sole and unique world, of the 'sole and unique' that makes every living thing (animal, divine, human) a living thing 'sole and unique' [Mais la mort, la mort elle-même, s'il y en a, ne laisse aucune place, pas la moindre

chance, ni au remplacement ni à la survie du seul et unique monde, du 'seul et unique' qui fait de chaque vivant (animal, humain ou divin), un vivant seul et unique]" (11). Death afflicts not only the one who dies, but the whole world as the possibility of the "seul et unique," and yet, without this end of the world, there is no singularity of the one, any one, and especially of the one we miss. Death leaves nothing intact, no place for, not the slightest chance of a replacement for or the survival of the unique world.

But there may still be a chance for the world beyond its end. You wrote "la mort elle-même, s'il y en a . . . if there is death itself"—for as death, is it not also the voiding of every gathering possibility of identity or ipseity for the "itself" of death *itself*. No death *itself*. The displacement of death—the way in which it undoes place is also the displacement of death as its own impossibility or the impossibility of death having "its own." This displacement and nongathering of death corresponds to the end of the world without consolation, for death does not constitute an entity, object, will, subject, power—death is not the great inverse or obverse of god. Death is not, and yet it is irremissable, relentless, ineluctable, a strange sovereignty in its powering down of all power. So what kind of chance is this—the nonproperness of death, its resistance to ipseity? There is no undoing the death of the other. The departed one is gone. But the displacement of death perhaps exposes us to what Emmanuel Levinas calls "substitution"—the ethical passion of the one who is assigned responsibility for the other. This is a substitution without economy, the site of no *Aufhebung*, no replacement, a responsibility *sans relève*.[4] But I am perhaps substituting too quickly—the common risk of mourning, if not of life itself.

Let us continue reading (with) Derrida. He begins the end of his *Avant-propos* gesturing elsewhere, to another one of his texts: "If I dared to propose a true introduction to this book, it would be the essay . . . 'Rams: The Uninterrupted Dialogue: Between Two Infinities, the Poem.' It lurks around a verse from Celan that has not left me for many years: *Die Welt ist fort, ich muss dich tragen. The world is gone, I must carry you* [Si j'osais proposer une véritable introduction à ce livre-ci, ce serait l'essai . . . *Béliers. Le dialogue ininterrompu: entre deux infinis, le poème.* Il rôde autour d'un vers de Celan qui ne me quitte plus depuis des années: *Die Welt ist fort, ich muss dich tragen*]"

(12). At the brink of the work that is his and not his, *The Work of Mourning,* the work that appears under a different title in its French "translation," Derrida points us out of the present work to another work, as if allegorizing the detours of mourning and the necessity of reading elsewhere when confronted with the displacement of death.

Before taking this necessary detour, I must present what I've been referring to but withholding—*The Work of Mourning* en français: *Chaque fois unique, la fin du monde.* Thus the title of the work finds itself repeated in the *Avant-propos,* and we will also find a version of this line in *Béliers,* a reading of Celan offered in remembrance of Hans Georg Gadamer, and a text that might well have been included in *Chaque fois unique, la fin du monde*—a text that somehow *is* included on the outside as its eccentric introduction. The repetition of this phrase—*chaque fois unique, la fin du monde*—in various ways and in several venues echoes the odd economy of singularity/repetition that is tensed in the locution itself: the repetition inscribed in the *chaque fois* playing with what seems to be the definitive end of the world [*la fin*], a definitive end that comes somehow yet again.

