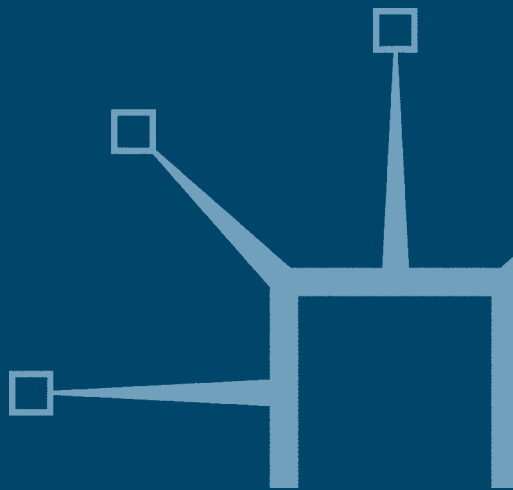


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Malabou, Nancy and Derrida

Jean-Paul Martinon



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On Futurity

Malabou, Nancy and Derrida

Jean-Paul Martinon



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Series Editor's Preface

Renewing Philosophy is an ambitious title for a series of philosophical works. What its name intimates is the need for philosophy to engage anew with the nature of the new. To engage with *the new* requires a thinking of temporality. The work that follows presents a *rigorous* thinking of temporality in relation to translation and language. I want, in this preface, to indicate some of the things at stake in what is meant by assessment of the following work, as I just have, as being *rigorous*. It is a word I have chosen very deliberately as the chief accusation that is made *against* French philosophy in particular, and European philosophy in a more general sense in the Anglo-American world, is precisely that of *lacking* rigour.

A key place where this accusation is brought bears precisely on the works of one of the philosophers who Jean-Paul Martinon analyses and responds to here: Jacques Derrida. When Derrida was proposed for an honorary degree some years ago at the University of Cambridge a campaign was orchestrated against it, led by many philosophers, and that included the claim that his works consisted merely of 'tricks and gimmicks', that the few 'coherent assertions' being made were 'either false or trivial' and which employed 'a written style that defies comprehension'.¹ All of which amounts to the view that his work, to say the least about it, is *not rigorous*. In the Anglo-American philosophical context this term is often synonymous with *logical*. There are several problems with this synonymy, however, and probing them goes some way to assessing anew the question of the role of rigour in philosophical writing. Firstly, the very question of 'logical' and 'rigorous' being synonymous requires a view concerning the meaning and status of synonymous expressions. Quine, one of the signatories of the letter, notoriously questioned the view that 'synonymy' could be regarded as a serious category in the philosophy of language, in fact subjecting it, like 'meaning' itself, to very radical questioning.² Since this very radical questioning is itself presented *within the context of a philosophy that concerns itself with logic* it would appear that there is, for Quine at least, no philosophically rigorous way of defending the view that 'rigour' and 'logic' should really be regarded as interchangeable.

If, however, the authors of the letter denouncing Derrida had trouble uniting around a definite view of language and logic that would have

permitted the easy assimilation of 'rigour' and 'logic' then it is perhaps worth thinking differently about what is being done when the ready assimilation of one word to another is being performed. Quine would in fact have been clear: it is a *translation*.³ We have here not merely a translation whereby one word is substituted for another and 'a meaning' thereby generated but, furthermore, we have a type of translation that is presented as *obvious* by contrast to 'a written style that defies comprehension'. This opposition between the 'obvious' and that which 'defies comprehension' is effectively one of the key rhetorical tricks of those who would wish to avoid *reading*, reading, above all, works of French and European philosophers, Derrida above all. If however, bearing in mind that one of the prime signatories of the letter that denounced Derrida was himself the prime exponent of an apparently 'rigorous' philosophy that precisely cast in doubt such apparently 'obvious' notions as 'meaning', 'synonymy' and 'translation' then we surely have to wonder how it is possible that this thinker (Quine) to mention none of the others who signed this letter could have had the gall to claim that they offered us a thinking that was more 'obvious' than Derrida. Perhaps we could even turn this opposition around and wonder whether Quine is not the one who has 'a written style that defies comprehension', while Derrida would instead be one whose work struck as stating the obvious?

This excursus was a preliminary way of stating that if some of us find Derrida to often write and analyse in a way that strikes us as 'rigorous' and hence may hope to find such 'rigour' in the work of someone like Martinon who writes on Derrida, then this may be because there are some who do not accept the easy conflation of 'rigour' with 'logic' and who may, indeed, have deep questions to ask concerning the nature of 'logic' itself. (This would be, of course, quite in line, as we have seen, with the work of Quine!) I would like now to focus on what kind of claim then could be being made in stating that Martinon presents here for us a work that is exemplary *in its rigour*.

If, rather than accepting commonplaces concerning the equation of 'rigorous' with 'logical', an assimilation which assumes in any case a settled sense for the latter term, we instead inquire into the nature of what can be said about that which is 'rigorous' we should remind ourselves of the contexts, beyond that of logical exactitude, in which this term is used. A corpse suffers, shortly after 'life' has left the body, from *rigor mortis*. What has happened? The body has stiffened. The Latin from which the term 'rigour' is derived refers us to 'stiffness' and 'numbness' and in its primary involvement with *mortis* requires a thought concerning death. Rigorous thought would thus involve a

certain stiffening, a numbing that would appear to 'taste' of death. This is the kind of thinking I find in Martinon (and, indeed, in Derrida, Malabou and Nancy). Would the thinking that *Renewing Philosophy* is intended to foster be one that involved a certain kind of passage through such a 'taste'? The work that follows would suggest so. In engaging with death we concern ourselves with the future (and vice versa). The relation between futurity and mortality would be one of the questions that emerges from a thought that attends to language without beginning with the 'entities' of 'meaning' that Quine (among others) have called into question.

If Martinon presents a type of thinking that is 'rigorous' in the sense of requiring a certain kind of stiffening then it will evidently involve some form of erection.⁴ To construct or develop a thought that would attend to its own conditions of possibility requires, among other things, attending to the body and to the *body of thought*, which we often 'name' using the word 'language'. The stiffening of thinking required would be one that would involve a kind of lingering, a lingering over *words*. This engagement with words would be part of what would appear to some to be merely a use of 'tricks and gimmicks'. Perhaps, however, since the status of names and their relation to descriptions, including the problem of reference to such figures as the king of France, have bedevilled the philosophy that declares itself 'rigorous' since its self-declaration in the person or persons of Bertrand Russell, it is less clear than would be suggested by such dismissive language when we have 'tricks and gimmicks' and when we have genuine *problems* (on the status of which Martinon, among others, informs us).

The concern of language with itself: this would be another name for the type of 'rigorous' thinking that would be philosophy. In fact such a concern would seem to have been one of the constant motifs of philosophy and not merely in the twentieth century, as we can remember by way of reciting Hegel's speculative proposition, the Stoic concern with the status of terms, the Aristotelian engagement with predication or the Leibnizian insistence on the virtual inherence of subjects in predicates. Without engagement with language, without thought concerning itself deeply with the means of its own enunciation, could there be philosophy at all?

The work that follows then would be *rigorous* in its attendance upon its own mode of enunciation. This would be the prime site of its rigour. But alongside this orientation towards the means of statement comes also an interest in the destinal nature of thought. Without an engagement with the temporal means of expression there would only be a static

thought. While the level of static thought contains its own 'rigour', the movement of thought would still bypass everything that aims to close. This is what gives to philosophy that would *renew* its dynamism, the fact that *renewal* can come, if it come at all, only through patient attention to the force of thinking itself. Thought would be that which is in movement without such movement either having determinate direction or any possible destination. The attempt to halt thought, to fix it, to prevent its motility, this is what is involved in the suggestion that there is a definite and final test for what can count as a 'coherent assertion'. Rigorous thought cannot be thought that is fixed in its assessment of coherence.⁵ Since this is so, the nature of assertions requires looking at in terms that cannot be fixed by reference to 'coherence'. Once having said that, the problems begin, but in saying it contemporary non-Idealist philosophy is of a piece. Perhaps then the opposition between 'a written style that defies comprehension' and one that bears the marks of clarity, coherence and the obvious is one that requires new work. While such work is *not* provided by Jean-Paul Martinon who is instead concerned with what we might think of as a 'local' set of questions concerning certain words shared between Malabou, Nancy and Derrida, the stakes of how to arrange it *are* here provided in a *rigorous* form.

Renewing Philosophy has, as its prime aim, an engagement of philosophy with both its own 'modern' history and the nature of the contemporary. Martinon's book provides a certain passage through this terrain. The nature of the passage is one that is guided by certain words and a key problematic. We will, in closing, give a certain 'name' to this problematic: how do we translate the mark of time on thought? Time marks thought due to the mobility of thought being registered in and through time. This marking would be at the centre of thought. Hence investigation of it is the most *rigorous* form of philosophy. Since it is this investigation that would mark a true *renewal* of thinking and thinking philosophically, it belongs here in this series and does so exemplarily.

Gary Banham

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Foreword

Tarnish it not by any pensive shadow of the mind; for it may be that nothing of futurity will be brighter than the mere remembrance of what is now passing.¹

On Futurity. The title of this book gives the impression that it is about the activity of racing young horses – futurity races, for example. It can also suggest that it is about science fiction or about imaginary scientific and technological developments or contacts with other worlds. More generally, the title can also imply that this book is about the possibility of things happening in the future or about the quality of being future – about desire, for example, if one accepts that desire can have the characteristic of being future.² In all three cases, the word ‘futurity’ has one overall meaning: it concerns the times ahead of us, the future times that we can sense coming: for example, a promising young horse, the possibilities of a scientific breakthrough, or more prosaically, our retirement, our old age, our death. In this way, futurity constitutes the *present space* of the future, what can be seen *today* as the future. From this understanding of the word ‘futurity’, one can then proceed to ‘gaze’ or ‘peep’ *into* futurity, while knowing all too well that this gazing, or peeping, is only that afforded by our present situation. Alternatively, if one is more inclined to take action, one can either ‘proceed carefully’ or ‘throw oneself’ *into* futurity, again from the basis of options available to us today. The meaning of the term is therefore unambiguous: that which can be identified *here and now* as the future.

None of these three connotations (horse racing, science fiction, future present) will be used in this book. The title of this book is simply a deliberate mistranslation of a French verbal expression that occupies a central place in this book: *à-venir* [‘to-come’]. This deliberate mistranslation is not intended to deprave or lead the English language astray. Instead of offering a mistranslation as an incorrect translation, this book proposes a mistranslation in order to *give* an English word a new connotation. The aim of this mistranslation consists of reinventing the term ‘futurity’ as signifying something that no futurologist, clairvoyant, or gambler could possibly forecast: that is, what can *never* be reduced to the simplicity of a future present.

The introductory chapter is divided in two. The first part attempts, in a style close to that of negative theology, to delineate – without defining them specifically – the idiomatic, linguistic, and philosophical meanings of the verbal expression *à-venir* ['to-come'], i.e. futurity in its new acceptation. Philosophically, this delineation is restricted to the specific field of contemporary French deconstruction (and more specifically, to the work of Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy). The second part provides the general background to the work, the particular emphasis taken in the chapters, and the structure of the book itself.

Introduction

À-venir – ‘to-come’

The Future speaks even now in a hundred signs; this destiny announces itself everywhere.¹

The French language has two words for the future: *le futur* and *l'avenir*. *Le futur* refers to something distant or remote, possible, or probable, therefore to something that is *not* necessarily inconceivable or unimaginable. *Le futur* supposes in fact the possibility of projection, predictions, and prophecies. As such, *le futur* is essentially hypothetical, wishful, or delusory: interstellar space travel, for example. It is often referred to in sentences such as ‘*one day*, the world *will be* a better place’. It is therefore what will or might *be* (a better world) as its Latin root clearly indicates: *futurus*, the irregular future participle to *esse*, to *be*. The word *le futur* thus implies the *being* of the future. *L'avenir*, by contrast, is imminently closer to us and is *usually* translated into English with futurity or what is ‘yet-to-come’. It is that which arrives (as we have seen in the Foreword, winning horses, scientific breakthrough, retirement) and is best exemplified by questions such as ‘What are you doing?’ ‘Breeding horses.’ Or ‘What are you expecting?’ ‘I’m winning the race.’ *L'avenir* – or futurity understood in its traditional sense – is also easily captured with expressions such as ‘I’m dreading it’ or ‘I’m looking forward to it’, therefore to situations of hope or despair. As Jacques Derrida remarks, ‘[*l'avenir*] is nothing other than . . . the condition of all promises or of all hope, of all awaiting, of all performativity, of all opening towards the future’.² The difference between *le futur* and *l'avenir* is therefore that one focuses on what the future *does* or what we *do* with the future [*l'avenir*] and the other concentrates on what the future *is* or *holds* [*le futur*].

The French language makes a further distinction between the noun *avenir* and the verbal expression *à-venir*.³ *À-venir* indicates that *there is* something going on, a movement perhaps, a hesitation, a ‘state’ of uncertainty. In our case, (*l'*)*à-venir* represents perhaps a shift in understanding, *le passage du français à venir à l'anglais* to come. However, on its own, the expression *à-venir* does not refer to an act, shift, or movement strictly speaking, it does not designate the way something or someone moves or reads. *À-venir* is what *disjoins* or *unhinges* the movement in

question.⁴ It is what provokes understanding, what allows the movement or the event to take another direction, another juncture, growth, or proportion. As such, *à-venir* cannot be identified as 'contemporary', but always non-contemporary, unexpected. This secret disjuncture is therefore what *stirs* the spatio-temporal, or to be more precise, it is that which is 'spacing (and) temporizing'.⁵ It is the play or the movement in which principles of order, finality, origin, destination, periodicity, and duration collapse into each other. It is a movement that can never be thought out on the basis of a simple present whose life would be within itself.

The verbal expression *à-venir* needs to be distinguished from two other words in both French and English. Firstly, it is not related to epoch-making arrivals and therefore cannot be understood as or translated with advent (*ad-* to and *venire*, come), in French: *avènement*. Secondly, the expression *à-venir* cannot be translated either with event (*ex-* out, *venire*, come), in French: *événement*. An event concerns the intimacy between consciousness, space, and time and marks the *condition* of all appearing. An event characterizes that which emerges or surges *out of* the disjuncture (provoked by) *à-venir*. It always already⁶ represents *something* that is *in excess*, *something* that *adds* itself to reality and allows consciousness to perceive it *as* a phenomenon. An event – even a past event – always relates to something new, an invention, a recollection, a 'first time', that is, something singular that *appears* and constitutes an inaugural act of production or understanding that is recognized, legitimized, and even sometimes countersigned by a social consensus. An event effectively *produces* meaning and for this reason, belongs exclusively to phenomenology.⁷ The crucial characteristic of an event is that, as Derrida says in relation to inventions, it also necessarily marks '*a last time*: archaeology and eschatology acknowledge each other here in the irony of the *one and only* instant'.⁸ An event therefore signals both a beginning and an end, something determinable – temporally or historically – as such.

By contrast, *à-venir*, 'to-come', i.e. futurity in its new meaning, represents (if it can represent anything at all⁹) that which *provokes*, *unhinges*, or *disjoins* an event, and as such *disturbs* the very possibility of the event itself. There are two crucial typographical characteristics to the translation or transformation of *à-venir* into the English 'to-come': the quotation marks and the hyphen. The quotation marks are important because they indicate that it is not a simple or straightforward self-contained expression referring to an event that can be empirically experienced. The quotation marks indicate a hesitation as to the nature of this provoca-

tion. This hesitation is essential because *à-venir* cannot pretend to aspire to the unity of a concept and even the quotation marks around it should never in turn guarantee the rigour of a distinction. The hyphen simply marks the difference between the verbal expression *à-venir* ['to-come'] and the verb to come [*venir*]. It also marks the intimate relation between 'to' – this preposition indicating direction – and the disjointedness in the movement itself. 'To-come' is at once *yet-to-come* [*avenir*] in the way it relates to some future present (action), and coming [*avenant*] in the sense of a secret 'unhinging' that comes to disturb this future present, this *avenir*, action, or event. (Together they form a secret adventure.)

À-venir is not unique to the French or to Latin-based languages. For example, it is comparable to the German *Zu-kunft*. The German expression derives from the verb *kommen*, 'to come', via its related noun, *Kunft*, 'coming or arrival'. *Zu-kunft* also cannot be confused with either *Zukunft* [*avenir*] or *künftig* [future]. The preposition *zu* means, among other things, 'to(wards)', and *zu-kommen* (*auf*) is 'to come to(wards)'. Hence the fact that *Zu-kunft* is literally 'to-come' and as such cannot be compared to the Hegelian *Zukunft* [coming towards].¹⁰ Unlike future, advent, or event, the words 'to-come', *à-venir* or *Zu-kunft* therefore characterize – again, if they can characterize anything as such – what takes place, as we will see later, between an original and its translation. The expression 'to-come' is therefore not confined to specific Latin-based languages. Without totalizing its meaning, one could say that *à-venir* is a universal structure of experience that is not bound to either specific moments in (political or general) history or culture (Abrahamic or other), or to any specific linguistic tradition. *À-venir* can occur under other linguistic and cultural categories. There are no limits to its unexpected 'occurrences' and therefore, as will become clear, one can never totalize its infinite linguistic incarnations. This does not mean, however, that it is universally valid or unanimously interesting.

The most crucial thing about *à-venir* is the fact that it evades the very possibility of being pinned down as (a) (metaphysical) entity and yet, paradoxically, remains essentially metaphysical.¹¹ The issue here is that *à-venir* cannot be understood as an identifiable or empirical *entity* between past and future or as a *moment* at the edge of time. Because it traverses all grammatical, linguistic, and semantic categories, (the) 'to-come' can only be understood as a (secret) *signal* sheltered by the (metaphysical) text. However much it is difficult to identify its meaning, however much it is unstable and unhinging, *à-venir* is still *a sign* that gives us to think beyond the closure of metaphysics. *À-venir* signals that something is afoot, that something might be coming, and yet, this signal

can only be made in a manner *unthinkable* by metaphysics, in a manner too strange or extreme to be considered. In other words, *à-venir* can only be metalinguistic and yet does not tolerate the idea of a metalinguistic citation. Nothing can make sense of the logic of this event at the edge of meaning. In this way, *à-venir* can only be understood as a signifying spatio-temporal trace – in a Derridean sense: the trace of an erasure of a trace – that cannot be understood as something *proper*; for example, *the* trace of what is coming. *À-venir* signals not in the direction of another present or presence in the future, but, as Derrida says in relation to the trace, ‘in the direction of an entirely other text’.¹² The important thing about *à-venir* is therefore that no philosopheme is prepared to master it. As disjointedness itself, ‘to-come’ (is what always already) escapes mastery.

In relation to space and time, *à-venir* ‘represents’ a spacing (and) temporizing, both of which are without essence, origin, destination, or determinable ground. I use here, following Derrida, the words ‘spacing’ and ‘temporizing’ in order to distinguish them from ‘spatialization’ and ‘temporalization’, which refer to *measured* time and space. With *à-venir*, nothing is measured, measurable, durational, spatial, or temporal.¹³ ‘To-come’ is not an attribute of the living present. It cannot be gauged. It is what *maintains the impurity* of the living present. As such, one can only relate to it as always already issued forth (in language) into the (expressive) structure of lived experience. It is what *maintains* (the lack of) sense. However, this ‘maintenance’ does not imply that something hidden controls, or holds everything together in a permanent state of ‘unhinging’. *À-venir* or ‘to-come’ – this spacing (and) temporizing – does not stem from a pure inside or from an atomic nucleus of submicro-cosmic dimension whose life would be within itself. *À-venir* does not take place *in* space or *in* time, but *as* space (and) time. Derrida makes this all too clear when he writes in *Speech and Phenomena*:

As soon as we admit spacing both as ‘interval’ or difference and as openness upon the outside, there can no longer be any absolute inside, for the ‘outside’ has insinuated itself into the movement by which the inside of the non-spatial, which is called ‘time’, appears, constitutes, or ‘presents’ itself. Space is ‘in’ time; it is time’s pure leaving-itself; it is the ‘outside-itself’ as the self-relation of time.¹⁴

Hence the fact that if one attempts to describe the disjointedness that is (*l’*)*à-venir*, it is always necessary to bracket the conjunction ‘and’ between spacing and temporizing.¹⁵ The brackets signal the interdependence

of the act of spacing with that of temporizing and the fact that this interdependence is what dislocates or unhinges *l'avenir* – that which is *yet-to-come*.

Although *à-venir* is not an ur-form, it still represents the index of an irreducible *displacement* 'taking place' in the present. However, it cannot be understood as 'the present', but as what eludes the present and can never be conceived as a simple or an originary present commanding the advent of space and time. *À-venir* can only be thought in terms of what interrupts the present, that is, every self-identity, self-homogeneity, or self-interiority. *À-venir* is therefore a trace without any purity or autoaffection, a here and now always already open to what lies inside/outside it. This 'here and now' – to use another expression easily confused with the present – is again *not* the present. It is the indication that there is perhaps some future, that something may be coming, that something is taking place in a 'here and now' without presence. This indication is not something that has a shape and can be seen or reached in time and space. It is an interruption that is absolutely non-reappropriable, and as such, can only have the shape of the other. *À-venir* or spacing (and) temporizing is therefore related to a certain alterity, but one which defies anticipation, reappropriation, calculation, or any form of predetermination. The spacing (and) temporizing operation (in a Mallarmean sense) of (*l'*)*à-venir* is indeed what dislocates all forms of opposition (same/other, presence/absence, inside/outside and inevitably past/future) and this without ever constituting itself into a culturally identifiable present.

For this reason, it becomes clear why this spacing (and) temporizing cannot take place *within* a succession *with* an origin *and* an end. It does not take place either *in relation to* an origin *or* an end (Absolute Knowledge or the Da of Dasein). *À-venir* does not need a synthetic, synthesizing, or synchronic process or point (*νυν*, *jetzt*, or now) to (re)present itself or in order for it to *be* (re)presented. It evades all *archia* and all forms of *telos*. It 'represents' what upsets teleology, line, or circle. The reason for this is that *à-venir*, like *différance*, is 'lodged' in the Aristotelian aporia of *hama* – that which occurs 'at once'.¹⁶ The locution *hama* is neither in space nor outside of it, neither in time nor outside of it. It does not bring together two points or two places; it thwarts and frustrates the possibility of combining everything into a (new) whole, a fullness, or a totality. *Hama* marks the *complicity* or common origin of time and space. *À-venir* is lodged in *hama*. However, this lodging is a curious one since it evades all sense of placement or locality; it is what could be seen, as Derrida says, as a dyad, or an absolute minimum.¹⁷ *À-venir* therefore operates *at once* in time and outside of time, in space and

independent from space. In this way and paradoxically, *à-venir* operates both as space (and) time and as the *other* of space (and) time, whereby the other is what has disappeared in the forgetting of the difference between space and time.

As the complicity or common origin of time and space, *hama* can be understood with the expression 'at once', or as we have seen with the use of brackets around the conjunction 'and' between spacing/temporizing. However, it can also be articulated using a different vocabulary. In order to think being outside or beyond any possibility of propriety and to rethink Heidegger's being-with as a more originary form of being (that is, as a singular plurality), Jean-Luc Nancy rearticulates in *Being Singular Plural* Derrida's understanding of spacing (and) temporizing as *partage* or sharing, as a 'with' that is not secondary or supplementary but the very condition of the emergence of a spacing/temporizing world. He writes: "'With" is the sharing of time-space; it is the at-the-same-time-in-the-same-place as itself, in itself, shattered.'¹⁸ And then further down, he adds,

simultaneity is not a matter of indistinction; on the contrary, it is the distinctness of places taken together. The passage from one place to another needs time [*D'un lieu à l'autre, il faut le temps*]. And moving in place [*du lieu à lui-même*] as such also needs time: the time for the place to open itself as place, the time to space itself. Reciprocally, originary time, appearing as such, needs space [*il faut l'espace*], the space of its own distention, the space of the passage that divides [*partage*] it.¹⁹

The complicity of time and space, whether formulated with the old Aristotelian conjunction *hama*, with Derrida's brackets or with Nancy's 'with', marks, in this way, the absolute lack of centre or property; infinite (re)fraction(ing) [*partage/partager*] of time (and) space.²⁰

In relation to the past or the future (radical or otherwise), *à-venir* is *not*, as Jean-Luc Nancy remarks,

a present time represented as such, but the fact that time never ceases to draw a 'coming', that is, to draw a coming from itself, a *coming about* from its most proper self, which is, precisely that of being neither present, past, or future, but that of surrendering to its very own instability (its own instantaneity, one which is never simultaneous with itself.) [*(L')à-venir*] is not a 'pure time' in the manner of Proust, a time that streams, modulated, or modelled. But time

undressed: plunged into what has not yet streamed, in the yawning of what is always possible – always certain, in truth – ‘no more time’/‘not yet time’.²¹

As such, *à-venir* has no *essential* relation to either the past or the future. The future first: *à-venir* does *not* stem from the future, but *from itself*, from a ‘self’ that ‘lies’ between radical impossibility (‘what has not yet streamed’) and a future historically determined in advance (‘what is always possible’). In other words, *à-venir* surges between the foreseeable, ‘projectable’, ‘plannable’, and programmable *future present* and the radical future, that is, the undeconstructible itself, that which exceeds or is more than this future possibility. The past: conversely, *à-venir* is also not *essentially* related to history or an absolute past, a past that cannot be reduced to a now-past. *À-venir* unhinges itself between history, memory, and the immemorial as such, what remains forgotten. In this way, *à-venir* is essentially emancipated from either of these two categories (radical/present future and radical/present past) in the way it breaks down the tension between the two, in the way it pushes against and beyond the limits of the horizon itself.

In this way, one can understand why Derrida says that there is ‘no “to-come” without heritage and the possibility of *repeating*’.²² *À-venir* draws a coming from itself, therefore from duplication, or more precisely, from an added differentiation to what is already gone – and this without constituting itself as an addition. To follow Jean-Luc Nancy’s line of thought, one could think *à-venir* in relation to what he understands by ‘the morrow’, that is, the ever-recurring chance, and danger of a new beginning. He writes:

The morrow ... comes like a repetition of the last day, but as a repetition of the passing of the very past, the very ancient, if the ancient is not presented through any memory. It is the absolute last past of the beginning itself, of the beginning of all the beginnings, if you will; but more precisely, there is no beginning of the beginnings, because the beginning is always only itself the collapse of the past into the immemorial, into the non-presence which opens at the same time another non-presence, that of the morrow.²³

The morrow therefore ‘situates’ itself between collapse and (re)opening, between the disintegration of the past into the immemorial past and the (re)opening of this absolute past into the ‘realm’ of chance and danger, therefore into what has no presence as such. In this way, the morrow is

à-venir, not an intermediate space or period, not the clarity of daylight or the silence of night, but that which supports or provokes repetition and is without place or present moment. This support or provocation is not a mysterious subjacent power, but the weakness that empowers repetition [*l'impouvoir qui donne force à la répétition*] (and therefore language) to take place.

In relation to issues of messianicity (especially those developed by Jacques Derrida under the figuration 'messianicity without messianism'²⁴), 'to-come' can also be understood as the hesitation between an affirmation, 'it is coming' and a question, 'is it coming?' Messianicity is a structure of experience where experience means undecidability: not knowing if one is running up against the other (the Messiah) with the certainty that the other will come *or* if one is simply unprepared to encounter something that takes our breath away (or to write using a Derridean vocabulary: awaiting what one does not expect, hospitality without reserve). *If* (and only *if*) one were to incorporate *à-venir* within a measured and measurable understanding of time and history, this hesitation would then suggest that the two temporal or a-temporal 'moments' put forward by the messianic (in recorded history and, *at the same time*, at the moment of the annihilation of all history) can only be read as figures *for* each other. The hesitation reflects this liminal messianic moment in recorded history (the statement 'it is coming' results from a teleological development) *and* at the end of history (the question 'is it coming?' can only be pronounced at the end, that is, at the very beginning of history). As such, (*l'*)*à-venir*, (the) 'to-come' can only be conceived in relation to the messianic as the provocation *of the hesitation* occurring *every second of time*: 'it is coming' *or* 'is it coming?' The conjunction 'or', which is at the heart of the process of deconstruction, therefore 'symbolizes' this structure of experience, this spacing (and) temporizing, in the sense that it reveals the hesitation between coming and not coming. 'To-come' is the exposure without any exposition of undecidability *per se* – 'or'.

Inevitably, every time the question of repetition, or the question of whether something is coming or not is raised, the issue of promise follows suit. In what concerns us, the important thing is to make the distinction between the negotiations of promises and that which divides or differentiates the various promises engaged in these negotiations. As is evidenced in much of Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Derrida's work, the issue of the promise is always related to that of the performative 'come!' [*viens!*]. This injunction orders or summons the very thing that will never present itself in the form of full presence and as such remains

always already, not unlike the adverb 'yes', prior to, or to be more precise, on the edge of any linguistic occurrence. As Derrida says, the expression 'come!' describes the

unwonted pressure [placed] on *coming* [*l'avance insolite de viens sur venir*]. It is the step over or upon coming [*venir*]. It comes down to what withdraws from any position, in the way it propagates and announces itself in the many nuances included in the words *venir* or *venue*; for example: the *yet-to-come* [*l'avenir*], the event, the advent, etc., but also in the various verbal modes and inflections of that which comes and goes.²⁵

The negotiations of promises that take place are therefore between whomever or whatever makes a step *and* what comes or not from this step, between the pressure exerted over the future and that which bothers to come, between the promise and its response. Between the two, 'there is' *à-venir*; what divides promise and determination, promise and event (or non-event) or whatever measures itself against this promise. (The) *à-venir*, which therefore must be distinguished from the performative utterances engaged in promises ('come!'), thus 'represents' what dislocates the promissory negotiations themselves.

Because it is impossible to decide between one 'come!' and the other, the dislocation between the two, this 'or', can never end up or result in a final 'to-come', the result of an infinite unhinging process, an ultimate 'come!' that would prevent the possibility of yet another promise or negotiation. As Werner Hamacher remarks in an analysis of Jean-Luc Nancy's rephrasing of Derridean messianism: 'If the coming only comes without ever arriving, without ever being present, if it comes without effectively coming, it can only empty or hollow out all meaning, all transcendental actuality and all empirical coming...'²⁶ The dislocation, the yawning, or the 'or' cannot finish by revealing itself because at each dislocation, *partage*, undecidability, or coming; 'it' retains itself from coming or announcing itself as dislocation, *partage*, or undecidability.²⁷ What shows itself as coming/not never manages to reveal itself; it is always in a state of 'undressing' [*dénudement*] to use a word by Nancy.²⁸ There is never any end to this undressing, a moment, for example, when the undressing will finally reveal something or other, an identifiable phenomenon, a body, the Messiah, Communism, the Promised Land *or* the 'beyond of coming'. Thus conceived outside of any process of realization *of* or *in* space/time, that which can be 'identified' as 'to-come', the exposure of the 'or', the disclosure of undecidability itself, then

becomes the dislocation that never dislocates itself properly. In other words, and to follow Nancy, it becomes the 'opening that does not arrive, but manages to distort and open up time'.²⁹ In this way, this undressing or unveiling carries on doing its work without the involvement of any identifiable players, directions, forces, or citations, for these *retain themselves* in the very process of their emergence.

The issue that arises at this stage is that of the *articulation* of this impossibly elusive 'to-come', which, as we have seen, is *at once* in time and outside of time, in space and independent from space – spacing (and) temporizing. The question on this issue is this: How is one to characterize this *thought* of the 'unhinging', this thought *that retains itself while it unhinges, that is, in the very process of its enunciation*? The thought of the 'unhinging' is perhaps inevitably eschatological, not in the sense of a theological understanding of endings or last things in general (death, resurrection, judgement, etc.), but in a way that refers to a thought of the extreme, a thought of the *eschaton*, of *what is furthest*. One cannot dissociate the (messianic) articulation of (the) 'to-come' from the thought of the *eschaton*. This *eschaton* is not a *horizon* of expectancy; it is not a welcoming *situation* or a final relief from dislocation. This *eschaton* has nothing to do with edges or limits – 'points' from which one can comprehend space and time. The *eschaton* cannot be figured either as if a door or a series of gates from which the Messiah might come – no matter how disorientating the doors or gates can be.³⁰ The *eschaton* can only evade this vocabulary precisely because it is the extremity in which the vacillation between promises and comings 'takes place'. It is *at* this (im)possible extremity, here on this page, on earth or anywhere else in the universe, that *à-venir* divides, disjoins, or unhinges and allows (us) to hesitate, undecided. 'Us' remains obviously between brackets, because as Derrida comments in relation to the eschatological dimension of justice: 'This is an extremity that is beyond any determinable end of being or of history, and this eschatology – as extreme beyond the extreme, as last beyond the last – has necessarily to be the only absolute opening towards the non-determinability of the future.'³¹ *À-venir* operates (again, in a Mallarmean sense) precisely *on* or *at* this 'stage', a 'stage' without a theatre and without a play, a stage where the time of the end dislocates the end of time.

À-venir is therefore an 'unhinging' *at* the limits and this, *as* infinity itself. This does not mean that this 'unhinging' *is* infinite. If it was infinite, then one could figure the disjointedness itself – for example, a breaking point on a horizon of intelligibility or an extreme location from which time (and) space would suddenly break up *together*. We reach here

at this point, inevitably, the limits of what is comprehensible. If one were to think this 'unhinging' at the limits or at the furthest in terms of performativity, then one would need a writing that would expose *and* perform at the same time this liminal performance. One would need a performativity that can never establish any form of presence, a future in a permanent 'state of conjugation', always about to be declined, derived, inflected, or argued. Again, Derrida writes most aporetically about this strange performativity in relation to Emmanuel Levinas's work and specifically – or perhaps inevitably – in relation to his understanding of the radically other. He says:

There would have to be [*il faudrait*] a writing that performs, but with a performative without present... a performative whose essence cannot be resumed as to presence... a performative heretofore never described, whose performance must not, however, be experienced as a glib success, as an act of prowess. For at the same time, it is the most quotidian exercise of a discourse with the other, the condition of the least virtuoso writing. Such a performance does not correspond to [*répond à*] the canonical description of a performative, perhaps. Well then, let the description be changed, or renounce here the word 'performative'! What is pretty certain is that *that* performance derives nothing from the 'constative' proposition, nor from any proposition at all; but inversely and dissymmetrically, every so-called constative proposition, every proposition in general *presupposes* this structure before anything else, this responsibility of the trace (*performing or performed*).³²

The performativity implied by (the) 'to-come' is therefore *not* any other performativity. Its main characteristic is that it does not end by producing a constative or an event (like the responsibility I hold in introducing this book). To be faithful to the structure of the expression 'to-come', the only thing that one can do at such a liminal 'point' is to accept the fact that the performativity that articulates the 'to-come' can only destabilize all forms of performativity. How is one to make sense of this?

So far I have used a number of words to characterize *à-venir*, 'to-come': what disjoins or unhinges movement, what stirs the spatiotemporal, what disturbs the event, what is sheltered by the metaphysical text, what is spacing (and) temporizing, what maintains the impurity of the living present, what interrupts every self-identity, what dislocates all forms of opposition, what upsets teleology, what emerges between radical impossibility and a future historically determined in

advance, what provokes the hesitation between 'it is coming' or 'is it coming?', what shows itself as coming/not, etc. The crucial aspect of this anxious – perhaps at times too anxious – attempt to provide a multifaceted characterization of this non-philosopheme is that, every time, it is an endeavour to evade the principle of figuration. Although it is clearly impossible to characterize this (pre)performative – hence the inevitable use of a style close to that of negative theology – many authors have tried to *figure* it in order to render it more comprehensible, pedagogically understandable, and easily translatable.³³ In each case, the answer always reverts to the arche-figure of the spectre, that is, to an allegorical or emblematic form whose only purpose is to *totalize* (the) *à-venir*. This answer always stems from a quick reading of Derrida's work. However, if one reads closely, it becomes clear that it is impossible to figure (the) *à-venir*, not only because as we have seen, it retains itself in the process of its emergence, but also and above all, because it comes from a *heterogeneity* that concerns neither knowledge nor ignorance. As Derrida says,

One does not know if the expectation prepares the coming of the future-to-come or if it recalls the repetition of the same, of the same thing as ghost ('What, ha's this thing appear'd againe tonight?'). This not-knowing is not a lacuna. No progress of knowledge could saturate an opening that must have nothing to do with knowing. Nor therefore with ignorance. The opening must preserve this heterogeneity as the only chance of an affirmed or rather reaffirmed future.³⁴

The issue is *not* that there are no spectres, ghosts, and spirits or that only spectres are truly able – because they inhabit two worlds *at once* – to make sense of *à-venir*. The issue is that it is simply impossible to reduce *à-venir* – however one thinks of the *eschaton* – with *one* all-encompassing figuration (ghostly or otherwise). The *à-venir* cannot be reduced because there is no moment in which this reduction can take place and there is no moment when one can witness the dislocation provoked by *à-venir*. Furthermore, even if the spectral were what can make sense of (*l'*)*à-venir*, it would have not only to dislocate itself in the process of making sense, but also to dislocate the sense it makes of this very dislocation. In this way, not unlike its many possible idiomatic formulations, the heterogeneity of *à-venir* is effectively irreducible.

So far, I have also referenced a number of Derridean terms: spacing, alterity, trace, *différance*, step/not, invention, disjointedness, promise, messianicity, eschatology, etc. Other terms could also have been used: displacement [or as we will see later, Heidegger's *Entfernung*], apocalypse,

or more straightforward Derridean terms, such as, for example, *dérive* or *envois* – to cite only those that are more or less close to the issue of *à-venir*. Derrida himself plays with all these terms each time he addresses (the) ‘to-come’. This is not contradictory or repetitive. On the contrary, it shows that the semantic, grammatical, and linguistic *category* of *à-venir* traverses all of these terms, *secretly*. This does not mean that by highlighting this closeness, one necessarily transforms *à-venir* into the main leitmotif in Derrida’s entire *oeuvre* – *à-venir* as the main overarching Derridean term. On the contrary, it is only one term amongst others, one term too often – and in most cases always too quickly – assimilated with Jewish messianicity and negative theology. As such, it can only be understood as a variation, adaptation, or alternative not of a central term (*différance*, for example), but amidst an irreducible plurality of terms, each of which has a different inflection or tone. Derrida says so himself when it comes to the different ways of understanding the word ‘come’ and how it resonates in apocalyptic texts:

Between all the ‘comes’, the difference is not grammatical, linguistic, semantic, pragmatic – and which permits saying: it’s an imperative, it’s a jussive modality, it’s a performative of such and such a type, and so on – the difference is tonal. And I do not know whether a tonal difference finally lends itself to all these questions. Try to say, ‘come’ – it can be said in every tone, and you’ll see, you’ll hear, the other will hear first – perhaps or not. It is the gesture in speaking [*parole*], that gesture that does not let itself be recovered [*repandre*] by the analysis – linguistic, semantic, or rhetorical – of speaking... Perhaps Heidegger would not have liked this apparently personal conjugation or declension of coming. But such conjugation and declension are not personal, subjective, or egological.³⁵

In this way, *à-venir* is perhaps nothing other than a displacement of a previous term and that its conjugation or declension (or its various tonalities) clearly shows that its meaning can only be understood *within a multiplicity* of terms and that none of them make complete sense on their own. The aim behind this *multiplicity* and *heterogeneity* is indeed to avoid at all cost overarching concepts. If one follows, for example, Herman Rapaport’s analysis of Heidegger and Derrida’s relationship to Anaximander’s *Apeiron*, then one could say that *à-venir* is yet another term in a long line of quasi-metaphysical terms such as *a-rché*, *a-letheia*, *a-peiron*, and *a-poria* – the crucial letter ‘a’ always vouchsafing the risk of creating

an overarching concept – *the* coming, for example – and reminding us that any quasi-metaphysical concept must always begin with a certain undecidability between two terms (*venir/à-venir*, for example).³⁶ In this way, *à-venir*, not unlike Anaximander's original term, would appear and disappear in the drifting and clinging of the prefix 'a'. However, if one follows this line of thought, then one would create – in the vain attempt to avoid at all cost overarching concepts – an overarching *letter* that would still string together the desperate attempts to trace the erasure of the trace. To avoid at all cost a quick metaleptical, translinguistic, and transhistorical link between words that happen to start with *a* (or *à* – *sic*) and to hesitate randomly or illogically between *disjoining*, *what unhinges*, *to unveil*, *undecidability*, *contamination*, *to step/not*, *promise*, *lying*, and *à-venir*, and, as we will see, its many conjugations, inflections, declensions, or tonalities is perhaps the only way one can make sense of the necessary slipperiness of quasi-metaphysical terms that haunt the metaphysical text in their desperate attempt to pin down what speeds towards us at the reckless pace of modern life or steal up on us with the languor of a summer afternoon. One cannot exit language or the fact of language; one is constrained by the slipperiness of metaphysical concepts and to this inevitable messianic/eschatological slippage of terms, inflections, or conjugations.

It is this liminal multiplicity and heterogeneity of sometimes contradictory and undecidable terms; with their many tonal differences and characteristics, that one here calls, in a deliberate act of mistranslation, 'futurity'. Now, although the title of this book is *On Futurity*, it would be wrong to see it as an overarching term that would then in turn contradict this very multiplicity. The choice of the word 'futurity' to encompass this multiplicity is only intended to highlight the inevitable dislocation between the singularity of one word and the multiplicity of modes of expression contained within this category. In other words, the aim is to reveal the *displacement* taking place between one word in one language (*à-venir* becoming futurity, for example) in relation to the infinity of words belonging to one or more language(s). The choice of the word 'futurity' is therefore only intended as being overarching in its 'momentariness,' that is, for the length of survival of this very book. By proposing the word 'futurity' as an overall title for this book, the hope is therefore for this word to become not a prototype or an archetype, but a pilot or a tester, that is, a type of experiment open to the future. Futurity as the pilot of a successful or failed series of other, perhaps more elaborate futurities.

Translation ‘to-come’

Why should one be concerned with the questions put forward by the French expression *à-venir*, by what I have mistranslated in English as futurity?

The most straightforward answer one could give is that the expression *à-venir* ‘represents’ a displacement of space and time, a breaking up of the measurable linearity of space and time and that to focus on this displacement, or disjoining movement, radically alters our traditional conception of the future. Put simply, the future usually represents the extension of a linear temporality, the outcome of time understood as a measurable sequence of events and therefore as narrative. This traditional view satisfies a Judaeo-Christian desire that time and history – both past and future – represent a continuous unity of progress and fulfilment. In this traditional (or vulgar) context, time is therefore always one-dimensional and unidirectional; it goes towards the future. The most famous model for such an account is obviously Hegel’s philosophy of history, whereby history progresses towards its final realization *in* the future. For the three philosophers that concern us in this book, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Catherine Malabou, the main problem with this traditional understanding of time is the fact that what contravenes this progress and fulfilment – contingency, plurality, death, etc. – always ends up being (re)appropriated within the wider scheme of chronology and progress. Part of the work of these philosophers and of the many others who have inspired them, is therefore to show the problems associated with these one-dimensional and unidirectional views of time, and to denounce their hidden ontological aspirations for presence. The expression *à-venir* – an expression that is central to the concerns of these three philosophers – is therefore of crucial importance for anyone interested in thinking the future in a way that has nothing to do with a historically determined dimension and/or with a horizon of intelligibility for action, meaning, and truth.

The expression *à-venir* and the specific conception of space (and) time it generates, owe much to a number of key philosophical texts taken from the wider context of the German phenomenological tradition and specifically from its reception within the French philosophical community after the Second World War. There is unfortunately no space here to give justice to this context; I can only send the reader to the bibliography and specifically to David Wood’s comprehensive account of this history in *The Deconstruction of Time*.³⁷ Suffice to say for the sake of clarity that within our context, the notion of *à-venir* – as

Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Catherine Malabou can be seen to understand it – has its roots in the work of three key authors. These three names should not be seen to represent a triad of male heroes responsible for paving the way towards a deconstructive understanding of this spacing (and) temporizing or more specifically towards a ‘French’ understanding of *à-venir*. Many other names should be included in any attempt to provide a historical context to the (a)philosophical notion of *à-venir*.³⁸ Because the aim of this book is *not* to contextualize or historicize these French authors, the following three names are therefore only intended to provide the most succinct background to their readings.

First and foremost, it owes much to Edmund Husserl’s work, specifically to his text ‘The Origin of Geometry’ and to his 1907 lectures entitled ‘Thing and Space’.³⁹ If one takes on board this body of work, then it becomes clear that the Derridean notion of *à-venir* (displacement or ‘unhinging’) inherits much from Husserl’s treatment of the question of origin or genesis.⁴⁰ For there to be an origin, something entirely new, for there to be future, something unforeseeable that comes to break with the continuity of space and time, there must be a certain alterity. Nothing is simply and immediately present in an instantaneous now-point, in the blink of an eye, but is always visible *with a delay*, with a mark of difference and therefore with something other. This other or this alterity prevents the possibility of an origin or of a single moment in time. The present is always open to the intimacy of time and alterity, that is, to a certain exteriority, to spacing, to something improper, or monstrous. With Derrida’s reading of Husserl’s work, the displacement or ‘unhinging’ operated by *à-venir* cannot therefore be seen as an origin or as an originary point *of* or *in* time, but as an ever-elusive trace that establishes the relation between time and space or, more precisely, between spacing (and) temporizing.

Derrida’s notion of *à-venir* also owes a great debt to Heidegger’s account of temporality and spatiality developed in *Being and Time* and later in texts such as *Beiträge zur Philosophie* [Contributions to Philosophy], *On Time and Being*, and the *Grundbegriffe* [Basic Concepts].⁴¹ The crux of this inheritance is the understanding of Dasein in terms of temporality and that of time as the transcendental horizon for the question of Being. The aim of this double understanding is to develop the ekstático-horizontal temporality of Dasein as one, which is essentially directed towards the future [*zukünftig*]. The issue for us is that this direction is a movement, a coming [*Kunft*] towards itself [*auf sich zukommt*]. Dasein as being is always coming towards itself – in so far, of course, as it is futural in its Being in general. The temporality that arises in Dasein’s

coming towards itself is thus always understood as *finite*; it has an *end* that does not befall it from without. Considering this situation, Derrida's notion of *à-venir* can therefore be seen as a reformulation of Heidegger's ontological understanding of space and time, whereby being is no longer understood as a movement of Being coming towards itself, that is, as a movement towards the possibility of property, but becomes – through a reading of Levinas's work – an ungraspable opening or exteriority that knows no possibility of identity or closure. Being becomes thus understood as a spacing (and) temporizing event that is no longer singularized in its ownmost possibility – that is, in its projection towards itself/its end – or reduced to a thinking of the temporality and historicity of being itself. As spacing (and) temporizing, being is therefore engaged as part of an *excess* of time that is no longer auto-affection or ecstatic departure towards itself. This reading of Heidegger's work is clearly evidenced in the number of key terms used by Derrida (for example, the gift) and Nancy (for example, *ex-posure*), each of which is an attempt to think what overflows the circle of economy and projection entrapping being in its own finitude and to put forward a thinking of time and being that is open to an other that is either entirely non-reappropriable (Derrida) or stems from an irreducible plurality (Nancy).

