ALTERNATE ENDINGS WITH REBEGINNINGS
IRREVERSIBILITY?

It was a movie about American bombers in the Second World War. Seen backwards by Billy, the story went like this: The formation flew backwards over a German city that was in flames. The bombers opened their bomb bay doors exerted a miraculous magnetism which shrunk the fires, gathered them into cylindrical steel containers, and lifted the containers into the bellies of the planes.

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Slaughter-House Five (74).

Irreversibility: Have I mentioned this earlier? It returned in a newspaper thrown on my lawn. On a Sunday morning. It was a news story in the Life and Arts section. It was in part about Gaspar Noé’s film Irréversible, which is a narrative told in reverse, just as Memento is told in reverse. Both are about rape and murder, extreme sexual violence, and re-membering: In Memento it is the character Leonard Shelby trying to remember but always ten or so minutes later forgetting everything and having to restart again. In his quest for revenge. An eye for an eye. (There is a lot of looping of scenes in Memento.) In Irréversible, it is the film itself trying to re-member, but again in reverse, forgetting in a final (but initial) scene what had been. Or so the film appears to be saying.

Irréversible begins with the ending. Two men are arrested, one is being carried off on a stretcher. They are Re: Vengers. It ends with the beginning. Max, the female,
is in an idyllic scene, but with a write-over: “Time [chronos] destroys Everything.”¹ The initial shot is of Max on an orange towel, lying on the greenest of grass, reading a book, and with children running and playing around her. The shot is vertical with her upside down and then, in an arc shot, righted. Finally—beginningly, the shot returns to the whirling motion. Midway in the film, where the fulcrum or lever, maintaining the pans of blind justice, might be located, Max is at a party with Marcus, her lover, and with Pierre, her former lover. They are happy and playful but then there is a quarrel. She leaves and, while on the street, from which she departs to cross over, takes an underpass. Into hell. Shot in all reds. There she is raped

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¹ The film *Irréversible*, a summary of the important scenes. The DVD identifies 16 scenes; below, I list 9.

- Credits are in reverse and acamera shots in a whirling motion through much of the film.
- Scene from Noe’s previous film, *I Stand Alone*, with the butcher saying: “There are no bad deeds. Just deeds.” The butcher recounts his crime of having raped his daughter.
- The police arrest two men (one on a stretcher). There is much homophobic invective.
- Marcus with Pierre searches for Le Ténia (Tape Worm). They are told he can be found at a gay night club called “The Rectum.” The search ends with the bashing of a man’s face with a fire extinguisher.
- Marcus and Pierre have just been told that Alex has been raped and her face kicked in by Le Ténia.
- Alex, in the street, takes an underpass. She encounters a man beating on a prostitute. Alex is in the way. Le Ténia (?) pulls a knife on her, rapes and sodomizes her. The scene is nine minutes long. The camera is on the ground (Grund), fixed on the rape.
- Alex is with Marcus and Pierre at a party. Alex quarrels with Marcus and leaves.
- Pierre and Alex wake and are intimate. Alex suggests she is pregnant.
- Opens with a tranquil, idyllic scene with Alex lying in the grass. Children playing. There is a note over the scene: “Time destroys everything.” The scene dissolves into one of the universe whirling.
and sodomized and her face is bashed in, in a nine-minute scene with the camera running and capturing it all in a single, uncut shot. The scene at the beginning of the film, which is the end, is of Marcus and Pierre taking revenge on the man who allegedly attacked Alex, but the man is most likely not the man who raped Alex. In seeking revenge, however, what does that matter! Any stand-in will do, as René Girard and Christopher Nolan argue. The beginning is the end of the characters. Time has destroyed everything. Rape-time has undone everything. As Aristotle says about Troy, he could say about Paris, France: None of the sacking and raping and bashing of faces can be revoked. All is subject to the principle of irrevocability. But it is even more complicated, and yet, even more precise. The official press book for *Irreversible* offers this text, summarizing the film:

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\text{Irreversible → Because time destroys everything → because some acts are irreparable → because man is an animal → because the desire for vengeance is a natural impulse → because most crimes remain unpunished → because the loss of a loved one destroys like lightning → because love is the source of life → because all history is written in sperm and blood → because in a good world → because premonitions do not alter the course of events → because time reveals everything → the best and the worst.}
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Is this the *inscription* that determines the film? These predications, qualities? Or can it also function as a *prescription*, something written at the top on a blank, wax tablet? “Because time reveals everything → The best and the worst.” God’s best and worst of all possible worlds? No, this is an inscription (one value divided into two), not a prescription (all that can be thought to be compossible).
Therein, in that difference, lies the test. Or Does the test lie in the in-different? Or in-difference. At the surface of the wax tablet?