Derrida concludes the *Avant-propos* with the line from Celan that most compels him and around which he lurks, thinking, writing the impossible mourning for the other: "Die Welt ist fort, ich muss dich tragen." Ending the foreword with this word from another (who other? and to whom? JD meditates on the strange intimacy at a distance of this *Ich* and this *dich*), the line is given over to us such that we necessarily mouth it too: "Die Welt ist fort, ich muss dich tragen."—and now with and without JD, with him gone from this world, with the world thus ended, we are bequeathed the necessity of bearing him, carrying him. Are we equal to the task? The overwhelming nature of this task of carrying the other when we are displaced by the world's distance is underscored when we reread the final lines of Derrida's text for Blanchot. He has been recalling the ritual of sending Blanchot a postcard from Èze: "I know today that, without ever again sending such messages via post, I will continue to write to him and to call him, in my heart, and in my soul, as one says, as long as I shall live [Je sais aujourd'hui que, sans jamais plus confier de tels messages à la poste, je continuerai de lui écrire ou de l'appeler, dans mon coeur ou dans mon âme, comme on dit,

aussi longtemps que je vivrai]" (2003b, 332). As long as I shall live. The alliance articulated by this oath—is it not also left to us, to carry all those who have been carried in remembrance by him, and does this carrying of the other's others not extend almost infinitely, to the point where I am carrying not only you, but multitudes, the multitudes that you are?

But carrying you, we are still alone. JD insists on this solitude. Mourning does not form a community, or if it does, it is the community of an unshareable bearing or an unbearable sharing—*partage*. Blanchot's exceptionality, his essential solitude, heightens the uncanny aloneness of the one who bears the other in mourning. Derrida emphasizes that Blanchot leaves no school, no disciples, Zarathustra-like:

> He disordered and transformed our ways of thinking, writing, or acting, I don't think that one can define it as "influence" or "disciples" . . . It is about something wholly other. The heritage he leaves us will have kept a trace more interior and more grave: inappropriable. It will have left us alone; it leaves us more alone than ever with bottomless responsibilities. [Il a dérangé et transformé de nos manières de penser, d'écrire ou d'agir, je ne crois pas qu'on puisse le définir par des mots tells que 'influence' ou 'disciples' . . . C'est du tout autre chose qu'il s'agit. L'héritage qu'il nous laisse aura réservé une trace plus intérieure et plus grave: inappropriable. Il nous aura laissés seuls, il nous laisse plus seuls que jamais avec des responsabilités sans fond.] (331)

Bearing the other who resists appropriation is ultimately the responsibility of every mourning, every remembrance. This abyssal, unassumable responsibility, however, comes in the future anterior, repeats perhaps the distinction between *survenir* et *arriver*: this task will have been ours, but coming from the past of a future always to come [*à venir*], it will never have arrived. The future anteriority of the solitude and the abyssal responsibility that deepens and expands it is *mise en abyme*. The temporal deferral and relay without arrival repeat the impossibility of carrying you after the end of the world. There—nowhere—in the place where I must carry you is the abyss of a responsibility that will have never arrived even as it submits us to a

strange repetition without origin. Mourning, I am submitted to the infinite dehiscence of responsibility, a responsibility unending and unassumable to the singularity of the other.

Still attuned to this infinite responsibility, Derrida reads the potential violence of mourning, conceived in Freudian terms as "carrying the other in the self/*porter l'autre en soi*"[5]: "But if *I must* (and this is ethics itself) carry the other in me in order to be faithful to him, in order to respect his alterity, a certain melancholy must still protest against normal mourning . . . The 'norm' is nothing other than the good conscience of amnesia. It allows us to *forget* that to keep the other within the self, *as oneself*, is already to *forget* the other. Forgetting begins there. Melancholy is therefore *necessary*" (2005a, 160). Interiorization as the mark of a successful or normal mourning violates the singularity of the other in the very movement that supposedly keeps the other. Recognizing the unacknowledged and unavowed violence of a normative mourning, Derrida sketches a necessary displacement of mourning into melancholia as a kind of ethics of melancholia that dictates both an ethical "law—and the poem dedicated to the other" (160).