Finally, the last crucial author in this bird's-eye view of the philosophical context of *à-venir* is someone who does not belong to the phenomenological tradition, but stands apart on his own: Walter Benjamin. The obvious source here is Benjamin's extraordinary fusion of German Romanticism, Jewish messianism, and Marxism in the 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'.⁴² Derrida transforms these heterogeneous and allegorical theses into a rigorous analysis of the idea of promise without determinate content.⁴³ Derrida's 'messianicity without messianism' represents the continual *commitment* to keep open the relation to the other. This promise prior to any form of promise is crucial in the context of any analysis of time and the future as it prevents any presence from being both closed around itself and suspended in a time continuum. With Derrida's Benjaminian messianism, one is always already engaged in a type of promise that maintains the unhinging of space (and) time unabated. As Ernest Laclau remarks in his review of Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*: 'We can do away with the teleological and eschatological dimensions, we can even do away with all the actual contents of the historical messianisms, but what we cannot do away with is the "promise", because the latter is inscribed in the structure of all experience.'⁴⁴ As mentioned in the first part of this introduction, *à-venir* is what provokes and maintains the hesitation implied in

any messianicity: Is it coming? It is coming. In this way, (the) *à-venir* that concerns us here cannot be dissociated from Derrida's reading of Benjamin and the way this reading generates a non-eschatological and non-redemptive promise occurring at the edge of discourse – an edge or limit that is *not one*, precisely because it is always already other than the limit itself.

Considering this context and the various other sources that have influenced it and that cannot be covered here, the crucial thing is that none of the three philosophers' work explored in this book – Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Catherine Malabou – attempts to propose *another* way of *thinking* the future; for example, a type of post-Husserlian, Heideggerian, or Benjaminian way of thinking that which comes unexpectedly towards us or surprises us from behind. Aware of the dangers of recuperation and reappropriation, their works focus instead, each in different ways, on deploying a number of strategies of *displacement* of traditional views on the future; strategies that end up revealing the full problematic of addressing the issue of time in the first place. The Derridean expression of *à-venir* – one that transpires, as we will see, under other guises in the work of Nancy and Malabou – is central to this strategy of displacement. Not unlike Derrida's *différance*, this displacement aims to prevent not only any attempts to solidify the ground of philosophy, but also to traverse, as this book attempts to show, the performative, that is the spacing (and) temporizing dimension of writing (philosophy). This operation of displacement *of* and *in* philosophy is therefore crucial in the way it reveals the impossibility of thinking about the issue of that which is spacing (and) temporizing in any other way, but attached to or in parallel with a thinking of writing. It is this impossibility or irreducibility that concerns us in this book. How can one make sense of this interdependence between writing and spacing (and) temporizing in the most revealing manner?

In order to make sense of this operation of displacement, I have chosen the act of translation as an exemplary undertaking in the way it reveals, exposes, or 'lets slip' what can be identified as spacing (and) temporizing – *à-venir*. Put simply, the act of translation 'takes place as part of' this unhinging of space (and) time. Translation is displacement. One cannot address the issue of displacement or 'unhinging' on its own, it has to pass through the channel of translation. Translation can only be understood in complicity with *à-venir* and vice versa. There cannot be a writing or a translation of (the) 'to-come' that simultaneously does not call (the) 'to-come' into question. In order to expose this, one has no choice in the field that concerns us but to turn to deconstruction.

Deconstruction and translation are synonymous. The work of Jacques Derrida is, here, obviously a prime example. In his work, Derrida indeed creates thick and fleshy ways to 'problematize' the eventuation of a transformation or translation in and of language. This attempt has two key aspects. Firstly, for Derrida, language is not something petrified or static, but has the continuous capacity of transformation and living on.⁴⁵ Words, sentences, and texts cannot be dissociated from the advent of the future itself. Secondly, there is always for Derrida a semantic plurality at play in words.⁴⁶ The claim, for example, that 'in the beginning was the word' suggests in fact that in the beginning there was a plurality, the possibility of semantic conflict.⁴⁷ These two key aspects, plurality and mobility, reveal that, for deconstruction, the work of philosophy is necessarily a work of translation and that *à-venir* cannot be dissociated from it.

Furthermore, the act of translation is a process by which a given word or text *is given over* to a chain of substitutions and reinventions, therefore an act of displacement whose result often bears little resemblance to the original. The most famous account of this process is perhaps Heidegger's argument in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* that the translation of Plato's word *Physis* into Latin involves an inevitable thrusting aside of the original meaning.⁴⁸ This process of substitutions and reinventions implies two things. Firstly, there can be no faithful translation because a translation can only be an act of *transformation*, one that can never reduce the proposed translation into an inferior version of the sovereign original, but stands equal as a text on its own.⁴⁹ Secondly, a text *as* original or *as* translation cannot be conceived as a *finite* thing. A text or a translation marks instead the very possibility of something else, another translation, or interpretation. Considering this undecidability – the impossibility and possibility of translation – how is one to understand this passage or this movement between untranslatability *and* translatability; the site or non-site at which the inaugurating open-ended indefiniteness of textuality emerges? How is one to make sense of that which opens up the very possibility of another text, this opening, breach, gap, or caesura that shows the lure of the abyss between languages as the condition of freedom itself?

This issue of the intertwinement of *à-venir* and translation marks the point of departure of this book. It proposes to focus on the creative process of translation between two languages – French and English – and addresses the following questions: Is it possible to reveal the creative process of translation, with its ever-shifting moves, in relation to the way in which space (and) time unhinges itself – *à-venir*? Alternatively

or conversely, is it possible to expose this 'disjointness' through the process of translation itself? How do these two breaking movements *touch* each other? Before deploying the methodology used to answer these questions, it is necessary to answer a further crucial question: Why should we care to know how the movement of translation touches *or* is touched by the movement of what comes? This can be understood in two ways.

Firstly, it offers a way of rendering the spacing (and) temporizing process of translation (or transformation) that 'takes place' in and between languages outside of the constraints of an understanding of time as one-dimensional and unidirectional. Usually a text, a translation, follows (the) homogeneous linear time (of the original), it assumes that time is a reality, an idea, or simply a continuum. The idea is not to propose alternative models, texts, or translations that cannot be read following a linear trajectory.⁵⁰ Because the focus is on the *emergence* of meaning through translation, the idea is to expose the spacing (and) temporizing occasioned by translation, that is, the uncertain movements that provoke an author (a translator) to choose words in one or another language, to pass, for example, from *le français à l'anglais* and vice versa. The aim is ultimately to show how to think the space-time of translation without thinking this space-time as *an* essence or as 'what is', but as 'what does'.⁵¹ The focus is therefore on these ignored or repressed (non)times and (non)spaces that *provoke* the endless permutations, transcriptions, alternatives, combinations necessary to create a translation and consequently *another* language. In other words, to explore translation and/as 'to-come' is simply an attempt to provide a tool to grasp the all-too-important, but always elapsed *mo(ve)ments*, uncertain but inventive, taking place in and/or between languages. This does not mean that the intention here is to provide a tool-kit for future translators or to propose a programmatic presentation of an *impossible* process: the act *of* translation. The reason for this is simple. The act of translation has no determined limits. How, for example, would one be able to propose a fixed way to translate the undecidability of signs in translation – 'or'? Therefore, the following attempt does not aim to establish a doctrine or system, but to expose an activity, translation, for which improvisation and hesitation are the only ways in which what comes, comes as/from the unexpected in one language, or another.

Secondly, it helps to expose the process of deconstruction at the edge of its traditional linguistic categories. The question here is to ask whether it is possible to propose to (further) extend (in a different direction) Derrida's attempt to reveal the tangled relationship between words

belonging to different languages. For example: between French and English: 'Oui'/'We',⁵² 'bless'/'blesse',⁵³ 'legs'/'legs',⁵⁴ 'poster'/'poster'.⁵⁵ The following chapters propose to radicalize even further this game of undecidability in order to make the possibility of translation between French and English itself *at once* possible and impossible. The idea is to exploit these many French words that linger in translations, that never manage to pass into another language in order to create another language, a multi-language like no other. Deconstruction writes in many languages. Its tool, *différance*, is not monolingual; it represents the free creative use of languages, the possibility itself of a polylingual vertigo. *Différance* is that which breaks the customary orders of languages, reversing, altering, or extending their established meanings, not with the aim of creating an inter- or intra-language or reaching a metalanguage, but of inventing *another* language altogether, one *in which* translation, transmutation, and transformation *never cease*, one *for which* there would be no more sovereignty or law, *no more maternity*. A language or a creolization made up of prostheses and grafts – monstrous. The coming together of translation and/as 'to-come' therefore points to, and turns itself into, the opening of the possibility of deconstruction itself, not as a way of anticipating or predicting the future *of* deconstruction, but as a way of carrying on the work of enriching the incestuous and infectious proximity of deconstruction and that which is coming.

In order to answer the main questions announced above and confirm each of these two justifications, this book takes up a number of inter-related and interdependent but not exhaustive inflections or tonalities to come, each of which forms a chapter. Each chapter is an attempt to translate or transform a French expression into English and vice versa. These expressions are: for Chapter 1, *voir venir*, for Chapter 2, *survenue* and finally for Chapter 3, *venue*. These three French expressions are taken from three texts written by the three authors studied. The reason for this choice of authors is explained later. For the moment, a word on the choice of words.

The three expressions have simply been chosen not so much because they multiply the unhinging or dislocation called 'to-come', but because they create a series of inflections of (the) 'to-come'. These inflections or tonalities are attempts *not* to figure the expression 'to-come' as *an* event, but following Derrida, to 'invent' the other in every chapter; that is, to pave the way or to prepare for the other, to come upon or finding the other in all its various guises. They represent without hierarchy or comprehensiveness, the convergence of several modes of coming or going, doing or letting go. The idea is not to expose the

multi-fold nature of a supposedly primordial 'to-come', but to expose the moments or non-moments when the differentiation of space (and) time trembles, or resonates, harshly, or gently through the sharing out of thoughts or bodies in one language or another. These comings are not variations on a theme, eccentric declinations, or declensions from the *verb* 'to come'. They constitute in a myriad of severances and partitions, particular 'unhingements' of space (and) time that have (dis)similar intonations or pitch. They rise or fall, move sideways or backwards, inwards or outwards. They arouse or dampen; they thrust or surrender. As such, these intensifications or inflections are not intended to constitute hinged doors between here and there, one moment or one state, and another. There is no hierarchy or ordering. There are only turbulences.

This lack of hierarchy and this focus on turbulences is intended, following philosophers such as Jean-François Lyotard, Richard Rorty, and indeed, as we will see, Derrida, to put forward *multiplicities* that can never be contained or unified.⁵⁶ In the context of this book, this intention can be translated in the following manner: we open to the future or (the future opens itself to us) in a multitude of ways that can never be accounted for. In other words, the 'unhingement' of space (and) time is not unique; spacing (and) temporizing is not singular or multidimensional, but *multiple*.⁵⁷ The issue is that *here*, right *there*, there is no single opening, unveiling, or departure, no single expectancy or redemption. Space (and) time unfold itself/themselves in an infinite number of ways and in many different locations or to be more precise, at the extreme edge of an unlimited number of locations, scenes, places, settings, or localities.⁵⁸ They are infinite, because the incarnations, permutations, and combinations of words or movements, their pitch or tonality, their brutality or gentleness, in one language or in one place or body simply cannot be counted, measured, or analysed. Not only spacing (and) temporizing breaks off from the measurability of the spatio-temporal, but reading, translations, or interpretation can never establish any certainty. It is a good infinite in the sense that these 'unhingements' can never add up or correspond. Nothing can tally; nothing ever tallies.

The idea is therefore to evade the issue of *the* one and only 'to-come' as if it was a single coherent entity. In other words and however much I do so in this book, we cannot address (the) *à-venir* as if this was a generic structure of experience. There is no single Messiah, justice, or democracy. There is not one unique *pas-au-delà* to use Maurice Blanchot's famous expression, but an entire futurity – in the sense developed in this book – that is, an infinite number of step/not and/or step/misstep that can

never be identified with any certainty.⁵⁹ The 'or' takes place or falls, needless to say, 'between dispatches'. These many 'unhancements' aim to disrupt (the) 'to-come' and to avoid at all cost the hegemonic structure of an all-encompassing interpretation of the unfolding of space (and) time. All this in order to avoid the idea of going somewhere, but to remain exactly where we are, in what tears away from itself, here or there, within, outside, besides, or on the edge of a firmament of linguistic formulations and/or sensuous manifestations; *one* unique spacing (and) temporizing, *our* spacing (and) temporizing (one which resembles all the others), but at which one never knows where one is going.⁶⁰

Although intensified by different inflections, the three chapters of this book – inevitably or necessarily – repeat themselves. What trembles as it comes also trembles as it ought to come and what is to come is always already coming, always already trembling here or there and yet never present as such. There are no strict differentiations between the intensifications, severances, or partitions explored in this book: *voir venir*, *survenue*, *venue*. All three repeat themselves while never being recoverable as the same. Repetition or reiteration is always a movement towards the possibility of something else. Mimesis always involves rupture and a differentiation from itself, repetition always invokes a disconcerting reinvention and a certain inventive mobility. Although these chapters repeat themselves, there is also, obviously as the overall book shows, a desire – perhaps contradictory – to begin a grouping or more precisely a community with specific idiosyncratic and idiomatic characteristics.⁶¹ The aim is therefore to explore a small number of inflections, to create amidst this infinity, a 'constituency'⁶² as Gilles Deleuze would say, or a family of 'monstrous monstrosities'⁶³ to take up Derrida's famous figuration of the future [*avenir*]. For this reason, this book is *necessarily* always already *un-finished*. The constituency or the family knows no boundaries or limits.

The following chapters are dedicated to three different French philosophers and situate themselves *between* the French and the English languages, in *a world* or a no-man's-land where nothing is uttered in *one* language, but is always expressed in translation or transition. The first chapter, focusing on the expression *voir venir*, is dedicated to Catherine Malabou's first book, *The Future of Hegel*. The second chapter focuses on Jean-Luc Nancy's book, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel* and on the expression *survenue*. Finally, the last chapter is dedicated to specific passages taken from Derrida's book *Aporias* and on the word *venue*.

These three authors were chosen for the way they handle or mishandle deconstruction. The most salient feature of their commonality (in

comparison to other philosophers, such as, for example, Françoise Dastur) is the way they relate to the process of deconstruction as *unrelated* to the question of *being*. The deconstruction of philosophy for Derrida, Nancy, and Malabou knows no foundation and no thematic of reunification; it knows no rest. Deconstruction is infinite and always calls for its own self-deconstruction. For these three authors, deconstruction tends to focus on two parameters. The first one, already intimated earlier, is that if deconstruction does not characterize what is (*being*), it necessarily characterizes what comes [*ce qui arrive*]. The second parameter is that the process of deconstruction always implies more than a language. As Malabou remarks: 'Deconstruction is what takes place, deconstruction speaks more than one language. The transformative process of rupture at the core of deconstruction focuses on the fact that tradition is originally structured by a irreducible plurality of events and idiomatic acts.'⁶⁴ This double characteristic brings to the fore the very process of translation or transformation that is the aim of this book and justifies the choice of authors in the way their chosen works focus already on the thematic of the dislocation of space (and) time and on the dissemination of language.

A few more words are necessary in order to explain further the choice of the other two living philosophers accompanying Derrida: Jean-Luc Nancy and Catherine Malabou.

Catherine Malabou writes regularly on or in reference to the work of Jacques Derrida.⁶⁵ However, it would be wrong and simplistic to see her as a 'follower' of the late Derrida. Malabou puts forward ways of thinking about the process of deconstruction that have helped to reconceptualize Derrida's very own project. If one were permitted to identify a single vector of this reworking, it would have to be her attempt to radicalize the very idea of *différance* – and to come up with what is now called a hyper-deconstruction. In her four books to date, she indeed offers a way of rethinking the abyss of deconstruction, not in an attempt to surpass it or get rid of it for that would be impossible, but in a way that does not leave us in an endless free-fall and yet continues the work of de(con)struction of Western metaphysics. Malabou's main question is perhaps this one: Why did Derrida continually address the issue of the radically other, of that which has absolutely no ground? This crucial question resets in motion the deconstructive process, giving it *another* chance. It asks if the abyss were a true abyss with no ground whatsoever, it would have to suppress or sublate the idea of abyss altogether, because otherwise *the idea* of abyss would be the end of the process of deconstruction. In other words, Derrida's negativity can only be truly negative if it

is capable of becoming that which animates it in the first place. The point is to denounce the morbid fascination for the radically other, a fascination which prevents deconstruction from overcoming its own failings (arguably that of a politics, for example) and to propose instead a more mobile and mutating negativity, a *plasticity* whereby the true abyss sublates itself into abyss at every differing instant. This attempt to rethink that which arrives (deconstruction), that which comes beyond the rigid structure of negativity, is here crucial in the way it attempts to think the spacing (and) temporizing of Derrida's key device or cipher – *différance*.

Although radically different in style, approach, ambition, and scope, the work of Jean-Luc Nancy equally attests the same hyper-deconstructive concerns. These concerns are a way of acknowledging that one can no longer proceed in the usual deconstructive manner in philosophy. Philosophy is no longer able to carry on finding the breaches in which the ghost of presence is lurking. Deconstruction has moved on. Today, philosophers can only opt for a mode of reading that explores how a text *lives* its deconstruction. As Malabou herself remarks, this new type of reading implies 'to refashion the shape occasioned by the withdrawal of presence in a text. In other words, to refashion the shape left by its own deconstruction.'⁶⁶ This refashioning, this new reading, always ends up with a form, a form that is other than presence, other than metaphysics *and* other than deconstruction itself. Not unlike Malabou, Nancy also writes regularly on Derrida's work.⁶⁷ Like her, he refuses the idea of a radical alterity or that of deconstructive abyss. With notions such as being-together or community, Nancy manages to prevent deconstruction from drifting into a quasi-theological principle of absolute negativity. For him, that which arrives does not stem from a radically other or from *Le Très Haut* to reference Levinas, this other author of radical alterity, but from an impossible heterogeneous origin that is nothing other than the unmediated multiplicity of singular 'ones', this community of others co-appearing in irreducible plurality. 'To-come' or (the) spacing (and) temporizing does not therefore separate an inside (the world) from an outside (the radical future), or the sign from its (potential or lost) presence. It is that which exposes itself, an exposition, a putting out of place that can never be substantiated by or through any exterior factor, because there is no outside strictly speaking.

Both Malabou and Nancy thus help to reconceptualize the issue of space (and) time within a deconstructive framework, and this free of the awkward intimacy Derrida entertained with negative theology and with the foundational thematic imposed by Heidegger. With its emphasis

on the continual capacity for reinterpretation, rereading, and redeployment, the present book should be seen as an attempt, with a certain amount of inevitable deviation and perhaps unwarranted rebellion, to follow the footsteps of these two central figures of French philosophy in the wake of Derrida.

1

Voir Venir

At the end of her book, *Le Change Heidegger: Du fantastique en philosophie*, Catherine Malabou asks herself whether she managed, after all, to really rethink Heidegger's ontology through the prism of change, of Being *as* change, or whether she failed to convince her readers. In order to address this question, she weighs the two possible outcomes of her endeavour: either it will be rejected and Heidegger's ideas remain obsolete or it will be accepted and Heidegger's work, thanks to her, will be given a new lease of life with the concept of change. Unsurprisingly, Malabou does not predict one of the two possible outcomes. Her meditation on the future of her book does not take sides. By drawing attention to the success or failure of her endeavour, she only highlights the importance of the act of weighing, considering, or evaluating things – an act that is essentially directed to the future: either this or that *will* happen. This weighing is crucial not because it questions whether or not she managed to convince her readers, but because it represents the purest form of risk-taking, *a risk-taking exercise essential to all thinking*. Focusing on the relevance of the idea of weighing things, she writes, quoting Heidegger:

... a scale is the most simple converter, the purest, *the figure itself of any risk-taking*. Heidegger says so himself in relation to Rilke in one of his most beautiful texts: *Why poets? To posit an alternative is first and foremost to take a risk*... However, to risk oneself, to be in danger, is to be undecided [*c'est être en balance, in der Wage*.] 'In the Middle Ages, the word *Wage* [*balance*] still meant something almost like danger [*Gefahr*]. To be in the balance means to be in a situation that can turn out in one way or the other. That is why the instrument that moves [*bewegt*] like this, by dipping one way or the other, is called

the balance [*die Wage*]. It liberates; it plays about the beam and plays itself out. The word *Wage* [balance] in the sense of danger and as the name of the instrument is derived from *wägen, wegen*: to make a way [*Weg*], that is, to go, to be going. *Be-wägen* means get something under way, to get it going: *wiegen* [to sway or weigh].¹

Further down she adds:

To weigh, as you might have gathered, does not mean *to decide one way or another*. To weigh does not mean to wait either. As I said, the messianic horizon is never pure, it is always already changed; and the angel, as Heidegger knew well, is metamorphosed from the start... *To swing two positions, to break down flatness: the shape that comes indeed comes from splintered forms.*²

Malabou's conclusive remarks on the meaning of the act of weighing are of paramount importance when it comes to understanding her work. The act of weighing something or other represents *a test* that aims to gauge a possible outcome to a present situation. To weigh is therefore *to set* a context in order *to hazard* an interpretation. There are therefore two sides to this act. Firstly, it establishes the context in which the future will unfold. It creates a situation in which the appliance or the circumstances end up deciding on the course of action. Secondly, once the context or the situation is in place, it provokes an action based on weighing the results up. As Malabou recalls, reading Heidegger, to weigh is to set in motion, to go off, to figure, to wander on one path or another. The act is therefore paradoxical: on the one hand, it is entirely passive in front of the unknown – it lets the future come – and on the other, it is entirely proactive – it actively engages the future. How is one to measure the true importance of this test, of this paradoxical act of weighing in Malabou's work? The answer to this question will be lengthy, because we need first – even before introducing the problematic that will concern us in this chapter – to briefly introduce Malabou's work.

Metamorphosis and *The Future of Hegel*

To date, Malabou's work represents a colossal attempt to rethink the work of three major authors in continental philosophy: Hegel, Heidegger, and Derrida. Her aim is to think these authors as if there had been no evolution, no progression between Hegelian dialectics,

Heidegger's destruction and Derrida's deconstruction of metaphysics. For her, these three authors are the most representative of a way of thinking that situates itself between two types of negativity. As she says,

My philosophical itinerary situates itself – this is where it indubitably situates itself – at the crossroads of two negative logics. According to one, negation, by redoubling itself, forms its own solution – *dialectical negativity*. According to the other, negation, by redoubling itself, differentiates and displaces itself without resolving anything, tracing only its own separation as the spacing of a pure dislocation – *deconstructive negativity*.³

In situating herself in this manner, Malabou attempts to think and work in two times and in two ways *at once*: a time in which one re-assembles or reshapes together what is broken, and a time in which one increases the breakage or the breaking point in order to carry on threatening the possibility of any formation whatsoever. By bringing together these two times and these two modes of thinking, Malabou's ambition is to think about the constant exchange taking place between them and consequently, to fathom the endless transmutation and transformation taking place between dialectics, destruction, and deconstruction and this without any consideration of conventional historical development.

The result of this double negativity is a new mode of thinking that would overall come to push into another direction Derrida's expanded understanding of writing. If one could sum up this aim with a couple of questions, it would probably go something like this: How can one think about the legitimation of the displacement incurred by Derrida's expansion of the notion of writing? Could it be that to think about Derrida's understanding of the trace as the erasure of the trace necessarily implies that the concept of trace was already amenable or responsive to the change in the first place? If these are valid questions, then writing – in its expanded Derridean definition – is necessarily plastic, malleable, compliant, but also resistant and even perhaps somehow, rebellious to its incurred modifications. In other words, for there to be an expanded understanding of writing, writing itself must, in the first place, be able to respond to these imposed changes. The new mode of thinking that Malabou is putting forward is therefore a new way of *characterizing* the momentary organization of thought, a way of understanding the spacing (and) temporizing *metamorphosis* of (and in)

writing, a way of *materializing* that which occurs or comes towards us as trace (formation)/not (dislocation).

There is no space here to critically evaluate the ambitious philosophical turn that Malabou is proposing. A sustained reading of her work and a lengthy analysis of her ideas – and the ideas of those she borrows from – would be necessary. It would also require tracing the path of her thought from her early Hegelian studies to her current interests in the plasticity of neurobiology.⁴ Such a reading cannot take place here. What can be done, however, at this stage in Malabou's career is to focus, more modestly, on one single work, her first book, *The Future of Hegel*, and to see if one can make sense of this way of thinking about the characterization of the trace, this *metamorphosis* or *materialization* of writing [*écriture*]. The choice of this book is dictated not by a desire to simply introduce the first English translation of Malabou's work, but by our very own topic: the disjunction or 'unhingement' of space (and) time – (the) *à-venir*. What does this book, which relies so much on the process of deconstruction, tell us about this disjunction or 'unhingement', so familiar to Malabou's doctoral supervisor: Jacques Derrida? How is *à-venir* affected by Malabou's *metamorphosis*? How is one to perceive the *materialization* of what could be seen as the spacing (and) temporizing (dimension) of Derrida's *différance* – *à-venir*? A word on the scope of her book is necessary here.

Catherine Malabou's first book, *The Future of Hegel*, can be understood as an attempt to rescue Hegel's philosophy of time from the museum of dead onto-theological monuments.⁵ In doing so, she offers a radical reappraisal not only of Heidegger's interpretation of Hegel, but also of the work of the three main protagonists in Hegelian studies in France: Jean Hyppolite, Alexandre Kojève, and Alexandre Koyré.⁶ In a way, Malabou's attempt is similar to that of Deleuze, Derrida, and Lévinas who have all tried to surpass Hegel's 'end of history' by offering notions such as 'multiplicity', 'différance', and the 'irreducibility of the face'. However, what distinguishes Malabou's first book is precisely her attempt not to discard, disrupt, or exceed negative dialectics, but to reassess it in the light of its *survival*. For her, destruction and deconstruction are already inscribed in Hegel's work. Similarly and perhaps surprisingly, dialectics remain in the work of Heidegger and Derrida – in the shape of a Hegelianism without reserve, for example. Hegel's time thus becomes something much more complex and problematic, something that cannot be so easily discarded.

This complexity comes from a particular way of reading and writing which is unique to Malabou. This way of working is not that of retracing

past studies or that of starting from a specific secondary source, but that of highlighting a specific leitmotif in these philosophical works and sticking to it until the works studied no longer become familiar. In the case of Malabou's reading of Heidegger, this way of thinking comes across when she highlights three words that have received as yet no exegetic analysis. These words (*Wandel* [change], *Wandlung* [transformation], *Verwandlung* [metamorphosis], which she then summarizes using three letters: W,W,V) are then transformed into a recurring threefold concept that sheds an unexpected new light on Heidegger's work (i.e. *le change* [change/exchange/to change]). In *The Future of Hegel*, Malabou focuses on one key Hegelian word: *plasticity* [Platzitizität]. This expression is applied to all aspects of Hegel's philosophy, from his understanding of the plastic arts to his concepts of man, God, subjectivity, and of course, as we will see, to his way of dealing with the issue of time. The word recurs throughout the book not in a repetitive way, but in a way that dislocates common preconceptions of Hegel's work and restores it under a radically different light. Why is Malabou so obsessive about using this word as a leitmotif to reread Hegel? Perhaps one way of understanding this obsession is to see it as an extraordinary attempt to continue Derrida's work on Hegel and to offer a unique reflection (*at once* dialectical *and* deconstructive) on the 'shape' of Derrida's key 'device': *différance*. How is one to make sense of this reflection?

Within a purely Hegelian/Derridean context, this reflection or this rethinking centres on a twofold thematic. On the one hand, Malabou wants to challenge Hegel's dialectic with the thought of *différance*, and on the other, she wants to push Derrida's Hegelianism 'without reserve' one step further, in order to think about a type of deconstruction that will not end up in an absolute relativism, but with a thinking of the shape that events take when related to what is irreducibly other. Malabou's task is therefore to think the abyss of deconstruction, the place where *différance* is not recuperated within the same or stubbornly externalizing itself in relation to an absolute other, but sublated *as* 'form', therefore as history. In a sense, her aim is to represent or expose the shape of a double take, one in which thought is caught *at once* by a body of thought and by its dissimulation.⁷ As Malabou remarks, 'the philosophical signification of plasticity is today made up by the juxtaposition of two ways of playing the game, metaphysics and deconstruction, refutation of *différance* and indication of the trace...'⁸ Plasticity is therefore a synthetic operation – a metamorphosis or a materialization – of two negativities – dialectical negativity and

de(con)structive negativity, or as she says, 'non & non'⁹ – that points to the *différance* of *différance*. Before exploring further Malabou's ideas in *The Future of Hegel*, let us put forward at this stage the premises for the arguments developed in this chapter.

The test of plasticity

This chapter articulates itself around one question: What shape could this synthetic operation (plasticity) actually take? The idea behind this simple question is *not* to critique, reiterate, or paraphrase *in English* the way Malabou invents and exposes her French key concept. The idea of critiquing or reiterating Malabou's invention would indeed be equivalent to that of offering a *meta*-discourse, a discourse that would add or graft itself onto her discourse and this would be useless. The reason for not doing this is that Malabou's account of plasticity cannot simply be reiterated or commented upon because it simply defies the idea of commentary itself. If one criticizes or reiterates her thoughts, one risks asking this crucial and inevitable question: How plastic would *this* commentary be? And as soon as one asks this question, one defies the very possibility of addressing Malabou's work. As Derrida remarks: '*The Future of Hegel* bears such a strong relationship to its own writing and its own idiom that it constitutes on its own a kind of philosophical *oeuvre*... It is a unique *oeuvre* on which any meta-linguistic dialogue very quickly experiences its own limitations and its simulated nature.'¹⁰

The idea of this chapter is therefore not to repeat or critique, but, following Malabou herself, to *weigh* Malabou's plasticity, to *set it* in *another* context and see what *other* shape plasticity can possibly take. In this way, if one remains as faithful as possible to Malabou's way of thinking, the aim is therefore to see if her new post-Derridean–Hegelian 'notion' can really be *set in motion* under a completely different set of circumstances, whether plasticity can really allow one to wander onto a radically unforeseeable path. Because of the remit of this book, this weighing or test focuses on the problematic of translation and that of its coming or as *a form* of coming. In this chapter, the aim of this specific test is therefore to measure the pliability or the explosiveness of Malabou's words, to experiment with their ability to espouse and reject *at once* a foreign language, a language totally alien to Malabou and her specific Franco-German idiomatic delineations. This foreign language is English. How does *plasticité* translate *into English*? How does one see coming the plasticity of English in English? How blind is English

to Malabou's French plasticity? And finally, can one compare between French and English ways of seeing and plasticizing that which comes? It would be wrong to see in all these questions, a simple attempt to ask the question whether inter-linguistic translation and plasticity are synonymous. Not unlike our central question (What shape could this synthetic operation – plasticity – actually take?) these further questions are far more complex than one would at first suspect and cannot be reduced to a simple equation. There are *two premises* for all these questions – that is, for this test.

The *first premise* is to highlight the all-important issue of the *choice* of (the) idiom for (of) philosophy. Malabou insists in her book that, following Hegel, one must 'philosophize in one's own idiom'.¹¹ Commenting on this aspect of Malabou's work, Derrida highlights that to do so is to give one's own language all the chance in the world. In other words, Malabou gives the French language a chance to address a Hegelian term by 'inventing a [new] language',¹² by allowing and/or moulding her own language into something else. In this way, Malabou translates or more precisely transforms Hegel's *Platztität* into French not simply with the word *plasticité* [*plasticity*] but with a double syntagm *plasticité/voir-venir* [*Platztität/kommen sehen*]¹³. I leave here, for the moment, the importance of the supplement *voir venir*. At this stage, the issue for us is not how to understand this German to French transformation, but how can one *give another chance* to Malabou's French transformation; how can one translate or transform her new *double* syntagm in yet *another* language? How is one to give and what would it mean to give a third language [English] a chance *after* a second language [French] was given all the chance in the world? Can there be *so much* chance or can there still be any chance *left*?

This issue of idiom and its chance is indeed crucial in relation to Malabou's Derridean reading of Hegel. In her book, Malabou insists that Hegel not only wants to philosophize in one's own idiom, he also has a very specific understanding of the type of idiom one should use in philosophy. This understanding can be characterized by two Hegelian imperatives: First imperative: For Hegel, a philosopher should *never* use technical (especially Greek) terms in philosophy because these give the impression that philosophy is a universal and univocal idiom shared by all philosophers. This imperative shows that Hegel positions himself against the use of artificial terms borrowed from ancient languages. Second imperative: For Hegel, it is important to preserve in the act of philosophizing 'the strange and alien character of any and all language, that is, to preserve the irreducibility of its place and time'.¹⁴ This second

imperative shows that philosophers should indeed only philosophize in their own language. The reason for this is that he or she could not use an alien idiom with the same certainty as his or her own.

In relation to Malabou's argument about the *choice* of (the) idiom for (of) philosophy, these two imperatives raise the following questions. Should an English-speaking philosopher use Malabou's French terms in the same way that she uses technical Greek (for example her recurrent use of the terms *πασχειν* – in lieu of the expression 'being acted upon' and *ενεργειν* – in lieu of 'acting') or German terms (for example, her – inevitably recurrent – use of the term *Aufhebung*)? Is Malabou not evading Hegel's first imperative when using these technical Greek and German terms and will we not be doing the same when using her new technical French terms in *English*? How should an English-speaking person use Malabou's French understanding of Hegel's German? How does one also deal with other *French* interpretations of *Platztität*? Nancy's or Derrida's? The answer to all these questions is perhaps to simply settle on *not deciding*. One cannot simply choose between etymological rigour and expanded signification, geographical relevance and universal significance. One can only accept the terms as *they come or go*, already constituted or in the process of constitution and in need of further expansion. For this reason we have to accept that, no matter what, *plasticité* or *Platztität* are simply *not* self-evident universal concepts understandable in all idioms worldwide. *They call for a test; they need to be weighed by or in comparison with another language*. Without the test of translation, without recognizing the call and its response, the English would remain *blind* to this new French interpretation inspired by the German. In order to probe this question further, it is necessary to explore the second premise supporting the idea of a Malabou-style test.

The *second premise* revolves around the issue of opening up new meaning in philosophy. Malabou addresses this question herself when she comments on the necessity of 'extending'¹⁵ or *enlarging* the scope and meaning of philosophical language and – in a Deleuzian manner – that of *inventing* new concepts. She writes in *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*, a small book summarizing her career so far: 'All thought needs a scheme, that is a motif, product of a rational imagination, that allows to break open the meaning of a period and to create for it new exegetic perspectives that are adapted to it.'¹⁶ Malabou's observation primarily refers to the invention of new philosophical concepts in *history*, but it could easily also refer to the invention or translation of new concepts in or on other geographical or idiomatic shores/worlds. How does one indeed open up, extend, or enlarge the meaning of Malabou's

French interpretation of Hegel's German in another geographical and/or idiomatic context? Can one extend or enlarge the meaning of a scheme or motif *current* in one country and/or idiom to that of another? How can one not denature its idiosyncratic or parochial character?

The questions raised by this second premise really revolve around the issue of *someone's capacity* to extend or enlarge *the materiality of sense* proposed by a foreign expression. This becomes particularly acute in relation to plasticity. This concept implies that whoever addresses it is already a plastic individuality, not only receptive to form and giver of form, but also and above all, incarnating or embodying the plastic exposition underway. Commenting on Hegel, Malabou's observes: 'The philosophical reader or interlocutor are of course receptive to the form, but they in turn are led to construct and form what they hear or read. In this sense they become comparable, Hegel reasons, to Greek "plastic individualities".'¹⁷ The question here is this: Where does one situate with any certainty *the* 'activity of form [*Formtätigkeit*]'¹⁸ between one philosopher and another, between one philosophical exposition and another? In other words, where does one situate with any certainty the being-there of translation or the capacity of someone to transform, metamorphose, or plasticize? The answer here again, as for the first premise, is perhaps to settle on *not deciding*. One simply cannot choose (or situate the plastic process taking place) between one plastic philosopher or exposition and another, the plastic process is irreducible and never ending. As plastic individualities, our reading can *only* be plastic or transformative, that is, it is *by default* engaged in a continual process of acceptance and intervention, mutation and metamorphosis that can never be reduced to being *an* exemplary singularity *capable* of plasticizing.

These two premises bring us back to our central concern: if one is *by default* engaged in a continual plastic process, if one cannot critique or argue *against* Malabou in a conventional critical manner – for that, as we have seen, would raise the question of the form of the address – then how is one to evaluate in English Malabou's transformation of a German expression into two French ones? Perhaps the only way to remain as faithful as possible to Malabou's thought, and to make sense of this irreducible process, is to take the pulse of plasticity, to make it pass this test – a test that will show if Malabou's new post-Derridean–Hegelian 'notion' can *really* be *set in motion* in another world and under a completely different set of circumstances. This chapter will therefore aim to explore the plasticity of Malabou's expression by making it pass *an idiomatic plastic test*. This test consists of simply finding out if one

can *incarnate* or *embody* in English Malabou's German–French notion and whether it can survive, that is, whether it can *shape* and *at the same time* literally *ignite* another idiom.

Considering this test and the remit of this line of questions, there will therefore be no attempt in this chapter to further contextualize Malabou's work either in relation to Hyppolite, Koyré, and Kojève or in relation to Heidegger and Derrida.¹⁹ The aim is simply to stay as close as possible to her line of thought and yet depart radically from it. In the process, I hope to show that the intended test is crucial in any understanding of Malabou's work precisely because it focuses on the idiomatic, linguistic, and philosophical *shaping* of concepts themselves. To expand a concept with another meaning specific *to our time and place* is an intrinsic characteristic of plasticity itself. To expand a concept with a meaning specific *to our idiom* is also *another* intrinsic characteristic of plasticity itself. No concept can expand without a certain idiomatic and spatio-temporal plasticity. As we have already seen, Derrida's well-known extension of the meaning of writing to that of *arche-writing* – in which writing can no longer simply mean graphic transcription, but writing *in general* – operates from a certain (spatio-temporal *and* idiomatic) plasticity of the term itself and it is this ability/capacity for transformation that needs to be studied, but *this time*, in another idiomatic context.

The following will then be an attempt to follow in Malabou's footsteps and to extend the meaning attached to her interpretation of plasticity in order to confirm its significance not only to our times, but also to a new idiomatic world. The shapes (or misshapes) contained in the following pages will therefore follow the same Kantian *scheme* used by Malabou, that of a *hypotyposis*,²⁰ that is, the exhibition of a problematic that follows a form of reflection *similar* to the problematic itself. In other words, the idea will be to perform a test *following* the strategy taken by Malabou to test Hegelian dialectics in the light of deconstruction. In a way, if one really wants to take into consideration Malabou's work, one has no choice but to follow the scheme of *hypotyposis*. As Derrida clearly points out, 'the [presentation] of this "method" . . . shows itself to itself as entirely "plastic" and urges itself to manifest itself as the "formation of concepts"'.²¹ Overall, our test will attempt to expose whether Malabou's term is effectively *truly* plastic, *shaping* and/or *explosive*, a plasticity, a transformation, or metamorphosis that would perhaps (but then again, perhaps not) end up being totally *foreign* to Malabou's (French) or even Hegel's (German) thought. Now that the premises for the argument

of this chapter are laid out, let us return to and expand further our understanding of Malabou's notion of plasticity.

Speculative *souplesse*

In *The Future of Hegel*, Malabou focuses crucially on the word 'plasticity' and not on the word 'plastic'. Roland Barthes analyses the word 'plastic' in *Mythologies*. For him, the word 'plastic' refers to

the idea of infinite transformation...a sudden transformation of nature...the trace of a movement. And as the movement here is almost infinite, transforming the original crystals into a multitude of more and more startling objects, plastic is, all told, a spectacle to be deciphered: the very spectacle of its end-products.²²

What interests Barthes is to sublimate a utilitarian and disgraced material and to expose its philosophical and cultural potential; the fact, for example, that with plastic the very invention of forms in our modern world no longer imitates nature. Referring exclusively to the language of Hegel, Malabou, by contrast, focuses not on the material itself or its origins in modernity and its relevance to our 'postmodern' age, but on the *quality* or state of being plastic, mobile, flexible, moulding, forming, or explosive. Her aim is to expose, as she says, the speculative *souplesse* of Hegel's work. This *souplesse* is not suppleness or flexibility, but *versatility*, what is able or meant to be used in different ways. In this way, the *quality* or state of being plastic concerns neither passion (active interest or enthusiasm for change) nor passivity (inactive receptivity to change) taken individually, but the adaptability of the one towards the other.

In a first English commentary on Malabou's work, Lisabeth During remarks that the clearest antecedent of this focus on the Hegelian word 'plasticity' is that made by Jean-Luc Nancy in his 1973 study of Hegel's *Aufhebung*, *The Speculative Remark (One of Hegel's Bon Mots)*.²³ In this early book, Nancy highlights not only the importance that Hegel attributes to the word 'plasticity', but also the significance of this concept in any attempt to read his work. Nancy's aim is to emphasize Hegel's use of rhetoric and linguistic play in order to show that his philosophy is not exclusively systematic; it is also open to *necessary* hesitations and uncertainties. In this way, reading Hegel consists in performing a double reading that does not consist in simply following carefully the logic of argumentation (a type of ratiocinate reading), it also consists

in grasping [*fassen*] the accidental (a speculative reading). '*Fassen* is to grasp, to catch, to take something in hand [*prendre en main*]. It is a matter of grasping [*empoigner*] the proposition otherwise – and of grasping the entire philosophical writing by another end, by two ends, or still otherwise, who knows?'²⁴ To read Hegel is therefore to be transported back to the writing of the text, to its exposition, that is, to the logic of argumentation *and* in a double reading, to what *escapes* this logic. When reading Hegel in this manner – in the way Hegel wants to be read – one ends up *rewriting* the texts themselves.²⁵ Indeed, all serious reading of Hegel is essentially *formative*, *transformative*, in a word, *plastic*; it 'repeat[s] its exposition *plastically*'.²⁶ To accept this kind of reading implies that one understands Hegel's text as having been written at once in a speculative *and* accidental manner, and that one can only read Hegel in the same way, that is plastically, in a way that grasps the dialectical proposition *otherwise*, in a manner that is totally unforeseen. The word 'plasticity' therefore highlights for Nancy, the importance in Hegel's work not only of a certain *versatility* in philosophy, that is, of a type of work that is meant to be used and understood in different ways, but also of a certain playfulness between the two subjects involved in speculation – reader and writer.

In *The Future of Hegel*, the first of three books on the subject of plasticity, Malabou takes the Hegelian notion of plasticity in another direction. Instead of focusing, as for Nancy, on the versatility of this synthetic idea in relation to reading and writing, she proposes to focus instead on plasticity in relation to time and the future specifically. Her aim is to reject the usual understanding of Hegel's conception of time and to highlight the fact that, for him, time is essentially a plastic concept. Malabou's interpretation of Hegel's time goes like this. For her, Hegel never perceives time as a 'now' amidst a single continuum of instants or 'nows' – a time in which the future is always a 'future-now'. Malabou sees Hegel's time as an instance of dialectical differentiation that can only determine itself momentarily, i.e. 'now'. This 'now' or, to be more precise, this 'punctuality' [*Pünktlichkeit*] has nothing to do with the Aristotelian *στιγμη* [*stigma*], this term from which most readings of Hegel's time as homogeneous and empty are usually based on. This momentary or differentiating 'point' represents sublation [*Aufhebung*] itself, a point never conceived as a point of rest, not even at the end of history. Hegel's *Pünktlichkeit* is not a homogeneous milieu, but an *act*, a *movement* turned towards the future. In this way, time no longer appears as a series of points, but essentially as difference. The contradiction at the heart of the dialectical process thus becomes a differentiating tension.²⁷

How can one understand Malabou's plastic transformation of Hegel's interpretation of time?

In order to sustain her argument, Malabou puts forward, borrowing from Hyppolite and Heidegger, the following idea: Hegel understood *two times at once*. The first time is the time of chronological differentiation. The second time is the time of logical differentiation. 'The first modality arises from what is possible to call the originary synthetic unity of a teleological movement in potentiality and in action. The other modality stems from the originary synthetic unity of apperception, the foundation of representation [*Vorstellung*].'²⁸ These two times constitute not only a state of 'separatedness' and negation that never marks a repetition or a closure, they also foreground the very possibility of *understanding* this state of 'separatedness' and as a result the constitution of a *history* of time. Hegel's time therefore becomes not a time that can only pass or be reiterated or recuperated, but a double event taking place at the crossroads between logical and chronological differences, between a teleological movement (chronological differentiation) and a synthetic mode of comprehension or assimilation that bases itself on a previous experience or perception (logical differentiation). It is therefore no longer a time defined by the closure of a single timeline (Absolute Knowledge, the End of History), but a time whose doubling or differentiation is always already open to the future, to what distance itself from itself. In other words, time, for Hegel, can only be understood *as* and *at* the intersection of two times, in the differential movement of the two. Implicit in this interpretation is therefore the fact that Hegel effectively *confuses the future and time* and that no interpretation of time can elude this confusion. Implicit also in this interpretation is the fact that since time is no longer defined by closure, there is still some future for Hegel's work.