This press book, with its statements, reminds me of the presocratic fragments. Which are the very paradeigma of thinking as testing, testing as thinking—which, as Agamben writes, is the improper “proper place of the example…always beside itself, in the empty space in which its undefinable and unforgettable life unfolds” (Coming 10). In this case, testing as thinking, reading, writing rape (sexual violence). As it variously unfolds. This press book, with its fragments, reminds me of Anaxamander’s fragment, his celebrated (celibate) principle of the indeterminate—to apeiron—but as rendered by the attempter and experimenter Nietzsche, in his anecdotal testaments (Philosophy 25, 45–50). In writing about presocratic figures, Nietzsche gives three anecdotes for each. (Once he gets to three, he has thousands.) Nietzsche’s take is not inscriptions, but coming-prescriptions. He writes the conditions for comp- possibility (with its incompossibilities). While Anaxamander is a “true pessimist” (45–46), Heraclitus is in-different to species-genus relations (50–69). Heraclitus situates One and Many, a radical multiplicity, in paralogical writings. Which means the One is not, yet is (see Heraclitus, e.g., fragments 45–47; cf. Badiou, Being 52–59). Anaxamander is to best and worst or to one and many as Heraclitus is to in-difference, in-differentiae. Heaviness or lightness? The test: What do you, my Dear Reader, choose? Do not be mislaid, misdirected, by a sense of the political over the aesthetic. After all, for both there is the beautiful and the sublime.

Nietzsche writes about Heraclitus: “Man is necessity down to his last fibre, and totally ‘unfree,’ that is if one means by freedom the foolish demand to be able to change
one *essentia* arbitrarily, like a garment—a demand which every serious philosophy has rejected with the proper scorn... Heraclitus... had no reason why he *had* to prove (as Leibniz did) that this is the best of all possible worlds. It is enough for him that it is the beautiful innocent game of the aeon” (63–64). But while Nietzsche writes about such thirds as Anaxamander and Heraclitus, he goes to other thirds as well, making, turning, them into new *conceptual personae* (Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 64), all incipient thirds (Thales, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, Socrates). All men on their way to becoming something other than men or the other of women. Something of a third figure. Multiple maniacs!

Reversible Destiny: I also mentioned this rubric earlier. In *Sexual Violence*. Toward the end, yet rebeginnings (185– ). There, I pointed to Aristotle and the irrevocability of Troy through Leibniz and the Palace of Destinies. And the new Anarchive. But this reversible destiny, as I see it now, appeared out of the corner of my eyes on Google.com. And then again, quite forcefully, on Amazon.com. But I, for some reason of timing, ignored it. Until I could no more. It returned in the form of a prompt—“you desire this one”—at Amazon.com on my monitor. It is a book *Reversible Destiny: We Have Decided Not to Die* by Arakawa and Madeline Gins. I could but laugh! Once I purchased this book, there was then the additional prompts of yet other books by Arakawa and Gins, so I was told, that I desired: *Architectural Body, The Mechanism of Meaning, Architecture: Sites of Reversible Destiny (Architectural Experiments After Auschwitz-Hiroshima), Helen Keller or Arakawa*. What Arakawa and Gins are interested in is designing, not tombs for our return to *humus* (see Harrison, “Hic Jacet”; Leary, *Design for Dying*), but bridges that will sustain
life, living, not dying, living humanely or post-humanely, and not through the instant of our rape and death, soul murder. They are architects of entire community spaces. Of the new *humus*. I have just to attach their thinking to a community without a community, extracting death as such a community’s basis, and then moving us on to living (cf. Jake Kennedy). But then, that will require a whole new book that would be a finishing of a trilogy with *Negation* and *Sexual Violence* (along with *Chaste Cinematics*) and what will become, in a tentative title, *Design as Dasein*. But I can say here now, saving much for later, that Arakawa and Gins’s vision of architecture, the (new) earth, and space is one that does not rely on the old epideictic architechttonic discourse that gave us the palace of memory at Hiroshima or of Auschwitz, perpetuating death-holocaust in memory, memory in death, but gives us what they call a reversible destiny. For many people, of course, such thinking is, to put it politely, too optimistic. Perhaps too eutopian. Too sentimental. Childish. Too Primary Narcissistic. (Such childish omnipotence!) For many people—given to death, in love with entropy until death—there can be no other way but death. Heidegger tells us: “As potenti-ality-for-Being, Dasein cannot outstrip the possibility of death. Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein. Thus death reveals itself as that *possibility which is one’s ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped*. As such, death is something *distinctively impending*” (*Being* 294; Heidegger’s emphasis). Etceteras. May they (those who would die), then, RIP. But Arakawa and Gins rethink bodies living in peace and a space of a “bridge of reversible destiny/the process in question” (see the various writings and graphics in *Reversible Destiny*; cf. Taylor, “Saving Not” in *Nots* 96–121). This bridge (or Sebold’s tunnel revisited) has many “rooms” that a visitor has to pass through:
With the help of Arakawa and Gins perhaps we can rebuild Troy as a bridge (or tunnel) through the Palace of Destinies To Not-To-Be-Raped Again and Again, Not-to-Die. In the meantime, we will learn from the Palace of Destinies to subtract our present situation by wayves of multiPLIcations. Multiple Maniacs!