Derrida opens *Béliers* in melancholy. Wondering if he is able to faithfully do justice to the admiration he has for Gadamer, Derrida immediately turns to "une mélancolie sans âge," perhaps a melancholy without cause or referent that could ever be revealed as such. And yet, Derrida does trace it metonymically to the experience of a strange missed encounter, their first encounter (Paris, 1981): "Our discussion must have begun by a strange interruption—something other than a misunderstanding—by a sort of prohibition, the inhibition of a suspension. And by the patience of indefinite expectation, of an *epokhē* that made one hold one's breath, withhold judgment or conclusion. As for me, I remained there with my mouth open" (136). This essay in remembrance of Gadamer is attended by an interruption and a melancholy from the very beginning. Before the beginning, even. Derrida begins in the hiatus, mouth open, speechless (barely speaking—"I said very little"), in an *epokhē* itself suspended, cut off from the final clarity of a phenomenological reduction with a *Sinngebung*. Here, the *epokhē* doesn't bracket the world to bring a noema into focus, but rather freeze-frames an absence, a missed encounter. Spanning between these two

infinities—Gadamer and Derrida, infinities in finitude though they may be—is a poem.

The poetic word. The word of Celan. Unable to meet Gadamer, but for this very reason melancholicly bound to an uninterrupted dialogue with him, there is between them, JD and Gadamer, in the place of this interruption, interrupted again by the death of Gadamer, a poem.[6] The untranslatability of the poem marks the site of an *other* order of encounter—an encounter there where there is no passage, for this untranslatability marks the singularity of both the poem and those it reads, who read it. It is by this singularity only, this resistance to smooth passage, translation, and transmission, that something like an uninterrupted dialogue can take place, or a translation always to come that would shock like an unheard-of event: "The poem is not only the best example of untranslatability. It also gives to the test of translation its most proper, its least improper place. The poem, no doubt, is the only place propitious to the experience of language, that is to say, of an idiom that forever defies translation and therefore demands a translation that will do the impossible, make the impossible possible in an unheard-of event" (137). The poem—"entre deux infinis"—is itself an infinity, and without the finitude of readers. Holding open the place of an unheard-of event, the poem maintains the interruption that opens the possibility of any uninterrupted dialogue, dialogue without end.

Derrida ties interruption to the melancholy he invoked to open the text. This melancholy, however, although it found its way back to the event of an interruption, a missed encounter, as if this were its primary referent, is an "originary" melancholy that corresponds to what elsewhere Derrida calls anticipatory bereavement—the knowledge that of two, one will almost certainly die first, before the other. In this way, the uninterrupted dialogue traverses (or is traversed by) interruption, just as the untranslatability of the poem provokes translation nevertheless—endless translation that lives off the punctures of untranslatability. This strange economy is not even quasi-dialectical, for it keeps intact the untranslatability of the poem; translation and untranslatability are not two poles of an opposition, nor are they even in *différance,* unless it be "*différance* as the relation to an impossible presence, as expenditure without reserve, as the irreparable loss

of presence, the irreversible usage of energy, that is, as the death instinct, as the entirely other relationship that apparently interrupts every economy" (Derrida 1982a, 19). This *différance* without return is also the "ultimate interruption" that is death. Death is absolute—it marks the end of a certain kind of circulation and return, is foreign to the detour and return of economic *différance*. But like the untranslatability of the poem (impossible simile!) that nonetheless provokes translation, the absoluteness of death, given in life only as the impassibility of the separation between life and death ("une séparation à nulle autre comparable") terminates metaphor by annihilating the field of comparison and defies thought by tracing an "enigmatic seal." This unreadable seal, however, "we will endlessly seek to decipher," and thus the enigmatic seal resurrects the metaphor, the translation, that it kills off. In all of these ways, Derrida helps us to understand how, for example, an uninterrupted dialogue bears interruption nonetheless, without dialectical recuperation, but also without the false certitude or good conscience of having successfully let alterity be absolutely, without the least violence.