How does this double time or this doubling of time relate to plasticity, to the *quality* or state of being plastic, mobile, flexible, moulding, forming, or explosive? For Malabou, the process of differentiation that takes place at the crossroads of logical and chronological times can only be understood *as* plasticity itself. Plasticity 'represents' the self-determination engaging these two times. It 'represents' the encounter of time with the synthesis of time, the merging or the meeting of the time of teleology and the time of representation. The simplest way to figure this 'temporal plasticity', this self-determination, is by making reference in a Nancyan move, to the process of reading Hegel. As she explains,

reading Hegel amounts to finding oneself in two times at once: the process that unfolds is both retrospective and prospective. In the present time in which reading takes place, the reader is drawn to a double expectation: waiting for what is to come (according to a linear and representational thinking), while presupposing that the outcome has already arrived (by virtue of the teleological ruse).²⁹

The mobile synthesis of retention and projection taking place in reading is plastic. It brings together time and the thinking of time and this non-simultaneity or non-contemporaneity 'represents' the plasticity of time in the act of reading. To figure this differently and reference a Derridean understanding of writing as trace, plasticity would then be the *shaping* (in a here and now without presence) of 'the originary effraction of the trace'.³⁰

The question that inevitably arises at this stage is this: how can plasticity recuperate itself *and* how can it give (itself) (another) shape? Inversely, how does it relate or (re)integrate that which is exterior or radically other to itself – a new time, a time unforeseen? In order to make sense of this curious formation or transformation and openness, Malabou comes up in a later publication with another word for plasticity: a *sur-prise* in its etymological sense, something that seizes or holds excessively [*un excès de prise*]³¹. This *sur-prise* is at once what comes about unexpectedly (it surprises) and what is excessively put under pressure (it holds [*prise*] excessively [*sur*]). In this way, plasticity is a *sur-prise* in the sense that it refers to what takes shape (plastic moulds and plastic *moulds*) but *also* surprises violently (plastic explosives). In other words, it refers to what is capable of receiving and/or giving form and to what ignites form. Plasticity, this *sur-prise*, is therefore the contradictory formation of the future [*l'avenir*]: what accepts, creates, and dislocates what appears unexpectedly. As such, it is what is essentially proceeding or differing (in the process of being accepted, created, dislocated) *and* paradoxically remains open to the future (still open to more acceptance, creation, or dislocation). In this way, plasticity does not engage a process of closure, but one of openness to the radically other. Malabou calls it an 'action-reaction prone to *différance*'.³²

This explains that in Malabou's vocabulary, plasticity curiously can also be understood as or translated with the expression *voir venir* – which I leave here again, for reasons that will become clear later, deliberately in the French. Malabou is adamant about this; she repeats several times that the concept of plasticity is in fact *inseparable* from the concept of

voir venir. The two concepts are *interchangeable*. Plasticity is *voir venir*. And Derrida also highlights the importance of this inseparability or exchangeability. He writes in his review of Malabou's thesis:

...plasticity is not a *secondary* concept or another concept that would add itself to *voir venir* and constitute a sort of hermeneutical couple... It is the *same* concept in its differentiating and determining process. Because of its own dialectical self contradiction and mobility, *voir venir* is in itself a plastic concept, it allows plasticity to come to us.³³

Now, how is one to understand, *not* this curious pairing of plasticity and *voir venir*, for that will hold our attention later in this chapter, but of *voir venir* as a *French expression*? There is a crucial difference in French between *à-venir* (the expression 'to-come' as defined in the introduction) and *voir venir*. The first term refers not to the usual temporal moment of the future, but to the unhinging of space (and) time. The latter term, Malabou's other word for plasticity, *voir venir*, is the *formation* of this unhinging; it represents the shape of what is coming, *as* it becomes an event. In other words, it represents the formation of the future itself [*l'avenir*], what can be *seen* as coming or what can be seen turning into an event. The formation of this movement is 'plastic'. As Malabou remarks, plasticity 'is nothing less than the *formation* of the future [*l'avenir*] itself. [It] characterizes the relation between substance and accidents.'³⁴ *Voir venir* therefore 'represents' the relationship between subjectivity and the un/foreseen as an instance that can only be momentarily determined in its immediacy.³⁵ There is never any possibility to actually perceive or represent the shape of *voir venir* as if it was an already constituted event; it can only manifest itself in its momentariness.

Using a more Hegelian vocabulary, one could say, following Malabou, that *voir venir* (or plasticity) represents *at once* a teleological process *and* an opening onto the contingent. *Voir venir* takes place when a subjectivity (necessarily involved in a teleological process) attempts to see what is coming and finds him or herself therefore open to what is radically unknown, what is contingent. It would be wrong to imagine that Malabou is here referring to the usual interpretation of Hegel's relation between necessity and contingency. *Voir venir* (or plasticity) is not a *mechanical* process where what is possible is essentially effective and vice versa. On the contrary, the operation is versatile in the sense that it is essentially or at least *double*. As Malabou says, 'Hegelian philosophy assumes as an absolute fact the emergence of the random in the very

bosom of necessity and the fact that the random, the aleatory, becomes necessary.³⁶ In this way, the teleological and the contingent enter into a dialogue [*un entretien*³⁷] in which both elements feed each other and differ from each other. They both engage themselves onto each other and away from each other. In this rather contemporary interpretation, Hegelian philosophy ends up assuming the idea that the happenstance of the aleatory is right at the heart of the teleological process and that teleology itself emerges out of the aleatory. As Malabou notes earlier in the book: ‘...the Greek word *συμβεβηχος* [*symdedakos*], “accident”, derives from the verb *συμβαίνειν* [*symdanein*] which means at the same time to follow from, to ensure, and to arrive, to happen’.³⁸

As is abundantly clear in her text, Malabou’s reading of Hegel’s notion of plasticity is a (versatile) synonym for the dialectical model.³⁹ For this reason, one should not imagine that Malabou’s intertwinement of necessity and contingency suddenly leads nowhere or goes round in circles. Malabou does not eradicate this crucial aspect of Hegel’s philosophy in order to freeze it in a perpetual instant. Malabou’s revision of the dialectical model, now called *plasticité/voir venir*, is engaged in an advancement of its own and is actually going ‘somewhere’ – ‘where?’ is uncertain, but *plasticité/voir venir* is actually *moving*. Malabou goes to great pains to explain this issue in order to avoid misunderstandings. Her aim is not simply to accept the usual *movement towards* self-determination implied by the dialectical model, but to rethink this movement as a diffraction/reconstitution of the instant. This is made relatively simple when focusing on the culmination of Hegelian philosophy. Absolute Knowledge or the End of History is no longer the end of the teleological process, but is transformed by Malabou into *a moment amongst others*, a plastic instance of self-determination that is also, and this is crucial, an instance of self-differentiation (logical and chronological). Malabou’s notion of plasticity therefore takes place as if a game of fractals at all levels of Hegel’s dialectical process. *There is plasticity every time times meet*. There is therefore no moment in time that one can locate as an origin or a destination of time. Even absolute time, a time essentially sublated, is a time that can always envisage *another* time. As Malabou observes: ‘At the stage of Absolute Knowledge, the time which is sublated...leaves us always time to think what might otherwise have been...The question of the wholly other...is always in fact a question about an origin that could have been wholly otherwise.’⁴⁰ The issue of the origin or the destination of that which is speculative is therefore impossible to master.

This extremely brief reading of Malabou's interpretation of Hegel's plasticity shows that Hegelian dialectics will never be the same again. With Malabou, dialectics, understood as *plasticité/voir venir*, therefore becomes what marks the difference between origin and destination, a marking that has no proper destiny or destination except the *Aufhebung* to which it is bound. As Lisabeth During comments: 'If speculative thought is plastic rather than recollective, transcendental, or merely "critical", it is because it is a movement that dissolves and restores, fractures and reweaves, in the same way that plasticity allows the organ to regain resilience or the work of art to make and remake the possibilities of its material.'⁴¹ In this way, like there is no centre to structure and no origins to the trace, there is no 'end' (read there is still some future) to Hegelian dialectics. The old and dusty Hegelian dialectical process rejuvenated by the Derridean deconstructive process still manages to shape a history, therefore the 'periodization' of what has been sublated.

Wait and see and to see (what is) coming

How can one test such a complex reinterpretation of the Hegelian model? How can one weigh this speculative *souplesse* [versatility]? As announced at the start of this chapter, this test will specifically focus on the problematic of translation. How is one to translate, transform, and make plastic in English the form(ation) of coming? In other words, how is one to measure the pliability or the explosiveness of Malabou's words when faced with or surprised by a foreign language, a language totally alien to Malabou? Let us see what is at our disposal. One word of caution before going any further: in what follows, my intention is *not* to highlight problems of translation or to dispute already existing translations, but to think of the implications of translating, transforming, or plasticizing Malabou's specific double expression into another language. In other words, my aim is to weigh the exegetical economy that leads one to create/espouse English plastic readings.

Lisabeth During is the first to propose a translation of Malabou's double expression. Let us focus exclusively on what earlier was left in the French, this doubling, this other word for plasticity: *voir venir*. In a special issue of *Hypatia*, During translates the words *voir venir* with 'wait and see'.⁴² These two words reflect a faithful rendition of Malabou's definition of this expression. Malabou writes in French: '“Voir venir” signifie à la fois en français attendre prudemment en observant l'évolution des événements, mais aussi deviner les intentions d'une personne et pénétrer ses desseins.'⁴³ During translates this sentence into English in this

way: '*Voir venir* in French means to wait while observing, as is prudent, how events are developing. But it also suggests that there are intentions and plans of other people which must be probed and guessed at.'⁴⁴ This first translation has the advantage of respecting the grammatical structure of the expression *voir venir*: two infinitives. In doing so, Derrida remains faithful to Hegel and the dyadic/dialectical/speculative character of his philosophy. There are, however, two problems that are worth highlighting here, for they allow us to begin exposing the difficulties in elaborating a test of translation for this double expression in English.

The first problem relates to the crucial conjunction 'and' between the two verbs. This 'and' has the unfortunate role of altering Malabou's original intentions. With the conjunction 'and', the act of waiting and the act of seeing are forever split as if one could just wait without seeing and vice versa. *J'attends et je vois, je vois et j'attends* [I wait *and* I see, I see *and* I wait]. The conjunction 'and' therefore represents an abyss distancing the two acts of waiting and seeing, which are so crucially and strategically entwined in plasticity.

The second problem is the verb 'wait' [*attendre*]. Although Malabou uses this verb to explain her ideas, the verb itself does not exist in Malabou's expression. It seems to be referring to the idea of staying in one place or to the idea of doing *nothing* for a period of time until something happens or in the expectation or hope that something will happen. I *wait*, here, while reading these pages, for a proper translation to come or for a translation that will take my breath away. I pass time while not seeing anything at all or I simply kill time watching the horizon. The problem is that with plasticity there is no waiting whatsoever. Plasticity is not exclusively passive. As Derrida remarks, '*Voir venir* is to *anticipate*, predict, foresee, project; it is to expect what is coming, but it is also to allow a certain coming or to let oneself be surprised by the unexpected.'⁴⁵ There is therefore in Malabou's expression of *voir venir* no 'waiting around', no 'hanging on', 'hanging around', or 'hanging together' for something to appear unexpectedly or in hope, but an *active* anticipation. If one were to respect Malabou's Hegelian term, there must be a reference to a plastic *task* that is also paradoxically utterly *passive*: the contradictory act of expecting *and* allowing the other to come to us. Whatever English expression is used, *voir venir* should *encourage* the opening of that which is coming (anticipation) and the total surrender to the unexpected (acceptance), and this without any prophetic prediction or the straightforward anticipation of something expected.

Furthermore, the verb 'to wait' also seems to be calling for a *face to face* with the future as if one were to quietly 'wait' *and then* 'see'

what the future throws at us and once this happens, suddenly, *without* any conjectures, predictions, or projections, one would realize that one has been *facing* the future. 'J'attends patiemment et passivement que quelque chose se passe, là devant moi'. [Uncomplainingly, I wait for something to suddenly leap in front of me.] This 'waiting' therefore betrays Malabou's reading of Hegel. It betrays it because 'to wait' implies that one can identify *a* time of expectancy or anticipation, *a* time where presence would reassert itself as *a* moment *in* time. Plasticity would then *be* an identifiable and historically determined point in space and time, curiously pivoting around an Aristotelian *στυγμη* [*stigma*], a time homogeneous and empty *in which* one would literally 'kill time'. This 'waiting' does not *call* for or *provoke* an event; it represents an attitude *entirely unrelated* to the event itself. Overall, During's translation of plasticity/*voir venir* as 'wait and see' cancels the intrinsic paradox of Malabou's expression. With 'wait and see', there are no longer any teleological consequences *affecting* or *surrendering to* the development of what might come unexpectedly.

In the subsequent full-length English translation of Malabou's book, Lizabeth During alters her original translation and proposes to understand *voir venir* by 'to see (what is) coming'.⁴⁶ During explains her new choice in this way: "'voir venir", which means at the same time to anticipate while not knowing what comes, [is] translated by the phrase "to see (what is) coming", the parentheses marking the reserve inherent in waiting itself'.⁴⁷ She adds in a footnote: 'The parentheses... mark the *waiting* or the *reserve* implicit and inherent in the *coming* and in the modality of *sight*'.⁴⁸ As it stands, During's final translation creates two problems that, although at first superfluous, are worth highlighting for the way they problematize the English understanding of the expression *plasticité/voir venir*.

The first problem relates to the fact that the English version of *voir venir* is above all else *a sentence* ('a phrase' in During's words) and not *an expression*. This is crucial because to translate an expression with a phrase is to lose the intrinsic character (contraction/expansion) of the original concept (the speculative nature present in the original), that is, its plastic character. I have already mentioned Malabou's insistence on the importance of extending an already constituted concept by diverting it with another meaning that would be significant to our times. I also mentioned that this extension is an intrinsic characteristic of the concept of plasticity because it shows that all concepts necessarily operate from a certain plasticity of *formation* or *deformation* (Derrida's plasticization of writing into *arche-writing*). If one then transposes or

transfers these timely and necessary interventions in philosophy to the realm of idioms and their translations (and this without leaving the operating game of deconstruction), then the question becomes this: how does the phrase 'to see (what is) coming' operate a transformation of *plasticity itself*, this word and concept that appears to easily pass from the French [*plasticité*] to the English [plasticity]? In other words, how does During's final translation do justice to the universal characteristics of the synthetic operation that Malabou calls plasticity, this metamorphosis or materialization of two negativities that exposes the *différance* of *différance*? I will argue that the cumbersome character of the English unfortunately fails to do justice to this synthetic operation of plasticity. This criticism is not intended to elevate the French above the English or to signal that the French is more suitable to translate a German concept. 'To see (what is) coming' fails plasticity because it does not stand as the hypotyposis of either the French expression or the operation of plasticity itself. In other words, During's translation does not exhibit the same problematic as the French; it does not follow the same transformation/deformation that Malabou imposes on the concise and contradictory *plasticité/voir venir*. (And if one were permitted to go even further, During's translation fails to stand as the hypotyposis of the German expression – but we will leave that enormous topic for another time.) If one simply focuses on the plastic character at play between the English and the French, then how does During's sentence fail to become the hypotyposis of Malabou's French?

In order to answer this question, let us now address the second problem with this translation. Right there, in the middle of the sentence, one sees the *presence* of the words 'what is'. Enclosed between brackets, 'what is' stares at the reader as if it was a special commentary inserted by the translator in order to clarify the simple sentence of 'to see coming'. Why this insertion? Why these brackets *there*? Why not simply 'to see coming' as can be found (paradoxically) in other parts of Malabou/During's book? The *reserve* ['(what is)'] that is implicit and inherent in the *coming* and in the modality of *sight* inserts itself *there* in full view and in English amidst the play of plasticity. This bracketed reserve is not as straightforward as the 'waiting' of During's original translation. This reserve is not a 'waiting around', but the fact that *there is* something not quite visible amidst the plasticity of *voir venir*, something hidden or hiding amongst all this coming and all this seeing, something that can only manifest itself between brackets. '(What is)' it?

During's '(what is)' effectively tells us that perhaps something is *not quite right* with Malabou's *voir venir*, that something is indeed missing,

that 'to see coming' [*voir venir*] simply does not make sense *on its own*, that something needs to be included *there* between parentheses in order for it to make sense *in English*, but also perhaps *in the French itself*. How can one understand Derrida's addition, this extra *supplement* to Malabou's very own supplement [*voir venir*]? One way of answering this question is first to investigate the issue of the French verbs *voir* and *venir* *within* a *Gallic* context. This will allow us to move onto the issue of the English version of these two verbs.

To see coming blind

The first issue that needs to be addressed in relation to *the French* is this: how do the two verbs *voir* [to see] and *venir* [to come] contradict and sublimate themselves in the expression *voir venir*? In other words, where is the contradiction and where is *la relève* [the sublation] in Malabou's supplementary syntagm to plasticity, *voir venir*?

As is well known, Western civilization has indeed always favoured sight over all other senses to the point where seeing and knowing are effectively synonymous, as the expression 'I see', for 'I understand' in any European language indicates. In French, the verb 'to see' [*voir*] has a number of related verbs that also indicate that something else is at stake: it is a question of possession [*a-voir*], knowledge [*sa-voir*], power [*pou-voir*], duty [*de-voir*], etc. When Derrida comments on the closeness between death and the expression *voir venir*, he makes clear that it is always a question of sight or blindness and therefore of knowledge or non-knowledge and power or powerlessness.⁴⁹ The verb *voir* [to see] therefore serves as the root for a number of other verbs, clearly indicating that vision is not the only field that one has to take in consideration when addressing or translating Malabou's double expression. *Voir* [to see] implies always *much more* than simple sight or foresight. This becomes clear when *voir* [to see] is combined with the verb 'to come' [*venir*].

The combination of *voir* [to see] and *venir* [to come] appears at first to refer to the issue of a coming knowledge: I *see* something coming, what? I do not yet *know*, but I'll *soon* have *knowledge* of it. At first glance, knowledge appears to surface *after* the act of gazing into the horizon, the act of seeing, contemplating, or watching with our own eyes. However, this combination of *voir* [to see] and *venir* [to come] does not paradoxically imply the organ of sight. With *voir venir*, knowledge can occur without seeing anything at all. A simple example will show this. If one conjugates⁵⁰ Malabou's expression, as in, for example, *je vous vois venir*

and then translates this into English, one ends up with a rather different understanding of *voir venir*. *Je vous vois venir* can be understood or translated by 'I see what you are aiming at', which one could retranslate back into French with *je vois où vous voulez en venir*. The 'I see' in this sentence does not refer to something perceptible by the organ of sight, but to the intangible acquisition of knowledge, the sharing of ideas, the moment of comprehension. In this way, *voir venir* does not mark any difference between vision and knowledge. *Voir venir* can be either of them or both of them simultaneously, and in this way remains essentially experiential.

However, it would be wrong to reduce the notion of *voir venir* to a simple empirical and/or phenomenological experience involving knowledge. With *voir venir*, the experience does not arise to become or remain an identifiable presentation or presence.⁵¹ *Voir venir* can only be understood as the dialectical movement that goes from passively accepting what comes unexpectedly to transforming this unexpected through habit and repetition; and then differing and deferring it so that it evades the very possibility of presence.⁵² And, as we will see later on, the same is true of the organic in general.⁵³ In other words, *voir venir* is experiential in the sense of a transformation or metamorphosis. In this way, *voir venir* is the experience of what comes, but where what comes can neither be perceived as the movement of confirmation of a presence that necessarily pre-exists the movement itself, nor as the foundational movement of presence. Perhaps in this sense, Malabou's expression *voir venir* owes much to Heidegger's reading of Hegel's notion of experience, for whom experience is the appearance of (a) coming knowledge, but where the appearance in its effort to be present necessarily disappears or simply goes away.⁵⁴ The crucial aspect of what emerges with the expression 'I see what you are aiming at' is therefore that 'to see coming' [*voir venir*] refers not so much to something visibly coming, but to an experience whereby what comes or emerges can only be differed and deferred through habit and repetition.

In relation to the act of reading, the sentence 'I see what you are aiming at' [*je vous vois venir* or *je vois où vous voulez en venir*] effectively corresponds to a form of attention mixed with speculation that leads to understanding. I see what this text is aiming at. However, this process of reading, apprehension/comprehension is again not a self-contained activity analysable as such. For it to be truly plastic, it also has to be a response to a stimulus, to a provocation, to something utterly unexpected – the next line. As Malabou remarks in more general terms, *voir venir* is 'to wait, while, as is prudent, observing how events

are developing. But it also suggests that there are intentions and plans of other people which must be probed and guessed at'.⁵⁵ The activities implied in the expression *voir venir* are therefore never clear-cut. With *voir venir*, one cannot make a clear distinction between (scientific) *observation* (*je vois* [I see]) and speculative *guessing* (*venir* [what you are aiming at]). The two come together in the understanding of what is coming. This confusion is essential because it brings together the two fundamental bases of Malabou's plasticity: the reception of form and the donation of form. In relation to the issue of reading, one could therefore say, following Malabou, that there can never be any clear distinction in the act of reading between the formation of understanding and the response to the stimulation provoked by reading and that the process is inevitably also again always already differed and deferred.

All this clearly shows that the activity of reception and donation, that is the synthetic operation of plasticity, does indeed reveal itself in all its significance in Malabou's parallel French expression *voir venir*. The verbs *voir* [to see] and *venir* [to come] indeed contradict and sublate themselves in the expression *voir venir* making it the perfect French synonym for plasticity. However, there is one odd flaw in this French version of Hegelian dialectics, here understood as *plasticité/voir venir*. The expression *voir venir* implies a contradiction at a theoretical and temporal level (observing/guessing, necessity/contingency, reception of form/donation of form), not at a verbal level. As the expression 'I see what you are aiming at' shows, *voir venir* simply implies a process of understanding, therefore of giving form and/or apprehending what one can see occurring or what happens unexpectedly. In this way, *voir venir* represents a movement that *positively* makes sense of what is suddenly or by necessity presented to view. The flaw at a verbal level is simply that the opposite stance is only implied, never expressed. There is no strict evidence of this opposite. It is simply not *included within* the expression *voir venir*. Where is the opposition in *voir venir*? If one accepts that speculative words necessarily bring together two opposed meanings [*Bestimmungen*], then how speculative is *voir venir*?⁵⁶

If one returns to Düring's translation, then the opposite of *voir venir* is simply 'not to see (what is) coming' [*ne pas voir venir*], 'I do not see what you are aiming at' [*je ne vous pas vois venir* or *je ne vois pas où vous voulez en venir*]. The omission of this negation is a curious one in the context of such a rigorous post-Derridean rewriting of Hegelian dialectics. Malabou not only never includes both contradictions *within* the syntagm *voir venir*, but she also never explores or even mentions the *opposite* of plasticity: *ne pas voir venir*, a form of *inflexibility* or *resistance*

to the synthetic process that should effectively be the igniting *blindness* or *darkness* behind or at the heart of *voir venir*. This blindness to what can be guessed at and/or anticipated, to what gives and implodes form, calls for a number of questions: What is one to make of, for example, *self-imposed* blindness? What of a loss of sight that deliberately rejects any form of coming? What of a loss of sight that results from a moment of resigned blindness, one in which there is no other option? And finally, what of a situation in which experience itself refuses to take place and one can no longer differ and defer? In order to address these questions, it is necessary to explore the second issue in relation to Malabou's Gallic expression.

The second issue that needs to be addressed in relation to *the French* is this: When choosing an expression to encapsulate a whole theory, why give in, as we have seen, to the common pre-eminence of *vision* in the Western world? Why not choose instead an expression where the movement created by the unhinging of space (and) time ceases to be ocular-centric? With these questions, the intention is not to reduce the verb *voir* [to see] to the exclusive capacity or ability to perceive things coming *without* eyes. *Voir* [to see] evidently relates in Malabou's work to the formation of the future, to the apprehension of what is coming, to the experience of understanding. With these questions, the intention is, on the contrary, to *pervert* the motif of the 'eye' in general and specifically the motif of what Jean-François Lyotard calls the 'eye at the edge of discourse', this optical device that always assumes that there is only *one* eye or that there is a *stable* consciousness or a *stable* language that can fix us with his/her/its gaze.⁵⁷ To question the pre-eminence of *vision* implied in the verb *voir* [to see], is therefore simply to draw attention to the fact that what occurs between language and thought is not – even if it only takes place between the empirical and the phenomenological – necessarily governed by the economy of vision.

In his commentary on Malabou's work, Derrida clearly highlights that

to see coming, in the end would always mean to see coming without ever seeing, whether we see beyond the visible present, whether we see nothing at all, whether again what is announced or what surprises without ever being announced has nothing to do with the category of sign and is never given at all to sight. In all cases, there needs to be some sort of blindness.⁵⁸

In order to justify this argument, Derrida quotes Malabou's observation that the future is neither absolutely invisible nor absolutely visible.

Considering this undecidability in relation to the (in)visibility of the formation of the future, can one therefore imagine an expression that would take on board Derrida's radicalization of Malabou's *voir venir*? Can one imagine a verbal expression that would truly respect (or translate) the contradictory meanings of both *voir venir* and *ne pas voir venir* [to see coming and not to see coming]?

In order to address these questions, I will propose a first translation of Malabou's *voir venir*. This translation is curiously *intra-linguistic*. It is a French to French translation in a text in English. This intra-linguistic translation goes like this: In order to pay attention to the necessary contradiction in/of speculative words and in order to push further Malabou's French, perhaps the supplementary expression *voir venir* can only really be understood as *voir venir aveugle*, to see coming blind-folded or to see coming blind or blindly. With this extra supplement in both the French and the English, Malabou's plasticity then acquires, in addition to its theoretical and temporal 'anchorage', its verbal contradictory movement. Within the syntagm *voir venir* lies the impossibility of seeing, *aveugle* [blind]. This impossibility could also be understood as a form of madness, the frustrating impossibility of making sense of that which arrives unexpectedly. I'm blinded by too much information. The expression *voir venir aveugle* [to see coming blind] therefore exposes the fact that there must be a certain element of madness or insanity, something utterly disrupting within Malabou's synthetic operation of plasticity.

Can this be a satisfactory plasticization of Malabou's supplement to plasticity? Let us not precede ourselves. The most important element in this *intra-linguistic* translation is that the shift from *voir venir* to *voir venir aveugle* or to see coming blind, effectively helps us to fully understand the reserve imposed by Malabou's translator. Indeed, During's brackets with the added words 'what is' right at the centre of Malabou's expression represent what is effectively *missing in the French*. During in fact *completes* Malabou's incomplete supplementary French expression. With her translation, she adds what could be seen as an English translation of Emmanuel Levinas's *il y a* and places it *there*, right in the middle of Malabou's expression. By inserting 'what is', During adds a moment *or* a movement that has no author, resists objectification, and refuses to be sublated, upheld, and/or uplifted. In a subtle move, During adds the unidentifiable *atmosphere* of (and within) *voir venir*. She adds the existential *density* of the speculative (French-English) language, which I, perhaps erroneously, translated by *aveugle* [blindness]. Right *there*, in the interplay between the becoming essential of

the accident and the becoming accidental of essence, During places a non-substantive and non-essential darkness, the 'there is' of speculative thought, this density of the void, this murmur of silence, this nothing, or reserve that *provokes the originary operation of plasticity into actually taking place*.

Curiously (or perhaps unsurprisingly for he had been Malabou's PhD supervisor) Derrida sees this coming all along. He sees that the problem in Malabou's *voir venir* is, indeed, this reserve, this *il y a*, this *aveuglement*, this ('what is') at the heart of the operation of plasticity. His concern is to show that *only* the impossible can truly *come* to the subject; only what cannot be seen can affect the formation of the future. Derrida is obviously interested in the eventuation of radical alterity and how it comes to disrupt the Hegelian process of infinite sublation (a good infinite). His answer is predictable. There is always something that can come from above, 'from a very high stance, in truth, from the height of a height much higher than height itself or any height whatsoever',⁵⁹ that one can never expect or see coming. There is always an insanity, a madness, or a 'there is' in the act of seeing or not seeing what comes. Derrida's aim (not unlike During, but obviously for different reasons) is very much that of inserting a radical *interruption* right at the heart of Malabou's concept of plasticity, of bringing the totally accidental right at the core of her speculative language. The answer to our earlier question ('(What is)' it?) is simply that within the hermetic enclosure of Hegelian dialectics, there is always what *cannot* be seen coming, what refuses our gaze, i.e. what *allows* for speculative thought *and* unexpected arrivals.

In this way, with the help of Derrida and During and their plastic interventions or interruptions, one ends up incorporating within Malabou's synthetic operation what she would later add as *sur-prise* in *Plasticité*, her companion piece to *The Future of Hegel*.⁶⁰ The dark void, the existential density right at the heart of the synthetic operation, this '(what is)' corresponds precisely to the radical openness of *sur-prise*: what comes about unexpectedly (what surprises) and what is put under excessive pressure (what holds [*prise*] excessively [*sur*]). What *cannot* be seen coming, what is truly unexpected is effectively *sur-prise* itself; *the blindness in the field of vision created by the formation of the future*. This does not mean that this is a major oversight in Malabou's work. The proof of this is simply, as we have seen, the crucial emphasis that Malabou places in the later text, *Plasticité*, on the word *sur-prise*. This only means that thanks to the English and to Derrida's exegetic commentary, one is able – perhaps surprisingly – to evade the

idiosyncrasies or limitations of Malabou's specific idiom (the French *voir venir*) and to work, *past the French*, towards another idiom: plasticity in English.

What ought to come and go wonder...

If something is not quite right with Malabou's expression of *voir venir* – and there *must be* something that is not quite right⁶¹ – how is one then to take on board both Derrida's difficulties in translating *plasticité/voir venir* and Derrida's questioning? How can one plasticize the French in a foreign language without forgetting the point of sheer randomness, this blindness or madness in the field of vision created by the formation of the future? And, what does this plasticization say of the future and its coming *in English* and maybe in all other idioms? In order to answer these questions, it is perhaps necessary at this stage to take another *risk*, and to *venture* another translation and then *see* if this new translation – this time *inter-linguistic* – stands the test of plasticity, what it says again *of* the French *voir venir*, and how it finally reveals what is arbitrary, what is not predictable, in a word, 'what is not quite *right*' with Malabou's original reading of plasticity.

The main problem is not one of connotations or nuances between the French and the English or any other language. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the issue at stake in this attempt to translate, transform, or metamorphose a verbal expression is to test the plasticity of one idiom in relation to the complexity of another. The idea is not to offer a perfect translation as if one could create a perfect copy, but one, which, at least in this case, *plasticizes* the plastic character inscribed in Malabou's expression; one which allows one language to accommodate itself with the idiosyncrasies of another and yet remain open to what is totally unexpected. The first part of this task appears to be quite straightforward in the sense that an idiom often accommodates words or expressions of another. By now one could, for example, go against Hegel's imperative and not bother to translate *voir venir*, leaving it in the English text as two foreign words of vague intelligibility. It is the second part of this task that appears impossible. How is one to find *chance* in an idiom and/or how is one to let it come without anticipating it? In order to do this, it is necessary to forget the French and Malabou's Derridean reading and ask: How is one then to (give a) chance (to) *voir venir*, this time, *in English*?

If one were to give *an* English (or perhaps in this case a German–English) expression a chance, then one could perhaps *risk* a second

translation, this time using the very Hegelian modal auxiliary verb 'ought' [*sollen*] in the expression 'what ought to come'. Although generally linked to Kant's account of morality as in the famous expression 'you can because you ought', the auxiliary verb 'ought' taken on its own [*sollen* and not *das Sollen*] expresses the fact that something might or might not occur. In this way and unlike the other auxiliary verbs (could, should, might), 'ought' becomes *tainted* with 'probability', with what can be guessed, but remains always uncertain. This probability can be understood in expressions such as, for example, 'many ought to be enough'. Although not entirely correct, the verb 'ought' remains faithful to the original *voir venir*; it *projects* and predicts the future and yet *remains* open to the unknown. The sense of undecidability put forward by the modal 'ought' when conceived as probability and not obligation allows for a flexible (faithful), versatile (unfaithful) and/or explosive (misleading) translation of Malabou's concept of plasticity or *voir venir*. In this way, here (and perhaps *only here*), Malabou's *voir venir* can be translated into English by 'what ought to come'.

This is no straightforward translation or mistranslation. This is the chance of the English language to espouse and yet still depart from Malabou's French. The idiomatic characteristics are clear: 'what ought to come', unlike 'what is bound to come', or 'what is likely to come' shapes itself as a probability linked to a logical consequence. It is a synonym of plasticity because it brings together the *telos* of time, as in the expression 'the result ought to be infinity', a sense of expectancy as in the expression 'she ought to be here by now', and a sense of indeterminacy as in the expression 'your translation ought to work'. Malabou's deliberately contradictory interpretation of the word 'plasticity' or *voir venir* in Hegel's philosophy can now be translated as follows: "What ought to come" means at once to wait, while as is prudent, observing how events are unfolding. But it also suggests that other people's intentions and plans must be probed and guessed at. It is an expression that can thus refer at once to the state of "being sure of what is coming" and "not knowing what is coming".⁶² With this second expression, with this *English* expression devoid of all dark atmospheres or bracketed reserves (such as the ones we have seen earlier), one still remains, in the language of Shakespeare, open to *sur-prise(s)*. The language is pressurized to ignore the sense of duty attached to the auxiliary 'ought' and to take on a new meaning that could never have been anticipated. With 'what ought to come', both necessity and accident finally emerge *to form* and *dislocate* – through contradiction and sublation – the plasticization of that which is 'to-come'.

Unfortunately, as can be expected, satisfaction never takes place with a simple and straightforward expression that resolves everything *once and for all* or *just for a while*. One can anticipate that the future [*l'avenir*] of 'what ought to come' can only be very, very short. Its demise is easily predictable. Let us indeed not fool ourselves or become delusional; the test incurred by this second translation, transformation, or metamorphosis has failed. In a reverse translation, 'what ought to come' is really, after all is said and done, *ce qui pourrait ou devrait arriver*, yet another synonym of *voir venir*; yet another expression not included in Malabou's reading of Hegel's *Platzität*. The plasticization of *voir venir* has therefore failed. The test, i.e. my attempt at a second translation, remains inconclusive; the English has only managed to translate the French in an awkward and unseemly way. But all is not lost; this little diversion was *not* performed in vain. The crucial aspect of this failure is that it reveals more importantly another unsuspected and/or unexpected flaw in *the French* expression *voir venir*. This flaw, or more precisely this unexpected chance, allows us to push the test even further.

Part of this flaw, opportunity, or unexpected arrival appears again to be invisible in French, but is manifest in the English. The attempt to make sense of the *self-contained* French expression *voir venir* with a similarly *self-contained* English expression ('what ought to come'), places an unexpected emphasis on the relationship between *voir venir* and the *subject* who *sees* something coming. This emphasis comes in the form of the grammatical word 'what'. The word 'what' relates to a type of direct or indirect question that effectively has the purpose of requesting further information. As such, it is loaded with anthropological significance because only a subject with an ability to ask questions can truly ask: 'what is this?' – let alone '(what is)' it? If this question is exclusively the reserve of subjects, then how can one understand Malabou's *generalization* that *plasticité/voir venir* corresponds to the formation of the future itself? The problem here is *not*, as before, that of blindness versus vision. The problem here is really the fact that plasticity *needs* the centralizing motif of subjectivity for it to make sense. Without the *presence* of the subject, there cannot be the formation of the future.

The other aspect of this flaw or this chance is apparent in both languages. The verb 'to come' [*venir* and not *à-venir*] effectively implies a specific movement, the movement from a place, thought of as 'there', to *or* into a place thought of as 'here'. If one considers the characteristic of this movement, then it becomes quite clear that this specific movement can take any dimension whatsoever. 'To come' can take place at any stage between microcosm and macrocosm, however these

are defined. When one focuses, like Malabou does, on the question of seeing the specific movement taking place between subject and accident, one necessarily has to ask the following questions: what happens when there is no distinguishable movement whatsoever and yet something is definitely happening? In other words, how can one understand a situation where the distinction between 'there' and 'here' or between subject and accident is not visible or simply cannot be made *and yet there is a movement*, there is something that comes and this coming does not necessarily imply a (spatial) (in/visible) movement that comes [*qui vient*]? In other words still, how is one to see coming that which comes without moving? [*comment voir venir un venir sans mouvement/bouger?*] The French is not given here in a gratuitous manner. On the contrary, it shows that the French is simply not as playful as the English. In English, the expression 'without moving' can refer to both the perceiving subject and also that which moves (a moving object, for example). This playfulness clearly shows that the subject (who is actively gazing at moving objects) is also *in* movement between a here and a there. In fact, he, she, it is always in movement, in a movement that precisely puts into question the very movement of coming in *voir venir*. This movement cannot be escaped, as it lies at the core of Hegel's understanding of subjectivity as essentially active, that is, as a subject who speculatively works on his or her predications.

In order to address this two-part flaw ('to see' without subjectivity and 'to come' while moving), it is necessary to return once again to the French and entrench our translation, transformation, or metamorphosis of *plasticité/voir venir* even further.

In his commentary on Malabou's work, Derrida tells us that the human being is not the only 'thing' at stake in the expression *voir venir*.⁶³ The expression *voir venir* is applicable to all *living* beings, even those who might not be considered within the category of subjectivity. Malabou is indeed not just interested in updating through Derrida the overall Hegelian structure that constitutes the deployment of time and *subjectivity*, she simply wants more.⁶⁴ In order to expand her remit further, Malabou proposes to simply revise Hegel's adaptation of the organic to the inorganic as $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\epsilon\iota\nu$ [*theorein*]. At the level of *theorein*, both the organic and the inorganic are able to react to something unexpected and, through habit and repetition, to appropriate this unexpected as their own. With this expansion of plasticity to the organic and the inorganic, Malabou then develops with the help of a few notions borrowed from Gilles Deleuze the idea that plasticity effectively takes place in any *milieu* [oddly translated by Derrida as either 'middle point'

or 'surroundings']'.⁶⁵ Plasticity is not restricted to the gazing subject or to the experience of understanding; it permeates all living and non-living forms. This is what Malabou calls the *plasticity of life*, not in the sense of what is organic and lives, but in its expanded definition, in terms of both the organic and the inorganic.⁶⁶ Life is plastic 'in the sense that life is responsible for the donation of vital forms, but also in the sense that each of these forms, to the degree that it is made of a concentrated energy, provokes an explosion'.⁶⁷ The issue that interests us here is this: how can this *milieu*, a milieu that is *not* a subjectivity, actually *articulate voir venir*, that is, how can a *milieu* as a mode of *theorein* shape or misshape the future, without expressing any thoughts, ideas, or feelings? How can it form the future if this *milieu* is, for example, limited to two basic reactions to what comes or is unexpected: sensibility and irritability?

Malabou appears to answer these questions by saying that the expression *voir venir* cannot be understood simply as *theorein* or within the context of organic (zoology or anthropology) and inorganic life alone, but at three Hegelian levels: logical, natural, and spiritual.⁶⁸ There is no space here to question Malabou's certainty about these levels. For this to be addressed properly, one would need to question in minute detail the (onto)logical, ontic, and spiritual premises of plasticity, which would require lengthy analysis. The only question one could ask in our restricted field of investigation is this: what other terms, besides those employed by Malabou's translator, could one use to translate and/or transform this expanded sense of *voir venir*? In other words, can one think of a third translation that would encapsulate Malabou's *plasticité/voir venir* without making reference to (a) sight or non-sight [*voir/ne pas voir*], (b) the realm of subjectivity or zoology, (c) any sort of movement between 'here' and 'there' (to come) and still make sense of the *formation* of the future itself?

In order to achieve this, it is perhaps necessary to abandon all attempts to translate Malabou's words into *another* idiom. In what concerns us here, such a vast set of questions cannot be answered properly if one simply focuses on Malabou's text or on the vast field in which Malabou's thinking operates. The strategy has to address itself or has to come *unexpectedly*. Let us take what appears (*as if*) *by chance* in her work. Or more precisely, let us give again all the chance in the world to all the texts at our disposal: Malabou's and Derrida's French, and Derrida's and Cohen's respective translations. Perhaps it is simply a question, following Malabou's attempt to find the unexpected (i.e. the future) in Hegel's rigid philosophical system, to also find *in our case* the unexpected

in Malabou's own *oeuvre*. The aim would then be to answer the questions above in the most plastic way: by transforming or metamorphosing the unexpected into the translation of *plasticité/voir venir*. The idea is *not* to go on a mission to find the unexpected, like the Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader, who in the 1970s went on a mission to find the miraculous, but to *plasticize* what appears to result from logical conclusions *into* the unexpected and to transform this unexpected into the conclusion of our reading of Malabou's expression *plasticité/voir venir*.

(Un)surprisingly, this unexpected does not come from Malabou's work. It comes from outside. This unexpected – if it can really be called that – comes in the form of an unusual verbal formation in the English translation of Derrida's text. This verbal formation comes in the shape of the last two words of Derrida's commentary. As final words, they stand oddly *at once* conclusive and strangely open to the unknown at a crossroads between two texts and two times, *neither* Malabou's *nor* Derrida's. He writes:

I do not know anymore. Here. We must believe, if we must believe, that at this point the word 'accident', as that which it opposes itself without being opposed, essence, I mean to say, and Being and all of those concepts, this word, these words belong to an idiom which I am not sure any more of being able to understand. It is as though, in history, in my history, a strange accident happened to the word 'accident' (and hence to the word 'essence'), an accident of which I am no longer sure, of which no one can be sure of being able to *sublate*. 'Farewell', the noun or the exclamation (the *performative* salutation! Yes another plastic connotation!), in the plasticity of its idiomatic values, a mobile and reflexive, specular or speculative plasticity (and so dangerous), I have not used it in the time of this dialogue, because, as with the 'perhaps', it has occupied me at great length these times, but in order to let one understand, in *this* idiom, my own incomprehension, a certain increasing and stubborn non-intelligence, on this stubbornness precisely, of an idiom, of more than one idiom, perhaps, at the crossroads of the Greek and of its other, go wonder...⁶⁹

Derrida is in trouble. He can no longer explain the meaning of the words 'accident', 'essence', 'Being'. He has fallen right in the middle of his own idiom upon an accident that prevents him from going any further. The accident is devastating: it marks the end of Hegelian sublation. No more *Aufhebung*! The only exit is, following Malabou, the plastic salutation 'farewell'.⁷⁰ As he leaves, Derrida in his obtuse refusal

to differ/defer any longer, ends with a surprising and yet curiously predictable expression: 'go wonder...' Now, how is one to understand this 'go wonder...'? What is he referring to here when he references a crossroads of idioms and traditions? Who is the other besides the Greek? Is Derrida precisely not inverting here, in a final twist, the structure of Malabou's *voir venir* and in doing so translating it – or more precisely *plasticizing* it – for us once and for all? How can the pupil (Malabou) allow her supervisor (Derrida) this final repartee at the edge of her text?

Derrida does not write, 'go wonder...' in English. He writes in French, *allez savoir*... another peculiar French expression that means *at once*: 'go and find out' and 'who knows?' It brings together two verbs: one in the imperative [*un impératif: allez*] and the other in the infinitive [*un infinitif: savoir*]. Together, they indicate not only a state of uncertainty or indecision (i.e. knowledge as yet to be acquired), but also the possibility that one could seek out this knowledge [*allez*]. *Allez savoir*... thus brings together the formation of the future as possibility and an essential openness to what the future might hold, that is, openness to the utterly unexpected. It does not take too much to realize that *allez savoir*... effectively represents what has held our attention for so long; it represents the exact opposite of (or the reverse to – but not the contradiction of) *voir venir*. It represents the opposite or the reverse in the sense that it simply *inverts* the movement of the formation of the future itself. Instead of focusing on the (formation of the) movement of what is coming [*voir venir*], Derrida proposes instead to focus on the (formation of the) movement of what is going [*allez savoir*]. In French, the inversion is perverse: the same verbal formation consisting of two verbs, one indicating movement (a contrary movement expressed by the antonym of Malabou's *venir* – *allez*, 'to come' – 'to go') and the other indicating the acquisition, and at the same time, the non-acquisition of knowledge (simply swapping 'I see' with 'I understand', vision for knowledge).

Curiously – and this is where the unexpected comes in – in English, the inversion proposed by Derrida's translator, Joseph D. Cohen, is *at once* thoughtful and miraculous. To gauge this 'thoughtful miracle', it is necessary to stress the importance of Cohen's very own expression through the prism of another translation. The aim is simply to quickly test Cohen's translation and to reveal that effectively, he *correctly* translated Derrida and that any other translation – even a more accurate one – would simply be *un-plastic* in relation to the signification of *voir venir*.

Indeed, *allez savoir*... should have been translated with 'go figure...' and not with 'go wonder...' Understood as a self-contained verbal formation, *allez savoir*... brings together both the appearance of a shape or

form seen in outline or indistinctly and (in its intransitive form) the fact that an idea is formed or envisioned. *Allez savoir si cela marche...* [Go figure if this works...] The verb 'to figure' precisely points to the acquisition or the formation of knowledge [*savoir*], it marks the outline of what is progressively understood. Therefore, to translate *allez savoir...* with 'go figure...' would have made sense on two counts: firstly, it draws the attention to the importance of the act of seeing or not seeing and through this, to the acquisition or non-acquisition of knowledge (as previously noted, *voir*, *sa-voir*, etc.) in the structure of *voir venir*. Secondly, but most importantly, it retains the primacy of subjectivity as the entity forming the future. Indeed, 'go figure...' privileges the point of subjective synthesis as representation. In an attempt to address the issue of Divine Plasticity, Malabou indeed remarks that the birth of modern subjectivity is the mirror opposite but also the result of Divine Kenosis, that is, it is the result of a form of alienation [*Entäußerung*] of the subject from itself. This alienation corresponds to the distancing of self from itself, a form of human hypotypothesis that marks the birth of the human form as a becoming subject. Its form is inevitably *representation* [*Vorstellung*].⁷¹ The verb 'to figure' is therefore the ideal word to choose to *represent* this 'alienated plasticizing figure' – the embodiment of Modern subjectivity.

However, Derrida's translator, Joseph Cohen, did not fall miraculously or deliberately, for the easy translation of 'go figure...' He translated *allez savoir...* instead with 'go wonder...' a verbal formation that curiously radicalizes Derrida's French expression. How is one to understand this planned and/or unexpected occurrence in the plasticizing process of reading and translating an inverted version of *voir venir*?

'Go wonder...' implies the idea of speculation (I wonder if this will end with the expression 'no wonder') and/or curiosity or simply interest (I wonder how this will end?). Unlike 'go figure...' which remains very close to Malabou's original intentions, 'go wonder...' evades some of the inherent difficulties that are embedded, as we have seen, in the very concept of *voir venir*. With this unusual verbal formation, the visuality of the figuration and that of knowledge are clearly abandoned. 'Go wonder...' literally means to open oneself up to what is radically other. It means *at once* to be seized or filled with wonder about what is coming and to have doubts about what is coming. And instead of the passivity inherent in *voir venir* where the subject 'awaits without waiting', we have, and this *without any proper send-off or leave-taking*, the activity of departing (go) and, at the same time, that of disappearing (...into the unknown). Free of all constraints, 'go wonder...' thus

forms the future at once as 'neither invisible nor visible' and as 'neither inventive nor receptive' and can thus be applied to *all* milieus, even those not characterized as subjectivity and/or not endowed with sight. 'Go wonder...' with its suspension points is therefore *another* perfect synonym for plasticity, one which will no longer allow *voir venir* to have any *priority* or right of *property* over Malabou's synthetic operation.

Farewell

There is one last question that still remains to be answered. This question will tilt our reading of Malabou's double expression in another direction. Why does Derrida reference *the other* of Greece? What is crucial about this reference when considering the opposite of or the reverse to Malabou's *plasticité/voir venir*? The answer is that with 'go wonder...' Derrida is deliberately referencing a way of understanding time that is radically at odds with the Greek, Christian, Hegelian understanding of time as explored by Malabou. Indeed, by emphasizing the act of *going*, *leaving* somewhere, and even perhaps *departing*, Derrida is highlighting the importance of a Jewish messianic and eschatological approach to time. In order to understand this, it is crucial to return again to the expression *voir venir*. This expression *secretly* implies the *direction* to which things are to *come*, that whoever or whatever is seeing, sensing, or comprehending things, they are always *coming*. There is a *direction* to this movement even if this movement is only, as we have seen, a diffraction/reconstitution of the instant. This movement is *not* going; it is *coming* [*venir*]. It (or we) form(s) or plasticize(s) (itself/ourselves) as *coming*. For Malabou, even if plasticity implies the formation of the future, i.e. what 'gives form',⁷² the synthetic operation is, as we have seen, necessarily *unidirectional*: *coming* [*venir*]. No matter how much Malabou tries to evade the fact, this is what the verb indicates: from the unknown, the radically other, *towards* the subject and/or milieu.