But it is not just with the vision of these two anarchists (well, only one left now, since the other died) that we can search for reversibility over and against irreversibility, but it is also with Michel Serres himself who opens up the compossibility of simultaneous reversible irreversibility and irreversible reversibility. Serres rewrites himself, re-including what he had cast away as reactionary reversibles. Reaching for a third. Serres asks and answers: “What is an organism? A sheaf of times. What is a living system? A bouquet of times” (Hermes 75). Serres, in detail, explains:

It has not been inelegant to conclude that the organism combines three varieties of time, and that its system constitutes a temporal sheaf. . . . Background noise, the major obstacle to messages, assumes an organizational function. But this noise is the equivalent of thermal disorder. Its time is that of increasing
entropy, of that irreversible element which pushes the system toward death at maximum speed. Aging, for example, is a process that we are beginning to understand as a loss of redundancies and the drifting of information into background noise. If the integration levels function correctly as partial rectifiers and transform the noise of disorder into potential organization, then they have reversed the arrow of time. They are rectifiers of time. Entropic irreversibility also changes direction and sign; negentropy [emphasis mine] goes back upstream. We have discovered the place, the operation, and the theorem where and with which the knots of the bouquet are tied. It is here and in this manner that time flows back and can change direction. Due to the numerous reversals of the temporal vector, the fluctuating homeorhesis acquires a fleeting stability [homeorhesis, an open, dynamic system, in contrast to a homeostatic one]. For a moment the temporal sheaf makes a full circle. 

*It forms a turbulence where opposing times converge.* Organization per se, as system and homeorhesis, functions precisely as a converter of time. We now know how to describe this converter, as well as its levels and meanderings, from whence come amnesia, memory, and everything imaginable. (81–82; emphasis and bracketed statement mine. Cf. *Parasite* 182–89)

Multiply Principles, Fly towards Transversals: When confronted with disjunctions, when affronted with two philosophers, *write a third one*. When confronted and affronted with whatever it is, write a third transversal one. As Serres himself does. When stuck, multiple y.our principles. Write of a sheaf of multiple times, in multiple, simultaneous senses, directions. Multiply multiples. Incompossibilities.
Do not think of simply and only reversing the particular incompossibility; for it can, more often than not, lead to revenge. “Man would rather will nothingness than not will” (Genealogy 163; Nietzsche’s emphasis). But it is, as Nietzsche continues elsewhere, more complicated and easily mis-acted—this willing. Nietzsche’s Zarathustra teaches: “The will cannot will backwards; . . . that is the will’s loneliest melancholy” (251). Rather, going to the past to redeem the present, go to the future anterior: Think, write, read nothing but your potentiality to not-think, not-write, not-read. What was not. In the future waiting for the past. For this purpose, we have sent Bartleby to the Palace of Destinies, to call the principle of irrevocability into question and thereby to claim What was not.

For a similar purpose, we can send Pip away from “Murray’s Grammar” (Moby Dick 385) to Thomas Sebeok’s impotential paragrammar of David Ingram’s grammar and beyond to whatever paragrammars. Sebeok writes: In “Aymara (as spoken in Bolivia), the number of grammatical persons has been determined as 3 x 3, each compacting coactions between one pair of possible interlocutors. Simplifying somewhat, the following forms can occur: first person is addressee included but addressee excluded; second person is addressee included but addressee excluded; third person is neither addressee nor addresser included; and fourth person is both addressee and addressee included. These, then, yield nine categories of possible interreaction: 1 → 2, 1 → 3, 2 → 1, 2 → 3, 3 → 1, 3 → 2, 3 → 3, 3 → 4, and 4 → 3. It is mind boggling to fantasy what the character of [C.S.] Peirce’s metaphysic might have been had he been born a native speaker of Jaqui language” (Eco and Sebeok, Sign 7–8). It would equally be mind boggling to fantasize, say, in a Borgesian book of imaginary becomings, what the character Pip might become if born transversally across asystems of paragrammaticisms. Other
modals and contingencies. Pip, flying the mad fly’s eye in an assemblage with the flying of a mad wasp. Telling other stories, parastories. And yet, I must incite, through Alain Badiou’s thinking *being* and *event*, even more so how mind boggling if we were to reconceive the character Pip in terms of a pure, rapturous break from even Jorge Luis Borges. From Deleuze. By subtracting the One and thereby increasing the conditions as composable (*Manifesto* 33–39) and adding a complementary relation between set theory (“from Cantor to Groethendick”) and literary discourse (“from Mallarmé to Becket”) (*Being* xiv), we would find the child Pip in wildly and equally distributed heterogeneous domains of art, politics, science, and love.