What is it that separates JD and Gadamer and brings them together at a distance? What is their *entretien?* Derrida reads Celan in this space between Derrida and Gadamer; he reads Celan at once according to the hermeneutic model followed by Gadamer, and the disseminal reading practice that he, Derrida himself, advances and to which he submits. There is between these two readings, an "insurmountable but always abusively surmounted border" (2005a, 142). The reading difference turns around the approach to the remainder that supposedly infinitizes any reading. The hermeneutic practice with all of its attentive, formal approaches, its concern with the detail, is "indispensable," and thus it is not a matter of discrediting this approach, but of reading the strange and ineluctable "relation" of the two reading practices. The disseminal reading practice is already a writing—a "reading-writing"—that "endeavoring to take all of this into account [all of the language details that are also the concern of any hermeneutic], to account for all of this, to respect its necessity, also directs itself [*se porte*] toward an irreducible remainder or excess" (149). Derrida, undertaking, as always, a double reading that leaves no detail outside of the reading-writing space, can't but confirm and let remain the remainder. This remainder, far

from undercutting the necessity of the hermeneutic approach, gives rise to it by always remaining in a position of exteriority to the hermeneutic reading practice: "The excess of this remainder escapes any gathering in a hermeneutic. This hermeneutic is made necessary, and also possible by this excess" (149). This nearly chiasmatic formulation demonstrates how the escape of the remainder is translated into the necessary entry of hermeneutics. Nearly-chiasmatic, because in the French, there is not the economic end-point of a period after "also possible by this excess." The excess makes possible not only hermeneutics, but also, "among other things, the trace of the poetic work, its abandonment or its survival, beyond any signatory and any specific reader." The remainder itself cannot be determined, but determines a number of possibilities and prompts the infinity of the poem.

The hermeneutic imperative to discover as much as possible about every detail, to account exhaustively for the totality of the text, does not "exhaust the trace of this remainder, the very remaining of this remainder, which makes the poem both readable and unreadable to *us*" (150). Borne by this trace, Derrida goes on to wonder, who in fact is this "us," who seem to be hailed by the poem although we are not named by it or included in the singularity of its phrasing, the gravity of its final line: *Die Welt ist fort, ich muss dich tragen.* Where is our place in the poem, called as we are, but only as a silence in the poem's diction?[7] Abandoned by the abandon of the poem, consigned to a patience without term, "[the poem's] *shibboleth* is exposed to us and escapes from us, it awaits us; we are still awaiting one another, precisely where 'Niemand/zeugt fur den/Zeugen'" (150). Describing the nonlieu in which "we" are hailed by the poem, ultimately Derrida specifies this place—"precisely where"—only by offering a poetic word yet again. Thus, just as we are to find our place, we will find ourselves borne off once again by the remainder of the poetic word. We are remaindered by the excess of the poem, left behind. The poem too survives our reading: it is "destined to outlive, in an 'infinite process' the decipherments of any reader" (146). The abandonment of the poem, Derrida suggests, is an immediate unreadability that "is also the resource that permits the poem to bless (perhaps, only perhaps), to give, to give to think, to give cause to think, to give the possibility of weighing the charge or import, to give rise

to reading, to speaking (perhaps, only perhaps)" (147). Perhaps, only perhaps, is the unreadability of the poem the chance for reading, the chance for *us*. Remaindered by the other noncontemporaneous survivors (poem and "us"), at the point of unreadability, are we given the impossible experience of remaining after the end of the world? Perhaps, only perhaps.

This infinitesimal opening at the point of unreadability is brought about by the responsibility to read everything—leave no punctuation unturned, no margin uninscribed and this accounts for the hermeneutic necessity. But this hermeneutic effort is put to the test of an interruption, can be but interrupted, but always regathers. With the necessary inventory of a variety of formalisms, comes the hermeneutic approach, a response and responsibility toward what Gadamer "often called the *Anspruch* of the work, the claim it makes upon us, the demanding call a poem sets up, the obstinate but justified reminder of its right to stand up for its rights" (141). What kind of reading responsibility is adequate to this demand? There is no possible adequation—only interminable, perhaps infinite, reading responsibilities. Returning to the *différance* of two reading practices, one called hermeneutic and the other disseminal, Derrida reveals that the two infinities in the title of this work (the two infinities between which is the poem) might be approaches to infinity or an infinite approach borne differently by these two readings. And the difference of these two, the interruption of their quasi-similitude, is *interruption*: "This [hermeneutic] response, this responsibility, can be pursued to infinity, in uninterrupted fashion, going from meaning to meaning, from truth to truth, with no calculable law other than that which the letter and the formal arrangement of the poem assign to it" (152). Responding to no law other than the letter of the poem, the infinity of the hermeneutic response continues more or less placidly, though interminably, steadily unfolding truth without shock or violence; though incalculable, this response encounters no contestation to its own possibility, no break, or breakdown.