By contrast, for the Jewish Derrida, the movement of the formation of the future cannot rest on a verb that is unidirectional – no matter how many times Derrida references to the 'to-come' in his work. There is simply no specific direction from which one can apprehend the future. Hence 'go wonder...' is a simple reversal of direction (going [*allez*]) in order to show that indeed, when it comes to the future [*l'avenir*], things do *not* necessarily *come*. This – which can be seen as Derrida's repartee to Malabou – is *not* a criticism of *voir venir* as a synonym of plasticity. Derrida is not forgetting here that, for his pupil, plasticity is *an excess of time over time* and as such cannot be understood within the context

of a *telos* with a movement towards self-determination. By finishing his commentary on Malabou's first book with 'go wonder', Derrida is in fact simply *enriching or complicating* the operation of *plasticité/voir venir*. This complication comes in the form of a third perspective that is *not* added to the two already developed by Malabou (chronological and logical times), but is *inherent* in them. This third perspective apprehends time from a reverse position, whereby the subject or milieu is *not* facing and/or producing the future – and thereby expecting things *to come* out of this expectancy or this formation. He, she, it is in fact positioning him, her, itself *against* the future, in a reverse position – and thereby expecting things *to go* into this expectancy or this formation. The excess of time over time does not simply come; it also goes in either direction of Hegel's chronological and logical times. How can one make sense of this?

Without going into the details of this specific Jewish perspective – one for which the past necessarily has a redemptive future [*un avenir*] – and the many texts that are attached to it – Scholem, Benjamin, etc. – it is worth recalling here in the most simple terms, the Hebraic approach to the future. In Hebrew, the future is not ahead of us and the past is not behind us. With words such as *qadam* and *akhor*, the future is necessarily behind us and the past is in front of us, there, where one can scrutinize and analyse it.⁷³ Future generations appear behind us or after us, sometimes by surprise, and we face and/or produce the past. This reversal transforms the horizon of expectancy: instead of lying ahead of us in the distance, it becomes incorporated within the experience of space (and) time. It or we become(s) the horizon. Instead of coming from afar, the future surprises us from behind as if from nowhere. However, this reversal does not necessarily mean that the past that we can see going into the distance ahead of us is retained forever. What is lost to sight, memory, and history can also come back and surprise us from behind. In this way, although it goes away from us, the immemorial past can therefore also come and surprise us as if nothing had ever happened. Thus reversed, the differentiation taking place between chronological and logical times – the stage in which plasticity operates – becomes disarticulated by the past and by memory, this other 'perspective' from which things *also* come. And whoever says that there is a disarticulation or an 'unhinging', there is also, inevitably, a future. The future comes or goes at the same time [*hama*].

In this way, plasticity can no longer be seen exclusively from the perspective of a 'to-come' *that only* comes [*qui vient*]. The verb *venir* becomes problematic, because it is *emblematic* of a certain movement.

The come in (the) 'to-come' [(l')à-venir] also has to be perceived paradoxically from the perspective of a time that emphasizes the primacy of the past and of memory. With 'go wonder...' one is therefore confronted with a radical questioning of the traditional Hegelian *Zukunft* as the elected horizon of intelligibility. Even if Malabou operates at the intersection between chronological and logical times, or between time and its representation, one cannot automatically assume that the plasticity operating synthetically between the two rests on a verb indicating that things simply *come*; it might be something radically different, *who knows*? In this way, Derrida's swapping of *venir* [to come] with *aller* [to go] is not just playful. *Without* undermining *at all* Malabou's careful articulation, his reversal literally *complicates* the synthetic operation of plasticity to incorporate a reshaping or a replasticization inspired by Jewish messianism, one for which the Messiah is neither coming nor going strictly speaking.

All this explains perhaps why Derrida insists so much on reading Malabou's plasticity as an experience of farewell. As he says without hesitation, 'one may as well say that plasticity is an experience of farewell'.⁷⁴ Not unlike his attempt to interrupt the versatile dialectical operation with a surprise element coming unexpectedly from above, Derrida attempts again, but this time with a single word – farewell – to interrupt the operation in order to *enrich* and *complicate* again Malabou's plastic exposition. How is one to understand this word? The word refers to a salutation – and more specifically, as we will see, a salutation *to* time. However, this salutation is not as straightforward as one might think. It is unsurprisingly double. On the one hand, this salutation is an *adieu*, an interjection that, for once, needs no translation. This *adieu* is radical in the sense that, whoever utters it, does *not* expect to see someone or something ever again. Because it references God [*a-dieu*, *à-Dieu*], the expectancy is therefore that the next and final encounter can only happen with God 'being present' or at least 'in sight', therefore, in death. On the other, this salutation is an ordinary goodbye, that is, a farewell understood in a situation whereby one expects or hopes to see a person or thing again.

Derrida makes clear that when it comes to plasticity, it is impossible to distinguish between the two. *Plasticité/voir venir* is *at once* a leave of absence (taken or given), *and* a drastic separation or abandonment. Derrida imposes his word(s) with the intention of sharing the invention of the future. He wants to work *with* Malabou's system, in truth 'with the gift of what she is giving', as he says. His gift to her gift is to interrupt *voir venir* with a word that enters into the yawning of the 'to-come', this space

or non-space from which plasticity operates. It is *in* the non-simultaneity of coming and going that one says adieu/farewell, or one lets go or abandons, forever. In other words, one says our salutations, however these are expressed, *as* one forms the future, in the plastic formation of that which is 'to-come'. There is no escaping this adieu/farewell in any understanding of plasticity and this because salutations represent, as Derrida says, 'a concern for plasticity everywhere you look, and however you write it'.⁷⁵

The crucial aspect at this juncture is that Derrida's adieu/farewell is simply not addressed to someone strictly speaking. The words adieu, farewell, goodbye, and salutation [*salut!*] do not imply an address to someone, to some other, to the other, to otherness, or to the absolute other. The separation or abandonment implied in these expressions is not necessarily that of a 'who', or a 'what', it is that of time itself or the future. It is a farewell or an abandonment *to* time, to the all too common (Hegelian) definition of time and therefore to its unavoidable realization, Absolute Knowledge. In a way, to say 'farewell' to time and specifically to Hegel's time is to rid ourselves of the imposition of a destiny and a destination. It is to regain a certain amount of autonomy whereby we form the future and the future forms itself as we say goodbye to a time that was, so far, always already past.

Hence the fact that one cannot distinguish with any clarity between an adieu and a farewell. An adieu is a radical interjection to a time that comes to pass and will never be seen again, while a farewell is an interjection to a time that might return or come again. Who is to distinguish between the two? As Derrida says, 'we ought to think of different farewells, and different times for farewells. These will often be difficult to discern.'⁷⁶ And later on,

there is always more than one farewell, more than one adieu, in the farewell or the adieu; one renounces the future, the other hopes or promises, but the more it is assured or given (as the salutation inherent to salvation), the more the promise becomes a calculation, that is, the more it is lost – as future. That is why the time of these multiple farewells remains so difficult to think it never gathers or draws itself with itself or in itself.⁷⁷

Between the time of one farewell and another, between one farewell and another, there is a vacillation, a plastic operation that prevents

the very recognition of this farewell as an adieu or a simple goodbye. The question that arises at this stage, when there is no longer any sense of direction, no longer any coming or imminence, when words no longer signify a movement per se [*venir, viens, vient, venez*] is: how is it possible to take or to give time its leave or to be more precise, how is it possible to take or to give one's self our very own leave?

To take one's leave, to say goodbye, farewell, or even adieu, is a way of passing or moving past, of going or simply lasting only a short time. It signifies, as Derrida tells us,

a movement, the pace of a passage [*commeatus*, from *commeo*], the passage through which we may pass, come, and go: become a passer, become past, or to come. The leave that we take or give one's self [*commeatum summere*], is the possibility, the permission of passing, of coming, of going: come now! Go! Go away! No future without leave [*Pas d'avenir sans congé*]. And hence without this separation in departure which we have here named or surnamed *farewell*.⁷⁸

Plasticity as leave [*comme congé*] can only be taken or given to ourselves and/or to time itself (to Hegel's time) as a gesture in passing, as a passer, or as a movement always already past, in a situation where there is no discernible future, no imminence [*plus d'avenir*], only a history of the future, however paradoxical this might sound. With this leave, with this leave of absence (taken or given), plasticity still operates as a coming, a coming to sight, but one which *venir* will never look or feel as if it is coming. And at this juncture between times, between chronology and logic, time and its representation, and between Christian and Jewish times, there can be no more promises *with* a determinate content (such as the Messiah or Absolute Knowledge). At this juncture – or crossroad, to use Derrida's word – adieu, farewell, to see coming and go wonder... can only haunt each other. As Derrida says, 'one will always remain the ghost of the other, the spectre itself'.⁷⁹

Is this it? Is this Derridean expression a plastic (philosophical and idiomatic) translation of Malabou's *voir venir*? Is the transformation or metamorphosis a success? And what of the test? Does it manage to open plasticity to what was totally unknown or what could not have been foreseen when first reading Malabou? Does 'go wonder...' with

its suspension points and without any reserves or brackets, measure the pliability or the explosiveness of Malabou's words? Does 'farewell' espouse and reject *at once* Malabou's Franco-German idiomatic delinquencies? Does it stand tall and proud in comparison to the clumsy English-German 'what ought to come'? And above all, do these translations evade the awkward reliance on subjectivity and the ocular-centrism of *voir venir*? The questions abound and not unlike Malabou in *Le Change Heidegger*, the answers will not be given. To do so would ultimately be equivalent to evaluating or even judging Malabou's gargantuan attempt to make sense of Hegel's dialectic in the light of Heidegger's destruction and Derrida's deconstruction, something which she already does, better than anyone else, in her subsequent book, *La Plasticité au soir de l'écriture*.⁸⁰ What can be done, however, is to see if these queer attempts to translate Malabou's *plasticité/voir venir* endanger at any level her work. The idea of endangering Malabou's work, like that of finding a flaw, should not be taken literally. It simply consists of showing that these translations effectively *expose* Malabou's *plasticité/voir venir* to something unforeseeable, to an 'other' that would be radically other to this French post-Derridean reading of Hegel.

Malabou's interpretation of *plasticité/voir venir* could be seen to correspond to both a faithful reading of Hegel – as a reinterpretation of the dialectical – and to its total betrayal – in the way it includes something totally un-Hegelian (*différance*) in texts dating back to the 1800s. Contrary to what one might suspect, this faithfulness and this betrayal are not contradictory. It derives from a way of apprehending classical texts that defies convention, whereby Hegel's system is no longer perceived as enclosed, but open to infiltration and contamination. Inversely, it derives from a way of apprehending contemporary philosophy in a manner that defies its self-sufficiency and its pretensions of radicality. Between faithfulness and betrayal lies Malabou's synthetic operation. Opening and closing, forming and undoing, shaping and imploding both the dialectical and its de(con)struction.

If one follows this line of thought, can one therefore conclude that this chapter's modest attempts to endanger Malabou's French use of the double expression *plasticité/voir venir* also constitutes again *at once* an act of faithfulness and betrayal? The betrayal is self-evident in the way it attempts so desperately to (mis)translate Malabou's double syntagm. The faithfulness is less apparent – perhaps only in the way it stays as close as possible to Malabou's use of the French. If this double act of faithfulness and betrayal, or reliability and disloyalty, is acceptable, then do we have here at least partially, the premise for the possibility of the plasticity

of translation, of translation as metamorphosis? This is not intended as previously stated in a way that would want to establish plasticity *as* a method of translation. On the contrary, this question is only intended in the sense of seeing translation as a way of simply becoming other, of plasticizing an idiom into another even if this idiom is the same. With Malabou's playful use of Hegel and Derrida (and Deleuze), translation could indeed be seen to become a synthetic operation that organizes the same and the other in a way that the other is always the other of the other. If this is the case, then the above attempts to (mis)translate Malabou's *plasticité/voir venir* are indeed attempts to endanger her work, to provoke its crisis, but also inevitably and perhaps above all else, *to highlight its relevance*, i.e. its translatability, to our contemporary world.

Perhaps in this way, one can begin to make sense of our last two attempts. Through the curious prism of two texts (Malabou's and Derrida's) and their respective translations, *plasticité/voir venir* in a way extended or plasticized itself into another idiom. In English, plasticity no longer needs a reserve, a reassuring and explanatory *il y a*. It has become weirdly 'go wonder...' or 'farewell'. Or again, if one were to carry on reversing Derrida's Jewish messianism and reabsorb it in an idiomatic curiosity, it has become a 'farewell to *voir venir*'. The abyss created by the two idiomatic expressions plasticizes itself without reserve and without any risk of being recuperated – and this not because it is separated by a channel, an ocean or an idiomatic no-man's-land. The abyss brings together and separates the two opposite movements in any formation of the future: go wonder... *while* seeing coming [*voir venir* comme *un... allez savoir*], go wonder... *while voir venir* [*allez savoir* comme [*on*] *voit venir*], etc. The whole point of bridging and multiplying the outcome of two translations and/or two idiomatic shores would be to focus exclusively and inevitably on the meaning of the word 'while' [*comme*]. While, *comme*, at the same time, *hama*. We have here, again, as always with anything relating to (*l'*)*à-venir* or with any (re)articulation of Derrida's spacing (and) temporizing (*différance*), the non-simultaneity of openings and exposures, a non-simultaneity that can only make sense with an Aristotelian *hama*, which, as Derrida says in relation to the word 'as such', 'evades us forever'⁸¹ and leaves us not only stranded *within* metaphysics, but also with the possibility of speech. *Between* 'go wonder...' and *voir venir*, there can only be a determination that *names* difference, and this determination at the heart of the formation of the future always comes from the metaphysical order.

What would Malabou then say of all this? What on earth could she say about her *voir venir*, now plasticized in a multiplicity of ambiguous

philosophical and idiomatic juxtapositions that, ultimately, are really only intended to expose the manifold and contradictory nature of the formation of the future itself? *Allez savoir...* [Go figure...] Malabou tells us, 'opening the question of the future always implies the risk of immediately closing it behind'.⁸² The question is indeed, properly speaking, *never a new question*. Its philosophical antiquity, its tradition, its history, all threaten to cancel out its meaning. And in this way, the question will not go away (perhaps will never go away): Did the (now) old *voir venir*, like the even older *Platzzeit*, manage to grasp *in advance*, to understand that which arrives by surprise *as farewell*, and does it manage to foresee what could still arrive as a necessary consequence or again by surprise in yet another language and in another time? Indeed, go wonder... And perhaps we sense here the enormous *strain* we live under, this *infernal* or *diabolical* dialectical/de(con)structive storm blowing from paradise as Benjamin could have said, or maybe, more simply, from the other – the radically other – or from an irreducible plurality that does not even allow expressions such as 'go wonder...' or *voir venir*, because they can never make sense of the infinite ways the future forms itself. Under this strain or pressure, *surprise* holds us and surprises us with ever more complex processes of sublation and/or differentiation. As Malabou says, as if we had not had enough: 'surprise, even in a weakened form, can always surprise again'.⁸³

2

Survenue

Pleasure/Jouissance: terminologically, there is always a vacillation – I stumble, I slip. In any case, there will always be a margin of indecision; the distinction will not be the source of absolute classifications, the paradigm will falter, the meaning will be precarious, revocable, reversible, the discourse incomplete.¹

Jouissance can only come from the absolutely new, for only the new disturbs (weakens) consciousness (easy? Not at all: nine times out of ten, the new is only the stereotype of novelty)... Encratic language (the language produced and spread under the protection of power) is statutorily a language of repetition; all official institutions of language are repeating machines: schools, sports, advertising, popular songs, news, all continually repeat the same structure, the same meaning, often the same words: the stereotype is a political fact, the major figure of ideology. Confronting it, the New is *jouissance* (Freud: 'In the adult, novelty always constitutes the condition for orgasm').²

Yet one can make a claim for precisely the opposite... repetition itself creates *jouissance*. There are many ethnographic examples: obsessive rhythms, incantatory music, litanies, rites, and Buddhist nembutsu, etc. to repeat excessively is to enter into loss, into the zero of the signified.³

These three observations by Roland Barthes show that both *jouissance* and its language have an intimate relation with what is 'new'. The future

tense in the first sentence refers to the fact that there will never be *in* the future a proper linguistic distinction between pleasure and *jouissance* or a suitable taxonomy capable of ordering the various intensities of *jouissance*. In other words, even *in* the future one will not be able to convey the experience of pleasure or *jouissance*. In this way, because its account or its classification is indefinitely postponed, the language of pleasure or *jouissance* is essentially always structured as to come. Conversely (second and third paragraphs), non-encratic language and obsessive repetition are equally structured as to come: a text or a chant makes us 'jouir' because it excites and/or surprises us by its disruptive and/or repetitive character. Barthes's three observations therefore show that pleasure or *jouissance* and its *language* are, therefore, what is *expected* (the *jouissance* coming from the repetition of a rhythm) *and/or* arrive *unexpectedly* (the *jouissance* deriving from the 'succulence' provoked by the unexpected or coming from the newness of an expression).

Coition

Barthes's observations provide the first taste of the thematic explored in this chapter dedicated to a reading of Jean-Luc Nancy's book, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*. The aim of this reading is not to put forward the meaning of Nancy's short, but dense text, or to attempt a summary of its many detours and parentheses or even to compare Barthes and Nancy. Nancy's complex work, with its unhinged grammar and ambiguous syntax, is a challenge to any reader. The idea of providing a meaning or a summary is simply self-defeating. This does not mean that the idea of summarizing or contextualizing this book or any of Nancy's work is impossible. This only means that the following reading accepts and follows this necessary complexity and cautiously remains modest in front of such an intricate work. This reading therefore simply takes on the task of exploring one book – the *untranslated* French version of *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel* – and seeing how it also explores the three themes that transpire in Barthes's commentary (the future, *jouissance*, and translation).

Nancy's work is now well established not only within the context of contemporary French thinking, but also within the wider field of deconstruction. His major influences (Schlegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Bataille, Levinas, Derrida, etc.) are well documented and the key themes he has developed since the 1960s (syncopation, sharing, touch, exposure, community, fragmentation, sense, the relationship between philosophy and literature, etc.) are equally well known.⁴ There is therefore no need to cover this ground here. My aim is to dedicate as much space as

possible to this small text and how it relates to the overall thematic that concerns us in this book. In relation to the threefold thematic extracted from Barthes's commentary and explored in *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, Nancy owes much to the work of a number of authors. Again, there is unfortunately no space here for an in-depth presentation of these influences. The field is simply too vast. However, out of the three themes that concern us (the future, *jouissance*, and translation), three authors are of crucial importance. The first one is unsurprisingly Jacques Lacan and his specific interpretation of *jouissance*, developed in *The Seminar, Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge: Encore*. *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel* is a reading of this and other texts by Lacan, and the present chapter will attempt through a close reading of Nancy's own text to present the way he handles Lacan's work today.

The influence exerted by the other authors will remain, for lack of space, unexplored, but should be kept in mind as key influences in Nancy's thinking in this book. These authors are Emmanuel Levinas and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The title of Nancy's book clearly references Emmanuel Levinas's best-known notion '*il y a*' [there is], developed in both *Existence and Existents* and *Time and the Other*. This famous expression (which, as is well known, departs from Heidegger's *es gibt* [it gives] in the way it emphasizes complete impersonality) names what Levinas calls 'existing without existents [*un exister sans existant*]'.⁵ The crucial element in our context is that no consciousness can experience this paradoxical state of existence. Consciousness and subjectivity are secondary, they emerge from the *il y a*. Inversely, the *il y a* precedes and presupposes anything that can be articulated by reason. It is with these two inter-related contexts that one must approach Nancy's work. With Levinas's work (as well as with Nancy's), the important thing is that we are always dealing with a notion that appeals more to intuitive recognition rather than strict philosophical investigation. With *L'il y a*, we are here at the cusp of language, on the edge of the Symbolic Order. The aim is therefore not to *relate* a state of affairs that makes sense, but to investigate the ways one encounters something *other* than Being, something impersonal that escapes rational analysis because it is at the cusp of the rational. It is this aspect of Levinas's inheritance that needs to be kept in mind when reading Nancy's book.

L'il y a' du rapport sexuel also draws heavily on an understanding of embodiment that owes much to Merleau-Ponty's work, and specifically to his 1945 book, *Phenomenology of Perception*. The important aspect of this second inheritance is perhaps the fact that existence cannot be thought outside of or in abstraction from the body. The body is the first

to articulate space (and) time. It is that which touches – to use Nancy's word – or comes in contact with the world, the others, or the Other. The body is a limit, the opening of the event of Being [*Ereignis*]. In this context, both Merleau-Ponty and Nancy cannot be seen to understand the body, and specifically the body engaged in *jouissance*, as if it was simply a physical object constructed within a specific social or cultural discourse. For Nancy, the body, following Merleau-Ponty, is that which takes place at the limit; it is an event *at* the limit of sense, in the emergence of sense and signification. It is this main aspect of Merleau-Ponty's influence on Nancy's work that also needs to be kept in mind when reading *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*.

A close reading of any book, especially of a book as complex as *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, unfortunately cannot do justice to the influence of both these writers. For the way that Levinas and Merleau-Ponty have influenced Nancy's reading of Lacan, I can only draw the reader to two works: first and foremost, Jacques Derrida's voluminous reading of Nancy's work, *On Touching Jean-Luc Nancy* – a book which can easily be compared to Sartre's *Saint Genet* – provides perhaps the most comprehensive account of this influence, especially in the way it focuses on four key words in Nancy's corpus, *étendue*, *partes extra partes*, *toucher*, and *se toucher*.⁶ The second book is Ian James's excellent introduction to Nancy's philosophy and specifically – in what concerns us here – the chapters that explore the way Nancy addresses the issues of the Subject, Space and the Body.

The aim for this chapter is therefore to simply read (translate) the three themes that resonate in Barthes's commentary and that also transpire in Nancy's *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*. In relation to what concerns us in this book overall, this threefold thematic necessarily focuses on the way in which Nancy tackles the Lacanian understanding of *jouissance* and its translation *in relation* not to the future as such, but in relation to time and specifically to *the unhinging of space (and) time itself* – (the) *à-venir*. If Barthes puts so much emphasis on the future in his understanding of *jouissance* and its languages, then how does Nancy address this specific issue, especially if one considers the fact that his understanding of the future follows to some extent, as we have seen in the introduction, that of Derrida? The question is therefore that of addressing a liminal issue (i.e. *jouissance*), its translation, and the way it necessarily provokes, involves, interacts, or simply disturbs the coming of the future or to be more precise, (the) *à-venir*, that is, the 'movement' of spacing (and) temporizing as defined in the introduction. The following reading therefore asks two interrelated questions marrying

pleasure, *à-venir*, and translation as the framework of our reading of *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*. These two central questions are these: what relation is there between *jouir* [to come] and *venir* [to come]? And do we come [*jouir/venir*] as we say, 'I am coming' or is there no similarity between an utterance, a cry, and an orgasm?

These two questions will hold our attention throughout this chapter and will be answered in a specific manner. Indeed, the following reading does not operate a deconstruction of Nancy's already heavily deconstructive approach. In a way, the reading of a book that 'obeys' the double deconstructionist 'law' by which a text offers itself to be read while derailing or deterring the condition of its reading cannot claim to proceed from the same process. A reading is simply a commentary, an attempt not only to translate Nancy's text – with all the necessary betrayal that this entails – but also to push or thrust further *into another idiom*, Nancy's deconstructive spacing (and) temporizing of both *jouissance* and its translation. There are three reasons for doing so.

The first reason for offering this reading is this: Nancy's book was written 30 years after his collaborative work with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Title of the Letter, a Reading of Lacan*. The main difference between the two (besides themes) is one of approach. In the first, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe literally 'deconstruct' Lacan. They reveal how, against Lacan's own saying, his psychoanalysis inevitably reinscribes a number of classical philosophical presuppositions such as, for example, the certainty of subjectivity, the underlying motif of systematicity, and the use of a ground (for example, the maintenance of the formula of metonymy) in order to make sense of the process of psychoanalysis. By contrast, in *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, Nancy operates a reading of Lacan's work that attempts *not* to deconstruct in order to reveal 'specks of presence' in his work, but to excavate and deepen the *impurity* of Lacan's thought, that is, its transgressive and destabilizing character. The first reason for offering this reading of *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel* is therefore to present the way in which Nancy excavates and deepens these impurities. If one stays within a Nancyan understanding of deconstruction, one that is overall post-Derridean, then the issue of *jouissance* or sexual rapport cannot be addressed from above or from a distance. It has to be approached as if a game of contamination or interference of the Lacanian discourse on *jouissance*. It is this approach, no longer strictly deconstructive, that is presented here.

The second reason focuses on the relationship between *jouissance* and its *translation* and revolves around Nancy's use in *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel* of the verb 'to enunciate' [*énoncer*] and the noun, 'enunciation'

[une énonciation]. Nancy uses these two words strategically as a way of making sense of two of Lacan's famous statements: 'there is no sexual rapport' and 'jouissance is impossible'. Nancy makes clear that he is no psychoanalyst and that he is only interested in the way these 'enunciations are enunciated [*ces énonciations sont énoncées*]'.⁷

What interests me cannot be to scrutinize again the ins and outs or the transformations of these principal or matricidal statements in the structure of psychoanalytical theory: I have in this no theoretical or clinical competence. In this way, I have no intention to develop anything from within this structure, and similarly I will not make any commentary based on the texts that articulate it. I approach it from outside – please make a note of it – I am interested first in the way these enunciations are enunciated. I could say that, in a way, I start from the premise of how these enunciations constitute statements, or from the premise of the performative and pragmatic (in a linguistic sense) aspects of these constatives (this is after all how these statements present themselves: as the affirmation of facts – not empirical facts, but givens of the structure itself: however the problem here is precisely that there could never exist a rapport of the empirical and of the structure, a relation between what is *de facto* and what is *de jure*). I begin from what I hear, therefore from my own listening post. This post is obviously not analytical; it is in fact buoyant in a unique manner: This listening post allows to develop in me resonances that will not imitate Lacanian sounds, but occur against them, as they touch them, that is, as they get close, but also, at the same time, as they are at their furthest, as if an inverted echo or according to an incommensurable intercourse (sexual or not?). What have I been asked to listen to? To what should I lend my ear? In which direction should I prick up my ears [*Vers quoi, de quel côté faut-il la dresser, cette oreille?*]⁸

In English, the verb 'to enunciate' is usually understood in its intransitive sense, that of pronouncing or uttering something distinctly. However, Nancy uses it in its transitive sense, that of making a definite or systematic statement. He *proclaims* or *makes clear* that his interest lies only in how these statements are made and how they resonate in philosophy.

Nancy's emphasis on enunciations, their performance, and their relationship to psychoanalysis is not new. In *Ego Sum*, a book published six years after *The Title of the Letter*, Nancy draws attention to the issue

of enunciations when analysing the performative statement 'I am'. For Nancy, psychoanalysis represents the final achievement of the Cartesian understanding of the subject as 'I am'. This understanding is based on the self-positing and self-determining operation that consists in *affirming* the gap between object of knowledge and subject knowing. The modern subject, the subject of psychoanalysis, is a subject that posits and determines itself *as* the abyss separating the two. The issue for Nancy is that this self-determination and self-positing comes necessarily in the shape of an enunciation: it affirms itself: *ego sum*, I am. 'The truth of the subject consists in the fact that it enounces itself, not in the contents of the proposition itself.'⁹ However, this enunciation is not a discourse in the style of Descartes (the cogito as a fable), but the murmur of someone who indecides ['s'*indécide*']¹⁰ itself between being the object of knowledge and being the subject knowing. In other words, the subject posits itself through the quiet indecision between *announcing* and *denouncing* itself. And he adds, 'there is no chance to subtract ourselves to the metaphysico-anthropological reconstitution of the subject [risked by psychoanalysis], if one does not pay attention to the outbreak of this murmur'.¹¹

From this perspective, the enunciation of a subject is a unique performative that *subsists* – I will come back to the importance of this verb – only the time of its enunciation, the time the subject takes to form and at the same time to utter itself as enunciation. This subsistence prevents the possibility of determining the subject as a substance speaking. The subject is a process of enunciation. This enunciation or this affirmative statement between announcement and denouncement or as abyss is not the essence of man's language or the law organizing the symbolic order. This enunciation is not the premise or the basis of a being-always-already-speaking. This enunciation is the opening of the subject, 'an opening without bounds from which the Subject limits and surpasses itself [*une ouverture sans bord dont le Sujet se borde et se déborde*']'.¹² In other words, the subject announces itself over its denouncement only to pronounce itself again. Conceived as an enunciation opening itself (on)to the other of itself, the question that inevitably arises is how can this subject relate or enter (in)to a *rapport* with another subject, how can an opening without borders open itself to another opening?

We have here, with this question, our second reason to study *L''il y a' du rapport sexuel*: Nancy's work distances itself from Lacan's by introducing a different philosophical organization to the performative dimension of the subject's enunciation [*ego sum*]. He destabilizes the

subject's substance and course [*'son assise'*¹³] in order to evade the *certainty* of subjectivity inherent in the splitting of the subject articulated by psychoanalysis. As enunciation, the subject loses all finitude and therefore all figuration (ego) and organizes itself not in a movement arising from the Other, but as co-dependence, being-with, a mutual abandonment and *exposure with and to* the Other. 'The *ego sum* counts as "evident", as a first truth, only because its certainty can be recognised by anyone. So, to articulate it completely would be to say: *I say that we, all of us and each one of us, say "ego sum, ego existo"*'.¹⁴ The second reason is therefore to find out how Nancy *translates* Lacan's two sentences ('there is no sexual rapport' and '*jouissance* is impossible'), with their heavy dependency on the certainty and singularity of subjectivity, into the register of a philosophy in which there is no longer the possibility of a reinvestment into the discourse of the subject.

The third reason focuses *again* on the relationship between *jouissance* and its *translation*, but this time revolves around Nancy's use of a composite word borrowed from Lacan. This word brings together *jouissance* and sense: '*jouis-sense*'.¹⁵ For Nancy, *jouissance* *is* sense because there could be nothing else. Sense, for Nancy, does not mean linguistic meaning, but the event in which there *can be* signification.¹⁶ The body does not *have* sense, but *is* sense as such. The body can only be 'the taking place of sense [*l'avoir-lieu du sens*]'.¹⁷ Or again, as he says, more specifically somewhere else, 'bodies transform sense into an excess of sense [*les corps font du sens outre-sens*]. They are an excess of sense. That is why a body only makes sense when it is dead, frozen.'¹⁸ Consequently, *jouissance* could also be nothing else but sense itself, i.e. the event of sense, its excess. *Jouissance* and sense are effectively coextensive and interrelated.¹⁹ There could be no *jouissance* without sense and no sense without *jouissance*. The crucial aspect of this coextensivity and this interrelatedness is that there is no superfluous meaning from which one could ask: what does *jouissance* mean? *Jouissance* and sense *come* together. As Nancy writes in 'The Birth to Presence': 'Joy, *jouissance*, *to come* have the sense of birth: the sense of the inexhaustible imminence of sense.'²⁰ This means that *jouissance* is neither transcendent nor immanent, it simply remains in excess of, or irreducible to, systems of signification and in this way, it is both contingent and finite. There is therefore no possibility of addressing the issue of *jouissance* without addressing the issue of the sense of *jouissance*, and without this excess, flow, or interjection (or this dispatch to use a Derridean vocabulary), there would be neither sense nor *jouissance*.

... the sexual rapport, or the 'to-report' of what differentiates itself [*le se-rapporter du se-différer*], even if it does not write itself in the sense that Lacan suggests, can most definitely be uttered: not only does it pronounce itself, sometimes, with words – and idioms have many words to express an orgasm including the first or perhaps the last word of all: I/you come! [*je/tu jouis!*] – tautology expressed as an address – which would require a lengthy diversion – that is *nothing less* than a saying – a saying that does not signify, but whose meaning is *jouissance*, which also shows, undoubtedly, that beyond all signification, significance in general is *jouissance* ('*jouis-sense*', as Lacan could have put it).²¹

The proximity, or perhaps even the contamination, between *jouissance* and sense provides the third reason to read Nancy's text. This third reason focuses on a series of idiomatic questions: how does one *enunciate*, translate, transcribe, or report *this jouis-sense*, this non-simultaneous coming of come and sense *into another idiom*? If *je* or *'I'* can stand for *jouir* or 'to come' [*venir*] and if sense can also stand for *jouissance*, then how can one understand the tautology of '*jouis-sense*' in English? As come-come; or do we have to recall Derrida's words in French, *viens-viens, oui, oui*?²² As for the previous chapter, the idea here is *not* to question Nancy's interpretation of *jouissance* or to provide a new translation or interpretation of this enunciation in English. The idea is simply to see how sense and *jouissance* operate in English, how the mechanism of what remains irreducible to systems of signification [*jouis-sense*] functions in another idiom.

Three reasons: hermeneutic, intra-linguistic, and inter-linguistic. All in the aim of addressing the translation of *jouissance* and the way they (*jouissance* and its translation) provoke, involve, interact, or simply disturb that which spaces (and) temporizes – (the) *à-venir*. Three reasons that are also therefore three aims: that of uncovering how Nancy contaminates the Lacanian discourse of *jouissance*; that of seeing how 'there is no sexual rapport' and '*jouissance* is impossible' survive in a situation where there is no longer the possibility of figuring or grounding a subject; that of unravelling how *jouis-sense* operates (in a Mallarmean sense) in English.

There is a further and final aim behind this attempt to read *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel* by Jean-Luc Nancy: that of creating a couple, a pair or duo. On the one hand, excerpts of Nancy's French text translated into English and on the other, my reading of his text overall. With this couple (incisions and additions), I want to put forward two translations

(a more or less faithful one and an adulterous and deviating one) and to propose to see between them *a coition of interpretations*. The aim of this coition (*co-* + *-ire*, come together, from which the word *coitus* derives) between an English version of a master text and an unwanted appendage or offspring is to address this question. Is it at all possible to create a translation that does not generate 'a straightforward couple': the master French text published by Galilée in France and its English version published in England? Is it at all possible to provoke instead a copulation of sorts, excerpts of the straight English version in a rapport with a queer English commentary? Could there be, ultimately, a translation or a reading that remains at the level of the drive, a couple of thrusts, incomplete, imperfect, deficient and not a couple of perfect, self-contained books or chapters? Could there be two translations as two thrusts with a certain amount of release (but without achievement) printed in one single book, in one single chapter?

These questions can easily lead to accusations of violation, rape, abuse, savage misappropriation, or at best, to an unfaithful and even perhaps at times erroneous set of interpretations. However, if one displaces the classical perspective that positions the original as something seminal and the translation as something derivative and, following Walter Benjamin, if one rethinks the original to be in a position of demand with regard to the translation, then who abuses whom? The original is *not* a plenitude that would come to be translated by accident. This does not mean that Nancy's text is in a situation of demand. It is *not* really indebted a priori to translations. It does not even assume the possibility of being enriched in any way through its survival. This only means that there are effectively no demands or answers, appropriations, or unfortunate survival. There is only the law of translation; one in which debts are cancelled and the demand for signification exceeds considerations of origins, destiny, or destinations. In the following case, and perhaps in *this* embrace only, this demand is simply an act of adoption that comes very close to also being an act of devotion.

Incommensurable actions

The first tentative move or the first embrace in this reading is Nancy's emphasis on the paradoxical nature of Lacan's sentences.

The enunciation is here that of a certain provocation and of a provocation based on a paradox. The statement says that what occurs every day is not effectively taking place (at least 'sexual relations' take

place every day, and even when it comes to *jouissance*, it is not as simple as to think that it does not take place every day). The statement is made in a spectacular and sidereal way: there is not what there is! A well-versed philosopher will immediately note that it is the same when Hegel or Heidegger, each in a different mode, enunciates that being is not. However, these statements do not announce the inexistence of what exists. They say that 'being', or the concept understood as 'being', whether we take it as a verbal copula (let us note in passing that we are here already, suddenly in a copulation, whatever form it takes) or as the act of what is *being* [*ce qui est étant*] in its active sense (and both hypotheses recover each other), cannot consist in something that is being [*étant*] (neither stone nor God; neither flower nor penis). Finally, they say that 'being' is not something, but that being is this: that there are things in general. They also say that the statement 'that there are', the *fact* that there is (at once empirical and transcendental, at once double), or simply the 'there is' itself, is no being itself.²³

A sexual rapport therefore behaves [*se comporte*] like 'being'. What 'is' (being, *jouissance*, or sexual rapport) is neither a 'thing' nor what allows itself to be counted. It is neither one, nor two, nor two + *n*. With this comparison, Nancy attempts to differentiate between two ways of perceiving Lacan's enunciations. If one eludes for a moment the familiar meaning often attributed to these sentences (i.e. sexual intercourse as such), to concentrate on the more subtle meaning of these expressions, the paradox not so much evaporates, but takes on all its resonance. The issue for Nancy is that Lacan's sentences can be understood prior to any economy of lack, therefore prior to any inscription within the Symbolic Order or any dialectic of desire/recognition. To justify this, Nancy takes up the slang equivalent to Lacan's two statements. He says that the semantic meaning of the slang 'to fuck' [*baiser*] clearly classifies the statement 'there is no sexual rapport' in the category of property, of what is exchanged or not. 'To fuck' refers to an existing 'fucking', received or given. This classification onto the register of property shows that *jouissance* as 'fucking' is only concerned with either 'bodily maintenance' or preservation: to give and/or take, to contract and/or discharge, in other words, to engage in intercourse, is to seek an equilibrium (sexual satisfaction or reproduction). However, if one discards this analogy (empirical and transgressive), then we find ourselves with an entirely different meaning that cannot be neutralized or satisfied.

'There is no rapport' could be understood in the same way as 'there is no petrol in this pit' (one feels that there would be other resources in this metaphor of the pit, but not for the moment). This means that the relation is here a thing. However, this is what language gives us. The word 'rapport' implies an action, not a substance. When it is used in a secondary sense, it indeed implies a substance, a support, or a supposition, as in an account ('a police testimony'), or the result of a relation ('a harmonious relation'). It becomes clear here that the meaning has slipped from that of an act to that of a product (it can also mean, as Littré points out, the instrument that one describes as a calculator [*un rapporteur*]: the object that allows to calculate the results of a mathematical relation).

However, it turns out that, in its strict etymological sense, the word 'rapport' does not mean a thing. Furthermore, the expression 'sexual rapport' is not indicative of common usage. Even an indiscreet gossipmonger [*un rapporteur*] would say: 'they slept together' and not 'they had a rapport', unless this gossipmonger is a doctor or a policeman. The expression becomes indeed medical or medico-juridical. It refers to the physical and physiological aspect of what is only expressed using verbs (to sleep, to make love, to fuck, etc. – or, as in Proust, *faire catleya*). The most ancient meanings of the word are those of 'proceeds', 'account', or 'tale', of 'convenience', or 'conformity', names indicating things or qualities. It is on this original register, juridical and economic, that has emerged, belatedly, the expression of intimate relations, that of a 'sexual rapport'.

In saying that there is no sexual rapport, one could mean that there is no income, account, conformity or determined proportion when a couple gets together; and in fact, there are none. If it has to do with a sexual rapport or about a sexual rapport, if it has to do with what *proceeds* from this act or what one can *retain*, *disseminate*, *calculate* or *capitalise* (and therefore in the sense of inscribing or writing), then one would have to say that the account, the measure, or more generally, the appropriation or the determination as a thing in itself is effectively impossible. This rapport can neither be told nor accounted for (this is the main problem of erotic literature). Unless of course, as I have already stated, if this takes place in relation – that is, from the perspective or the specific standpoint – to a medical, physical, physiological, or even powerful [*énergétique*] examination – even also pathological or sociological – without forgetting the fact that an impregnation is possible (from which, by the way, one would have limited the scope to unprotected heterosexual rela-

tions, thus excluding all the others – and this without a mention of auto-eroticism), unless of course, if this takes place in the context of a police investigation or a juridical and religious inquest.

When the rapport is seen from the perspective of a ‘thing’, one can say that there is no rapport of sex, or that sex is fruitless. This is perhaps what Lacan has in mind when he says that a report [*un rapport*] can be written, but one cannot write a sexual one.²⁴

The same year that Nancy published *L’'il y a’ du rapport sexuel*, he also published *La pensée dérobée*. In this book, there is a postscript to his analysis of ‘The Kantian Pleasure System’ which is missing in the English translation published in *A Finite Thought*. In this postscript, he reverses Lacan’s sentence (‘*jouissance* is impossible’) in order to show again that the impossibility of *jouissance* has nothing to do with property and cannot revert to the same:

The tension [of *jouissance*] is on the side of difference, one which cannot be equal to itself. (It is this difference that would provoke me to interpret and reverse Lacan’s famous sentence, ‘*jouissance* is impossible’: *the impossible is jouissance* – ‘the impossible’ must here be understood as the infinite differentiation that cannot be returned to the same.)²⁵

Free from the constraints of property and transgression, *jouissance* thus becomes perceived as a movement of differentiation that can never be satiated [*assouvit*]. It is infinite because it appropriates itself as its own ground or as its own self-grounding, that is, as a movement of differentiation that knows no rest. It would be wrong to think that this infinite differentiation is either symbolic or strictly ontological. It concerns in fact the body and the body as sex specifically. The impossible, *jouissance*, or this infinite differentiation, concerns the body from one end to another: breasts, penis, vulva, testicles, ovaries, bone structure, morphological and physiological characteristics, a genetic map, each of which is engaged in this impossible and infinite process of differentiation, *jouissance*.

The crux of this signification is that the words ‘rapport’ and ‘*jouissance*’ imply an action, an action that can only be understood as an act of infinite differentiation. The copulas ‘there is *no*’ and ‘is impossible’ do not therefore refer to the substance of a movement or, to use Nancy’s word, to an ‘entelechy’²⁶ as such. There is no final and completed stage to a sexual rapport or to *jouissance* and (or because) there is no final and

complete stage to being. If there were a stage, that one would consider a sum total, a stage when 'being [*l'étant*] achieves or para-achieves itself ... it [would] also represent the point where it would cease to be'.²⁷ For Nancy, the two Lacanian sentences therefore indicate that there is *no foundation or locus to jouissance or rapport*. They indicate on the contrary that *jouissance* or *rapport* points instead to its own permanent instability. In an essay entitled 'Statu Nascendi', published in *The Birth to Presence*, Nancy adds: 'Pleasure as a singular entity occurs neither at the origin, as a principle or a primacy, nor at the end, as a generalised discharge. It occurs only through self-precession ... or through self-addition, as its own premium.'²⁸ This shows that even understood in its singularity, *jouissance* or *rapport* can never be understood as an addition, as something that adds itself to the act, but sweeps out not from or towards the Other (in a Lacanian sense), but from *and* towards the other or the other in me. The act referred to in Lacan's two sentences is therefore necessarily a spacing (and) temporizing involving always more than one. Because 'rapport' refers to an action, a movement, an exaltation that *comes* and can never be identified as such, it therefore refers to what occurs *in between* and can never begin, end, or be comprehended as such.

However, it would be wrong to think that because the focus here is only on an action prior to intercourse itself, that is, on a movement or an exaltation that infinitely comes between two, and that nothing that takes place at this edge allows itself to be counted or accounted for, there is *nothing* that *reports* or that there is nothing left at the end: wind copulating with wind. Nancy's thought is not *of* the body *strictly speaking* or *of* its absence. It is also not a thought of the subject as an affect or effect of structure (rhizomatic or otherwise). Nancy's thought is an attempt to evade the typology of substance while knowing that everything everywhere depends on something else for it to differ and defer. For Nancy, there is simply *no measure*, calculation, or determination with which to substantiate the *rapport* or *jouissance*. As action, quiver, or murmur, the *rapport* represents in fact the incommensurable as such. I use here the word 'incommensurable' not in the sense whereby *jouissance* or *rapport* lack a quality or value, but in the sense whereby it cannot be reduced to something empirically verifiable because *jouissance* or *rapport* is always already engaged in the process of infinite differentiation. This incommensurable is therefore nothing other than the 'taking place' amongst bodies.

Understood as actions and not as substances, *jouissance* and *rapport* have an inevitable *rapport* with time and specifically with what we

have defined in the introduction as *the unhinging of space (and) time*. Self-precession or self-addition, to use Nancy's words, takes space and occurs *not* over time, but *as* and *at* the juncture of time and space, or to be more precise, *in* and *as* the spacing of time or as the temporizing of space itself. How is one to understand this without necessarily confusing or reducing *ad absurdum* *jouissance* or rapport with our central motif in this book: *à-venir*? Amongst the many references included in his book, Nancy makes one reference that structures the entire text and entrenches *jouissance* and rapport within a specific understanding of space and time. The reference is that of Stoic philosophy. This reference is not unique in Nancy's *oeuvre*. It already figures in *Being Singular Plural*.²⁹ It is worth diverting our reading or our exploration of this body of texts, to explore in brief outlines the heart of Nancy's Stoic reference.

λεχτόν

Instead of referencing the tradition that goes back to Aristotle and Plato, one that posits philosophy as a branch of knowledge based on *concepts*, Nancy, following Deleuze, references the Stoics for whom philosophy is based instead on *bodies* (or more generally, on the *corporeal*, what has the nature of or is a body – *σώματα* [*somata*] – *corporeus*, *corpus*, *corporis*). Nancy's reference is therefore to a type of philosophy that assigns, against Plato, ontological primacy to the sensible over the intelligible. For the Stoics, most of the world is indeed corporeal and most things are bodies. However, these bodies are not inert or pulsating flesh appended or suspended (on)to the Platonic Idea, but *active* and *self-generating* movements of physical matter not dissimilar to, for example, Spinoza's *essentia particularis affirmativa*.³⁰ The corporeal can in this way be seen to represent the existent, the real, or actual, i.e. all that which is currently existing or has being. It is what has the capacity to act or be acted upon and constitutes the distinctive mark of 'that which is'.

In what concerns us here (*jouissance*, *à-venir*, translation), the crucial aspect of this Stoic reference is that bodies can enter into a *relation* or rapport with other bodies. However, these relations or rapports are *neither real nor substantial*. For the Stoics, *there is no* relation strictly speaking between bodies. A body cannot change or be the cause of another body. A body can only modify the attributes of another one.³¹ For example, to quote the same reference as Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*, 'when the scalpel cuts through flesh, the first body produces upon the second not a new property but a new attribute, that of being cut'.³² The important thing here is that the act of cutting or modifying cannot be

substantiated. The rapport between bodies is *unsubstantial* or *incorporeal* because it takes place at *an* edge or at *a* limit *delineated* on or in the body.³³ In other words, there *can* be a rapport between bodies *but* this rapport is essentially incorporeal.

Nancy points out that the Stoics identified four incorporeals [ασοματα, *asomata*]: 'Space, Time, the Void and the λεχτόν [*lekton*]'³⁴ (the said or the enunciated). These four incorporeals have a few common characteristics: firstly, they do not exist strictly speaking; they *subsist*. The use of the verb 'to subsist' is crucial because it gives the incorporeals a mode of existence that is different from that of bodies (the corporeal). Bodies exist [*ex-sistere*], non-bodies subsist [*sub-sistere*] because they do not have an independent existence in relation to the rest of the world. They *subsist*, not under, below, or beneath, but in *a relation* to the world, *they border on* the corporeal. Secondly, they cannot be ignored. They play a crucial role in the movement of the world. Although we do not see them, they represent the *movement* of the corporeal world itself. This movement is not subjacent, it is relational: it *brings* bodies together. In other words, the incorporeals generate the friction of bodies and that of the world. Finally, but most importantly, incorporeals have a specific way of interacting with bodies. As A. A. Long points out: 'since interaction is exclusively the property of bodies, the Stoics cannot allow these incorporeals to act upon bodies or be acted upon by them. How then do they play any part in the world? ... One answer: *by "transition"*.'³⁵ Long is here making reference to Diogenes Laertius's remark that incorporeals can only be 'conceived *by* transition',³⁶ therefore through a process in which the incorporeals pass from one state, stage, form, or activity to another and this permanently without rest. Because incorporeals have no existence, because they are not 'things' we can 'have', they can only be apprehended not *in* passing or *in* transition as if it were something self-contained, but *by* transition, that is, *as part of* a spatio-temporal relationship that indicates that something is *besides*, at a distance *or* close *by* – *par é-loignement* to use again a Heideggerian–Derridean expression – and yet cannot be identified as such.³⁷

The first (or last) incorporeal is the λεχτόν, which represents 'meaning in transport' or as Seneca puts it, 'movement of thought'.³⁸ A λεχτόν is not a proposition [αξιοματα, *axiōmata*] because a proposition is a subspecies of λεχτόν. The λεχτόν is 'what is said' and/or 'what is being heard'. For the Stoics, both thoughts and 'utterances are bodies',³⁹ they are corporeal, what happens between them, the λεχτόν, is incorporeal. In *Being Singular Plural*, Nancy makes exactly the same distinction: 'Language is incorporeal ... Either as an audible voice or a visible mark,

saying is corporeal, but what is said is incorporeal; it is everything that is incorporeal about the world.⁴⁰ What occurs between voices and marks (the λεχτόν) is incorporeal. It is, as Ammonius remarks, 'the intermediate between the thought and the thing'.⁴¹ In Stoic terms, the λεχτόν has one specific characteristic: it is *not* timeless, it lasts (without constituting a duration as such, that is, without lasting strictly speaking) while 'it travels from those who utter it to those who hear it'.⁴² Sextus Empiricus gives a relevant example in relation to translation: if a Greek and a barbarian hear the same Greek word, the Greek will understand it, the barbarian will not.⁴³ Sextus then asks: what *subsists* besides sound and meaning if these are perceived as corporeal? What the Greek perceives is two bodies: the sound and the meaning of the word, plus an incorporeal: the *transport* of meaning from one to the other, something that will escape the barbarian. In other words, the λεχτόν is, as Sextus puts it, the intangible 'remains of a rational impression'.⁴⁴

When describing this last incorporeal, the important thing for the Stoic and, as we will see, for Nancy as well, is to avoid copulas, that is, verbs that link the subject and the predicate, such as 'is' in 'the tree is green'. They prefer to say that 'the tree blossoms' or 'the tree greens' as Deleuze remarks.⁴⁵ When copulas are avoided, the sentence takes a performative resonance that aims to evade the subject-object dichotomy (and therefore the one *on* one or the one *to* one rapport) and the associated (Platonic) issue of concepts. Their aim, in accordance with the idea that incorporeals can only be conceived *by* transition, is to focus, through the use of verbs *combining* predicates and copulas, on the *relation* itself, the *movement* of that which is said or enunciated and heard or perceived (blossoming).

The other three incorporeals are intimately associated with the λεχτόν. For Stoic philosophy, Space is an incorporeal, because it is a transition, the movement of space itself, what makes space to be the unbound multidimensional expanse in which all matter (i.e. what is corporeal) *exists*. For this reason, it is impossible to *touch* space or to have a relation with it. As a body, one can only be made up of space and immersed *within* it. Furthermore, because of the infinite divisibility of space, there is never an *extremity* from which one could touch space. Except for culturally determined edges (for example, the mouth, the anus), the space of a body knows no limit; its 'invaginated' topologies prevent the very possibility of ascribing a limit to it. A body can never be measured with any certainty. The Void, by contrast, is not only what *escapes* space and bodies, it is also what escapes the absence of space

and bodies. In other words, it is space devoid of space *and* bodies (i.e. of all that is corporeal, including thoughts). The Void has no dimension and is formless; 'it contains no difference'.⁴⁶ Time, the last incorporeal, is also a movement that has no consistency or substance and cannot be quantified or qualified. It is 'the dimension of motion'.⁴⁷ The Stoics interpret it as 'an interval *in* movement'⁴⁸ within the corporeal world. In other words, it is what falls between two measures (or beats) and is again beyond measure. This shows that the Stoics do not understand the present as an Aristotelian 'now' [*νυν*], that is, as a 'link of time holding together the past and the future'.⁴⁹ Because time is an incorporeal, they perceive the present as a *movement* of division (Nancy's *partage*) between past and present.⁵⁰ And like for all incorporeals, time and the present can only be expressed with the use of verbs.

Ego cum

This reference to Stoicism brings us closer to the most urgent zone of our reading. This zone (which is not a zone, strictly speaking⁵¹) is not as yet the place of relief, but that of the promise of entry and/or the assurance of surrender. Nancy understands these four incorporeals as the four conditions of Lacan's *rapport* or *jouissance*. These four conditions mark the distinction between the localities or bodies involved in the *rapport* (Space), the difference of times (even if the times are simultaneous) when *jouissance* takes place (Time), the empty and formless interval that extends between bodies (Void) and, most importantly, the fact that in all *rapport*, there is a 'saying' and/or 'a being heard' (*λεχτόν*). Nancy summarizes these four incorporeals as the 'distinction of bodies'.⁵² However, Nancy does not leave the argument over the noun 'distinction'. Following the Stoics' imperative of always using verbs when referring to incorporeals, he specifies that what concerns him is in fact the 'to distinguish' itself.

If bodies were not distinguishable from each other, they would not be bodies, but the indistinguishable of a formless mass [*l'indistinct d'une matière informe*]. If they can be distinguished, it is necessarily for these two reasons: they separate each other and this separation allows a relation with the other (distinguishing itself from one another in all senses: perception, choice, honours). It follows that the *rapport* is no being [*étant*]: nothing distinct, but distinction itself. Or more precisely, it is the *to distinguish* itself whereby what is distinct has its own property and only acquires this property by virtue of what

is distinct in another way. Through an act of relation, that which is distinct distinguishes itself: that is, it opens itself and closes itself at the same time. It returns to the other and detaches itself from the other.⁵³

This distinction (or this *to distinguish*) does not create an entity or a totality known as *the* distinguishable. In a rapport, this *to distinguish* is not what separates two identifiable entities, but what *makes* the rapport distinguishable. If one transposes this onto the register of psychoanalysis, one could say that this distinction is precisely that which cannot be identified *in* space and time as the 'one'. The embrace of a couple or *jouissance* is never a totality or a 'one'. As is well known in psychoanalysis, Lacan's two statements cannot be dissociated from this other correlative statement: 'There is something of One.'⁵⁴

This *There is something of One* is not simple – to say the least. In psychoanalysis, or more precisely in the discourse of Freud, it is set forth in the concept of Eros, defined as a fusion making one out of two, that is, of Eros seen as the gradual tendency to make one out of a vast multitude. But, just as it is clear that even all of you, while undoubtedly you are here a multitude, not only do not make one, but have no chance of so doing – as is shown only too clearly, and that every day, if only by communing in my speech – so Freud had to raise up another factor as obstacle to this universal Eros, in the shape of Thanatos, which is the reduction to dust.⁵⁵

A sexual rapport therefore always hangs on a fantasy of oneness. A couple believes that *there is something of One alone*, a fusion that miraculously 'makes one out of two', that 'makes one out of a vast multitude'. For Lacan, this fantasy of 'oneness' comes from language. It is because of language that we believe in this fantasy. However, this fantasy does not originate in any language or in language in general. In order to make sense of the way this fantasy is articulated, Lacan coined the word '*lalangue*'⁵⁶ to mean that part of language which reflects the laws of unconscious processes, but whose effects go beyond that reflection, and escapes the grasp of the subject. There is therefore no sexual rapport because subjects relate to each other through what makes sense in *lalangue*. With regards to Nancy's reading of Lacan, the problem with *lalangue* is the fact that, no matter what, it still remains subordinated to and mastered by the discourse of psychoanalytical theory. In a Stoic way, Nancy is therefore forced to take a different perspective, remarking

that the two involved in a rapport or more precisely a 'to report' are not and should never be understood as related to language or *lalangue* as if this was a separate entity identifiable as such.

The logic of rapport ... responds to this other Lacanian axiom (an archi-axiom that perhaps creates strong ties with Heidegger and Bataille) according to which there is no totality. (Axiom from which woman '*pas-toute*', with her knowledge of *jouissance*, is its symbol.) However, the fact that there is no totality (or *the* totality) does not describe a lack or an ablation, and this simply because there existed no totality before the statement announcing that there is no totality. This means that all that there is (and there really is all that there is) cannot be totalised, all in all. Here, the important is to understand one another: there is indeed the totality of the whole [*holon, totum*] and the totality of all entreties or of the whole world [*pan, omnis*]. How therefore does one understand the totality created by an embraced couple? Certainly not as an entirety. Two does not make one, but two swellings, two ascends, a couple of thrusts [*deux poussées, deux élans, un couple de forces*] – the tearing away amidst the touching – are necessary for the mechanism to quiver. We are therefore not addressing here a support, but a transport: the rapport carries itself out of its own transport.⁵⁷

The two involved in a rapport do not therefore become a totality, but remain two transports, two swellings, two ascends, a couple of thrusts, whose other synonyms are joy, ecstasy, rapture, and exuberance.⁵⁸ The sexual cannot be reduced to a *predicate* (two beings attached to or linked by a verb implying an action) precisely because the sexual is neither a substance nor a thing; it is always already a verb, a rapport, 'to report'. Consequently, there is no 'there' to the enunciation of pleasure, rapport or *jouissance*, because one cannot precisely locate the 'where' of the enunciated or even the 'where' of language.

When one says that there is or that there is not, one must find out *where* this 'there' is taking place [*il faut savoir où est le y*]. If one speaks of something, it can be here or there; but if one addresses no being or thing, and therefore if one addresses totality as such or the relation between things, there is no locality, no place for such unity however it manifests itself; there is only the yawning [*l'écartement*] of what takes place and the game of between-places.⁵⁹

The Lacanian noun *rapport* or verb 'to report' knows effectively no port.

Forming neither a totality nor two singularities as such, having no port from which to depart or go ashore, the two carry themselves out of their own transport. They are reports *out of* rapports, transports *out of* transportations; or to be more precise, they are the 'to transport' *transporting* 'to transport' – verb, verb, verb. In an amorous embrace, no one is indeed man or woman as such, because no one is man or woman without rest [*sans restance*]. Without rest, we are a transport towards the other, towards ourselves. As transports (or transitions to use Diogenes Laertius's expression), the stability of our sexuality (or identity) can never be fixed. *Jouissance* or sexual rapport occurs between individuals whose sexuality knows no rest. The consequence of this restless transport is that the copulation taking place is not between two beings-*for-themselves*, what Nancy calls '*deux étantités*',⁶⁰ but between being-*with*, that is, between beings essentially constituted as relation.

Copulation is the 'with' (co-) of a relation, of a liaison [*apula*, from *apio*], and the same can be said of the 'coit', the 'with' of a 'to go' [*ire*], of a coming and going of which the rousing, the movement to and fro, the thrust and withdrawal constitutes (or founds, structures, signifies, symbolises, or activates as one wishes) most precisely the 'co-' itself, a 'co-' that is nothing in itself, nothing but the rapport, nothing but the quivering of the same or of the one-in-itself.⁶¹

There is therefore no rapport between this or that (for example, another sex or another wor(l)d), there is only the *to report* or the *to transport* of two transports occurring in irreducible plurality.

With, co-, copulation, coit, a rapport without haven or harbour, a transport of transports... these words enunciate our being-together, embracing or wrestling, in any case, involved in a rapport. Since there is no longer any fantasy, it is perhaps worth risking here, quickly and without much fuss, a mistranslation. The aim of this risk-taking is not only to bring Nancy (in)to English, while remaining as close as possible to him, but also to restore a certain unacceptable impurity to the rapport and to the coition of interpretations. Why restore a certain impurity to the rapport? Perhaps because it is essential to ensure that no safe ground is established in the process of making sense of Nancy's work. The 'to transport' is never pure and can never be confirmed or complete as such and this, whether we talk about a sexual rapport, *jouissance*, or, as we will see later, a translation.

The enunciation of a being as a transport or as a 'to transport' can no longer state or affirm *ego sum* because as soon as it does so, it would encounter only the absence of ground. The enunciation of a being is always already engaged in a rapport, a co-, a with-, (an)other that is always necessarily itself *and* another. In the introduction, there was a mention that Nancy considers the *ego sum* as a first truth, *only because* its certainty can be recognized *by anyone*. It is necessary to push this one step further, this time in another idiom; in an idiom *as far removed as possible* from Descartes's Latin or Nancy's French. How can one translate this 'to transport', this with- or this co- *in English*? Can there be one word that would convey *at once* co-apparition and sexual rapport or *jouissance*? Nancy once wrote an essay entitled 'Cum', which is still 'awaiting' translation into English. In this essay, he writes:

[There is] a self-evident social 'us' that precedes all other self-evident statements. This 'us' also precedes chronologically and logically Descartes enunciation *ego sum*. To enunciate *ego sum* is to enunciate it to another . . . One could therefore say that all *ego sum* is already an *ego cum* (or *mecum*, or *nobiscum*). This seems obvious, it seems obvious to *us*.⁶²

The Latin *cum* is used to indicate that something or somebody is *with* another person or object. It emphasizes a connection or connectivity, a sharing or rapport. This *ego cum* can only be obvious or self-evident because otherwise there would be no *ego sum*.

The English slang 'cum' is a word used in pornography, Internet chat rooms and instant text messaging to signify coming (cum over), semen (a load of cum), or the culmination of the sexual act in general (I'm cumming). From the French to the English or from the Latinate to the slang: to come, to transport, to report, *jouissance*, co-, with- rejoin (or rejoice with) the slang cum. A cum without substance or meaning, a 'to cum' as the coming or sharing of (sexual) being(s) – at once contraction(s) and/or emission(s), journey towards the other and/or oneself, contribution and/or attribution. Cum marks the distinction of bodies coming, it is the 'to distinguish' itself, the sense or direction of the *with-* of being-with [*Mitsein*, *Mitdasein*]. The one (two, three, or more) involved in this sense or direction is, as Nancy points out in another context, the 'other of the with',⁶³ an other sharing the common intimacy of cum, of a cum that is neither male nor female, transgendered or culturally determined because the cum is necessarily incommensurable. Cum is the incorporeal amongst or between corporeal bodies coming

and cumming together.⁶⁴ It marks the distinction between the localities or bodies involved in the rapport, it stretches the time of *jouissance*, it hollows out the interval between bodies and it says or it hears the murmur of the one (in) the other – cum.

The attempt

This *cum* (which is also, above all else, a ‘to cum’) brings us to a point of no-entry that is also a point of deliverance in our reading of Nancy’s text, *L’‘il y a’ du rapport sexuel*. ‘There is no sexual rapport’ and ‘*jouissance* is impossible’ are two expressions that cannot be understood in the sense of an infinite aporia, that is, in a situation where the impossibility of the union of the two engaged in a rapport would for ever *prevent* the way to a union or a realization. The rapport and *jouissance* are aporetic in another way. They are aporetic in the sense where there cannot be any distinction between possibility and impossibility and this indistinction is what opens the way to the infinity of sex as it differs and defers from itself. In other words, in our differentiation one can only remain in an aporetic situation that does *not* prevent us from passing, but which incessantly renews the aporia. ‘There is no sexual rapport’ and ‘*jouissance* is impossible’ are infinitely possible and impossible, and under this aporetic strain one can only constitute a simultaneous gesture of presentation towards this possibility (enunciation) and withdrawal from this impossibility (denunciation). There is no exit from this aporia; it is always already a convulsion or a spasm.

From this aporia, that is, from what *also* constitutes a *poros*, what can be *reported* is that the rapport or *jouissance* can only access *itself*. How is one to make sense of this self-accession? In an attempt to provide a culminating moment or movement *to* the (im)possibility of *jouissance*, Nancy writes a short, but complex paragraph that will retain our attention until the end for it brings together the two verbs that concern us in this chapter, *jouir* (to come) and *venir* (to come).

The attempt [*l’enjeu*] is precisely the fact that the access accesses nothing other but itself: an access that can only be an accession in as much as it is an excessive coming [or a happening], a surprise, thus by nature stolen from itself [*un accès qui n’est qu’une accession que pour autant qu’il est aussi une survenue, une surprise, et donc par essence dérobé à lui-même*]. There is no access to *jouissance* because *jouissance* is an access: as such, it is painfully or elusively close to a state of crisis and to all that takes place in the context of a crisis, as long as

sex of course does not become aware of itself; because sex can fail itself, it can fail to sexualise or exceed itself: otherwise it would not be able to accomplish its attempt [*son enjeu*].⁶⁵

At this stage, where one can no longer return, we touch here with this paragraph, *a problem of reading*, that is, of transporting meaning within an idiom, but also from one idiom to another. 'To report' does not *really* report. The rapport remains *somewhat* impossible, beyond reach. The idiom used to translate Nancy's French does not translate. The attempt [*l'enjeu*], both philosophical (in Nancy's French) and inter-linguistic (from the French into the English), is unsuccessful; it simply does not pass. However much it borders or overlaps it, the incorporeal does not provoke the corporeal. Penetration occurs, but everything remains untouched. The *aporia* is reached, but nothing happens, no one manages to pass through or return from the *poros*.

Nancy tells us in French that *jouissance* 'est un accès qui n'est qu'une accession que pour autant qu'il est aussi une survenue, une surprise, et donc par essence dérobé à lui-même'. *Jouissance* is 'an access that can only be an accession in as much as it is an excessive coming [or a happening], a surprise, thus by nature stolen from itself'. To translate this sentence in this way is to transport or report the meaning of Nancy's sentence from one idiom to another. However, what is being transported and what is lost? Which idiom comes closest to this access? Are we not standing here with this translation, transport, or report close to Sextus Empiricus with his Greek and his Barbarian who does not understand a single word of Greek? The French (i.e. the Greek) can understand Nancy's definition of the (im)possibility of *jouissance*, but the English (i.e. the Barbarian)? Or is it the exact opposite? The English (i.e. the Greek) get it; the French (i.e. the Barbarians) are lost in the mist of their abstraction and the luxuriance of their vocabulary? Not unlike Sextus, should we not ask: what remains besides sound and meaning? In other words, how can one report back in English from the *aporia* or after having gone through the *poros* – this excessive coming, this surprise stolen from itself?

This question of the remains, of the λεχτόν of Nancy's definition, in truth concerns only two French words: *jouissance* and *survenue*. All the other words in Nancy's definition [*excès*, *accès*, *surprise*] are *somewhat* translatable into English and vice versa. They all have if not the exact spelling (two accents and two 's' disappear in English) at least the same etymological origin – although these should obviously not be considered faithful poles of reference in translations. In any case, one can say that

both the English and the French are as close to this *access* as any other Indo-European language would be able to get. However, when it comes to *jouissance* and *survenue*, the sound and the meaning of the words do not transport from one to the other. The access remains barred. Someone, i.e. the French or the English, only perceives the corporeal elements. The λεχτόν, the intangible ‘remains of a rational impression’, gets lost or goes astray. Where can one situate the λεχτόν of these two words? Do they *subsist* or are they only available in Greek? How does a λεχτόν come about? These questions are not intended to focus on the meaning of these two words, but on the issue of the coition of French and English, and consequently, on the *transport of meaning* that makes Nancy comprehensible.

There is no space here to repeat all the arguments in relation to the various attempts to translate *jouissance*. Suffice it to say, for the record, that the word *jouissance* is indeed an untranslatable term. In a note to Roland Barthes’s *The Pleasure of the Text*, Richard Howard remarks, ‘the Bible translated [*jouissance* with] “knowing” while the Stuarts called it “dying”, the Victorians called it “spending” and we call it “coming”’. A hard look at the horizon of our literary culture suggests that it will not be long before we come to a new word for orgasm proper – we shall call it “being”.⁶⁶ Alan Sheridan in his translation of *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, writes: ‘There is no adequate translation in English of this word. “Enjoyment” conveys the sense, contained in *jouissance* of enjoyment of rights, of property, etc. Unfortunately, in modern English, the word has lost the sexual connotation it still retains in French.’⁶⁷ Jane Gallop argues, annoyed (‘Oh the French!’), that unfortunately contemporary philosophy and psychoanalysis now take this word for granted, turning it into a principle that is no longer *beyond* the pleasure *principle*. ‘In the last ten years, at least in an English speaking context, *jouissance* has become a doctrinal concept: singular, unambiguous, steady, and *de rigueur*.’⁶⁸ Against this view, and in advance of what is to come, one could put forward, without going into any details for lack of space, the following observation. If one does not attempt to invent another word (Lisa Garbus and Simona Sawhney, two of Nancy’s translators, propose a new verb, ‘to joy’⁶⁹), if *jouissance* is not taken as a doctrinal concept, and if one uses it by retaining in English its disruptive character, then it can become a fully fledged English word (that is, mature but without long-established status) of French origin that disrupts the meaning of the more sober English pleasure. *Jouissance* becomes a surplus of signification, an added ambiguity – in a Barthean sense – to the pragmatic and economical English language.

Survenue, by contrast, is not part of the doctrinal vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon psychoanalysts and as such remains alien. Robert Richardson and Anne O'Byrne, the translators of Nancy's *Being Singular Plural*, alternate between 'to occur' and 'unexpected arrival'.⁷⁰ There are other, equally valid translations, including, for example, 'to supervene' (or in Spanish: *sobvenir*), i.e. to follow, happen, or interrupt something going on. However, this English verb implies something that is additional to the normal course of events. The English prefix 'super-' refers to something stronger, larger, or faster. By contrast, the prefix *sur-* refers in both French and English to something beyond *the norm* (as in *sur-realism*, for example) that is *not* necessarily superior, stronger, or additional. It is something *bordering* on the normal. *Survenue* can also be translated by 'chance coming'. The element of chance is here crucial, but it is not exclusive. *Survenue*, as we will see, does indeed happen by surprise. However, the expression 'chance coming' does not fit the sexual context explored by Nancy and has to be discarded. *Survenue* can also be translated by 'happening'. The word 'happening' agrees with Nancy's noun [*une survenue*], but a 'happening' has the connotation of something dramatic, improvised, or informal taking place.

Survenue is really another word for 'to-come'. However, *survenue* is not strictly speaking 'à-venir', 'to-come' or 'to come about' [*survenir*]. *Survenue* refers to what comes *excessively* [*ce qui vient de trop*]. The issue is that of a *venir* [to come] that happens *de sur-croit* [above all]. When he uses the word *survenue*, Nancy is not addressing an aporetic coming that never leaves us, what he calls on other occasions *une survenance* 'nue'⁷¹ [a naked coming], the *coming* of an inextricable aporia that exposes our impossible nakedness.⁷² The difference is that *une survenance nue* constitutes in relation to finitude an interminable presentation without presentness [*'praes-sentia'*]⁷³. *Une survenance* is the *end* or the death of the presentation as what is given, our true nakedness. By contrast, *survenue* is *unrelated* to finitude. *Survenue* occurs at the limit of sense, that is, on the body, and it arrives *excessively* and incessantly. It never leaves us, not because it concerns our own or most proper propriety [*Sein*], but because it is our own excess. *Survenue* is what is excessive. But what does this mean? What is the true signification of Nancy's attempt? Can there be *an excess* of what Nancy calls in another context a syncope;⁷⁴ what would amount in fact to *an excess* of syncopation [*un excès de syncope*]? Can there be something that borders *too much* on the normal? Can there be a loss of consciousness that is *too excessive*? Can one lose *too many* letters from the middle of a word?

Jouis-sense

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to divert again our reading. This diversion is not intended, at this crucial stage, to lead our reading astray or to lose its focus, but on the contrary, to reach the point of excess of the *aporia/poros*. The justification for this new diversion is simple: release is never achieved stubbornly or obstinately, only with an askance glance – incidentally, but without hesitation. This diversion focuses, inevitably, on Nancy's understanding of the French word *jouir*. In a passage inspired by Derrida's study of Maurice Blanchot's work and written seven years prior to *L' 'il y a' du rapport sexuel*,⁷⁵ Nancy explains the way he understands the verb *jouir* [to come, to joy, to be].

Coming [*jouir*] occurs – or opens up [*fraye*] an access – only when the signifying or symbolic order is suspended. When it is suspended by an interruption that produces no void of sense, but, to the contrary, a fullness and indeed an over fullness: an 'absent' sense or the eruptive coming of the sense that is older than all signification, as it were its truth *as sense*. This is what theoretical language has sometimes thought to translate by speaking of the 'impossible'. And yet the 'impossibility' of *jouissance* is merely the impossibility of its 'sensible' (re)presentation, whereas from another point of view this 'impossibility' of *jouissance* is the most extreme, originary possibility of all (joyous or painful) coming into presence, and of the potential significations of the latter.⁷⁶

In this short extract, it is again a question of a double topology. This topology expands the one that concerns us in this chapter [*jouir – venir*]. In this text published in 1993, Nancy establishes a topology whereby presence comes [*jouis*] into sense and sense comes [*jouis*] into presence, another enunciation for *jouis-sense*. The presence in question here is again a presentation without presentness, or to recall a vocabulary familiar to Nancy, the entrancement of *praes-entia*. This entrancement is here understood as a co-occurrence of symbolic bindings (presence coming into sense) and substantial continuities (sense coming into presence). It is a concatenation because neither sense nor presence can come independently of the other. They both come together and their coming is an interruption (a *jouissance*) of sense that makes sense. Again, it would be wrong to understand this as if it was a purely ontological notion. For Nancy, this co-occurrence cannot be dissociated from the body.⁷⁷ As we said earlier, the body does not make sense; it *is* sense at the limit

of sense, in the contact/separation [*le toucher*] of both sense and what escapes sense (for example, the muteness of impenetrable matter). How can one understand this extreme co-occurrence taking place when the Symbolic Order is suspended?

This 'jouis-sense' comes attached here again in this early text to the pair *access* and *excess* (access to sense – question or enunciation – and excess of sense – answer or denunciation). This pair *reinforces* the double topology or the co-occurrence between symbolic bindings and substantial continuities. On the one hand, one comes and such coming can only be perceived as an absence of sense, a moment without language, a moment impossible. Etymologically, 'access' means either 'to move onto' or to 'come or enter upon'. This movement or this coming is eruptive and/or contracting. Because this eruption/contraction takes over the body, it saturates the self as the horizon of sense. The self is here obliterated or annihilated by its own excess. However, on the other hand or 'from another point of view', coming is also a departure. This time or at the same time, etymologically, the word 'excess' means 'departure', or 'projection', 'what goes *beyond* the bounds of reason'. In its very intensity, coming not only suspends the self and prevents any possible accounting or "sensible" (re)presentation'; it also marks, at the same time, a departure, an exteriorization, an act of deferment. What saturates the self is also a release *out* of self. We therefore have saturation *and* invention, a co-occurrence of obliteration and dissemination, Nancy's paroxysmal mo(ve)ment, excessive and overflowing *to* and *out* of self.

This brief detour into Nancy's understanding of *jouir* and of the Lacanian 'jouis-sense' does not imply, at this stage, a conspicuously cloudless [*éclairé*] *survenue*. 'Jouis-sense' is a singular syncope, *an* interruption that produces sense, even *an* excess of sense. 'Jouis-sense' is *one* syncope (libidinal and linguistic). *Survenue*, by contrast, cannot be perceived as a singular interruption strictly speaking. *Survenue* is an act of sustenance, the condition of being supported, in French *pâtir* [to sustain (impairment), to subsist] – therefore also, necessarily, displeasure, or suffering. Because it is essentially turned towards the future, towards 'a future never future enough' to recall Levinas's words,⁷⁸ *survenue* is a syncope that keeps syncopating, whereby the excess that comes out of this sustenance continues to provoke syncopation. Not a hiccup or a spasm, but the blind *tension* that sustains us and never lets go. It represents *what cannot be made visible* and yet is *subjacent* as it *subsists*. In this way, *survenue* is the structuring movement of the incorporeals

themselves, the movement that perpetually borders or overlaps onto the corporeal and pulses beneath *or* on the surface of (our) skin.⁷⁹

Hume analysed the sexual encounter as made up of three motives: firstly, there is the 'desire for generation' linked not to the need for reproduction but to the genital, because, according to him, 'sex is the object and the cause of desire'; secondly, there is a 'tender or kind generosity' that can, even momentarily, go with the act itself, as if the genetic turned out to be generous; finally, there is the warmth and feeling of beauty that comes to animate or reanimate desire: however this feeling of beauty is nothing other, as he said, but pleasure taken over by 'sympathy' (later one would use 'empathy') by the pleasure of the other towards his or her own body: the beauty of the body that I desire is also that through which this body pleases him or herself.⁸⁰ In this way, the relation between the sexes breaks up into a polyphony of three registers in which, each time, pleasure, or desire veers towards itself in as much as its identity [*sa mêmété*] consists of its alterity. For this reason – because identity consists in its difference – this rapport can only be properly infinite, which means, that it is at once endless and entirely present every time it occurs.⁸¹

One should not understand this as if one were condemned to an eternal return, one that would affirm the present beyond all presence, but in the lineage of Derrida's remark that infinite *différance* is finite.⁸² It is a matter of what binds time and alterity, of how infinity occurs *at* a finite moment, that is, at the moment of the syncope, when in an excess of self, 'the same indecides [*s'indécide*] itself'.⁸³ Hence, the importance of the word 'play' or 'act' in the sentence 'it is the infinite as play of the play itself in which the play is to exceed itself. [*C'est l'infinité en acte de l'acte même en tant qu'il est acte de s'excéder*]'⁸⁴ Nancy extends here ad infinitum the finitude of coming. This does not mean that it is infinite strictly speaking; it is a coming that is *at once* (Derrida's *hama*) infinite and finite. In an analysis of Derrida's work, Nancy formulates this finite infinite in a similar way:

The *coming* is infinite: it does not get finished with coming; it is finite: it is offered up in the instant. But that which takes place 'in the instant' – in the distancing of time 'within' itself – is neither the stasis nor the stance of the present instant, but its instability, the inconclusiveness of its coming – and of the 'going' that corresponds to that coming.⁸⁵

Coming [*jouir*] is 'always' in play. *Survenue*, this excess – this tension – of coming equally *extends* itself in *and* through its own release.

... if one differentiates in [Freud's] work between what remains subsumed to an oppositional model between excitation ('preliminary' pleasure) and satisfaction ('terminal' pleasure), and what in some cases, exceeds, perhaps nearly unbeknown to Freud himself, one also finds this scheme of rigidity and discharge. Pleasure emerges out of desire and as desire – following the double sense of the German *Lust*, as Freud himself remarks (a double sense that is also present in the Greek *eros* and the Sanskrit *kama*). When desire dies down, it becomes its own extinction and its own excess: as it discharges, it also gives the incommensurable measure of an entropy that never takes place (except provisionally, and only because it cannot sustain a stiffness that would have no end). *Jouissance* is precisely the simultaneity of the excess of tension and its release. In this way, it is, if you want, 'impossible', but not in the sense where a hypothetical fusion bars the way to its realisation, in a way where the aporia itself is what opens the way – to what? – to the infinity of the desire-pleasure, that is, the infinity of sex as it differs from itself. (And, if one needs again to state it, desire-pleasure must also be reported as a certain form of dis-pleasure: beyond-contentment.)⁸⁶

Surprise

Although *survenue* is always in play in the distancing of space (and) time, it would be wrong to understand it as if there were no surprise, as if *survenue* simply extended itself in and through its own release as a self-evident and permanent certainty. Nancy does not write *venir*, something that *I can see* coming and that remains in a state of arrival until the ultimate effectuation of being. He writes *survenue* followed by the word *surprise*. As noted at the start of this chapter in relation to Barthes's commentary, *jouissance*, if it is not obtained through repetition, necessarily implies an opening to the unknown, to the new, to what happens unexpectedly. However, this new is not something that can be posited in front of us as if an object of knowledge, the unexpected arrival that makes us *jouir*. The release (of sense) can only occur, if it occurs at all, unexpectedly. In order to grasp the implication of understanding Nancy's use of the word *survenue* followed by *surprise*, two words at the heart of Lacanian *jouissance* and rapport, it is necessary to drive further into Nancy's work and try to bring out by force or perhaps simply elicit

discreetly, in passing, the way he understands the word 'surprise'. This last embrace, this last abandonment into Nancy's work, will achieve or complete our selective reading of *L' 'il y a' du rapport sexuel*.

The concept of surprise represents the main topic of an essay entitled 'The Surprise of the Event' included in *Being Singular Plural* and it also features in relation to freedom in Nancy's doctoral thesis, *The Experience of Freedom*. In his introductory text to Nancy's work, B. C. Hutchens clearly highlights the other texts in which this concept occurs in Nancy's writing.⁸⁷ For Nancy, the main problem with the issue of surprise is that there is no ground on which one can begin to think about it. As Hutchens remarks, 'the entire relationship between a subject, its thinking (an event) and the event about which it thinks is "surprising" in such a manner as to forbid any establishment of a privileged foundation from which to survey surprising events'.⁸⁸ A surprise is therefore what disrupts thought. The question is therefore how can one think that which unexpectedly disrupts thought and yet remains a surprise? How can one remain shocked while thinking about what is shocking? In other words, again, but this time with a different emphasis: how does one carry on thinking while cumming or while keeping the beat during the most excessive syncopation?

Usually, a thinking subject apprehends what occurs unexpectedly as if it occurred not by surprise, but *by necessity*. Thought captures the unexpected as if it was already articulated, as if there were no surprise. For example, I am thinking about a surprise, therefore about something that is no longer surprising, or I am thinking about the unexpected storm brewing in the sky, therefore about something that is already occurring. In an analysis of a sentence taken from Hegel's *The Science of Logic* in his text 'The Surprise of the Event', Nancy articulates how Hegel distinguishes between the event as phenomenon [*eventus*] and the event as surprise [*eventire*].⁸⁹ The latter, this event as surprise, is what cannot be anticipated or projected from any empirical or phenomenological standpoint. This crucial differentiation in Hegel's work marks a turning point in philosophy because it announces a way of thinking the event that is at the edge of the phenomenological inquiry. If one is permitted to draw parallels, one could say, for example, following Nancy, that the event as surprise is what Heidegger later qualifies as *das Geschehen*, not in the sense of becoming historical (the ex-tension – *sich-erstrecken* – that pulls the existence of Dasein between birth and death), but simply what arrives, what takes place. To think surprise as eventuation, therefore as *das Geschehen* or as *eventire* and not from the perspective of phenomena, one has no choice but to think the *shock* [*l'étonnement*] of surprise itself,

a shock that cannot be reduced to any form of presence, substance, or predicate. How can one make sense of the shocking effect produced by a surprise?

In order to do so and hold onto the surprising event without turning it into an element or a moment of surprise, one has to forgo the idea of catching the event of thinking by surprise. Indeed, as Hutchens rightly observes, 'there is nothing to leap, nowhere from which to leap, nowhere to which it can leap – the surprise of the event is a negativity in so far as there is no origin from which the surprise occurs'.⁹⁰ In other words, to address the issue of surprise, one has to think surprise without subtracting from it any surprise. This has nothing to do with something ineffable or something that cannot be thought out. This has to do with something that *can* be thought out, but remains necessarily at the edge of thought. The task is not to address the issue of 'what is' surprising, but to allow surprise to emerge from the concept itself. In other words, the task is to retain the moment of surprise without turning it into a mere object or moment of thinking. This task is obviously a difficult one. In a way, as Nancy remarks in *Being Singular Plural*, it concerns the whole task of philosophy.

In order to begin thinking anew surprise without subtracting from it any unexpectedness, Nancy proposes to think surprise as the eventuation of time itself, the unexpected in what is coming. For Nancy, surprise is or stands for *the present* not as entity, but as what cannot be (re)presented and yet somehow emerges not as event, but as a happening without entity or unity.⁹¹ *Surprise* is therefore the 'difference that structures the present'.⁹² It is difficult not to equate what Nancy is identifying and analysing here in this text as surprise with Derrida's *différance*. Surprise is that which is prior to any event whatsoever, and therefore can only have the same structure as *différance*. However, Nancy does not simply offer a synonym for *différance*. What is crucial for Nancy is that this surprise 'represents' not the crux of undecidability, but a tension that we cannot ignore. 'A tension that is not itself progressive, but is all in one go, in a single stroke, the tension/extension of Being, "that there is"'.⁹³ The use of the word 'tension' to qualify the operation of surprise as the eventuation of time or the difference that structures the present allows Nancy to think surprise without subtracting from it any element of unexpectedness. *To extend* is a process of increasing the size, scope, or range of something or other. *To tense* is to apply force in order to create stress. Surprise is therefore not what will result in this extension or this tension being broken, but *is* the apprehension of what might happen if it does so. So, instead of having undecidability as such,

one has an extension and a tension that *sustains* itself in the (f)act of always already being *about* to break down, break free or simply die.

In this way, surprise represents the eventuation of time or the difference that structures the present in the sense that it is what *subsists* in the play of *différance*, what maintains it, what sustains *à-venir*: a surprise. Surprise therefore represents – if it can represent anything at all – a *figuration* of *différance* as the (ex)tension of surprise. This figuration is not intended to solidify or ossify the play of *différance* with the rigid form of *the* surprise, but to characterize *différance* further, to complicate it in order for it to take all its relevance. The crucial aspect of Nancy's figuration of surprise/*différance* as (ex)tension is – perhaps inevitably – that it is beyond visibility and knowledge. However, it is *not* beyond the knowable or the said or the enunciated [λεχτόν], it comes *with* Being, with its enunciation. There is no Being nor spacing (and) temporizing without surprise and there is no event (of thought) without a certain element of surprise. One knows and says the other without being able to constitute it as an object of visibility or knowledge. (In relation to the economy of eroticism, this *surprise* could be seen to represent what in pornography is also beyond visibility and knowledge and therefore *cannot* be represented, not even with a cum shot. It is beyond tropes and yet it comes as the differentiation that takes place when men, women, come – if they come at all.)

Now that the notion of surprise in Nancy's work has been briefly outlined, let us return to the short extract taken from *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel* and to its two key words: *survenue*, surprise. Why, right at the cusp of *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, right *at* its aporia, when he finally announces or more precisely *enounces* the overall scope of his attempt – *l'enjeu*, as he says – does Nancy write these two words, one after the other? What is the difference between them? How can one distinguish with any precision the difference between *survenue* and surprise? There is no choice here but to bring together, finally, all the zones of the body into a chorus of voices (or as, we will see later, into what Derrida calls a 'braid of voices').

Up to this plateau, *survenue* appeared as what *arrives excessively*, an excessive syncope that never ends because it is always already engaged in a future that is never future enough. If one now reads this *survenue* through the prism of what has been uncovered in relation to surprise, then Nancy's sentence begins to take on its full resonance. Let us reformulate what has been said so far in relation to *survenue*, but this time using the vocabulary encountered in *Being Singular Plural*.

Survenue then becomes an *excess* of tension/extension, or to be more precise, it becomes this excessive *tension*, which *extends* itself *as* or *at* the non-point of finitude – this unstable point constantly distancing within itself or differentiating itself from itself. *Survenue* ‘represents’ what can be interpreted as the excess of (the) present. However, this does not mean that it is what exceeds the present; it is by contrast the present tensing as it extends itself in order to be. This tension is not intended to simply open up the future or its extensity. Because it only accesses itself, this tension has no other object but *the* extensity of the tension itself: a tightness or a widening – with all the eroticism that this entails – that is not occasional or temporary, but sustains itself infinitely. As Nancy writes in *Being Singular Plural* in a sentence worth transcribing in both idioms because of the sheer complexity of its idiomatic deployment:

*Survenue: le rien tendu jusqu'à la rupture et au saut de l'arriver où la présence se pré-sente.*⁹⁴

*Survenue: the nothing stretched to the point of rupture and to the leaping off point of arrival, where presence pre-sents itself.*⁹⁵

It would be impossible, within our scope, to contextualize this sentence in relation to Heidegger's interpretation of the leap [*Sprung*].⁹⁶ What can be said, however, in our narrow perspective, is that this curious sentence finally gives our ‘opening’ onto the first word extracted from *L'‘il y a’ du rapport sexuel: survenue*. On the one hand, there is time, not a succession of presents, but the taking place as such. On the other hand, *as it were*, there is that which takes place, survives, and passes over. In between the two, there is a tension that never ceases, a tension that is also necessarily an extension, the spacing of the non-simultaneous, which as we have seen in the context of surprise could be equated with Derrida's *différance*. At this mid-point [*l'entre, l'ancre*⁹⁷] between two non-simultaneous non-points, at this stage that can only be qualified as ‘nothing’,

one could say that [the relation] becomes strained: tension and extension, the only means by which something could appear as ‘passing through’ and ‘process’, the non-temporal and non-local extension of the *taking-place as such*, the spacing through which time appears, the tension of nothing which opens time. As Heidegger puts it: *Spanne*.⁹⁸

Without this tension – without the tension provoked by *différance* – nothing would pass. There would be no rapport between that which separates or differentiates itself [*se partage*]. There would be no orgasm, no pleasure, no coming or going, no syncopation and no release. Everything would proceed along a line made up of voids, points of time as empty moments. *With* this tension, there is (a) passage between two, a separation, a *rap-prochement*, *éloignement*, cum. ‘Extension, tension (*gespannt*: tense, excited, seduced, captivated. Agitation, spasm, expansion).’⁹⁹ *Spannweite*.

Survenue is thus opened. Now, what of surprise? When thinking *survenue* and surprise together, one cannot ignore the fact that we have here two words starting with the prefix *sur-*. The crucial character of this prefix is often ignored. The translators of *Being Singular Plural* choose a whole range of words that evade the importance of this prefix (for example: ‘appearance’¹⁰⁰ in lieu of ‘*sur-gissement*’¹⁰¹). It is perhaps here that we must return to Malabou’s work. What does Malabou say about this tension? Could it be the tension that sustains plasticity/*voir venir*? Is Nancy’s emphasis on the prefix *sur-* in *survenue*, surprise the same as Malabou’s surprise? The rapprochement between the two thinkers is too complex to be undertaken here. What can be said – extremely briefly – is perhaps this: as noted in the previous chapter in relation to Malabou’s work on Hegel, the word ‘surprise’ signifies something that *seizes* or *holds excessively* (as Malabou notes, it is ‘*un excès de prise*’¹⁰²). Malabou therefore already emphasizes the tension that characterizes the crucial role of surprise in relation to both *à-venir* and *voir venir*, but without exploring it in any depth. Nancy is perhaps the one who takes this further. Earlier, I noted that the use of the prefix *sur-* refers in both French and English to something beyond the norm that is *not* necessarily superior, stronger, or additional. The prefix *sur-* occurs repeatedly in Nancy’s French text ‘La surprise de l’événement’: in words, such as ‘*surprendre*’,¹⁰³ ‘*surgir*’,¹⁰⁴ ‘*surcroit*’,¹⁰⁵ ‘*surmonter*’,¹⁰⁶ ‘*survenant*’,¹⁰⁷ and of course in the many instances of the words *survenue* and surprise. If one takes in consideration the importance of this prefix and its doubling in the sentence that concerns us, then one could perhaps summarize what Nancy is telling us by saying that for him, what comes or occurs unexpectedly [*la survenue de (l’)à-venir*] is *always* indeed a *tension stretched or extended by surprise at the non-point of finitude and to the point of rupture, but where the rupture never occurs and the extension is never achieved*.

The excessive spacing (and) temporizing, syncope, *jouissance*, or rapport, all take place under this surprising strain. This does not mean

that we live or orgasm *under* the strain of an endless and yet unexpected coming. There is no force (from the past or the future, for example) that pulls or stretches us. There is no device (straps or harnesses) that regulates (within or on the surface) the tension experienced. There is no build-up of suspense or the crossing of a stretch of ground either. If any of these forces, devices, or necessities takes place, there would be no *survenue* followed by surprise. This does not mean that the past (memories), the future (fantasy) or any specific gadget, force, or necessity cannot or do not lead to cumming in both its sexual and ontological meanings. This only means that together *survenue*, surprise, with the prefix *sur-*, is what keeps us held together in an extensity that knows no bound or remission. This is what makes us maintain ourselves, that is, this is what makes us come *and* come together – cum. [*C'est ce qui nous fait p  tir, c'est-  dire, ensemble, c'est ce qui nous fait venir et jouir l'un (avec) l'autre – cum*]. In other words, *survenue*, surprise are what prevents the very possibility of our solitude, maintaining the necessary contact (or 'touching') that keeps us together enthralled or simply bored and this whether alone with oneself or in the company of others.

'We are in touch with ourselves in so far as we exist. Being in touch with ourselves is what makes us "us", and there is no other secret to discover buried behind this very touching, behind the 'with' of co-existence.'¹⁰⁸

Disrobing

This foray [*ce frayage*] into Nancy's understanding of the words *survenue* and surprise allows us to reach the final part of our selective reading of Nancy's text. This final part is necessarily succinct: it concerns only the rustle of clothes. It focuses on the last few words in Nancy's key sentence, when, in our reading, we reached a point of no entry that was also our point of deliverance (aporia/*poros*). The last few words are these: ... *et donc par essence d  rob      lui-m  me* [thus by nature stolen from itself].

The word *d  rob  * is another key Nancyan word of Bataillean origins that is included in a number of essays in *La pens  e d  rob  e*. *D  rob  * stands for Bataille's non-knowledge. Again, in a Stoic way, Nancy understands it and occasionally uses it as if a verb, for example, 'non-sait'.¹⁰⁹ Simply put, *d  rob  * is to disrobe, to undress, to unveil, or to strip. However, there are two more meanings to this word. Nancy uses this word in both these senses. Firstly, he uses it in the sense of *se d  rober*, which means to steal

away or from underneath *as if* by *surprise* and secondly, he uses it in the sense of 'to rob': '(as English *to rob* or German *rauben*, the robe would, in the first instance, be a garment seized by a thief)'.¹¹⁰ The word *dérobé* therefore implies, at once, 'to undress' by surprise (i.e. to reveal flesh unexpectedly), 'to steal' from underneath (to suddenly break away) and 'to seize' the self (to take a hold and steal as if a thief). These three meanings intertwine themselves in order to prevent the possibility that, at one stage or another, this undressing, robbery, or capture accesses an entity, a truth, or a naked woman or man. As he says in relation to the intimacy between Being and the body: 'The body is *ours* and is *proper* to us in the strict sense whereby it does not belong to us and conceals itself [*se dérobe*] to the intimacy of one's own being [*de notre être propre*], if being really exists, which is what the body must do: to make us seriously doubt of its existence.'¹¹¹

However, the access is not futile. *Dérobé* accesses in fact, as we have seen earlier in relation to 'jouis-sense', the sense of language – a sense that only occurs as saturation, *and* invention, a co-occurrence of obliteration *and* dissemination. In the night of pleasure, one does not touch a radical obscurity or ecstasy that one can only sense from its contours, its breath, or its tremor. Not unlike for Lacan, Nancy asserts that there is no 'beyond' the Other, no alterity that would command the structure of *jouissance* or that would anticipate a religious discourse.¹¹² There is nothing that is ahead or outside the spacing or the yawning created by a rapport. There is nothing that is above what reports-itself-to-sex. This disrobing/robbery/capture accesses instead the incandescence of its absolute sense, or as already noted, the eruptive coming of sense, or again, its truth *as sense*. Nancy makes this abundantly clear when he addresses the aim of Bataille's non-knowledge:

In the night, then, as in anxiety and in the solitude and horror that accompany it, but equally in the strange communication of laughter, it's not the chaotic din of an absurdity that is triumphant. Rather, it is sense itself or the truth of sense, sense freed up in its naked power: sense sensing, therefore a remark that is far, far removed from anything like a play on words, but, quite contrary, involves the very play of sense, that which opens it and puts it into play: its body.¹¹³

Laughter, sacrifice, religious ecstasy, inner experience, and *jouissance*: all reach, once disrobed/robbed/captured, not something otherworldly,

but what relates all meaning and all body zones to each other. It is the incorporeal disrobing of shared thought.