The disseminal reading, uncannily responding to the "same law, forever subjected to it, every bit as responsible . . . undergoes and takes on, in and through the hermeneutic moment itself, the test of an interruption, of a caesura or of an ellipsis, of an inaugural cut or opening."[8] Hailed by the

same demand, the hermeneutic and the disseminal reading infinities find themselves brought together in interruption, held together and apart by *différance*, and separating at what Derrida calls elsewhere "the point of greatest obscurity . . . the very enigma of *différance*," where it finds itself (impossible word here) divided, dehiscing "by means of a strange cleavage" (1982a, 19). Traversed by the infinity of the hermeneutic reading, the disseminal reading takes up the interruption that is differed and deferred; it absorbs the excess of the remainder by not absorbing it, but rather by letting it be a wound that is unhealable but that requires infinite attention. The "cut or opening" that tests and interrupts the infinity of disseminal reading is a gaping [*béance*] that belongs neither to "the meaning, nor to the phenomenon, nor to the truth, but, by making these possible in their remaining, it marks in the poem the hiatus of a wound whose lips will never close, will never draw together." Belonging to no order of sense, sensibility, or phenomenon, the wound gives rise to them in that very resistance. It both gives rise to them and skirts them, causing these orders to tremble even as it inscribes them. In this, the wound and the "strange cleavage" of *différance* perhaps also meet, for *différance* refers "to an order which no longer belongs to sensibility. But neither can it belong to intelligibility . . . the order which resists this opposition [sensible/intelligible], and resists it because it transports it, is announced in the movement of *différance*" (5). The wound encountered in the poem through the (interruption of the) reading of the poem is a speaking wound even when silent. One must attend to the words of the wound that it speaks by letting it speak and not speak; the lips do not close, they cannot be joined together again, which keeps them perhaps forever speaking but in a speech always interrupted by the impossible closing of the lips, a speech always attended by a silence both impossible and absolute.

It is this wound that keeps the disseminal reading both infinite and interrupted: "the process remains forever infinite, certainly, but this time in discontinuous fashion. That is to say, differently finite and infinite" (2005a, 153). This wound standing open seals the solitude of the poem, but thereby enables it, perhaps, to inhabit its final line: *Die Welt ist fort. Ich muss dich tragen.* The unclosable lips of the poem's wounded mouth, the

solitude through which "the poem hails or blesses, bears (*trägt*) the other, I mean 'you'—as you bear the grief of mourning or else bear a child, from conception through gestation to its delivery into the world. In gestation." The poem mourns and gives birth at once, bearing what can't be born(e) but still must be carried—you beyond the end of the world. The disseminal reading is attuned to the uncanny registers of a language that now also engages in a nonsemiotic signification behind or beyond its dissemination, what Levinas would call "substitution"—original responsibility as the one-for-the-other, as wounding, persecution, maternity.

This bearing [*tragen*] also marks the responsibility of translation, which Derrida explicitly links to violence: "To translate is to lose the body. The most faithful translation is violent" (2005b, 168). This violence afflicts the body of the poem, which "like anyone's body, is unique." Working over the *plus de métaphore* that here signals the imbrication of trope and body otherwise, Derrida displaces prosopopoeiea by refusing to establish priority of anybody's body over the poetic body. And yet this displacement can only take place in the interruption of an irreducible untranslatability—that is, this displacement doesn't take place other than as an infinite dehiscence that opens and opens. The assignation to carry [*übertragen*] is intimately tied to the task of translation [*übersetzen*]—and yet the relation between these two carryings may be traversed by the strange cleavage of *différance*. That is, the *übertragen* "works" because the *übersetzen* is interrupted by the very law of untranslatability that commands it: "I *must* translate, transfer, transport [*übertragen*] the untranslatable in another turn where, translated, it remains untranslatable. This is the violent sacrifice of the passage beyond [*au-delà*]—*Übertragen: übersetzen*" (2005a, 162). Here, at the passage *au-delà,* do I hear again the murmuring of an infinite conversation with Levinas? Perhaps, for Derrida arrives at this violent sacrifice, at the violence of metaphor (translation as one translation of metaphor),[9] after reviewing the shock of the *epokhē*. Let us read carefully. And let us remember that *epokhē* characterized Derrida's first meeting—missed encounter, encounter as interruption—with Gadamer. Do you remember that under the suspense of this *epokhē*, Derrida was left mouth agape, barely speaking, like the wounded poem itself?