Inevitably, this disrobing does not refer to an event that occurs once only. We are here with *survenue* and not with 'jouis-sense'. If one only retains the first meaning of the word *dérobé*, then one could say that to undress is to infinitely expose. It knows no end.

Nakedness never arrives at an end, can never conclude. On the contrary, nakedness accesses an infinite. To remove a dress is not to reveal a body, it is to disrobe the body to the moment, at its most intimate, an intimacy that is exposed as infinity: infinitely close, touching the other's desire, but also infinitely remote and always infinitely desired.¹¹⁴

The expression *et donc par essence dérobé à lui-même* [thus by nature stolen from itself] therefore implies that the movement of accession which is also a happening, a surprise, touches to a certain infinite nakedness, a persistent syncopated syncope that can never be grasped, be resolved, or fill a void; a syncope that moves at the 'point' of finitude and this in a state of always being open to the other to come. *Survenue*, surprise, has its meaning or its truth precisely in this undressing of presence itself, a presentation [*praes-sentia*] that is, each time, like that of birth or death. It is this undressing that occurs as we come unexpectedly but always infinitely so.

There is therefore no rapport in the sense where there would be an account or an accountability of excess: not because there would be an interminable gushing in the excess itself (which would be similar to a fusing entropy of oceanic proportions), but because excess is simply, strictly, and exactly the access to self as difference and to difference as such, that is to say, precisely the access to what cannot be reasoned or instantiated as such, unless this 'as such' is exposed as what could never be such [*à moins que son 'comme tel' ne soit exposé comme ce qui n'est jamais tel*] (in a way whereby the evaluation, measuring, or achievement of the rapport could establish it). There is therefore no rapport as 'rapport'. Said differently, to fuck never takes place as such, but always differently (what is usually understood by the 'as such' of the rapport represents pornography: it is – the only – figure of the impossible as what cannot pass). To fuck takes place according to the access towards its own impossibility or according to its own impossibility as access to what is incommensurable in all aspects.

However, one fucks, and when one fucks – however one fucks – I repeat it with Celan; one *marks (oneself) the scalding of meaning*. Jouissance is nothing that can be attained: it is that which attains itself and consumes itself as it attains itself, that is to say, it illuminates as it scalds.¹¹⁵

Survenue is the outcome of a deviating translation, an unruly translation, one that behaves differently and turns away from the conventional path of correspondence and faithfulness. This deviating translation is in fact the result of a coition of two translations. Nancy's sentence stays the way it is: *jouissance* is 'an access that can only be an accession in as much as it is a *survenue*, a surprise, thus by nature stolen from itself'. The italics and the quotation marks are gone. Both the Greek and the Barbarians understand this sentence; both of them receive its corporeal elements (sound and meaning) *and* its λεχτόν, the incorporeal transport of meaning that previously escaped all Barbarians – French *or* English. The reason for this transparency or this clarity *between* idioms, the reason the λεχτόν now resonates *in* both idioms, has *nothing* to do with the above reading of Nancy's text. The reason is simply that *survenue* surprise now cut into each other's idioms. The English cuts (incision) across the French with its pragmatic and economical vocabulary imposing a *necessary* silence on *jouissance*. In return, the French cuts across the English, leaving behind (addition) an *unnecessary* supplement of meaning that did not exist before. *It cuts both ways*, but without wounding, it forms instead an impossible syncope: 'the step marked, in a suspense, from the other to me, neither confusion nor fading, clarity itself, the beating of the heart, the cadence and the cut of another heart within it'.¹¹⁶

It would be wrong to think that this coition of translations has resulted in anything substantial: a meaning now plainly established, a clearly discernible and yet infinite syncope, an easily recognizable because always recurrent misstep. Under the incorporeal movement bordering or overlapping onto the corporeal, *a movement central to translation* (especially when there is a play of texts), there is still more undressing to do, there is still another movement or zone to explore, another warmth to cherish or repel. The coming together of two readings or translations has furrowed deep in the yawning separating Nancy's text and its afterlife (while *living-on* to paraphrase Derrida). The gap has widened and in such an extension, nothing new or revelatory has come up. The coming together of two readings has not led to a mystical union whose

outcome is a mysterious trans-idiomatic knowledge of the one and the other, of the one by the other. The gap or the abyss has revealed instead the need for a further disrobing of translation, a translation that does not bring us together, but that we share, divide and divide again. And in this tumult of sense, under the surprising strain that knows no release, the only thing that can come out of this tumult is further sense and only sense, 'jouis-sense'.

For this reason, it is therefore safe to say that *here* and perhaps *only here*, *survenue*, now an English word of French origin, moves by itself in the act of disrupting the pleasure and the future of the English language, thus expanding *again* Barthes's margin of indecision between pleasure and *jouissance*. I come, I orgasm, *je jouis, je surviens*... The margin of indecision *will* not go away, the door is open for a myriad of different inflections or conjugations. The meaning of *survenue* will always be precarious, revocable, reversible, the discourse never accomplished. In this way, *survenue* becomes, as Derrida points out in a commentary on his own translation of *Aufhebung*, another challenge to future translations in this (English) or any other idiom.¹¹⁷ However, it is not only an act of defiance for (or an opening onto) the future; it is also an act of mourning tinged with obligations and dues towards (or a closure of) the past. In between these two acts, in the spacing (and) temporizing provoked by these acts, right at the heart of this challenge and this mourning, Nancy's work, with its many untranslatable words, survives at a 'point' of infinity, where translation never completes itself, never resolves itself, always undressing/robbing/capturing. In this way, translation can only remain a tautology in the form of an address.

Reading Nancy's *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel* has provoked many impurities and disruptions, leaving Nancy's original reading of the double Lacanian thematic necessarily incomplete and inconclusive. While *living-on* [*pendant qu'ils survivent*], while extending their meaning through a coition of translations, both Lacan and Nancy's enunciations, as well as my own deviating translation, remain unpleasantly contaminated and soiled. However close one gets to the absolute passage, the impossible remains – hence the inevitability of impurities, of these unacceptable attempts to transform, alter, or modify a *poros* into an *aporia* and vice versa. Not unlike in the case of Lacan's writing, Nancy's and my impurities and disruptions are not pollutions per se (sexual or deconstructive). They are not gratuitous, unnecessary, but pleasurable losses of semantic disorder. They are productive, not in the sense of procreation, but in the sense of revelation, of a type of exposure

that ex-scribes itself – rightly or wrongly, it does not matter. Nancy's impurities operate at the limits, on a threshold of a stage where language and pleasure *at once* cease to make sense and yet remain sense and sense only. And on this threshold, survenue, surprise shimmer and shiver just when 'meaning indicates the direction in which it fails'.¹¹⁸

3

Venue

In Safaa Fathy's film, *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, first shown on the European television channel Arte on 29 March 2000, Derrida makes the following commentary:

Safaa Fathy We are here on the location of an incident that inspired Lorca's play, *Blood Wedding*. This location witnessed the symbolic death of a woman and her mournful memory continues to haunt this place.

Jacques Derrida This woman's infinite mourning constitutes the shared haunting of this place. What I wanted to suggest when referring to sexual difference or more precisely when referring to sexual differences, is that, each time, there is like a braid of voices [*une tresse de voix*], let us say a plurivocity – a word that has more than one meaning – that with or without difficulty compose each voice. Here, since we are talking about Lorca, his female characters and of all these ghosts that keep haunting the same place and that we take upon us at the time of mourning or self-communing, it is necessary that these ghosts, i.e. these voices, male, female, compose amongst themselves, entangle themselves or weave amongst themselves [*se tressent entre elles*]. In the same way, when one talks, when I talk, when an 'I' talks, this 'I' is constituted and rendered possible in its singular identity because of this interweaving of voices. A voice inhabiting the other, haunting the other. In this way, repression, all kinds of repressions and especially sexual repression, begins as soon as one attempts to silence one voice, or to reduce this interlacing or this weaving of voices to one voice, to a kind of monologic. Therefore, the multiplicity of voices is also from the start, the space open to spirits, ghosts, and to all that has been repressed, excluded, forbidden.

In this case, I would try to think together the multiplicity of voices, the haunting, the spectrality and also everything that we have been talking about for a while with regards to murder, repression, sexual difference, women, etc.¹

This commentary brings together a number of familiar Derridean themes. I leave here the theme of sexual difference aside in order to concentrate exclusively on the three other themes that transpire in this commentary.² The reason for such a focus is that the chosen themes not only clearly encapsulate most of the subject matter addressed in the film – appropriately titled: *D'ailleurs, Derrida* [Derrida, From Elsewhere/In Other Respects, Derrida] – they also correspond precisely to the specific theme studied in this chapter.³

The first one is the theme of spectres, spirits, and ghosts. In *Fathy's film*, the spectre that Derrida refers to is that of the Bride who haunts the arid and whitewashed village of Los Frailes (Níjar in Lorca's play) in the Andalusian province of Almería. The Bride haunts the village because the mourning of her lover – savagely murdered on the day of her wedding by her husband, the Bridegroom – will never be completed. Her mourning lingers in the village like a ghost. In *Lorca's play*, by contrast, the spectre is that of the Beggar, who, as Death, helps the Bridegroom to kill his Bride's lover.

Bridegroom Who are you? What do you want?

Beggar I'm cold.

Bridegroom Where are you going?

Beggar (in a whining voice) Far, far from here.

Bridegroom Where have you come from?

Beggar From way, way back.⁴

As this short extract shows, the spectre of death in Lorca's play appears from nowhere and disappears into oblivion. Its origin is essentially differential, always split between a remote distance and an unbearable proximity. Because *it comes* as if an echo – the recurrence, or the reverberation of words already muttered – its voice cannot be distinguished with any certainty. *The spectre comes* as if a splintered presence (neither beggar nor death), a doubling, or redoubling of what can never live again in the present and/or recover the shape of presence. The spectre comes. *C'est la venue du spectre*.

The second theme one can extract from this commentary is that of the braid of ghostly voices, another familiar theme in Derrida's work.⁵

In Lorca's play, the voices are those of the dead. Their persistent recurrence is not due to the fact that they are past, but that they are always *to come*, emerging through *acts* of resurrection carried out by the protagonists themselves. For example: 'I won't leave your father and brother alone here . . . I go to see them every morning.'⁶ The Bridegroom's Mother *lives* with her dead husband and son; they never leave her. Every morning, she goes to them and both *come* to her, accompanying and helping her throughout the day. She lives with ghosts. They all speak to her; guiding her, reminding her of her loss, and of her own approaching demise. Their voices form an inextricable braid, entangling her in an unbearable and sorrowful grief. In this way, the braid of ghostly voices is essentially *aporetic*. *The braid comes* between the Mother and the dead, and the voices that make up the braid, holding her prisoner of grief, come as if a chorus of differential vibrations, the haunting of previous iterations, those of her dead husband and son. Voices come. *C'est la venue des voix*.

The third and final theme selected from this commentary is obviously that of mourning. Mourning is here neither a process of getting rid of the dead (introjection) nor a process of repetition or fetishization (incorporation). Here, mourning *never* goes away. It is *infinite* because no attempt to overcome mourning can be successful. One can *do* nothing else but to bereave and one can *hope* nothing else but to bereave our own mourning. This Derridean theme is clearly articulated in Lorca's mournful tragedy. At the end of the play, the Bridegroom's Mother angrily addresses her neighbour who is weeping: 'Be quiet. I'll have no tears in my house. Because yours are tears from the eyes, nothing else. Mine will come when I'm alone, from the soles of my feet, from my roots, and they'll flow hotter than blood.'⁷ The Mother's grieving is neither negative nor short-lived; on the contrary, it is what turns tears into blood. Her mourning is therefore *not* a straightforward *lament* that takes over her life. It is *the workings of death in life*, the inevitable *coming* of death *through* life. The work of mourning is infinite. *Death comes*, incessantly, rising from earth, stemming from life, from the soles of her feet. Death comes. *C'est la venue de la mort*.

The three themes interwoven in this commentary provide us with the three main topics explored in this chapter, each of which focuses on a specific movement: the *coming* voices [*la venue des voix*], the *coming* spectre [*la venue du spectre*], and the *coming* death [*la venue de la mort*]. In each case, the movement is distinctive: they can be seen, sensed, or heard as *coming*. The movement might be indistinct, unclear, and perhaps even undecided, but there is no doubt that something is happening, that they are *coming*. As such, they each constitute a *singular event*: the

sound of the braid of voices, the apparition of the spectre and the arrival of death. Although these are singular events, these three movements cannot be understood or analysed separately. Derrida tells us as much: he wants to think these three movements 'together'. The voices of ghosts cannot be dissociated from the spectres themselves and the braid of ghostly voices cannot take place without death or mourning. If we think 'together' these three movements, then it becomes clear that all three concern a *liminal* event or movement: the event of our relationship to death – our own and that of others. It is liminal, because it comes from or goes into what is commonly understood as being beyond the grave, or more precisely, what Derrida calls 'the space open to spirits'. It is in this space, this milieu, or threshold – 'these four walls'⁸ in Lorca's play – that spectres arise, are heard, mourning takes place, and death comes. The three themes taken from Derrida's commentary and made into the three sections of this chapter therefore concern what separates us from death, from what returns from the dead and reminds us of our destination and/or our destiny.

In relation to the overall aim of this book, the focus on this liminal event – this coming with its three interrelated themes – constitutes the last inflection or tonality emerging from (or the last derivative taken from) *à-venir*. This last movement is of particular importance because it marks a clear departure from the previous two derivatives of *à-venir*: *voir venir* and *survenue*. This coming event refers to a question of endings, and more specifically, to the ending of (*l'*)*à-venir* or to be more precise, it refers to Being's last *à-venir*, to a stage when there can be no more disruptions. This coming is therefore essentially final: it is, if one may be allowed such an expression, a final *à-venir*, or an *à-venir* that *endangers* the possibility of *à-venir* itself. The important thing is that this final or aporetic coming has nothing to do with the messianic as such, that is, with a structure of experience that is essentially *open* to the promise. This final event, this coming, has to do with the advent of the end itself. At a first glance, this gives the impression that the issue here is exclusively eschatological. But, as will soon become clear, this liminal event refers in fact to an end *not* interpreted in an eschatological sense, but as a *singular* event taking place *in* time, therefore in a situation where the messianic and eschatology cannot again be dissociated from each other. In this way, the end is understood paradoxically and contradictorily as the *permanent* event of a *final* coming. It is an 'event' [*un événement*] at the edge or *of* the edge; a terrible event that takes us and holds us at death's mercy. In this way, this coming event and its three interrelated themes represents *not* another *à-venir*, but the disruption of the limits

of *à-venir*, and as we will see in reference to Heidegger, the disruption of the limits of truth – limits which reverberate in multiple voices, spectral tonalities, and acts of mourning.

How is one to address this liminal event in a satisfactory way? In order to tackle this event and its three interrelated themes, I will focus exclusively on Derrida's book: *Aporias Dying – Awaiting (One Another At) the 'Limits of Truth'* simultaneously published in France and the United States in 1993. The aim, as in previous chapters, is not to provide a comprehensive account or commentary on Derrida's important late work. The aim is, more precisely, to offer a reading of *Aporias* that helps us to make sense of this ultimate *à-venir*, this liminal coming. I will argue that the three interrelated elements that are exposed in Derrida's commentary on the location of Lorca's play, are all brought together in *Aporias* with one single expression: 'the event of a coming or of a future advent [*un événement de venue ou d'avenir*]'.⁹ In other words, it is in *Aporias* that Derrida truly thinks *together* the three movements mentioned in Fathy's film (braid of voices, ghosts, and infinite mourning). It is therefore this single expression and its interrelated three themes that will help us make sense of this final *à-venir* and hold our attention throughout this chapter. This does not mean that this single undecided expression unifies Derrida's three themes. As we will see, 'the event of a coming or a future advent' brings the themes together without unifying them strictly speaking. In order to do this, I have structured this chapter following the pattern exposed in Derrida's commentary around three interrelated questions: firstly, how is one to understand what Derrida calls a braid [*une tresse*]? Secondly, how is one to articulate the movement of these ghosts, spirits, and spectres? And thirdly, how is one to understand what Derrida calls an infinite mourning? These three central questions are addressed respectively in the following three sections: (1) 'Braids', (2) 'The newcomer/the arrival arriving' and (3) 'Mourning – one's ownmost possibility'.

The expression *un événement de venue ou d'avenir* [the event of a coming or of a future advent], which brings *together* our three themes, is taken from the following passage in Derrida's *Aporias*:

... the *aporia*: the difficult or the impracticable, here the impossible passage, the refused, denied, or prohibited passage, indeed the non passage, which can in fact be something else, *the event of a coming, or of a future advent* [*événement de venue ou d'avenir*], which no longer has the form of the movement that consists in passing, traversing, or transiting. It would be the 'coming to pass' of an event that would

no longer have the form or the appearance of a *pas*: in sum, a coming without *pas*.¹⁰

As this quotation clearly shows, 'the event of a coming, or of a future advent' concerns the liminal event mentioned earlier, that is, this non/line that prohibits passage and terminates all possible determinations. For Derrida, the question is not so much that of pinning down this line, finding out what lies beyond the line, or imagining other worlds after death, but that of questioning what it means to cross over onto another world or of trespassing a line as such. The aim for Derrida is not to confirm delineations, but that of questioning them; hence his reference to one of his familiar themes: *Il y va d'un certain pas* [It involves a certain step/not; he goes along at a certain pace]. The threshold of death is always indistinct and ill defined and yet it carries us along. No context can determine it to the point of exhaustiveness and yet it constitutes our horizon. All thresholds, and specifically the threshold of death, therefore mark a hesitation: it is either final and we meet our destiny or it opens up onto the other and we remain in the dark. The expression *un événement de venue ou d'avenir* [the event of a coming or of a future advent], therefore focuses on this liminal *event* [événement] that, according to Derrida, no longer has anything to do with the act of passing, traversing, or transiting. In everything that will follow, it will be a matter of making sense of this non/line and of showing that on this odd line one can do nothing else but mourn, hear chilling voices coming from beyond the grave and die.

Inevitably, because the focus is here on liminal issues (aporias and endings), this chapter will remain, this time, on the edge of translation. In the previous chapters, the approach to translation was either *plastic* (Malabou's *voir venir*) or *deviating* (Nancy's *survenue*). The aim in this final chapter will be to retain in our reading of Derrida's *Aporias*, an *aporetic* attitude towards translation. This aporetic attitude is intended not to simply prevent us from falling either into English or French, but to remain at the cusp between the two languages. The idea in this last chapter is therefore to understand the issue of this final *à-venir* again in relation to translation, but where translation is no longer possible. As will become clear, to translate is to open a path within a language while using one's own language. It is to decide upon a meaning while using one's own tools in order to free oneself from the agonizing aporetic gridlock provoked by the original. However, this act of translation is neither conclusive nor unique, a final and singular *poros*. It is again and again a new opening onto a multiplicity of further *aporetic* gridlocks.

Ultimately, for this final chapter, the idea is to break free not so much from a certain philosophical conception of translation, but above all, from the logic of identity/locality and that of archaic/contemporary that is always subjacent in all forms of translation, and perhaps in this way to reveal through this liminal act, the condition of translation itself.

Braids

In *Aporias*, Derrida explores the philosophical theme of aporia from a unique perspective. Unlike previous occasions in which this word has imposed itself upon him, Derrida this time refuses to understand the term 'aporia' in the singular, that is, as *an* impossibility, *a* non-viability, *a* non-track, or *a* barred path.¹¹ By rejecting this singularity, Derrida is effectively thrusting aside everything that could possibly run the risk of creating what he calls *an* 'institution' of 'indivisible lines'.¹² After recalling the fact that borders are necessarily multi-sided and that formal negativity is necessarily plural, he comes up, alongside the two most common understandings of the word (the barred path and the non-track), with a new type of aporia, which radically transforms our understanding of this 'tired old word of philosophy and logic'.¹³ Derrida writes:

The third type of aporia, the impossible, the antinomy, or the contradiction is a non passage because its elementary milieu does not allow for something that could be called passage, step, walk, gait, displacement or replacement, a kinesis in general. There is no more path (*odos*, *methodos*, *Weg* or *Holzweg*). The impasse itself would be impossible. The coming or the future advent of the event [*la venue ou l'avenir de l'événement*] would have no relation to the passage of what happens or comes to pass. In this case, there would be an aporia because there is not even any space for an aporia determined as experience of the step or of the edge, crossing or not of some line, relation to some spatial figure of the limit.¹⁴

How can one understand Derrida's third aporia? What is one to make of this strange 'elementary milieu'? And how can one grasp the idea of an aporia *that refuses* the very experience of the aporia itself, that of simply *not* being able to cross the line? What could be *more* aporetic than having to *invent* a route when no routes are visible? Finally, what does he mean by 'the coming or the future advent of the event'? In

order to answer all these questions, it is necessary to briefly map out the original meaning of the word 'aporia' and to see how Derrida arrives at this third interpretation.

In its Greek etymological sense, the noun ἀπορία [*aporia*] means 'what knows no way out', 'what is difficult or impossible to solve'. The verb ἀπορεῖν [*aporein*] means 'to be unable to get through'. The adjective ἀποροῦς [*aporos*] means 'without passage', 'what is impassable'. The opposite of an aporia is a ποροῦς [*poros*], which as Heidegger tells us, 'originally referred to the passage through a stream at a shallow place'.¹⁵ The way of resolving an aporia is to find a way out of the difficulty, to find a *poros*. In Greek, this is what is understood by διαπορεῖν [*diaporein*]: 'to endeavour something or to attempt the exploration of various routes'. If one goes back to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, it becomes clear that for him, the aporia represents an *initial* difficulty and that once the stage of wonder (θαυμάζειν [*thaumazein*], to wonder, to be surprised) is overcome, the path to philosophy takes place as *diaporein*, that is, as an attempt to find a route out of this initial difficulty.¹⁶ Following Aristotle, an aporia therefore represents the *realization* that a state of ignorance has been achieved and that this state of ignorance needs to be interrogated in order for it to be overcome and for knowledge to take over.

In a book appropriately entitled *Comment s'en sortir?* Sarah Kofman investigates further the meaning of the term 'aporia' in philosophy. She states that 'the aporetic condition always takes place in transition from a familiar space to one that is not familiar: it is a passage from one stage to another and vice versa, from light to obscurity or the other way round'.¹⁷ In each case, the imperative is to find not a method that would be valid for all kinds of aporias, but a way out [*poros*], a solution or a resolution to the difficulty itself. She adds, '*poros* must not be confused with *odos*, an expression which designates a path, any road whatsoever. *Poros* is a maritime or fluvial passageway, the opening of a passage across a chaotic space that becomes qualified and ordered'.¹⁸ Considering this well-known maritime metaphor ('the best metaphor to describe the aporias of speech'¹⁹), it would be wrong to think that *poros* represents a type of buoy or an anchored float serving to guide fishermen or philosophers in their endeavours and that as soon as one faces an aporia, one's role would be to try and locate these buoys. Aporias can never be resolved by relying on points of navigation or predetermined or pre-established courses. Aporias can only be resolved with the invention of a unique and previously unimaginable stratagem.

To say that *poros* is a path that needs to be drawn over a liquid space is to underline that this tracing is never traced in advance, it has always already been erased and is always in need to be drawn again. One speaks of *poros* when one needs to open a road or cross an unbridgeable, unknown world, hostile, infinite, *aporein*: a world that cannot be crossed from one end to another; the sea abyss, the *pontos* is the aporia itself...²⁰

The question Kofman does not address is that of the various *intensities* of aporias. Can one say that some are easier to resolve than others and if this is the case, is there an extreme form of aporia; an aporia, as Derrida seems to imply, of 'the impossibility of aporias as such'?²¹ Can there really be an aporia as an agonizing gridlock from which one can *never properly* extract oneself? In the traditional sense of the term, there is no such thing as an extreme form of aporia. All aporetic issues *in* discourse *can* be resolved, passages *can* always be found amidst language. As Kofman reminds us in relation to Platonic discourses:

... a final aporia is never the ultimate goal: participants in a discussion always leave each other with the decision to meet again so as to continue the search [for a way out of the aporia]. The aporia is simply a temporary but necessary obscure passageway, for the loss of sight it occasions forces one to find a way out: 'Faced with such a terrible upheaval (*deinos*) in our ideas, I long to see clearly' (Plato, *Protagoras*, 361c). Only an aporetic situation can awake the desire for deliverance. Because it is untenable, the aporetic state, far from paralyzing, mobilizes research, provokes the invention of some *mechanè* or some *poros*... start swimming in the hope of finding some miraculous dolphin. For no one owns the *poros*. Not even Socrates or his friends.²²

If one follows Kofman, then it becomes clear that *all* aporias seem to have the same kind of intensity (the ocean, the possibility of tracking currents, philosophical debates, the possibility of adjournment) and that *all* are temporary.

In this case, how is one to make sense of Derrida's third aporia? For Derrida, aporias are not necessarily heuristic; they do not simply result from *temporary* situations that one must overcome. They are essentially related to the process of thinking and more specifically to the process of deconstruction. As Rodolphe Gasché points out:

... [For Derrida,] the aporia is linked to the functions of differentiation, conceptualization and hierarchization that are essential to philosophical thought. Instead of being conceived from the angle of its resolution, the impassability of the aporia, which is at the core of its concept, has to be taken seriously. An aporia is only an aporia if it is truly *amechanon* [that is, entirely impracticable] ... Instead of being a transitory phase towards [philosophical] thought ... Derrida attempts instead to withstand the aporia and resist a quick resolution to what constitutes, by definition, a true deadlock. The aporia is [therefore] conceived in a more patient way, in order to endure it. This interpretation of the aporia represents a way of thinking that models itself on the aporetic, in conformity with it or following its contours [*son tracé*].²³

If aporias do *not* necessarily have to be temporary situations, then how does one make sense of an aporia that remains with us essentially *amechanon*, a *constant* impracticability that we have to accept every second of time?

To answer this question, it is perhaps necessary to rethink the classical metaphors used to describe aporias, such as barrier, gate, sea, or ocean. For Derrida, an aporia that *remains* totally impracticable *must* bring together *all* possible types of aporias – hence the fact that Derrida's title for his book is in the plural. A Derridean aporia is therefore one where each aporia interlaces and haunts all the others: the gate, the ocean, and this third type of aporia that is beyond all possible figuration. In order to make sense of this, let us return to Derrida's interpretation of aporias, this time including all three aporias:

It appears to be paradoxical enough ... that the partitioning [*partage*] amongst the multiple figures of aporia does not oppose figures to each other, but instead installs the haunting of the one in the other. In one case, the non-passage resembles an impermeability; it would stem from the opaque existence of an 'uncrossable' border ... In another case, the non-passage, the impasse or aporia, stems from the fact that there is no limit. There is not yet or there is no longer a border to cross, no opposition between two sides: the limit is too porous, permeable, and indeterminate. There is no longer a home [*chez soi*] and a no-home [*chez l'autre*] ... Finally, the third type of aporia, the impossible, the antinomy, or the contradiction is a non passage because its elementary milieu does not allow for something that could be called passage, step, walk, gait, displacement or replacement,

a kinesis in general. There is no more path (*odos*, *methodos*, *Weg* or *Holzweg*). The impasse itself would be impossible. The coming or the future advent of the event would have no relation to the passage of what happens or comes to pass. In this case, there would be an aporia because there is not even any space for an aporia determined as experience of the step or of the edge, crossing or not of some line, relation to some spatial figure of the limit. No more movement or trajectory, no more *trans*- (transport, transposition, transgression, translation, and even transcendence). There would not even be any space for the aporia because of a lack of topographical conditions, or, more radically, because of a lack of the topological condition itself.²⁴

We are here therefore dealing with *not* one new type of aporia that would supplant all previous ones, but *three* different types of aporias each *haunting* the other. This interweaving of aporias has only one aim: it prevents the very possibility of finding a *poros* or a way out, leaving us always stranded in the aporia. Derrida's haunting multi-fold aporia is therefore truly *amechanon*, that is, entirely impracticable, a true dead-lock. However, things are not as simple as they seem. The aporia might be truly impassable, it might refuse the experience of the aporia itself, but the interweaving work has the unsettling effect of confusing the exact moment of encounter or the moment when one realizes that one is locked in an aporia. Hence the fact that Derrida tells us in no uncertain terms that with an aporia conceived in this way, there cannot be an 'experience of the step or of the edge, crossing or not of some line, relation to some spatial figure of the limit'. We are aporetically confined and there is never the possibility of identifying the moment of encounter with the aporia. And here we realize that the questions remain: how could there be an *enduring* aporia without space and topographical and topological conditions? How can one envisage an aporia that is beyond all forms of kinesis, that is, that does not respond to any stimulus whatsoever? What in our daily experience does *not* lend itself to be trespassed and even *refuses* the possibility of the path itself?

In order to answer these renewed questions, it is necessary to realize that Derrida refers here to a type of aporia that is neither strictly ontological nor concerns itself exclusively with thought or language, but that amalgamates or contaminates both at once.²⁵ The premise of Derrida's amalgamation or contamination cannot be analysed without referencing, as Derrida himself does not fail to do, Heidegger's own interpretation of the term 'aporia' and its relationship to *Dasein*. For Heidegger, an aporia is a fundamental situation for *Dasein*. It constitutes *Dasein*'s

very own relation to the world. As soon as Dasein becomes aware of itself [τα προχειρα (982b13), 'what lies right at hand'²⁶], it recognizes the gap that separates not only what he knows from what he does not know, but also its being from the other.

The one who continues the *απορουν* and *διαπορουν* and attempts to get through reveals in such endeavours that he is flying in the face of *αγνοια*, ignorance, coveredness, and is pursuing *επιστασθαι* knowledge, having beings present in their uncoveredness. Thus, what the Greeks call *απορια* characterizes the peculiar intermediate position of Dasein itself over and against the world. It characterises a peculiar being underway of Dasein: in a certain sense knowing beings and yet not getting through. The *απορουν* in itself, however, does not have any sort of autonomous and positive meaning but only has the functional sense of the correct pursuit of the knowledge of beings themselves.²⁷

Dasein therefore sets itself off from what is striking or what makes him wonder and appears impossible. When such an *aporia* occurs, Dasein sets itself on the way to knowledge. Thus, the *aporein* or the *diaporein* 'moment' becomes at once a *fundamental* existential *phenomenon* and an explicit *moment* of knowledge (revelation, unconcealment, uncoveredness, disclosure), which, as Heidegger says, 'shows to what extent Dasein in itself aims at an uncovering of beings simply for the sake of uncovering'.²⁸

For Derrida, the problem with this Heideggerian interpretation is without doubt that the *aporia* represents an 'intermediate position', that is, a *moment* of realization that sends Dasein off on its path towards knowledge and towards its final realization. In order to make sense of the singularity of this problem, it is necessary to return to Derrida's interpretation of *aporia* and his way of contaminating ontological discourses with other discourses. One of Derrida's first contaminations takes place at a stage in the book when he refers to *peras*, a synonym of *poros*. This reference allows him to overcome the simple dichotomy: *aporein/diaporein* and to lift or sublate the aporetic problem ('*problema* can signify *projection* or *protection*...'')²⁹) at the level of deconstruction. He writes that the overcoming of the difficulty

... involves the line that terminates all determination, the final or definitional line – *peras* this time rather than *telos*. And *peras* is precisely what Cicero could have translated by *finis*. The Greek word

peras – term (here, a synonym of the Greek word *terma*), end or limit, extremity – puts us also on the path of *peran*, which means ‘beyond’, on the other side, and even vis-à-vis. It also puts us on the path of *perao*: I penetrate . . . I traverse by penetrating, I cross through, I pass the term of my life, *terma tou biou*, for example.³⁰

This reference to a synonym of *poros* shows that, for Derrida, the aporetic problematic constitutes not so much a way out, but *a way of working*. As such, a *poros/peras* cannot be pinned down as an originary or fundamental *moment* of Dasein’s relation to the world or as an *intermediate position* within this relation. Aporetic problems are intimately related to the processes of distinction, delimitation, and demarcation that are *intrinsic* to thought and specifically to deconstruction – that is, to what is to come – and can never be distinguished with any certainty. A true aporia cannot be situated in the middle of the ocean or at its edges, in the middle of Dasein’s life or at its term or from any intermediate position from which two distances, destinations, or destinies can be measured. Derrida’s aporia not only permeates the edges of linguistic and ontological fields, it is also always already structured in futurity (in the sense understood in this book) and as such can never be identified or resolved strictly speaking. For this reason, as he insists, aporetic delineations ‘*can never be endured as such*’.³¹ We *live* or we *come* with this aporia day in and day out without realizing it *as such*. We carry it with us, we ‘work it’ without realizing it, it follows us like our very own shadow and yet it never belongs to us properly. This does not mean that there are no more problems or obstacles or that our entire existence is a problem or an endless difficulty, because as Derrida himself explains, ‘one could no longer even find a problem that would constitute itself and that one would keep in front of oneself, as a presentable object or project, as a protective representative or a prosthetic substitute, as some kind of border still to cross or behind which to protect oneself’.³²

However much the problematic of aporias edges itself alongside or with the process of deconstruction, the question unfortunately *still remains*: in all aporetic situations, even ones that are on the edges of experience, is there not time and space? How can one speak of an aporetic situation if there is no time and space? Is Derrida not reverting here to an *authentic* type of experience that is beyond our *vulgar* concept of time and space?

It would be wrong to think that Derrida makes a mistake or, as many of his critics seem to think, that he uses metaphysical terms in order to carry out the process of deconstruction. Derrida in fact takes his three

interwoven aporias and creates what he calls 'a braid'³³ [*une tresse*]. The braid is precisely what prevents him from falling back onto a metaphysical understanding of *the* time/space of the aporia and what allows him to maintain his argument aporetically in *the spacing (and) temporizing* crucial to deconstruction. The braid interweaves or twines a number of separate strands creating an overlapping pattern from which one cannot clearly distinguish either origin or destination. This does *not* mean that Derrida ends up creating *an object* – a plait or rope-like configuration – that would come to stand for a new form of delineation. Derrida's braid does *not* bring together a few simple strands, but an infinite number of strands. The braid is infinite not in the sense of an infinite expansion in all spatio-temporal directions, but in the sense where it weaves and unweaves itself infinitely. This explains why, for Derrida, the braid is *necessarily always without repose*. The braid keeps *weaving* and *unweaving* itself at the same time [*hama*]. Hence the fact that the plural logic of the aporia that constitutes it, unavoidably 'installs the haunting of the one in the other [*installe la hantise de l'une dans l'autre*]'.³⁴ There is never an end to the weaving and unweaving of the braid because it is always already haunted by what escapes it altogether: the next or last strand.

The question now is what does Derrida do with this haunting and self-effacing braid, this truly aporetic deadlock that one can only endure every second of time? In other words, how does the braid *maintain* itself while it weaves and unweaves itself?

Derrida makes another specific reference to the idea of aporia *as braid* in *Aporias*. This reference begins with Derrida noticing that '[Heidegger's] articulated set of distinctions (between perishing and dying, but also within the existential field of *Dasein*, between death properly speaking and demise) thus presupposes *Dasein*. These delimitations also institute a hierarchy of inquiry.'³⁵ This hierarchy of inquiry could be summed up in this way:

1. A problematic closure between fields of knowledge.
2. An anthropological border between nations, languages, or cultures.
3. A conceptual demarcation between concepts.

With this hierarchy of inquiry, Derrida's purpose is really to investigate how these three forms of limits constitute a single braid [*'une seule et même tresse'*].³⁶ As he says,

In a modest and preliminary way, my purpose is to investigate more closely what makes one single braid of these three forms of limits...

The aporia of death would be one of the place-names for what forms the braid and keeps it from coming undone. The analysis of a passage in Heidegger will serve here as a provisionally privileged example in order to name and draw such a braid.³⁷

The passage in Heidegger is, as we will see in detail, the paragraphs 46 to 53 in *Being and Time* in which Heidegger attempts to put forward a strictly ontological interpretation of death. The braid that Derrida figures therefore situates itself as a challenge to Heidegger's demarcation between the ontological and ontic approaches to the issue of the death of Dasein. It is *there*, in this strange 'elementary milieu', in the space Heidegger determines as what separates the death of Dasein qua Dasein (dying) and any other death (perishing, demise) that Derrida places his braid or more precisely, blurs the boundary with interlacing boundaries. By replacing Heidegger's unpassable line with a braid weaving/unweaving together fields of knowledge, Derrida manages to disturb the entire structure of Heidegger's ontology. The braid becomes Derrida's most vivid 'representation' of the aporia in Heidegger's understanding of Dasein's most proper possibility. By positioning it in this way, Derrida's aim is therefore to show that this aporia or this braid, i.e. this unorthodox form of ever-changing demarcation between authenticity and inauthenticity, *cannot* be conceived or represented, however much Heidegger wants to, as a line, frontier, border, impasse, gate, plait, or sea. It can only be represented as a set of *interweaving Derridean traces*.

There is one crucial aspect to Derrida's attempt to blur Heidegger's careful delineation: the fact that the braid can realistically be figured only on condition that it is *not* a *strict* delineation. The figuring/blurring of the braid can only take place *provisionally*. In other words, the braid can only refuse the very possibility of figuration or experience strictly speaking, a limit of truth that is both permeable *and* impermeable, a limit in which each trace and each tracing haunts the other as it disappears. In this way, it would be wrong to see this aporia as if it was originary or as if it constituted a horizon, from which all other forms of aporias (the straightforward gate or the impractical sea) find their true signification. For Derrida, the aporia conceived as a braid, which only *succeeds* in undoing each one of its strands as it composes itself, is still *a* possible aporia even if it can never be experienced *as such*. In this way, Derrida's aporetological and aporetographic braid is effectively haunted by a principle of ruin that is also essentially and inevitably its chance.

All this allows us to understand, finally, why, in the paragraph mentioned above, Derrida writes a crucial sentence in our context. The

sentence not only brings the *ordinary* temporal dimension of the braid to the fore, it also allows for an understanding of the spacing (and) temporizing of the braid itself. The sentence reads: 'The coming or the future advent of the event [*la venue ou l'avenir de l'événement*] would have no relation to the passage of what happens or comes to pass.'³⁸ If it had been a traditional non-passage or non-path, the coming of the future would have taken the shape of *an* event – the *very first* performative moment of Dasein: either *the* realization of the immensity and incomensurability of the ocean or *the* sudden apparition of *an* overwhelming difficulty. It would have been a visible and identifiable trace. It would have been an aporia calling for a way out of the aporia, a salvaging *poros* or resolution. But this is not a traditional non-passage or non-path. It is a braid, and a braid that paradoxically *cannot* be experienced *as such*.

The coming of the braid therefore must remain, like *à-venir*, *prior* to any event whatsoever; hence the fact that it cannot have any 'relation to the passage to what happens or comes to pass', that is, to what can be identified within an ordinary temporal dimension as an event [*un événement*] as such: i.e. death. The braid *is* the coming or the future advent of the event itself. It weaves and unweaves itself and this multi-dimensional act – an act before any act whatsoever – takes place between what appears as coming [*la venue de l'événement*] as an identifiable woven strand and its ultimate fate [*l'avenir de l'événement*] as a strand that is no longer. In other words, the braid appears and disappears while never managing to constitute itself as an event. As such, the braid is, as we will see in the next section, what Derrida calls in one problematic word, *l'arrivant* [that which arrives, he or she who comes]. This *arrivant*, this coming or this future advent of the event, represents the coming of and to death, of the possibility of impossibility, of dying properly, but also of deceasing and perishing. This *arrivant*, this coming, is a coming that has no relation with the event of death itself. Derrida's aporia weaves and unweaves itself as the coming aporia that we allow, withstand, or tolerate 'every second of time' to recall Benjamin's famous expression. The braid comes. *C'est la tresse arrivante*.

There is one final issue that remains to be addressed before moving on to *la tresse arrivante*: that of the braid of ghostly voices. How is one to make sense of everything that has been explored so far in relation to Derrida's understanding of the aporia as braid when it comes to the voices heard by the protagonists in Lorca's play? The answer to this is simple: the voices of the dead that haunt the village of Los Frailes and the characters in Lorca's play hold us and the female characters entangled in an interweaving aporia made up of several ghosts, voices, and acts of

mourning, each of which weaves and unweaves itself without mercy or let-off. When entangled in such an aporia, there is no way out, there is no *poros*; we are stranded in a true deadlock. This does not mean that, unlike the Bridegroom's Mother in Lorca's play, our lives can only be made of sorrow, that we can only feel sad or that we can only lament our misfortune. This only means that this aporetic situation is the only possible one, in the sense that it is the only one in which we can *work* towards uncovering ourselves *as* knowledge and yet, at the same time, never being able to get through. There is no possibility of disentangling ourselves from the braid, *la tresse arrivante*.

The newcomer/the arrival arriving

From the safe and yet indistinct shores of ancient Greek terms, we need to move now towards the insecurity and undecidability of the border separating the French and the English. Right when the reader begins to make sense of the issue of a plural form of aporia, of an aporia as braid, Derrida asks the crucial following questions:

What *takes place*, what *comes to pass* with the aporia? Is it possible to undergo or to experience the aporia, the aporia *as such*? Is it then a question of the aporia *as such*? Of a scandal arising to suspend a certain viability? Does one then pass through this aporia? Or is one immobilized before the threshold, to the point of having to turn around and seek out another way, the way without method or outlet of a *Holzweg* or a turning (*Kehre*) that could turn the aporia – all such possibility of wandering?³⁹

In order to answer these questions, Derrida reverts to one of his famous themes: *l'arrivant*, at once 'the neutrality of *that which* arrives [and] the singularity of *who* arrives'.⁴⁰

Let us ask: what takes place [*ce qui arrive*], what comes to pass with the aporia?... what takes place... touches upon the event as that which arrives at the river's shores [*arrive à la rive*], approaches the shore [*aborde la rive*], or passes the edge [*passe le bord*] – another way of happening and coming to pass by surpassing [*outrepassant*]... What is the event that most arrives [*l'événement le plus arrivant*]? What is the *arrivant* that makes the event arrive? I was recently taken by this word, *arrivant*, as if its uncanniness had just arrived to me in a

language in which it has nonetheless sounded very familiar to me for a long time.⁴¹

The theme of *l'arrivant* is not a new one in Derrida's *oeuvre*. It first appears in 1990 in an interview with Elizabeth Weber published in *Points de suspension*.⁴² The theme crops up again three years later in *Spectres of Marx*.⁴³ In both cases, the theme of *l'arrivant* refers to the structure of the messianic or to what Derrida figures as the 'messianic without messianism'.⁴⁴ This structure implies, as Derrida remarks in *Spectres of Marx*, that 'no figure of the *arrivant*, even as he or she is heralded, should be pre-determined, prefigured, or even pre-named...'⁴⁵ *L'arrivant* is therefore 'absolute hospitality'.⁴⁶ How is one to understand this familiar theme within the context of *Aporias* and especially in the context of a reading of Heidegger's *Being and Time*?

Faithful to its etymological origins, *l'arrivant* remains in this text intimately linked to a whole vocabulary close to that used in the context of *aporias*.⁴⁷ This vocabulary is related to seashores, shorelines, coasts, and water edges. For example, *l'arrivant* 'touches upon the event as that which arrives at the river's shores [*arrive à la rive*], approaches the shore [*aborde la rive*], or passes the edge [*passe le bord*]'.⁴⁸ The issue here for Derrida is *not* to identify a line or a demarcation between a here and a there or to catch sight of the place from which death or an unnameable and unexpected monster might come. As he says: 'What we could here call the *arrivant*, the most *arrivant* among all *arrivants*, the *arrivant* par excellent, is whatever, whomever, in arriving, does not cross a threshold separating two identifiable places, the proper and the foreign, the proper of the one and the proper of the other...'⁴⁹ Instead, the idea is to come up with a way of articulating the spacing (and) temporizing movement of the *arrivant* as an aporetic braid. How does the *arrivant* as braid constitute itself and break off? How does the *arrivant* arrive while erasing its arrival? How does it constitute something (a shore?) while disappearing at the same time? Let us look at the way Derrida exploits this theme of *l'arrivant* as braid.

In order to make sense of this unusual take on his familiar theme, Derrida uses the various meanings of the word *arrivant* with the aim of revealing some of the possible strands of the aporetic braid. What are these various meanings? Thomas Dutoit, Derrida's translator, identifies them without difficulty: '*arrivant* can mean "arrival", "newcomer", or "arriving"'.⁵⁰ Each of these words constitutes a strand in the braid, not, as we said, with the aim of creating a self-contained three-strand rope-like configuration, but with the aim of operating it, making it alive and

impossible to master. The words are not exclusive either; other strands weave themselves, some identifiable, others not. The point of using these three words indiscriminately is effectively on the one hand, to expose the plural logic of Derrida's ever-changing aporia and on the other, to give the familiar thematic of the *arrivant* an unexpected multivocality. The aporia comes and this coming can never be identified with any certainty.

Without the possibility of demarcating a here from a there, an expectancy from a possibility, *l'arrivant* can perhaps in this way be understood as a protean *structure* (of experience) that is *at once a border* [a shore, *une rive*], *an arrival and something or someone unexpectedly arriving* [a newcomer, *un arrivant*]. It is a shore, in the way it runs along the edge of life and death; it is something or someone arriving in the way it is always to come and it is an arrival in the way it is always already with us or within our reach. In all three cases, the structure undoes itself and this undoing is a form of coming and therefore paradoxically, a form of doing. In all three cases, one can never identify the direction or the destination of the movement in play. This does not mean that the structure can be identified as a *sui generis* protean monster, a sea god or magic plait changing shape at will in order to remain aporetic. It is protean in a unique way: it can change appearance and alter its currents (doing/undoing, weaving/unweaving) all in the aim of preventing us not only from identifying it as such, but also of finding a way in, out, or through. As such, it constitutes our border, our very own treacherous and unstable boundary from which one cannot escape.