Derrida likens the distance and disappearance of the world [*Die Welt ist fort*] to the poetic embodiment of the phenomenological reduction: "Isn't this retreat of the world, this distancing by which the world retreats to the point of the possibility of its annihilation, the most necessary, the most logical, but also the most insane experience of a transcendental phenomenology?" (160). Reading the envoi of the poem as a "radical *epokhē*," Derrida reinscribes the procedure of the reduction and reads it to its interruption. The suspension of world in bracketing does not "annihilate the sphere of phenomenological and pure egological experience . . . On the contrary . . . it would make such access thinkable in its phenomenal purity." The poem both repeats and radicalizes this gesture: in the envoi, I am there bearing you beyond the distancing and disappearance of the world. And yet the power of the *epokhē* to suspend world curiously reverberates in the ego itself as the suspension of the possibility of *alter ego*. I cannot here do justice to the strong, irrefutable (perhaps too strong, too irrefutable) reading of Levinas's work that Derrida undertakes in "Violence and Metaphysics." Nevertheless, let me lay down a marker for a future pathway in reading. Among other reading interruptions, Derrida focuses in on the "absolutely other" of Levinas as being but a Husserlian *alter ego*. One reading of Levinas that Derrida offers finds the absolutely other not beyond the field of intentionality, but already inscribed in and *constituted by* the ego; in that reading, "the other as alter ego signifies the other as other, irreducible to *my* ego precisely because it is an ego" (1978, 125). Here, in *Béliers*, Derrida returns to the alter ego to read it as precisely the interruption of Husserlian phenomenology, the opening of the cleavage of *différance* in phenomenology. Following this displacement, the disseminal reading brings Derrida infinitely close to Levinas's substitution, in a near inversion of the terms of "Violence and Metaphysics." The aporetic instance of the alter ego in the ego, interrupting the intuition, means that "the *alter ego* is constituted only by *analogy*, by *appresentation*, indirectly inside of me, who then carries it there where there is no transcendent world" (2005a, 161). The alter ego is now an internal alterity that is more alter than ego. In the very absence of the transcendent world, the alter ego—the other in me, the you in me—inverts to mark a transcendence, for the ego can no longer carry the you if carrying

means to take within, if *porter* means *comporter*. According to Derrida, after the estrangement of world, to carry bears another signification, which is: "*to carry oneself or bear oneself toward* [*se porter vers*] the infinite inappropriability of the other, toward the encounter with its absolute transcendence in the very inside of me, that is to say, in me outside of me"(161). This word *transcendence,* so foreign to Derrida's lexicon, has it been borne toward him from another—is it the trace of another in him? Emmanuel Levinas. When Derrida continues his reading to say, "before *I am,* I *carry*. Before *being me, I carry the other*. I carry *you* and must do so, I owe [*dois*] it to you" (162), is he bearing Levinas, mourning him and delivering him to the world at the end of the world? And is this not the very structure of Levinasian substitution as the one-for-the other?