It is with this curious interpretation of *l'arrivant* as a border, an arrival, and something or someone unexpectedly arriving that Derrida begins his reading of Heidegger's work. His aim is to use this odd expression, this 'absolute *arrivant*'⁵¹ in order to render the limits of truth – on which the entire logic of *Being and Time* is based – problematic. As Derrida says:

[This] border . . . is ultimately [the] most difficult to delineate, because it is always already crossed, lies in the fact that the absolute *arrivant* makes possible everything to which I have just said it cannot be reduced, starting with the humanity of man, which some would be inclined to recognise in all that erases, in the *arrivant* the characteristics of (cultural, social, or national) belonging and even metaphysical determination (ego, person, subject, consciousness, etc.). It is on this border that I am tempted to read Heidegger.⁵²

The questions that arise from this 'absolute *arrivant*', this *arrivant* that destabilizes Heidegger's carefully planned ontological structure, are these: how can one overcome Derrida's difficulty in delineating this aporetic *arrivant*? Furthermore, how can one articulate this French absolute *arrivant* in *English*? And finally, how is one to avoid thinking about *l'arrivant* as Mr Arrivant or as Professor Derrida himself, arriving as if a carefully identifiable 'thing' or 'being' amidst Heidegger's careful topography of death? These three questions are intended to simply intensify one degree further our understanding of the spacing (and) temporizing dimension of Derrida's aporia, one which is encapsulated in this chapter's main sentence: the event of a coming, or of a future advent [*un événement de venue ou d'avenir*].

In relation to the first question (how can one overcome Derrida's difficulty in delineating this aporetic *arrivant*?), my hypothesis is this: it *should* be and it *must* be *impossible* to make sense of this *arrivant*, this specific border/arrival arriving. This hypothesis is not simply the expression of an act of incapacity or the desire to retain something beyond language. The absolute *arrivant* arrives and yet does not arrive; it is an arrival and yet it is still arriving. The *arrivant* also constitutes an aporetic braid, and yet it can only be understood as a self-mutating and unidentifiable aporia. In this way, the instability of *l'arrivant* forces anyone who approaches it to conceive it paradoxically outside of linguistic figuration *and* yet dependent on linguistic figuration. In order to make sense of this paradox, it is important to stress here that *l'arrivant* has, unlike everything that has been said on this theme before, nothing to do with the verb 'to arrive'. Not unlike Derrida's interpretation in *Parages* of Maurice Blanchot's word *viens!* [come!], *l'arrivant* cannot be understood as a modification of arriving, arrival, or as something (a border) in-between. Let us recall Derrida's commentary on Blanchot's famous word. '[*viens!*] subtracts something from every single position, it propagates itself and narrates through the modalities of arrival or of coming, for instance, the to come [*l'avenir*], the event, the advent, etc., but also through all temporal declensions of the verbs coming and going'.⁵³ As an ever-changing braid, *l'arrivant* can only do the same, that is, it can only remain within *and* beyond linguistic formulation because it spends its time adding and subtracting itself to its own movement. There is no language that can account for this shifty aporia because there is no external position from which to articulate it. It is all three (a border, an arrival, and something or someone unexpectedly arriving) *and* both (doing/undoing or weaving/unweaving) *at once* and as such, it should and must remain impossible to grasp.

If there is no language from which to make sense of *l'arrivant*, if it cannot be simply figured as a messianic protean border, if it necessitates constant deconstructive operations (always to come [*toujours à venir*]) in order to make sense of it, does this mean that *l'arrivant* is an asemia in language, something that falls outside of language? A careful reading of Derrida's work reveals in fact that *l'arrivant* does not even manage to be a straightforward asemia in language. The basis for this is another Derridean expression again taken from his commentary on Blanchot's *Le Pas au delà*. The parallel expression is that of *l'arrive*. He writes:

Going to come [*aller arriver*]: the strange future of that which arrives [*de l'arriver*] (the arrival of what?), the imminence of coming, marks itself in language through the help of the present tense of a verb (go, come [*aller, va*]) that should signify what distances-itself-from only to come-closer-to. From/to what? Here, from/to that which distances itself from itself, the to-come [*l'à-venir*] in order to make it arrive, etc. Everything suspends itself amidst indecision... and in a sort of a-semia of the come [*une sorte d'a-sémie de l'arrive*] which I will not address here.⁵⁴

What does he mean by a 'sort of' asemia? How can an asemia be neither here nor there? And finally, how is one to understand what Derrida himself does *not* address in his commentary on Blanchot's work?

In the context of the aporetic border/arrival arriving [*l'arrivant*], Derrida's use of asemia is crucial. It points to the possibility or the inevitability of a loss of meaning when it comes to articulate the *movement* of the braid, a movement that distances-itself-from only to come-closer-to. The idea is not to call, with this loss, for the purification of the polysemic nature of language, or for a void amongst its essential disseminating effect, but to point instead to what *happens* to language when it approaches issues of borders and arrivals. In the context of *l'arrive*, Derrida uses the verb *arriver* in the present tense as in *il arrive*. However, he transforms it into a noun, *l'arrive*, as if to convey a movement of arrival free of any subjectification. As this was not enough, he then multiplies this movement of arrival by subtracting from it another noun, another meaning. *L'arrive* also echoes *la rive*, the shore. Not unlike *l'arrivant*, *l'arrive* therefore brings together *at once* the *movement* of arrival, the *shore* onto which this coming takes place and the *arrival* itself. The question this threefold meaning raises is this: in both

cases, that of *l'arrivant* and that of *l'arrive*, how can one distinguish what arrives amidst this complex juxtaposition of meanings? What comes first? What is hidden in the process?

The only way to make sense of this multiple coming of shores, movements of arriving and arrival is to say that the coming to meaning of the one necessarily obfuscates the coming to meaning of the other, while at the same time revealing itself as either shore, arrival and gesture of arriving. In this way, this '*sort of a-semia*' of *l'arrive* or of *l'arrivant* is the necessary concealment or obfuscation occurring in any process of unconcealment or arrival. This stands in contrast to Derrida's original understanding of the issue of *asemia* in, for example, 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy'. In this earlier text, it is a question of what is *outside* language, of what falls outside of language, a radicality that cannot be expressed in words and stands *outside* of polysemia: 'Each time that polysemia is irreducible, when no unity of meaning is even promised to it, one is outside language. And consequently, outside humanity.'⁵⁵ By contrast, in the context of the aporetic border/arrival arriving, it is a question of the impossibility of any clear demarcation between polysemia and *asemia*, between what is outside language or humanity and what is inside. In the *aporia* of *l'arrivant* and that of *l'arrive*, contamination (corruption/purification) necessarily reigns.

It would be a mistake to see here again, with this impossibility of demarcating between polysemia and *asemia*, a way of hiding something that would be *beyond* the *possibility*, this time, of deconstruction. By pointing to *l'a-semie de l'arrive* (or that of *l'arrivant*), Derrida effectively renders justice to the work of deconstruction itself, to what always already remains to come [*à venir*] and must always be welcomed without expectancy or anticipation. With *l'arrive* or *l'arrivant*, he renders justice neither to the infinite polysemy of language nor to the infinite possibility of the loss of language, but to the quasi-limitless *future* possibilities of language, one for which there is never any certainty in terms of provenance or destination, *loss or multiplication* of meaning. As he says, 'As disarmed as a newly born child, it no more commands than is commanded by the memory of some originary event where the archaic is bound with the final extremity, with the finality par excellence of the *telos* or of the *eskhaton*.'⁵⁶ *L'arrivant*, this braid, this word that brings together three or more meanings, exposes the contradictory movement of the multiplicity and loss of meaning, one for which there is never any repose.

In relation to the second question mentioned at the start of this section (how can one articulate this French absolute *arrivant* in English?), it is perhaps necessary to ask if the border/arrival arriving also render(s) justice to what always already remains to come and must always be welcomed without expectancy or anticipation. Is it not the case that all trace submits itself to the law of iterability, to the law of repetition as alteration? If one is able to translate *l'arrivant* as the border/arrival arriving, then are we not entitled to ask if these *English* words are as confusing in their idiomatic pretensions as the French *l'arrivant*, or, whether through translation they affect the structure of the French *arrivant* itself? In other words, do they create enough murky aporetic waters within their own idiom to justify their extra/ordinary philosophical position?

The crucial issue here is the fact that to translate, transliterate, paraphrase, or transform is first of all, to *resolve* the aporia, it is to find a *poros*, a way out of the untranslatability of Derrida's vocabulary. However, in this case – and perhaps in this *rare* case only – the *poros* provided by the English translation, i.e the border/arrival arriving, should never truly resolve the aporetic untranslatability of Derrida's French. There is no translation, in any language whatsoever, that could possibly allow an exit from Derrida's aporia. In other words, there is no miraculous idiomatic *poros* (or translating dolphin) that could save us from (or guides us through) Derrida's aporia. This does not mean that French, as the aporetic language par excellence, reigns supreme in being able to playfully translate this aporia. This also does not mean that it is forbidden to translate Derrida's French. This only means that, for example, the English, Japanese, or Finnish translations of *l'arrivant*, this braid, *have to* remain a failure, *they have to* remain an *unsuccessful poros* to Derrida's aporetic untranslatability in the same way that *l'arrivant* is unsuccessful in bringing its three meanings together or revealing a way out of what constitutes it as aporia. In other words (and in English), the border/arrival arriving can only arrive only *not* to arrive when making sense of Derrida's French.

However, is it not the case, as Sarah Kofman says, that to translate is also 'to accomplish the philosophical gesture par excellence, the gesture of betrayal'.⁵⁷ If one considers this act of betrayal, then one can only conclude that to write in English (about) the border/arrival arriving is to betray (the writing of) *l'arrivant*. As such, the translation acts as an impostor, something (the arrival or the border) or someone (the newcomer), a movement (arriving) pretending to arrive as if it was the equivalent of the French. The border/arrival arriving deceive(s) and

cheat(s). It is a (or they are) deceitful impostor(s) because it or they pretend(s) to be a border/arrival arriving when in fact it is or they are an altogether different border/arrival arriving. But is it not also the case for *l'arrivant* itself or themselves in French? Can it be otherwise? Who can seriously be accused of being an impostor? The translator or the writer? Does not all thinking betray while pretending to achieve something, a letter, a text, a book, etc. only to mark its unachievement, thus pointing to the utterly *translational* character of all thinking?

In its various modes and directions, translation is always operative; there is never an end to translation, to its arrival, its borders, or the fact that it never stops arriving. There is no thinking beyond translation. In the braid elaborated by Derrida, in his very own plural aporia, in which thinking and existence enacts itself, there is not a single braid that has not already been spun and woven by previous translations, transliterations, paraphrasing, or transformation – in this case, and most obviously, Heidegger's. The unachievement of *l'arrivant* is identical to the unachievement of the border/arrival arriving. By pointing to the translational character of all thinking, this unachievement also shows the (deconstructive) work of betrayal of the braid itself, the unavoidable task of always dissolving the dream of non-translation and/or reconstituting it at once as the very possibility of translation itself. There are no differences between Derrida's aporia and the task of translation. We are never faced with a perfect translation, we are always trapped or entangled in the work of translation; this is our aporia; an aporia that is not *one* strictly speaking. The answer to the second question is therefore that the articulation of the absolute *arrivant* in whatever language of the world is always already necessarily engaged in the aporetic braid put forward by Derrida – no matter who writes about it or translates it; how it is written or whether it is successful or not. Translation cannot do without death. Translation weaves and unweaves itself in the elementary milieu that separates us from our death and the death of the other. In other words, there is no escape from idiomatic constraints when it comes to the constraints imposed by such a deadly aporia.

The last question that arises from this 'absolute *arrivant*', this *arrivant* that destabilizes Heidegger's carefully planned ontological structure, is this: how is one to avoid thinking about *l'arrivant* as *Mr Arrivant* or as *Professor Derrida* himself, arriving as if an aporetic braid amidst Heidegger's careful topography of death? This question focuses on Derrida's unorthodox use of the expression *l'arrivant* as if a noun. The argument here is that besides Derrida's countless efforts to prevent the possibility of a stable meaning, besides his insistence that *l'arrivant* can only be

understood with the generic term of absolute hospitality, and besides his use of the word to signify a border strictly speaking, are we not hearing here with this word, the noun of *someone* or *something* who is expected: *He/She/It* who arrives?

The problem here focuses really on the abbreviated article *l'*, and, therefore, what it entails: the possibility that the noun it specifies is a definite name – a *proper* name. The issue is indeed that of *celui* or *celle qui arrive*, of *cette arrivage*, *ce rivage*, *cette rive*, etc. but also (in English) that of *the newcomer*, *the arrival* arriving. Derrida's attempt to answer the crucial question of what it means to 'experience the aporia', to put into operation the aporia through the prism of *l'arrivant*, inevitably runs the risk of creating a *proper* name that not only challenges the necessary murkiness of language and idioms, but also forces it to lose the aseptic instability within its polysemic potential. No matter how clever the *arrivant* is in not crossing a threshold separating two identifiable places, the proper and the foreign, the proper of the one and the proper of the other, he, she, it, who is not even a guest or an inviting power, who can only surprise, *still retains* all the hallmarks of a *proper* name, of an identifiable existential and semiotic 'thing', of a monster or of death *strictly speaking*; an *authentic* [*Eigentlichkeit*] force that necessarily falls or rises between translatability and untranslatability. This risk brings with it the fact that, no matter what, the line, Heidegger's limit (of truths), would then, again, against all of Derrida's efforts, be (re)marked, the aporia clearly identified *by* and *as l'arrivant*, this ever-changing singularity that separates authenticity from inauthenticity.

This final question on the issue of proper names is decisive not only in the context of absolute hospitality, but also and perhaps above all, in relation to Derrida's reading of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. And Derrida knows this well. In order to prevent anyone accusing him of creating with *l'arrivant* yet another proper name hidden behind the most unfigurable figure imaginable, he warns: '... death is always the name of a secret, since it signs the irreplaceable singularity. It puts forth the public name, the common name of a secret, the common name of the proper name without name. It is therefore always a shibboleth, for the manifest name of a secret is from the beginning a private name...' ¹⁵⁸ But how is one to understand a proper name *without a name*? The obvious answer would be something *simply* proper, a properness, or a property that belongs to nothing and nobody in particular. But what would this mean? How could something proper remain aloof from any property, properness, or particularity?

Simply put, a proper name is what is proper to someone. A proper name is what cannot be modified or be used with a modifier. A proper name represents what is in question in an individual, in the very appropriation of the question of his or her existence. Similarly, what is proper to Dasein is, as Levinas remarks, what 'is in question in man and man is necessary because being is in question...*Dasein* is the very fact that being is in question.'⁵⁹ What is proper to Dasein is therefore not what ties it to biological life or its place in relation to animals, but in relation to being as *a* being as such. Now, how does Derrida deal with this when addressing *l'arrivant*?

Derrida is obviously not using a proper name *as such* – a distinctive proper name with capital letter, but what I would call a 'quasi-proper' name, that is, a word that is *on the edge* of property, properness, and particularity. Although this makes sense within Derrida's deconstructive strategies, it still creates a problem: that this quasi-proper name can, against all odds, be seen to continue the work of Heidegger that Derrida wishes so desperately to undo. The issue is a simple one: the fact of addressing *l'arrivant* as an aporetic braid between authenticity and inauthenticity, effectively grounds the very idea of the *proper* sense of that which arrives: *l'arrivant*. Because of this unavoidable characteristic, *l'arrivant* inevitably prevents the possibility of thinking Dasein in a manner that would be more suitable to Derrida, that is, as a derivative deformation or translation of the very question of being. As a quasi-proper name, *l'arrivant* retains in its structure the proper sense of this someone (or this Dasein) who arrives according to its originarity or its authenticity, a person who or (a thing that) cannot be conceived according to any derivative deformation whatsoever. To highlight this risk does not undermine Derrida's attempt to destabilize the Heideggerian limit; it only shows that, by referring to what comes near to the idea of a proper name, Derrida is inevitably running the risk of incapacitating its careful dismantling efforts.

The question, as usual with Derrida's work, is *not* what the word *arrivant* means, but what *to do* with this word, this quasi-proper name with its abbreviated definite article. If one leaves, following Thomas Dutoit, *l'arrivant* untranslated, are we not risking here – as is often the case, for example, with *différance* in English – the possibility of a proper name effect? Is it not precisely Derrida, who in *The Post Card*, remarks: 'Any signified whose signifier cannot vary nor let itself be translated into another signifier without a loss of meaning points to a proper name effect.'⁶⁰ Or do we have to take Derrida's word for granted, that it is impossible to distinguish between the various meanings of the word

l'arrivant even if we keep them untranslated and even if in both French and English they practically come across as proper names. Perhaps, here more than anywhere else, we have to concede the fact that there are, as Claude Lévêques remarks and as later Derrida acknowledges,

two simultaneous demands governing the proper name...on the one hand, a requirement of un-translatability and un-readability, as if the proper name were nothing but pure reference, lying outside of signification and language; on the other hand, a requirement of translatability and readability, as if the proper name were assimilable to the common noun, to any word that is caught up in a linguistic and genealogical network where meaning already contaminates non-meaning and where the proper name is absorbed and expropriated by the common noun...⁶¹

How can one then acknowledge these two demands and remain faithful or truthful to the polysemic and asemic characteristics of *l'arrivant*?

Languages can only do so much. They always need help. In the context of *l'arrive*, this other Derridean notion, help comes with the homonym *la rive*, thus marking exactly the indecision of Derrida's aporetic situation. By contrast, with *l'arrivant*, we are stuck with a French 'participe présent', that is, with a verbal derivative used as a noun that cannot mark an indecisive aporetic situation. What is then one to do? How is one to accept *l'arrivant* for something other than simply a noun, *Mr ou Mme Arrivant* – this border – in lieu of a self-creating and self-effacing aporetic braid? Perhaps, in order to remain faithful or truthful to the process of deconstruction and specifically to Derrida's deconstructive work in *Aporias*, one should therefore *never* read *l'arrivant* on its own, as verb-turned-noun that runs the risk of being turned into a proper name. Perhaps, each time we think of *l'arrivant*, one can do nothing else but to *always let oneself be haunted* by that other expression, *l'arrive* and its homonym, *la rive*. In doing so, one remains faithful to Derrida's aporia; this braid where no single strand can run the risk of delineating between two worlds. The haunting will then flourish as such: *l'arrivant la rive arrive*, thus adding to Derrida's French idiom the necessary English clarification put forward by Thomas Dutoit in his translation of Derrida's French. With this addition, with this extra strand or supplement, the English here prevents the French from creating a proper name effect.

L'arrivant la rive arrive, the border/arrival arriving: two expressions, two idioms, two or more idiomatic strands as part of the multifaceted

Derridean aporia. The addition or the insertion of another strand amidst this aporia helps to generate further aporetologic and aporetographic traces between authenticity and inauthenticity, on this side and that side and between idioms or languages. As such, this addition becomes in our context, what further prevents all forms of *poros* in, amidst or alongside Derrida's aporia, a prevention that respects and allows *at once*, as we will see later, the impossibility of trespassing between dying properly and any other form of dying. The braid can never be achieved and no idiom can be a *poros* to this aporia. Neither abyss nor obstacle, neither properness nor property, *l'arrivant la rive arrive*, the border/arrival arriving give(s) the aporia another chance, while inevitably announcing its ruin and its closure.

A final question needs to be addressed at this stage: how is one then to make sense of this border/arrival arriving in the context of Derrida's commentary on the location of Lorca's play? *L'arrivant la rive arrive* is simply the spectre or the ghost. In Lorca's play, the Beggar, who stands for Death, would then be the newcomer, the most unexpected newcomer who helps the Bridegroom to kill his Bride's lover. However, the Beggar is not simply a newcomer, he/she/it is also an arrival, a border and the process of arriving. He/she/it is also a braid of voices coming from 'way, way back' and going 'far, far from here'. The voices are unsettling and chilling because they do not come from an identifiable source located 'over there', they come as if a previous iteration, always split between a remote distance and an unbearable proximity. They are at once personal and remote, bringing with them cultural and idiomatic characteristics as well as ontological and ontical determinations. The worst aspect of this spectral border/arrival arriving that haunts both the village and the protagonists in the play is that it cannot easily be ignored or brushed aside. It creates worry and anxiety because it cannot be pinned down. Furthermore, the Beggar speaks in a language that is at once recognizable and beyond all possibilities of recognition and whatever he/she/it says, cannot be translated into any other language. In this way, the aporetic braid of voices coming from this spectral apparition haunts us as it haunts itself by its many voices. This is not intended as if one cannot evade contacts with other worlds; this is intended as the inescapable condition of any work of mourning.

The question that we are now left with is finally, how can this mourning *never resolve itself*? For that, it is necessary to turn to the motif of *infinite* mourning in Derrida's reading of paragraphs 46 to 53 of Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

Mourning – one's ownmost possibility

Part of Heidegger's aim in §46 to 53 of *Being and Time* is to build an interpretation of death that is purely ontological, that justifies and demarcates itself from all the ontic sciences. In order to do so, he argues that Dasein is essentially not a living being, that when it comes to Dasein's death, we have to think of a type of ending that is unique to Dasein, a type of death that is inscribed within Dasein's existence. In order to do so, Heidegger introduces his famous distinction between perishing [*verenden*] and deceasing [*ableben*], both of which relate to live/human beings and dying properly [*sterben*] which only concerns Dasein. Unlike animals who simply perish and human beings who simply perish and de cease, Dasein instead *dies properly* [*eigentlich sterben*]. The end of Dasein's body and the end of living beings in general therefore represent a physiological, biological, and social death that is of no relevance to Dasein qua Dasein. The intermediary phenomenon [*Zwischenphänomen*], deceasing, or demising [*ableben*] are a mode of ending that without being a dying [*sterben*] in the 'proper' sense of the term, is no less irreducible to the ending – the perishing – of a purely living being. Dasein therefore can de cease, however, it can de cease only as long as it is dying *properly*. This structure allows Dasein to flee its being-mortal and this fleeing is what constitutes Dasein's unique relation to death, the fact that it is essentially a Being-for-its-own death. Dying properly [*sterben*] has therefore nothing to do with the end of life as such; it only concerns *the being* of Dasein itself.

Now, because it concerns the being of Dasein itself, Dasein cannot simply die once and for all. The death of Dasein is not an event occurring *at* a specific moment in time. Dying, for Dasein, occurs *insofar as it exists*. Its end is not brought about by a specific occurrence or by something coming from outside. Dasein's existence is simply a finite existence within itself and this from the day it is born. Heidegger explains this finite existence by saying that Dasein's death is ultimately the possibility [*Möglichkeit*] of the impossibility [*Unmöglichkeit*] of Dasein. It is towards a possibility of impossibility because Dasein does not just simply relate itself to death as one amongst many other possibilities lying ahead in the future. Death or dying properly for Dasein is a possibility that *sustains itself* as impossibility throughout Dasein's life and constitutes the horizontal space that in turn opens up all other (futural) possibilities. In other words, Dasein is a being-towards-death because it sustains the possibility of death throughout its existence and this possibility is the uneliminable limit of Dasein within which all embodied possibilities unfold.

Put again with a different inflection, Dasein's possibility is constitutive of Dasein's being; it is what enables it to be what it is. Inevitably and consequently, once this uneliminable limit is realized (and not reached), this possibility no longer remains possible; it 'becomes' impossible.

Heidegger's aim in these well-known arguments is really to reject the idea of anticipating death as an event lying ahead *in* the future. Dasein's death does not refer to anything taking place *in* the future. Dasein's death is a rendering possible, it is what frees Dasein from the possibility of the possible. As such, Dasein's death is, as Heidegger concludes in §53, its *ownmost* possibility of being, what encroaches as an indefinite horizon within which we embody all other possibilities. And the most proper possibility of Dasein is what annihilates (impossibility) Dasein and for this reason, this ownmost possibility is the possibility of the impossible.

Derrida approaches these arguments not in order to critique, undermine, or ruin the entire structure of Heidegger's magnum opus, but to simply destabilize Heidegger's hierarchy between ontology and the ontic sciences. His aim is therefore to question the ontological certainty that founds the totality of all lived (non-ontological) contexts. In order to do so, he questions both ontological and ontical attempts. Firstly, he addresses the work of Philippe Ariès, Michel Vovelle, and Louis-Vincent Thomas who all put forward a cultural history or anthropology of death without a proper understanding of the meaning of the word 'death'. Secondly, and by contrast, he questions Heidegger's attempt to put forward an existential analysis of our being-towards-death that is totally unrelated to the empirical event of death and its historical, social, cultural, and anthropological repercussions. In order to achieve the latter, Derrida starts from the same premise as his questioning of the distinction between authentic and vulgar temporality in *Ousia and Gramme*: 'What if there was no other concept of time than the one Heidegger calls "vulgar"? What if, consequently, opposing another concept to the "vulgar" concept was also impracticable, nonviable, and impossible? What if it was the same for death, for a vulgar concept of death?'⁶² Derrida's reading is therefore an attempt to grant another status to Heidegger's hierarchy, one in which neither ontology nor the ontic sciences can address the issue of death without trespassing onto each other's fields of thought.

In this penultimate section and in order to circumscribe further the remit of my translation of Derrida's sentence, *un événement de venue ou d'avenir*, I will focus on Derrida's reading of Heidegger's understanding of Dasein's ownmost possibility. In this reading, Derrida infers that if

being-possible is the being proper to Dasein, then the existential analysis of the death of Dasein will have to make of this possibility its main theme. In other words, no existential analysis of death can possibly go without an analysis of Dasein's ownmost possibility. Derrida claims that there are two possible meanings to this possibility. The first is a 'virtuality' or 'imminence', that is, the imminent coming of an unexpected event, of an event "that can always happen at any instant", one *must expect it, I am expecting it, we are expecting it...*⁶³ This first meaning therefore refers to a sense of impending arrival, one which never goes away: 'one can die any second of time from now on'. This imminence constitutes the first essential constituent of all phenomenological approaches to death, one not perceived as an impending event strictly speaking, but as what establishes the hazy horizon within which we embody all possibilities. The second one refers to a possibility – in the sense of ability *and* capability – a 'possibility as that of which I am *capable*, that for which I have the power, the *ability*, or the potentiality'.⁶⁴ The indecision between capability and ability leaves open the undecidable character of our relation to what is to come: on the one hand, the sense that one is *fit* to step out, to stand up and on the other, the sense that one has the *will* to do these actions, both of which enables us to be who we are. The important aspect of this double definition is that it allows Derrida to reformulate Heidegger's crucial emphasis on the future as the privileged horizon of experience, one in which, as I will attempt to argue, destabilizes Heidegger's well-known ecstatic [from *ek-stasis*, 'stepping out'] triadic temporal structure.

Unsurprisingly, to focus on Derrida's reading of Heidegger's understanding of Dasein's ownmost possibility reveals another problem of translation. This time, it concerns the translation of another French expression, which Derrida uses to make sense of Heidegger's vocabulary. This French expression can be found in a reading of §50 of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, 'Preliminary Sketch of the Existential-ontological Structure of Death'. Derrida's expression is this: '*s'at-tendre l'un l'autre*', which he proposes as a translation of Heidegger's '*steht sich bevor*'. The intention behind this focus is not to challenge Derrida's translation or to compare it with previous ones. Derrida himself justifies and compares his translation at length and there is no need in our context for further exegetic analysis of Heidegger's German in either French or English. The intention is instead to see *how far* this translation allows Derrida to unravel a radically different approach to the issue of time and specifically the issue of the unhinging of space (and) time itself, that which is 'to-come' [*à-venir*]. As I will show, this expression clearly establishes not

only the heart of Heidegger's existential analysis of death, it also brings to the fore, through the prism of the theme of possibility and of Dasein's ownmost possibility specifically, Derrida's clear reformulation of Heidegger's privileged horizon of experience: the future, one for which the future is no longer locked within the hermetic enclosure of Dasein's being-towards-death, but becomes destabilized in a manner that cannot be imaginable as part of Heidegger's strict analysis of time and Being.

Derrida's reading of Heidegger's understanding of death as Dasein's ownmost possibility, takes place at the end of his paper, after a lengthy analysis of the issue of borders in the approach of the topic of death. There are, according to him, two typical series of ontological statements concerning possibility. The first series is an assertion: *Being-possible is proper to Dasein*. The second series is an aporetic supplement, it adds an impossible complement to this possibility: *this proper possibility is simply impossible*. In what follows, I will only focus on the first series of statements. Besides the lack of space, the reason for this limited focus is simple: it is what concerns most directly not only the unhinging of time itself [(l')à-venir], but also and above all, what has been identified as our key sentence: 'the event of a coming, or of a future advent [*un événement de venue ou d'avenir*]'. This does not mean that the possibility of *impossibility* is unrelated to à-venir. This only means that the second series (this aporetic supplement) will remain in the following paragraphs in suspense, hidden, to come.

This first series characterizes death as Dasein's most proper possibility. Derrida gives at this point the exact sentence from *Being and Time* that will concern him in his analysis:

Death is a possibility-of-being that Dasein itself has to take over [*zu übernehmen*] in every case. With death, Dasein awaits itself [*s'at-tend lui-même, steht sich ...bevor*, 'stands before' in Macquarrie and Robinson] in its own most potentiality-for-being.⁶⁵

'What [is Derrida] translating here, in a slightly strange way, by 'awaits itself' [*s'at-tendre*]?' Before answering this question, Derrida immediately announces that – unsurprisingly – his own expression is already untranslatable, that no further language – English, Spanish, Chinese and even perhaps German in a reverse translation – can really make sense of the complexity of his unique French translation. In other words, all future translation will lose out when attempting to translate his French.

Dans la grammaire française du s'at-tendre, là où l'intraductibilité de l'idiome peut produire des effets de shibboleth, plusieurs transitivités se croisent et se fécondent en quelque sorte.

In the French grammatical construction, *s'at-tendre*, where the untranslatability of the idiom can produce effects of *shibboleth*, several transitivities intersect and proliferate.⁶⁶

However, in order not to leave the rest of the world in the dark, Derrida proceeds to explain what is at stake with his 'unique' French expression. We are confronted, he says, with a number of 'transitivities', that is with a multitude of relational connotations between the various meanings of the verbal expression *s'at-tendre*. These connotations intersect and proliferate like the strands of a braid.

The first connotation is a curious one that oddly turns itself upon itself: Derrida states that one can simply 'await oneself' [*s'at-tendre soi-même*]. Derrida admits that it is 'not very common', that it is rarely used. His explanation is curiously unsatisfactory: 'I await myself and nothing else; I myself await myself in myself; and this is the most identifiable and most identifying self-relation, i.e. the ego's memory or promise of itself.'⁶⁷ What is Derrida referring to here? What does he mean by this most identifiable self-relation, this 'to await oneself'? Perhaps the first occasion when one awaits oneself, would be when one decides to come around to an idea: I will await myself to come around to this idea. In this case, it is a promise to oneself that one will eventually decide on something or other. Another occasion would be when one fails to recall an event and one decides to give oneself some time or to project some time of reflection in the future, for the memory to resurface, as in: 'it will come back to me'. In both cases, it is a question of allowing (future) time – or futurity understood in its traditional sense – to unfold in order to achieve a desired result. The memory and the promise both articulate themselves in a self-reflexive way at an unidentifiable moment of decision, which also happens to confirm one's identity to oneself: to keep this promise or to recall this memory proves beyond all doubt that there is a thinking subject that will *live to tell*.

We are here, with this first connotation, in a perfect Heideggerian situation. It refers to an existential possibility that forges ahead in the future the roles, identities, and commitments of beings. This forging ahead represents the basic experience of futurity – again understood in its traditional sense. Dasein is already ahead of itself, able to be what it is not yet. It is the basic form of the towards-onself, circular, and self-reflexive. We understand ourselves out of one's own ability.

Out of or through Dasein's ability-to-be, Dasein projects itself ahead of itself in order to open up the horizon of the futural ecstase, the space within which we comport and understand ourselves futurally. The first occasion mentioned earlier (promising oneself to do this or that) is a question of *pressing forward* into the future the moment when one would come around to an idea. The future is structured here around the promise that by pressing forward into the future, the idea will be accepted. The second occasion mentioned earlier (failing to do this or that) is a question of *projecting* into the future the moment when one will remember something. The future is here partially open: the memory that is sought after might never surface or the promise might be broken. Both occasions not only measure our *ability to be* either an open-minded individual or an individual with a good memory, they also assume that there are always already only moments to come, an urgency intimately tied to the present and unconnected to the radically other of the future.

The second connotation, by contrast, opens further the Heideggerian horizontal ecstases with its hermetic privileging of the future. It opens it onto a radical future, one that cannot be incorporated as ecstase. This second connotation is indeed non-reflexive; it opens up onto 'something... [on]to something completely other: one is expecting [on s'attend à]'.⁶⁸ Derrida articulates two openings: *le s'attendre à* and *le s'attendre que*, which Dutoit translates as 'expecting [s'attendre à]' and 'expecting that [s'attendre que]'.⁶⁹ The difference is subtle, but no less significant. One is simply open to a radical alterity that cannot be envisaged, foreseen, or predicted: *on s'attend à tout* [anything can happen], as the saying goes. The other remains more or less in the realm of certainty: the pronoun *que* or 'that' clearly indicates that whoever is expecting or waiting, knows part of what is going to happen: *on s'attend qu'ils viennent* [we are expecting them], for example. This undecidability between radicality and vague certainty is important, it avoids relying too much on a singular conception of the future as something radically other mixing it, or more precisely contaminating it, with future present.

Here, the important thing is that – not unlike for *l'arrivant* in which one cannot distinguish arrival, gesture of arriving *and* border – the awaiting is neither waiting around not knowing what will happen, waiting for something that might not happen nor *the* waiting itself, but *all three at once and none of them specifically*. How so?

In all three cases, i.e. *le s'attendre soi-même*, *le s'attendre à* and *le s'attendre que* '... can have a notable relation to death, to what is called – death (it is there, and maybe only there [là], that one ultimately *awaits*

oneself or expects, that one expects that; and it is only there that the awaiting oneself may be no other than the expecting the other, or that the other may arrive).⁷⁰ In all three cases, then, there is no possibility of any clear distinction. None of them allow for an ego or a subject to stand back in a detached theoretical pose deliberating over which possible outcome to actualize. *Le s'attendre-à peut devenir un s'attendre-que et même un s'attendre soi-même*. Or again, but differently and in English, *awaiting for* (someone) or *awaiting that* (this happens) can easily turn into a simple *waiting at* (a border) and the permutations multiply again with the verb *to expect*. And inevitably, *awaiting at* (a border) can easily become *awaiting nowhere*, at no identifiable limit, even if, and especially if, these are the limits of truth. Our relationship to the other is never single or unique. It is necessarily contaminated by another one, by the other in me, but also and inevitably by the border itself, the one separating one from the other. (Interestingly, but this would require a lengthy diversion, death, this possibility of impossibility, is represented in Derrida's text by the indefinite French *là* or by the English *there* – a threshold, an arrival, and something arriving in one but also in another or many other languages.)

The third connotation represents 'a third and maybe first possibility in this grammatical structure: we can wait for each other [*on s'attend l'un l'autre, l'une l'autre*']'.⁷¹ This third expression should not be understood simply as if it were involving two people who wait for each other at a railway station, for example. It brings together in one single turn of phrase a number of expectancies, some of which are reflexive, self-reflexive, and even self-reflexive *of* or *for* the other: (1) self-relation: *s'attendre* [awaiting (oneself)] with the emphasis on the 's'; (2) self-relation turned towards a single *one* that can also be *oneself*: *s'attendre l'un* [awaiting (oneself) the one]; (3) straightforward relation to the other: *attendre l'autre* [awaiting the other]; and (4) finally self-relation as an extro-self-relation: *s'attendre l'autre* [awaiting (oneself) the other]. This last one is extro- and not extra- in the sense that it is not beyond the self but outside the self. The two expressions *s'attendre l'un* [awaiting (oneself) the one] and *s'attendre l'autre* [awaiting (oneself) the other] can only be understood as relations to an other that is *never* strictly radically other, the *s'* preventing the very possibility of a straightforward relation to something that would be utterly outside oneself. *Je m'attends l'un* [I await my one] or *je m'attends l'autre* [I await my other] represents the basic forms of the towards-oneself or towards-the-other, but neither expression can vouch for the existence of an *Un* [One] or of an *Autre* [Other] that is not already involved in a

self-relation with an ego or a subject, *je m'—, tu t'—, elle s'—*, etc. This explains why for Derrida, these types of expectancies are able to exist, cooperate, blend, or get along with one another, echoing in this way the closest reference to the radically other, one in which there is no longer strictly speaking any disclosedness in a Heideggerian sense, that is, a *return* from the existential possibility onto which we project ourselves.

In addition to these four individual strands within the braid drawn out by Derrida, there is the single unifying braid that brings all these previous forms of expectancies together and that Derrida identifies, in his transformation (no longer strictly speaking a translation) of Heidegger's *steht sich bevor* as *s'attendre l'un l'autre*, to wait for each other. How is one to understand this curious Derridean expression and the quasi-impossible situation it entails? In order to answer this question it is necessary to explore two key aspects of Derrida's expression.

Firstly, there is the issue of the hyphen between *s'at* and *tendre*. One should not underestimate the importance of this hyphen. It recalls Derrida's other use of the hyphen in the French word *é-loignement* [removal from, departure, estrangement] in his text *Pas*.⁷² When Derrida adds a hyphen to a word, he draws attention to the fact that he holds the word open, that the movement he refers to is already in movement *in* the word itself. This means that *s'at-tendre* or *é-loignement* can no longer strictly be understood as *to await oneself* or *to depart*, two *distinguishable* activities with differing causes and results. With the use of the hyphen, Derrida inscribes instead a movement that prevents the possibility of locating the origin or end of this movement. There is no point of departure or arrival in the act of awaiting oneself or departing from oneself. The words are already in movement as if the sequential arrangement of letters already inscribes a movement that only the hyphen can highlight. In other words, there is, amidst these letters, a *pas* (step/not), or a hyphen that estranges the word from itself. This does not mean that the word is divided. The word is opened or unhinged without being divided; it is stretched by a movement pulling it apart or together, but never in two or into one. *S'at-* reaches out towards or estranges itself from *-tendre*. *De-* moves towards or away from *-parture*. Derrida's hyphen clearly stems from a way of thinking that can no longer start from a fixed point, from a delineation, demarcation, or simply from a limit between one thing and another.

Not unlike *é-loignement*, *s'at-tendre* obviously refers to the Heideggerian expression: *Ent-fernung*. It marks what comes close and what goes away,

but in a situation where neither what comes nor what goes can reach a stage of absolute proximity or complete disappearance. *S'at-tendre*, in all self-relational contexts, is a movement that tends to get as close as possible to what is most close to us and yet what is most close is also the most foreign. This explains why Derrida also uses the parallel homophonic expression: *cela tend* and *il tend*, it or he stretches towards, with all the imaginable permutations that these words can afford, thus provoking, as always with Derrida, endless effects of shibboleths. Derrida indeed writes in French: 'Il se tend, il se tend vers son pouvoir-être le plus propre, il se tend son pouvoir le plus propre, il se le tend lui-même tout autant qu'il se tend vers lui, dès lors que celui-ci n'est autre que lui-même.'⁷³ And Dutoit translates: '*Dasein* stretches [*se tend*], bends towards [*se tend vers*] its most proper being-able, offers to itself [*se tend*] its most proper being-able; it offers it to itself [*se le tend*] as much as it bends towards it [*tend vers lui*], as soon as the latter is nothing other than itself.'⁷⁴ The many connotations of the verb *tendre*, stretching, bending, offering, etc., prevent any strict opposition between what is stretched and what is stretching, between what is bending and what is already bent or what is being offered or is given as an offering. Dislocated by a hyphen, *s'at-tendre* thus gets entrapped in a contraband that affects absolutely everything, that is, everything that presents itself, is present, comes, goes, or arrives.

Secondly, there is the issue of what Derrida understands by the words *l'un* and *l'autre* and how these resonate or interpret Heidegger's ontological structure and its relation to death. *S'attendre l'un l'autre* replicates Heidegger's existential structure for *Dasein*, whereby Being tends or offers itself towards its *Da* in the same movement that it extends or estranges itself from the Other, *Mit*. It replicates it in the sense that it reproduces the existential project figured by Heidegger with the *existenziell* words of anticipation and resolution, but with a subtle difference. For Heidegger, resoluteness is the most authentic mode of *Dasein*'s openness; it represents its truth. *Dasein*'s most authentic possibility (its anticipatory resoluteness) is therefore *not* any other possibility, anticipation, or resolution. *Dasein*'s anticipatory resoluteness would *not* be what it is if *Dasein* projected itself towards any sort of possibility whatsoever. *Dasein*'s resoluteness is precisely, as we have seen, towards *the* extreme possibility that is death – a possibility that precedes any and all of its factual possibilities. Now, the main characteristic of this authentic anticipatory resoluteness is the fact that, as we have seen, it obviously privileges the future. This privileging of the future clearly marks *Dasein*'s project as the act of taking on what is proper to it, its

irreplaceable singularity, that is, the very possibility of coming to itself. Derrida changes this in order to open it or direct it to what is contingent, to what precisely affects the inauthentic life of beings, thus perverting the secluded ontological primacy of Heidegger's analysis. So, instead of resolutely anticipating its irreplaceable singularity, Dasein privileges the future, not as taking on what is proper to itself, but as taking on what is contingent to itself, the other of singularity itself. But how is one to understand this contingent, this other?

This contingent comes in the shape of the other, a radically other that can *only* be understood as part of a self-relation. Instead of having a self-relation that exclusively reduces the self as singularity, Derrida perverts it in order for this self-relation to also incorporate the other. The contingent is therefore the unfathomable tremor shaking the one and the other in any self-relation. As one might put it in French: *l'autre tend vers l'un parce qu'il s'at-tend* [the other reaches towards the one as (or because) it awaits itself], or *l'un tend vers l'autre parce qu'il s'at-tend* [the one reaches towards the other as (or because) it awaits itself]. *S'attendre l'un l'autre* therefore takes on, on the one hand, *s'attendre l'un* [to await (oneself) the one], that is, the privileging of the future as the most *authentic* possibility, one that precedes all factual possibilities, but also *s'attendre l'autre* [to await (oneself) the other], this other privileging of the future based on the most *inauthentic* possibility that *comes* and contaminates the other. *L'un l'autre* thus stand for Derrida as the most radical form of futurity, one in which there can be no distinction, delineation, or delimitation between authenticity and inauthenticity.

The consequence of this is obviously a central question in Derrida: who or what comes first: the one or the other, my death or the death of the other? His answer appears at first unambiguous: "The death of the other thus becomes again "first," always first."⁷⁵ But a closer reading of the text reveals a much more uncertain state of affairs. With *s'at-tendre l'un l'autre*, the alternative between the authentic possibility of my death and the inauthentic possibility of the death of the other no longer has any relevance once one accepts that Dasein is constituted in its very selfhood in terms of a *double* anticipatory resoluteness that stems from both authentic and inauthentic possibilities, that is, from both Dasein's ownmost possibility and the possibility of the death of the other: *l'un l'autre*. In other words, any self-relation always presupposes a welcoming of the other within oneself as different from the self. *L'un* is my death; *l'autre* is the one who dies and leaves nothing more than its memory *in me*. Dasein's existential and existenziell possibilities are thus structured by both the possibility of my death and that of the other. The act of

mourning the other (rememorizing or ghosting [*revenance*]) comes as *s'attendre l'autre*. The act of anticipating my death is what constitutes one's ownmost possibility, and this comes as *s'attendre l'un*. The death of the other thus ceases to become first *without necessarily being last*. The issue is effectively that of an anachrony, a *contretemps*, or that of the non-simultaneity of the encounter between *l'un* and *l'autre*, the fact that, the one or the other [*l'un ou l'autre*] never arrives as one or the other.⁷⁶

Hence Derrida's expression: '*l'un y attend l'autre*'.⁷⁷ In this final expression, *l'un* is therefore interchangeable with *l'autre*. There is no hierarchy. Mourning [*s'at-tendre l'autre*] does not precede my death [*s'at-tendre l'un*], and my ownmost possibility cannot precede all factual possibilities, including empirical death. Why? Because my death occurs every second of time, it is my constant companion, it is what constitutes my *existentiell* possibilities *and* mourning always entails a logic of double-bind, that is, an aporia whereby 'success fails' and 'failure succeeds'.⁷⁸ On the one hand, mourning can only be infinite, because it never leaves us alone even if and especially if one refuses to mourn. As we have seen, all that we do is in some sense bereaved, we all live *after* someone else. On the other, my death never leaves me alone even if and especially if one refuses to die. All that we do is in some sense, in passing, passing away, or passing over. Hence the fact that in Lorca's play, the Mother's mourning springs as if from her own grave, that is, from her own death, both her own death and that of her husband and son come together, 'when [she is] *alone*, from the sole of [her] feet, from [her] roots...'. The awaiting, the *s'at-tendre* or Dasein can only involve *l'un l'autre* as mourning *and* ownmost possibility. I await death, I go towards death; *my* death and I mourn the *other*, however best I can, and these two works, efforts or labours of love, inevitably or inexorably emphasize my late arrival.⁷⁹

All this perhaps explains why Derrida, on another occasion, insists that there is never one death, but always two deaths. He writes, three years after *Aporias*, in a commentary on Maurice Blanchot's sentence, 'the encounter of death with death', in *The Instant of My Death*:

Perhaps it is the encounter of death, which is only ever an imminence, only ever an instance, only ever a suspension, an anticipation, the encounter of death as anticipation with death itself, with a death that has already arrived according to the inescapable: an encounter between what is going to arrive and what has already arrived. Between

what is on the point of arriving and what has just arrived, between what is going to come [*va venir*] and what just finished coming [*vient de venir*], between what goes and comes. But as the same.⁸⁰

As this makes clear, one cannot therefore avoid the fact that one is always encountering the death of the other in me and the death that is already in me. There are two deaths, or more precisely, death is divided in two, in me and in the other. It is divided not because of an originary schism, but of what occurs here or there, in the distancing of the one and the other.

Derrida's aim in his reading of Heidegger's understanding of death as Dasein's ownmost possibility – 'figured' as *s'at-tendre l'un l'autre* – is really to create a braid of expectancies criss-crossing and blurring Heidegger's careful delineations between authenticity and inauthenticity. Each strand of the braid stretches, bends towards, and offers itself, in a movement of self-effacement, to the other and at the same time, to the other in me. Perhaps here we sense for the first time, that Thomas Dutoit's translation of *s'at-tendre l'un l'autre* as to await 'each other'⁸¹ fails to do justice to Derrida's careful reformulation of Heidegger's ontological structure. We cannot await *each* other. We can only await *one another*, or more precisely, we can only await (the) *one* and (the) *other*. Considering all that has been said so far, the emphasis can no longer refer to two people or two deaths considered individually (the other and the other in me, *each* awaiting itself and the other), but to a situation that is at once additional *and* differential (one with the other and/or one without the other). Within a Derridean framework (and maybe only within *this* Derridean framework), Heidegger's *steht sich...bevor* could then perhaps only be understood as: *Dasein awaits one and the other in its ownmost possibility*. The only thing missing from this renewed translation of Derrida's French would then be the gender of the protagonists involved. Derrida is very careful to highlight in his translation of Heidegger's German: *s'at-tendre l'un l'autre, l'une l'autre*. The feminine awaiting, inexistent in German, is unfortunately abandoned in English with the use of the neutral 'each other'. Considering what has been explored so far, how is one to articulate *in English* the addition of this 'e'? How does it alter the careful delineations between authenticity and inauthenticity? How does it affect my death and the work of mourning? And how can one understand again *in English*, a chorus of *feminine* voices, a braid of voices articulated as *l'arrivante, le rivage arrive*, a new expression deliberately confusing the genders of those that are in self-relation? At this stage, one can only leave these enormous questions for another time.