The disseminal reading of Celan's poem, and particularly its envoi as a radical *epokhē*, also echoes the phenomenological reduction of the said that Levinas undertakes in *Otherwise than Being:* "The reduction is reduction of the said to the saying beyond logos, beyond being and non-being, beyond essence, beyond true and non-true. It is the reduction to signification, to the one-for-the-other involved in responsibility (or more exactly, substitution)" (Levinas 1998, 45). This reduction exposes the *au-delà* in language as its interruptive undoing. The reduction of the said reveals the saying, substitution as interruption, "interruption of the irreversible identity of the essence" (13). Without the interruption of signification as substitution, the *epokhē* is just parentheses—which would perhaps limit it to the order of formalism or an infinite hermeneutic reading: "The reduction could not be effected simply by parentheses, which, on the contrary, are an effect of writing. It is the ethical interruption of essence that energizes the reduction" (44). Derrida and Levinas near and far; Levinas carries on an uninterrupted dialogue with Derrida, hearing *writing* and mishearing it. Substitution is the curious remainder refractory to all comprehensive reading that carries disseminal reading away and away and away.[10]

JD, reading with and without you, I've been borne by your reading and by bearing your reading. Let us stop now, provisional end, so we can pick up again elsewhere, following the displacement there where irreplaceability—*chaque fois unique, la fin du monde*—is substitution without substitute, where

I am in the place of the death of the other and there is nothing but metaphor, translation interminable, but no transcendental metaphor . . . nothing but being carried away and away and away within and without.

NOTES

1. Translations in this work are mine.
2. "Plus de métaphore" is Derrida's syntagm for the aporetic economy of metaphor, philosopheme that reinscribes philosophy even as it traces an internal *différance*. See Derrida (1982b, 219–29).
3. *Adieu*. This word, learned, as he says, from Levinas, carries Levinas here to this scene of reading. In the *adieu*, we cannot but hear "Adieu à Levinas" (Derrida 2003a).

   In *The Gift of Death*, Derrida reads Levinas: "I am responsible for the death of the other to the extent of including myself in that death." JD hesitates at that inclusion in the death of the other—is shocked by the catachresis, stopped by its metaphorical feint . . . and yet he marks the necessity of trying to read the text beyond this block, beyond the residual opposition of metaphor and life that remains even after *différance* or because of it. The deconstruction of metaphor calls for a displacement of the putative opposition (metaphor/proper meaning) it cultivates, and Levinas's work works over this displacement and derangement of what will have been known as "metaphor." Learning to read and think that possibility (beyond the difference of metaphor and embodiment) is a necessity: "Until we are able to displace the logic or topology that prevents *good sense* from thinking [inclusion in the death of the other] or 'living it,' we will have no hope of coming close to Levinas's thinking, or of understanding what death teaches us, or gives us to think beyond the giving and taking in the *adieu*" (1995, 46–47). It seems that Derrida's reading-writing makes such a displacement possible, and one might also convoke Nietzsche's "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense," which reads the sensibility itself as metaphor (see Nietzsche 1999, 139–53).

   Such a rereading of metaphor and embodiment would also open the possibility for a new reading with Derrida and Levinas of progressive American politics via a disseminal reading of George Lakoff's and Mark Johnson's theory of embodied metaphoricity, which takes place at the crossroads of linguistics and cognitive science (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; 1980). Lakoff has been "translating" this theory of metaphor into the political arena, with an emphasis on deploying it as a new orientation for progressive messaging and activism. According to Lakoff, particular syntagms take hold of the politico-popular imagination, because they are "framed" in such a way as to activate deep linkages via embodied metaphoricity (see especially Lakoff 2002 and 2004). Lakoff and Johnson examine how metaphor works by highlighting and hiding,

always with a view to conceptual totality and coherency. What or who, however, bears the incisive limit of metaphor? Reading disseminally, we would begin there with what is hidden, in the shadows, cut by the metaphorical limit, like the neighborhood always violated by the incision of a highway or a railway, whatever infrastructure necessary for the greater good. We would begin by examining if "the hidden"(they? he? she? you? me?) doesn't endure this hiding or being in the shadow as a kind of violence.

The rereading of metaphor in the American body politic would also have to engage Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's and Jean-Luc Nancy's articulation of *le retrait du politique/* the retreat and retracing of the political (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1997), and Ernesto Laclau's elaboration of the crucial importance of "empty signifiers" for the constitution of the political field (Laclau 1996).

4. In *Otherwise than Being,* Levinas discerns a preoriginary saying distinct from the said of representational, thematizing language. Saying marks the break from essence that Levinas's text tries to elaborate. But saying is not the entire story of signification in *Otherwise than Being*Kfor it is intimately linked with the complex notion of "substitution." Levinas first spoke and wrote of this "concept" in 1967 and 1968, and with expansion and emendations, the second version of his article "Substitution," became the chapter "Substitution" in *Otherwise than Being,* which, Levinas informs us in a footnote, "was the seed of the present work" (1998, 125). Thus, at the heart of being otherwise is an "originary" substitution. It is necessary to emphasize that "substitution" (the-one-for-the-other) becomes a site of *rhetorical* substitution, for throughout the text Levinas describes a number of "concepts"—signification, maternity, persecution, proximity, trauma, sensibility, anarchy, hostage, saying—that seem to overlap with this term, perhaps in the fashion of "non-synonymous substitutes" (Derrida 1982a, 8). Thus substitution (the-one-for-other)—which seems to have a certain affinity with metaphor—becomes the site of metonymic slippage. In his exquisite reading of *Otherwise than Being,* Derrida follows this displacement to focus on the tying and untying of knots and the trace of the feminine in Levinas's text (1991, 11–50).

   For two compelling, but entirely different readings of substitution, see Bernasconi (2002, 234–51) and Critchley (1999, 183–97).

5. The French, *porter l'autre en soi* carries an ambiguity that the English cannot render—*en soi,* in the self (as given in the translation), but also *en soi* as in-itself; the tension between these two possibilities is irreducible.

6. Let us not fail to remember what Avital Ronell, recalling Derrida, recalls to us concerning the life of interruption: "There is interruption by the other, or by the presentiment of death. Remember the examples or figures of interruption like the caesura or the syncope. Nevertheless: interruption may always be a sign of life. Yesterday, in Irvine, I interrupted Derrida: 'How do you recognize that you are speaking to a living person?' He responded: 'By the fact that they interrupt you'" (1994, 3).

7. Is this the silent call that Blanchot hears in the work? Concerning the scene of reading, Blanchot writes: "Doubtless there is a sort of call, but it can only come from the work itself. It is a silent call, which amidst the general noise imposes silence, and which only reaches the reader's ear because he answers it" (1982, 196). Answering the call

precedes hearing it, as if answering the call somehow gives rise to the ear that then will have heard it.

8. In *The Test Drive*, Avital Ronell "traces the contours of the complicated extravagance of testing," linking testing, *différance*, rescindability, and the very possibility of justice (1994, 19).
9. For a reading of this translation of metaphor and its epistemological disturbances and sleights of hand, see de Man (1996).
10. Is substitution a name *à venir* for *différance*? Or do they differently inhabit the same impossible language—a possibility that JD allows when he insists that *différance* is not a negative theology, but that the detouring language that he must employ will sometimes resemble negative theology to the point that it will be "indistinguishable from it" while still not being it (Derrida 1982a, 6). This is not to say that Levinasian substitution is a negative theology, but that two discourses could be similar to the point of indistinguishability and still remain irreducibly different. *Différance* traces the way of substitution just as *différance* has been partially traced by Levinas's tracing of the trace.

    Différance and substitution remain to be thought together. What is their relation? *Différance* crucially questions "the provisional secondariness of the substitute"—does this not suggest an "originary" substitution? Furthermore, like substitution, *différance* signifies or traces without the semiotic sign: "One could no longer include *différance* in the concept of the sign, which always has meant the representation of presence." *Différance* as a rethinking of substitution allows one to "question the limit which has always constrained us—as inhabitants of a language and a system of thought—to formulate the meaning of being or beingness in general as presence or absence, in the categories of being or beingness (*ousia*)" (Derrida 1982a, 10). Is this a thinking of an *otherwise than being?*

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