In what has been explored so far, three sentences have held our attention. The first one is the focus of the overall chapter: 'the event of a coming, or of a future advent [*un événement de venue ou d'avenir*]'.⁸² In the context of the aporia as braid (section 1) and of *l'arrivant* (section 2), the sentence that concerned us was 'the coming or the future advent of the event [*la venue ou l'avenir de l'événement*]'.⁸³ In the context of Derrida's reading of Heidegger's sentence, *steht sich . . . bevor*, the focus was on the instability at play in his translation: 'to await each other [*s'at-tendre l'un l'autre, l'une l'autre*]'. To conclude, I will add a fourth sentence to these three. This sentence is again from Derrida, but this time, from *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*: 'the adventure or the event of the entirely other to come [*l'aventure ou l'événement du tout autre*]'.⁸⁴

How is one to make sense of all these events/advents? How is one to understand the event of a coming from the event of the entirely other to come? How can one distinguish between a future advent and an adventure? How can one relate the awaiting each other to these events/advents? And finally, how do(es) the border/arrival arriving hold(s) itself/themselves on these unstable grounds? Before addressing the direction of these questions, it is necessary to go over one more time, the various elements at our disposal.

'The aporia of death would be one of the place-names for what forms the braid and keeps it from coming undone.'⁸⁵ No longer a barrier, gate, sea, or ocean, Derrida's aporia problematizes with the creation of an aporetic braid the demarcation between authenticity [*Eigentlichkeit*] and inauthenticity [*Uneigentlichkeit*], truth and untruth, the possibility of impossibility and the impossibility of possibility itself. The braid [*la tresse*] is made up of *innumerable traces*, each erasing itself as it appears. The braid, this aporia, this ever-present and unyielding impossibility, does not appear to us as if from nowhere. The braid refuses the very possibility of experience. It does not separate this side from that side, my mortality from that of the other, my life, and what lies beyond it. The braid is simply with us at all time, preventing us from finding a way out of our mortal condition. The braid entraps us in a world without *poros*, without an origin or an end. If the braid had been conceived as a traditional non-passage or non-path, the coming of the future would have taken the shape of *an* event. The braid would then be either the realization of the immensity and incommensurability of both the existential and *existenziell* problem or the abrupt apparition of an overwhelming difficulty: to *suddenly* be made aware of one's own mortality. If the braid had been conceived in this way, it would therefore have been a visible and identifiable trace, line, demarcation, or borderline, between life and

death, between my death and the mourning of the other. It would have been an aporia calling for a way out of the aporia, an immediate *poros*, or resolution. However, the braid *cannot* be experienced because it is necessarily intertwined with the unhinging of space (and) time [(l')à-venir]. This does not mean that the braid is *prior* to any event whatsoever or that it dislocates the event. The braid is always already *a part* of the event of Being, it is with us, by our side, in us, an (im)possibility inhabiting us as if an unnameable and untraceable parasite feeding off us and giving us our ownmost possibility. As such, it is what threatens the very possibility of (l')à-venir.

In this way, the braid is the absolute *arrivant*, the coming of and to death weaving and unweaving itself with us and without us. It is both with us and without us because it stems neither from us nor from a radicality that has no name, but from the relation of the one with the other. It is at once an indistinguishable arrival, gesture of arriving *and* border, none of which prevails over the others. As such, it constitutes a suspension amidst the polysemic nature of language; it is what prevents the very possibility of clearly identifying not only a single braid or trace, but also its chance or ruin. However, this suspension is also what makes these strands interweave and haunt each other to form a perpetually incomplete braid. It is this game of haunting, this interlacing play, that Derrida qualifies as 'the coming or the future advent of the event [*la venue ou l'avenir de l'événement*]'.⁸⁶ In this way, this braid, this aporia of death, is neither arriving nor arrival, and it certainly is no border strictly speaking. It is the arrival of the shore onto which we are arriving, it is the act of arriving on a shore as arrival; it is the shore that lets us arrive as arrival – three possibilities of impossibilities interlacing or haunting each other.

As this structure of experience, one can only await (the) one and (the) other. I await myself as the one or the *da* of my Being and I mourn the other as the *other* of my being. The aporetic braid not only privileges my future as my ownmost possibility, a possibility that precedes all factual possibilities, but it also privileges my future as the most inauthentic possibility, one that can only be experienced through mourning. Derrida's reading of Heidegger's existential analysis of the death of Dasein brings together the two meanings of Dasein's ownmost possibility in order to contaminate them and prevent at all costs the possibility of differentiating them with any clarity. On the one hand, Dasein's ownmost possibility is indeed a virtuality or an imminence, an unexpected event that can happen at any instant. It is ours in the sense that it is our coming [*notre venue, notre approche*], our thrownness. The coming

[*la venue*] would then be *the* event we are expecting, an impending arrival that stays with us every second of time. On the other hand, Dasein can only relate to its ownmost possibility through the mourning of the other. It is the death of the other that gives us the sense of both ability *and* capability. It is through the death of the other that I gain the power and the potentiality to expose the infinite range of possibilities lying ahead of me in the future. It is because the death of the other always comes first and not because Dasein is a possibility that sustains itself as impossibility throughout Dasein's life, that the death of the other constitutes the true horizontal space that opens up all other (futural) possibilities. However, even if the death of the other comes first, the braid prevents me from clearly privileging one over the other. *My* death, the death of the *other*, always comes first – paradoxically and anachronistically.

The key sentence by Derrida that structured this chapter – ‘the event of a coming, or of a future advent [*un événement de venue ou d'avenir*]⁸⁷ – with its other adjoining sentences thus becomes the clearest ‘representation’ of Derrida's existential *and* *existenziell* interpretation of death. This ‘representation’ – between quotation marks because it could never become a full picture – perhaps has only one aim, that of highlighting the fact that the act of dying – an act that cannot be distinguished from the act of being alive – *and* the work of mourning are perhaps nothing other than the task of invention. In the event of a coming [*un événement de venue*], there can be no anticipation of the event itself, but the simple invention of what is happening (a coming [*une venue*]). The impossible passage remains in a constant state of invention. In the event of a future advent [*un événement d'avenir*], there can be no prophecy or expectancy, there can only be the invention of an adventure (what is yet to come [*un avenir*]). The refused, denied, or prohibited passage is also still to come and therefore still to be invented. Can I really choose between the coming event of my death – the only certainty I have in my life – and the coming event of the death of the other – the only certainty I have of my death? And between the two, can I really distinguish with any clarity that which separates my death from the death of the other – *l'arrivant(e)*?

In *Psyche*, Derrida mentions ‘the adventure or the event of the entirely other to come [*l'aventure ou l'événement du tout autre*]⁸⁸. Here, it is obviously a question of distinguishing between any invention whatsoever and the work of deconstruction itself, that is, the invention of the impossible. However, is the invention of the impossible (the work of deconstruction) not precisely at once the invention of what is happening

(my death, the event of the wholly other, of what does not have a name, of what stands for nothing) *and* the invention of an adventure (the death of the other, this event that gives me the possibility of saying 'my death', this event that traumatizes me and sends me on the perilous adventure of mourning)? If one follows this logic, then the work of deconstruction, as the invention of the impossible, therefore becomes the invention of one's own 'to-come' (the spacing (and) temporizing that 'institutes' our death) and that of the other (the spacing (and) temporizing that 'institutes' the language of (my) death), providing, of course, that no foundational thematic can be drawn from this self-relation. We reach here, perhaps, the heart of Derrida's philosophy. However, one can only leave it here – perhaps unsurprisingly – in suspense [*en suspens*]. In a more modest way and more in tune with the thematic of this chapter, perhaps one can risk asking if we are not here ultimately with this aporia with the invention of a 'we', of a plurality or community? Are we not here with an invention that takes place as an exchange of calls between parties that can never be distinguished with any clarity, an exchange of calls taking place in irreducible plurality? As Derrida says, 'the other is indeed what is not inventible, and it is then the only invention in the world, the only invention of the world, our invention, the invention that invents us. For the other is always another origin of the world and we are (always) (still) to be invented. And the being of the we, and being itself. Beyond being.'⁸⁹

With Derrida's reading of *Aporias*, we are not confronted with a thanatology, a thanatopsis, or even a thanatophobia, but with a strategic operation that consists of freeing the act of translation – in this case the act of translating Heidegger – from its subordination to a Being, a self, or a subject and allow this act to reveal itself as the idiosyncratic *work of death*. Not unlike writing, translation, this articulation of space and time, this becoming-space of time and this becoming-time of space, indeed marks, as Derrida tells us in *Of Grammatology*, 'the dead time within the presence of the living present, within the general form of all presence. The dead time is at work.'⁹⁰ There is no translation without this dead time. All translation marks the possibility of my death and that of the other. By contrast, death occurs every time there is translation, every time there is a mark. Understood in this way, translation becomes that which reveals the unhinging of space (and) time, a revelation, which in return, constitutes our desire for presence and/or that of subjectivity. In other words, translation is what discloses our work (the work of deconstruction) and is a witness to all our unhinging efforts. As Derrida says, 'all graphemes are of a testamentary essence',⁹¹ including

the braid, this *arrivant(e)* from which or by which, one can only await (the) one and (the) other.

Bridegroom Stay here tonight.

Mother I can't I must get home.

Bridegroom Just to sit on your own?

Mother How will I be on my own? My head is full of memories of
my men and the fights they fought.

Bridegroom But that's all those fights are now . . . memories.

Mother I'll fight on for as long as I live.

Bridegroom Whatever you say.⁹²

Conclusion

The three chapters of this book constitute three different approaches to (or departures from) the notion of *à-venir* in the work of Derrida, Malabou, and Nancy via the crux of translation. The overall outcome is unsatisfactory in terms of translation or philology. The attempt to make sense of each specific inflection ends up with three undecidables: neither success nor failure. The expression *voir venir* becomes 'go wonder/farewell', an opposite expression that in relation to Catherine Malabou's notion of plasticity, can no longer be understood on its own. Jean-Luc Nancy's *survenue* cuts through the English in order to remain oddly *survenue*, a word with Gallic resonances that could never replace more familiar English terms used to capture the movement of this other Gallic concept: *jouissance*. Finally, Jacques Derrida's *événement de venue* fails to be understood as an event coming (the death of the one) because it is necessarily interwoven in a braid with another liminal event, the event of an advent [*un événement d'avenir* – the death of the other]. The unsatisfactory aspect of these attempts at translation or philological analysis is not surprising. The attempt was not so much to come up with a 'proper' translation, but to plasticize, pervert, or push further already existing translations even if some of these did not exist – as is the case with Nancy's *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*. In each case, these metamorphoses from the French into the English have the curious effect of questioning the original French, thus expanding perhaps in an unanticipated direction the initial intentions of the authors studied.

Considering this unsatisfactory situation, how can one conclude with a semblance of dignity, without losing face in front of these partly successful, partly failed attempts, to translate a few words? Perhaps the only thing that can be done is *not* to conclude, but again, in order to keep things in an unfinished state and to evade the risk of generalizing,

to push things further. In other words, the idea is not to look back in sorrow, but to build upon these odd attempts, to confidently continue emphasizing the lack *or* the possibility of achievement. In order to do this, it is perhaps necessary to simply structure this conclusion around yet another text. However, unlike the three main chapters of this book, the intention here will not be to propose a close reading of a final text, but on the contrary, to bring things to an end, to a liminal situation where meaning vacillates into another world. This text is, perhaps unsurprisingly, Derrida's commentary on Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator' published in both French *and* English as: 'Des Tours de Babel'. The English version is by Joseph F. Graham. The reason for choosing this text in this conclusion is twofold. Firstly, it brings together the two main issues that have held our attention so far, that of *à-venir* [futurity, that is, the multiplicity of tonal differences of *or* alongside *à-venir*] and translation. The original question put forward at the start of this book was 'how do the two breaking movements of *à-venir* and translation touch each other?' So far, this was addressed diagonally with words such as *voir venir*, *venue* and *survenue*. The task is now to tackle this directly via Benjamin and Derrida. Secondly, and most importantly, a close reading of Derrida's text prevents me from extrapolating on what has been explored so far. The idea is simply to avoid at all costs falling into the trap of totalizing on *voir venir*, *survenue*, and *venue*. By remaining close to Babel, one can perhaps never gain a full picture, but at least one can avoid the pretensions of being God.

The task, if one may borrow this expression, will not be here to parrot or parody Derrida's translation of Benjamin's famous text. In other words, the aim will not be to translate Derrida's 'translation of another text on translation'.¹ The task will simply be, once more, to push this translation further away from its original, to plasticize, metamorphose, or pervert it so that it no longer follows Derrida's original intentions and yet paradoxically stays as close as possible to its main topic. The hope is therefore that this final queer reading manages in the process to invent a new language, or maybe again, to creolize two or maybe three languages in order to expose futurity *as* translation of one in (or as) the other. Finishing with Derrida should not be seen as if I wanted to give him the last word. Derrida is not the one to have the final say. Malabou and Nancy form part of the intrinsic texture of this conclusion, even if their voice only appears in filigree through a reading of Derrida and Benjamin's words.

Finally, and as usual, the following reading is deliberately selective and does not constitute either a summary of current interpretations of the act of translation or a synopsis of Derrida's famous text.² The

fact that Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida share the view that language is not an agreed system of signs, that their view on translation is anti-rationalist and is mainly inspired by early German Romanticism (and specifically the work of Friedrich Schelling and Friedrich Schleiermacher) and the fact that their ideas are imbued with (Jewish) theological connotations is well known and cannot be reiterated here in any satisfactory way. This is a conclusion and as such, the deliberately brutal sampling operated here only serves to bring together all the elements explored in this book under one light: translation and *à-venir*. In this respect, there will therefore be again, as in previous chapters, no reference here to the problem of equivalence or to the mimetic reformulation of expressions in translation.

The selections chosen from Derrida's text explore a specific number of themes relating to *à-venir* and translation. These themes have not been chosen randomly. They simply revisit a number of key arguments explored directly or indirectly in the preceding pages. Firstly, the idea that the promise that structures *à-venir* and translation can be understood together, and that there is a law governing this structure. Secondly, the notion that translation is another inflection or tonal difference stemming from *or* alongside *à-venir*. Thirdly, the idea that intra- and inter-linguistic translations have a spatial and temporal dimension that radically alters its process of transformation. Finally, the notion that translation is the work of death and that conversely, death is equally the embodiment of translation and that the two operate on the edge of the other. These themes will articulate themselves through five separate sections: the law of translation (*Nurturing Law*), the sur-vival of texts (*God: À-traduire*), the figuration of the limits of translation (*Trait*), the promise of translation (*The Promise*), and finally, the messianic dimension of translation and its fall into madness (*Entfernung or Danger is Everywhere*). Because the sections focus on explicit themes and are dedicated to specific passages in Derrida's text, the commentaries are necessarily succinct. The following sections are therefore not comprehensive, or exegetic. The idea is simply to bring things to a new beginning, to new start in the research.

Nurturing law

... at stake [in any translation] is a law, an injunction for which the translator has to be responsible. He must also acquit himself, and of something that implies perhaps a fault, a fall, an error and perhaps a crime.³

In any translation, a law is therefore at stake. What is this law? The law is obviously not the law of property, the law that establishes what is a proper translation; that is, a translation that respects the idiosyncrasies of the mother tongue or that of the language to be translated (grammar, syntax, and vocabulary), i.e. all that which unnecessarily pins down a language as a supposedly self-contained entity. The law that Derrida refers to is a subtler one. Derrida uses the words: commitment, duty, debt, responsibility, but also fault, fall, error, and crime. Derrida's law is therefore not between two languages, but between on the one hand, a destiny, or a destination (commitment, duty, debt, responsibility) and on the other, a chance, or a contingency (fault, fall, error, and crime). It concerns what links us to the past, to these texts we read and attempt to comprehend, and to the future, what we project onto the future, what we accomplish or hope to transform, translate, or simply interpret. The law is therefore applicable to both inter- and intra-linguistic translations, in our case, to Franco-French or Anglo-English translations as well as Franco-English ones. This law rules the exchange of words or texts between languages, not in a geographical or spatial way, but in a uniquely temporal sense: from the past into the future and vice versa. This law concerns *a duty* or a debt to our ancestors who have given us these texts and *the chance* to redeem ourselves for not having understood or translated them in time.

For the moment let us retain this vocabulary of gift and debt, and a debt which could well declare itself insolvent, when a sort of 'transference', love and hate, on the part of whoever is in a position to translate, is summoned to translate, with regard to the text to be translated (I do not say with regard to the signatory or the author of the original), to the language and the writing, to the bond and the love which seal the marriage between the author of the 'original' and his own language.⁴

Correction: this law does not involve ancestors and translators strictly speaking. Derrida alters Benjamin and brackets his reserve: '(I do not say with regard to the signatory or the author of the original)'. The task of the translator involves neither two individuals (the writer and his or her translator), nor two texts (the original and its translation), but an author and his or her own language. All acts of translation are under this strange law that brings together language and time. It is the law that regulates how one responds to (or how one inherits) this language *and* transforms it anew, making it significant for our times. This law is unavoidable; it is

part and parcel of any attempt at language. As such, it regulates the task [*Aufgabe*] of the translator. How then is one to understand the specific task of the translator in relation to this law?

The task of the translator is not that of simply translating a foreign text into another language, but that of having to invent a new language from the basis of one's very own language. This invention does not therefore come from the other, from the language of the text to be translated, but on the contrary, from the translator's very own (mother) tongue. The task of the translator is that of inventing one's own (mother) tongue, a language that can never be acknowledged as being entirely one's own. We are here in a situation where one's own language can never be identified with any certainty. We are here playing with the non-identity with itself of all languages. One's language needs to be invented because one's language simply does not belong to us. Monolingualism (idiom or dialect) is never at one with itself, as if a self-contained entity from which one can translate, transfer, or transform.

For the classical linguist, of course, each language is a system whose unity is always reconstituted. But this unity is not comparable to any other. It is open to the most radical grafting, open to deformations, transformations, expropriations, to a certain a-nomie and deregulation. So much so that the gesture – here, once again, I am calling it writing [*écriture*], even though it can remain purely oral, vocal, and musical: rhythmic or prosodic – that seeks to affect monolanguage, the one that one has without having it, is always multiple... This gesture is in itself plural, divided, and over determined.⁵

The task of the translator therefore concerns all forms of writing, therefore all forms of translation: written, visual, aural, or involving any or all other senses. It takes place at the moment of writing (in its expanded signification), whether this writing is a translation or not. The task therefore does not concern issues of property or equivalence, but those governing one's relationship with language in general. The task is *to pass* between an inherited language and the language we invent, between what comes from the past and what one creates for the future – well or badly, in any case, never indifferent to what has *come* to us. This is made all too clear if, following Derrida, we pay attention to the difference between *Setzen* (the posing of the position, of *thesis* and *nomos*) and *Übersetzung* (the transposition of this position).⁶ The task of the translator does not concern itself with passing beyond any established

position, word, text, language, or certainty as such; it concerns instead the invention of something that necessarily affects or produces effects. The task does not concern the activity of passing, bypassing, or trespassing onto another position, a beyond the origin, but that of extending a previous question, of posing a further question, of opening onto the other, and to call for further transformations. The task is therefore necessarily the positing of an event necessarily determined (spatially and geographically): a redistribution, a new throw of the dice – hence its infinite potentiality. As remarked in the introduction, in the beginning was not *one* word, but the possibility of semantic conflict, of another way of repeating or (mis)interpreting the word. Translation and the spacing (and) temporizing of language cannot be dissociated from each other, and their occurrence or to be more precise, their co-occurrence, is necessarily divided, multiple.

The task of the translator is therefore always already involved in the aporia of one's relationship with language, a relationship necessarily infused with a number of inescapable affectivities, dispositions, or tendencies: the guilt of never being able to fulfil one's promises, the crime of stealing from others, the hope of being forgiven for not being as generous or careful and the chance of an unexpected encounter, etc. This aporia is here again not an impossible passage strictly speaking, but a double event. Firstly, it concerns the event of a coming language, the event of the invention of our own language, one which can never be reduced to the simplicity of a determinable eventuality and one for which one never knows where one is going. The aporetic characteristic of this task is therefore that of facing the utterly untranslatable character of the language that is to be invented. This event is also aporetic in another sense. It is aporetic because it is essentially intimate; but of an intimacy that is so private and personal that it defies the very possibility of understanding it as a specific *form* of intimacy, that is, as a personal secret or a secret between two things or two people and identifiable as such.

The question at this juncture is perhaps this: how can the law of translation operate in such impossible intimacy and in such darkness? How can such an exposed intimacy actually *make sense* at all? The answer is simple: the intimacy between oneself and language and its orientation towards the unknown and the law that governs such intimacy and such directionality cannot be dissociated. It is precisely the law that allows for such snug closeness and openness towards the other. It is the law that allows us – all of us, even those not categorized as writers, translators, composers – to make sense in writing or in speech and this in whatever language, idiom, or expression. And considering such a

double aporetic situation, this 'making sense', this process of reasoning or translating reality or another text, can only have one (Benjaminian) way of operating: that of maturation. This is how translation operates and how one can make sense of this intimacy and this exposure to the unknown. The important thing about this maturation is that it is *not* a growth, direction, or destination, but an inescapable turning or deviation from what appears momentarily to our short-sighted eyes as a straight line or course.

[The ordinary conception of translation implied a] ... process of restitution, the task [*Aufgabe*] was finally to render [*wiedergeben*] what was first given, and what was given was, one thought, the meaning. Now, things become obscure when one tried to accord this value of restitution with that of maturation. On what ground, in what ground, will the maturation take place if the restitution of the meaning given is for it no longer the rule?⁷

The allusion to maturation of a seed could resemble a vitalist or geneticist metaphor; it would come, then, in support of the genealogical and parental code which seems to dominate this text. In fact it seems necessary here to invert this order and recognise what I have elsewhere proposed to call the 'metaphoric catastrophe': far from knowing first what 'life' or 'family' mean whenever we use these familiar values to talk about language and translation; it is rather starting from the notion of language and its 'sur-vival' in translation that we could have access to the notion of what life and family mean.⁸

The law of translation therefore concerns what perpetuates itself. However, when referring to language and translation, the words 'maturation', 'life', 'family', or 'perpetuation' cannot refer, as Derrida makes clear, to something eternally present in an idiom or to a presence proper to language that would extend itself across the ages. If this were the case, if one understood Benjamin as if he was referring to the timeless movement of language, to the survival of texts across time and to the family these texts manage to produce, then a metaphoric catastrophe would indeed take place. For Derrida, the only way to read Benjamin's reference to this series of words expressing evolution or progress is on the contrary to think about the afterlife or the survival of languages as if a deviating conjunction (what changes course while, paradoxically and at the same time, maintaining things together), wherein what survives in translation can never be reduced to self-identity and therefore to the

representation of what is proper to language. It is deviating in the sense that it is differing and deferring, it is a conjunction in the sense that it brings things together without ever constituting itself as a junction between past and present or past and future.⁹ With maturation, it is therefore a question of *la survie*, surviving, living-on, or more precisely, living-over or beyond the opposition between living and dying. The meaning of this maturation as *la survie* does *not* therefore *add* itself to living and dying. It is as Derrida says, 'originary', life as sur-viving; and translation is the work of this sur-viving.

In this way, when Derrida refers to 'maturation' and 'sur-vival' in Benjamin, he is in fact addressing the issue of what separates us from (or plasticizes itself into) our own target language. If one follows Derrida, then one discovers that if English is here the target language, then it is always already to come [*à venir*], that is, always already engaged in a deviating conjunction. One can therefore only think of language, of the language we use in writing or translating, in the context of their future, to what effectively always amounts to *another* language. Hence the fact that he divides Benjamin's crucial word, survival, with a hyphen. The vitalist survival becomes *sur-vival*, *le sur la vie*, *le sur langage*, what extends it, makes it other to life and language. Here, one would have to start again, after Malabou's *sur-prise* and Nancy's *sur-venue*, with the whole analysis of what the prefix *sur-* actually means, but we will leave this for another time. At this stage, in the context that concerns us, this *sur-vival*, this law, this shaky and unidentifiable conjunction that links up what is divided only to deviate its course, is that of absolute translation, not a first or metalanguage or an a priori to all languages that would guarantee orderly flow between oneself and language or between entry language and exit language, but the movement of (the) language(s) (of the other). As Derrida says in *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin* in a commentary on his own situation vis-à-vis the French idiom:

The monolingualism of whom I speak speaks a language of which he is *deprived*. The French language is not his. Because he is therefore deprived of all language, and no longer has any other recourse... he is thrown into absolute translation, a translation without a pole of reference, without an originary language, and without a source language [*langue de départ*]. For him, there are only target languages [*langues d'arrivée*].¹⁰

[This absolute translation without a pole of reference] is really a desire to invent a *first language* that would be, rather, a *prior-to-the-first language*... It is not even a preface, a 'foreword', or some lost

language of origin. It can only be a target or, rather, a future language, a promised sentence, a language of the other, once again, but entirely other than the language of the other as the language of the master or colonist, even though, between them, the two may sometimes show so many unsettling resemblances maintained in secret or held in reserve.¹¹

The law of maturation or *sur-vival*, the law that brings together the past, the present, and the future in a gesture of passing from one to the other, is therefore the law of absolute translation or that of radical translatability. What passes not between a donor and a donee, or an ancestor and a descendant, but between language and us is always already engaged in the inflections of language, *in its change of course*. The law of radical translatability that governs us is therefore based on the simple understanding of the logic of supplementarity. There can only be a target language because in language one is always already divided, in the play of *différance*. The law of translation is therefore always a nurturing law, a law that never posits itself as authority, but encourages and regulates its own development as it develops or more precisely, plasticizes itself amidst the plurality of languages. We can sense here the importance of this law in relation to the invention of concepts in philosophy. In a commentary on the notion of translation in early German Romanticism, Derrida makes clear that there cannot be any philosophy without a certain inventiveness and a certain ability for creative transformation. He writes, quoting Schelling:

Like mathematicians, philosophers have a relation to the universal, to be sure, and are united in their science, but they have the originality of being able to be original because they are capable of this 'transformation of form' [*Wechsel der Formen*] that also calls for a trans-duction or trans-lation [*une trans- ou une tra-duction*], an *Übersetzung* ... which posits a novelty, imposes and superimposes it inasmuch as it ensures the passages beyond differential particularity.¹²

Deviation, a change of course, the law of maturation does not exist *sui generis*, it comes with any translation, that is, with any invention, philosophical or otherwise.

In our context, the questions that come up at this stage are these: how has this law manifested itself in the previous chapters? How can we sense the process of maturation? What brought together elements from the past in order to deviate them from their course? In relation to our

first chapter, the turning points between *voir venir* and 'go wonder...' are excessive, but of an excessiveness that, even inaccurate, prevents (me at least) to think otherwise, off on a tangent where nothing no longer comes straightforwardly as if a simple game of expectancy. The English word 'survenue' expands Roland Barthes's margin of indecision between pleasure and *jouissance*. The *arrivant*, *cet événement de venue*, which can only be understood as part of Derrida's slippery braid that weaves and unweaves itself, suspends the polysemic nature of language only to relaunch it again. In between all these steps/not, these 'goings off on a tangent', these expansions and relauches, not much happens, maybe an excessive intensification, never strictly necessary or unnecessary and that can never be perceived as such.

God: *à-traduire*

The question however, remains: what could it mean to talk about the movement of languages, the point at which a target is identified and language is *set in motion on a new tangent*? How is one to make sense of the task of the translator as the task of someone *inventing* target languages? What does Derrida mean by absolute translation or what was transformed earlier into a radical translatability? Here it is necessary to return to Derrida's 'Des Tours de Babel'. Further down in this text, Derrida reintroduces, in the form of a question, his understanding of the *à-venir*, but this time in relation to translation, and comes up with a new expression: *à-traduire*. This new expression should *not* be seen as if a late addition or as a way of encapsulating all our work so far in some sort of quick conclusion. *À-traduire* adds itself to the multiplicity already explored as yet *another* displacement of or alongside *à-venir*. *À-traduire* is only one tonality amidst futurity, this multiplicity of tonalities, each of which has different characteristics and as such can never bring the spacing (and) temporizing of language together. Let us read what Derrida says:

... the bond or obligation of the debt does not pass between a donor and a donee but between two texts (two 'productions' or two 'creations'). This is understood from the opening of the preface, and if one wanted to isolate theses, here are a few, as brutally as in any sampling:

1. The task of the translator does not announce itself or follow from a reception...

2. Translation does not have as essential mission any communication...
3. ...Translation is neither an image nor a copy.

These three precautions now taken (neither reception, nor communication, nor representation), how are constituted the debt and the genealogy of the translator? Or first, how those of that which is *to-be-translated*, of the *to-be-translated*? [ou d'abord de ce qui est à-traduire, de l'à-traduire?]¹³

The question, which focuses most precisely on the task at hand, is an awkward one and remains, inevitably with Jacques Derrida, untranslatable. Joseph Graham translates *à-traduire* with 'to-be-translated', thus including a temporal dimension (the future to *be*, the translation to *be*) that does not exist in Derrida's expression. Derrida's French is specific; his expression opens itself to the unknown and perhaps should be translated into English – awkwardly – as 'yet-to-translate', thus transforming the preposition *à* into the adverb *yet*. There are two important aspects to Derrida's French expression: the first one is that translation *might not happen* or *be* and for this reason cannot be translated with 'to-be-translated'. *À-traduire* is essentially structured in order for it to be radically open to what is contingent or unknown. The second aspect to Derrida's expression is that it puts forward a duty: one must translate. As Derrida says in another context, it concerns 'the imperative of translation, the task of the translator, the duty-to-translate [*devoir traduire*]'.¹⁴ One thinks one knows what the target language represents or looks like, and yet while we fulfil our duty, one is effectively working towards the unknown, towards an entirely new language that one could not possibly foresee. *À-traduire* is the opening onto the contingent of the task of translation itself.

Now Derrida pushes this one step further with an extraordinarily abyssal remark relating to Benjamin's understanding of the role of God in relation to translation. He writes:

This law first establishes itself, let us repeat, as a demand in the strong sense, a requirement that delegates, mandates, prescribes, assigns... [This demand, this] ... requirement of translation in no way suffers in so far as it is the very structure of the work. In this sense the surviving dimension is an a priori – and death would not change it at all. No more than it would change the requirement [*Forderung*] that runs through the original work and to which only 'a thought of

God' can respond or correspond [*entsprechen*]. Translation, the desire for translation, is not thinkable without this correspondence with a thought of God. In the text of 1916 ['On Language as Such and on the Language of Man'], which already accorded the task of the translator, his *Aufgabe*, with the response made to the gift of tongues and the gift of names [*Gabe der Sprache, Gebung des Namens*], Benjamin named God at this point, that of a correspondence authorizing, making possible or guaranteeing the correspondence between the languages engaged in translation. In this narrow context, there was also the matter of the relations between language of things and language of men, between the silent and the speaking, the anonymous and the nameable, but the axiom held, no doubt, for all translation: 'the objectivity of this translation, is guaranteed in God' (trans. M. de Gandillac, 91). The debt, in the beginning, is fashioned in the hollow of this 'thought of God'.

Strange debt, which does not bind anyone to anyone. If the structure of the work is 'survival', the debt does not engage in relation to a hypothetical subject-author of the original text – dead or mortal, the dead man, or 'dummy', of the text – but to something else that represents the formal law in the immanence of the original text.¹⁵

Derrida's dense paragraph brings out the full meaning he gives to the expression *à-traduire*. If one reads this text quickly, it gives the impression that *à-traduire* references what Benjamin calls in the text of 1916, 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man', the 'spiritual essence of language', which Benjamin understands as what *gives power* to language.¹⁶ Language has the power of revelation and God is the one who gives us this power. God talks our language, He uses our Word, we pray in His language, and no modern semiotic could possibly reduce it (or us) to silence. When Derrida says *à-traduire*, he is obviously not referring to this mystical power, but more simply to the capacity or the ability of all languages to communicate *by themselves*. Here, it is important to pay attention to what Derrida is actually reading. He insists on several occasions that he is reading and translating Maurice de Gandillac's translation of Benjamin's two texts with recourse to the original German texts. Consequently, Derrida is focusing here on what Gandillac is writing in French and then comparing it with Benjamin's German. The key expression in German is '*Jede Sprache teilt sich selbst mit*',¹⁷ which in English becomes, 'all language communicates itself'.¹⁸ Gandillac translates Benjamin's German with '*tout langage se communique lui-même*'.¹⁹ In French as in German, the focus is on the

crucial pronoun *se* [*sich*], which disappears in the abbreviated English 'itself' [*lui-même*]. What could this *se* [*sich*] actually refer to besides the language to which it refers? Benjamin obviously calls this *se* [*sich*] the 'spiritual essence of language' [*Dieses "Sich" ist ein geistiges Wesen*].²⁰ Now for obvious reasons, Derrida again deliberately ignores this 'essence'. He is only interested in language's capacity or ability to communicate by itself, to survive, to live on. His attempt is really to understand language free from its subordination not only to a God, but also to a self or a subject, to see how it can survive by itself [*se communiquer*] between two creative gestures.

In order to understand this *se*, this capacity or ability of language to generate the call of translation, Derrida makes clear that, not unlike Benjamin, he is only interested in the *immediacy* of communication and not on the contents of linguistic communication. The focus is not on what is communicated, but on communicability itself and therefore on translatability, that which *calls* for translation. Now for the young Benjamin of 'On Language' (1916), this *se*, this communicability or translatability, emerges through a specific theological scheme. This scheme can be summarized very succinctly as follows. Since his fall from paradise, man remains excluded from the language of truth and is forced to live amidst the multiplicity of languages. His task is to return through the process of endless translation towards this original lost language, the language of Eden. Translation is therefore the job of passing from the language of things and of man to the language of God. This job of passing from one stage to another, this job of translation, is facilitated by the fact that man was created independently from the creative verb, therefore giving him the power to be creative with words. This God-like creativity constitutes what sustains pure translatability, a translatability which only God can authorize, make possible, or guarantee because He alone knows the outcome of the process of translation: that is, to be able to master His language. From this theological perspective, language becomes not only communication of what is communicable but also communication of what is *not* communicable, i.e. the work of God: pure communicability or translatability.

Derrida obviously does not follow this scheme. As he says, he does not 'wish... to reduce [his] role to that of a passer or passerby'.²¹ Instead he wants to come up with a discrete way to find a way around the issue of what he calls the hollow of the thought of God and to reorganize Benjamin's thought outside of all theological connotations and this without recourse to anthropological, positivistic, or logistic interpretations of language. In order to do so and justify the absolute

translatability of language and therefore of texts, Derrida refers not to God as the ultimate guarantor, authorizing body and the only one able to make things possible, but to his *very own* law, the law of maturation mentioned earlier in relation to the semantic plurality of language (what deviates and joins together) and that Derrida now calls, in relation to Benjamin, the 'formal law in the immanence of the original text', *à-traduire*. In lieu of God as the main catalyst for action, we have *à-traduire*, the self-generating injunction or motivation that comes from outside of all authority or authorizing power and helps us to make sense of what we have or comes towards us. This does not mean that Derrida posits the logic of supplementarity or *différance* as God. Derrida effectively only highlights the inescapable law that governs all translations, one which exists independently of any governing deity or subjectivity.

Now, considering this specific perspective, it would be wrong to think that this way of swapping God with a law is a new strategy in Derrida's *oeuvre*. In a way, the law of (the) *à-traduire* is a common feature in his work. For example, it can be found expressed in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* under the terminology of *à-destination*, which should not be confused with *cartepostalisation*, *iterability* or *citationnality*. *À-destination* means two things: to arrive at a place where one had planned to arrive [*arriver à destination*] and the impossibility of arriving at the place where one had intended to arrive [*adestination*]. The undecidability between possibility and impossibility marks the break-off point of any transference to a different place or text – destination or translation. One is always working towards reaching a target or a new translation and yet the task itself is impossible. Not unlike 'the formal law of the immanence of the original text', or *à-traduire*, *à-destination* focuses on the fact that all writing necessarily disseminates itself, divides itself as soon as it is written, translated, posted, sent, or dispatched and that nothing and no one can announce how or where this dissemination is going. There cannot be any writing without a necessary divisibility and this necessary divisibility is the *a priori* of all correspondence and therefore of all writing and all translation. So instead of a thought of God authorizing, making possible, or guaranteeing the surviving dimension of translation, we have here, with Derrida, the law of translatability itself; a law that authorizes, makes possible, and guarantees in exactly the same way the correspondence between letters, words, and languages and thus the survival or maturation of language. In this way, the original text or the translation *contains*, in its *immediacy*, its own *translatability*, that is, its survival, its ability or capacity of dislocating space (and) time,

of breaking away from the continuity of texts, always embarking on another tangent, or another unexpected curve.

The question that arises here is this: why does Derrida so easily swap God with *à-traduire*? Perhaps there are two explanations for this. These two explanations are also intended to stand – if one can extend and withstand the analogy – for *à-venir*, whereby *à-venir* and *à-traduire* are *not* synonymous, but, as we have seen, belong to the same family, like *voir venir*, *survenue*, or *venue*. The first one is that when addressing the issue of translatability, one is in fact addressing the issue of an absolute heterogeneity that unsettles all the assurance of the same within which we comfortably ensconce ourselves. There cannot be a perfect translation; there cannot be a same text twice. One is constantly dealing with or thrown into (a) heterogeneity that unsettles all Babelian attempts to create a universal language understandable by all. There is no need for a unifying figure encapsulating all languages, there is only absolute heterogeneity, (a) heterogeneity that has the same power to move and impassion as the one imposed by God Himself. The second explanation for this swap is perhaps that translation cannot be stopped. As John D. Caputo makes clear in relation to the politics of translatability: ‘Translatability is the slippage that is built right into things, but this slippage is productive, not a punishment, or at least it is a productive punishment. We are both summoned and consigned to continual translation, like the Shemites.’²² The orders from God *or* from (the) absolute heterogeneity that governs us are unmistakable: there can never be the possibility of closure; what comes never stops. The God/*à-traduire* swap is therefore self-evident: *there is something* irreducible to the singularity of presence that escapes language (this *something* is the only thing that cannot be translated), continuously creates language (there is never an end to the invention of languages) and prevents us from making sense of this language (language is at once necessary and impossible). But can one truly accept this? How is one to articulate this without falling into a metaphysical trap?

Trait

The question that indeed arises from Derrida’s commentary on Benjamin’s use of God as the guarantor of the survival of texts in translation is this: how is one *to figure* this law or axiom, the structure of the work as survival, as living-on – what Derrida calls (the) *à-traduire* without falling into a metaphysical vocabulary? The question of figuration is obviously not representational; it is one of limits and edges. The

law is, as we have seen, aporetic in the sense that it always already falls or emerges on the edges of language. Now Derrida draws his answer from Benjamin's understanding of the *name* as the site, place, or space that *allows* for the communicability of language itself. The name keeps hidden the power of language, its ability to communicate by itself. The name represents the being of language. As Gershom Scholem might have said, 'language is name'. Unlike the verb or the adjective, the name can be called, appealed, and worshipped. There is no escaping the power of the name. It structures language, gives it power. As Derrida says, 'understanding is no longer possible when there are only proper names, and understanding is no longer possible when there are no longer proper names'.²³ Now, Derrida again obviously does not follow Benjamin/Scholem's (quasi-Kabbalistic) interpretation of language. He pushes it in another direction by referring to what interests him most: the distinction between the name and the bearer of the name and its effect on language. His translation is unambiguous:

The question of proper names is essential here. Where the act of the living mortal seems to count less than the sur-vival of the text in the *translation* – translated and translating – it is quite necessary that the signature of the proper noun be distinguished and not be so easily effaced from the contract or from the debt.²⁴

Derrida's double debt – the debt of the translation towards the survival of the original and the debt of the original text towards its translation for allowing it to survive a little longer – is a strange one because, as we have seen, it does not bind real people or texts, but names. The debt, which should not be confused with the law of translatability, takes places between proper names.

Insolvent on both sides, the double indebtedness passes between names. It surpasses a priori the bearers of the names, if by that is understood the mortal bodies which disappear behind the sur-vival of the name. Now, a proper noun does and does not belong, we said, to the language, not even, let us make it precise now, to the corpus of the text to be translated, of the to-be-translated [*de l'à-traduire*].

The debt does not involve living subjects but names at the edge of the language, or more rigorously, *the trait* which contracts the relation of the aforementioned living subject to this name, insofar as the latter keeps to the edge of the language. And this trait would be

that of the to-be-translated from one language to the other, from this edge to the other of the proper name.²⁵

The issue of proper names was briefly touched upon in the context of *l'arrivant*. Every time this particular theme needs to be addressed, one must point again to the aporetic situation that one faces when addressing what is proper or what constitutes a property in general. A proper name is usually conceived outside of the semantic economy of language. Its referent is unique; there is only one proper name, one writer, or one translator. However, in the context that concerns us, this uniqueness is illusory because on the one hand, the proper name is always that of someone else (one's father, for example) and on the other, it can become truly proper only on condition of being no longer proper (in death, for example, it becomes a common noun). As Derrida says:

Death reveals that the proper name could always lend itself to repetition in the absence of its bearer, becoming thus a singular common noun, as common as the pronoun 'I', which effaces its singularity even as it designates it, which lets fall into the most common and generally available exteriority what nevertheless means the relation to itself of an interiority.²⁶

In this way, the proper name is that which has potential (to become someone else *but* one's father) *and* ceases being proper once it acquires meaning (a completed biography no longer identifies someone living, but *the* life of someone). Considering this context, what is Derrida saying here in relation to translation, the double debt, and this *trait*?

The important element in this crucial extract is the fact that the debt that befalls the translator does not engage him or her as a mortal being, but his or her proper name with that of the original author. The debt surpasses or runs over the translator as the bearer of a name to only indebt the proper name. This odd situation is due to the fact that the proper name, as Derrida says, is not outside the semantic economy of language, it both belongs *and* does not belong to language, it is *at once* inside and outside. A proper name is therefore located at the edge of language and the debt contracted through translation can only take place *at* this edge, that is, between two proper names and not between two bearers of names. This important distinction helps us to understand the way Derrida *figures* (the) *à-traduire*. In the second paragraph quoted

above, Derrida writes an extremely awkward sentence in French. Unsurprisingly, this sentence also remains awkward in the English translation. The sentence reads in French:

La dette n'engage pas des sujets vivants mais des noms au bord de la langue ou, plus rigoureusement, *le trait* contractant le rapport dudit sujet vivant à son nom, en tant que celui-ci se tient au bord de la langue. Et ce trait serait celui de *l'à-traduire* d'une langue à l'autre, de ce bord à l'autre du nom propre.²⁷

The awkwardness of this sentence in both French and English comes with the use of the word *trait*. How on earth can a *trait* contract something or other? Do we have to understand this *trait* as a characteristic or quality that distinguishes the two contracted (original text and translation) or do we have to understand this as a trace of something – even perhaps a hyphen [*un trait d'union*]? I will argue that Derrida is here attempting to figure or to delimit the spacing (and) temporizing of the encounter through translation between two proper names without any attempt at a proper delineation. The figuration is that of a characteristic [*un trait de caractère*], but *also* that of a trace or a hyphen [*une trace ou un trait*]. The important thing about this *trait* is that, not unlike *hama*, it is neither spatial nor temporal and cannot be experienced as such – even as a hyphen, which remains necessarily mute and elusive. As he says, later on in the text: '[This trait] ... takes place even if its space comes under no empirical or mathematical objectivity.'²⁸ This *trait* 'represents' the intangible contractual agreement that binds two proper names in the act of translation. This *trait* is therefore Derrida's clearest figuration – a figuration at the edge of representation – of *l'à-traduire*, i.e. what *binds*, *passes one into the other*, and *survives* between original and translation, or more precisely between proper names. In this way, if there was one way to figure the unfigurable without falling into a metaphysical trap, it would be with this awkward *trait* located at the edge of proper names, a contractual agreement, a secret, a password signed by no one, but which somehow manages to impose its law with the severity of a God.

'Here we touch – at a point no doubt infinitely small – the limit of translation. The pure untranslatable and the pure transferable here pass one into the other – and it is the truth, "itself materially".'²⁹

Derrida brings here together right at an infinitely small point of encounter, trade, or exchange – the *trait* – both the untranslatable and the transferable. The untranslatable is what remains untouchable [*unberührbar*] in the original, i.e. that which stays with the proper name or can

only be 'touched by the wind of language in the manner of an Eolian lyre'.³⁰ Conversely, the translatable is what passes over as expression *and/or* as content. The meeting *point* of this brief encounter of the two *passing one into the other* marks the contractual spacing (and) temporizing of translation – the trait. This contractual trait does not simply engage expression and contents or, following Paul de Man in his own reading of Benjamin's text, the demands of faithfulness to the original and the demands of the target language.³¹ Derrida's contractual trait, this small characteristic or hyphen, brings together what *touches* the two texts, or languages involved in translation. The task of the translator is thus structured by this contractual trait, this binding law – now figured – that one cannot escape because it is always already *material*, that is, it is always already with us, in the text, *in the direction* of another text.

Here, in relation to what has concerned us in the previous chapters, this contractual trait, this infinitely small point of encounter that cannot even be located with any precision, could be seen to 'represent' what passes between what belongs to me only *in potenza* [me as proper name] with what no longer belongs to Derrida himself [Derrida as common name]. The trait engages me in both a secret and not so secret contractual bind and this with whomever is quoted in these pages: Derrida, Nancy, or Malabou. This has nothing to do with what passes between me and these people who I have never met, whose thoughts I have no doubt betrayed, and whose secrets remain absolutely intact. This has to do with the encounter between proper names or between proper names and common nouns, one ruled by an intangible and inaudible trait; a spacing (and) temporizing that imposes its law and forces languages to veer always further in its very own maturation, and this, even if this maturation is unacceptable, unnatural, or extravagant.

The promise

The need for clarification can only increase at this stage, and the questions abound: how does the trait really play a role in the act of *sur-vival*? How does it sustain the power given to the proper name? And finally, and most importantly, how does it maintain itself as law? All these questions can be answered by referencing one word: the promise. Every contract, hyphen, trace, or trait under this law is a promise. Every agreement, verbal, or written, *describes the future*, otherwise there would be no agreement. And the same goes with the contractual agreement between translators. Derrida makes this all too clear when, in an effort to expand the meaning and signification of the contractual trait between writers

or translators, he returns to his familiar theme of the hymen or marriage contract:

Let us remember the metaphor, or the ammetaphor: a translation espouses the original when the two adjoined fragments, as different as they can be, complete each other so as to form a larger tongue in the course of a sur-vival that changes them both. For the native tongue of the translator, as we have noted, is altered as well. Such at least is my interpretation – my translation, my ‘task of the translator’. It is what I have called the translation contract: hymen or marriage contract with the promise to produce a child whose seed will give rise to history and growth. A marriage contract in the form of a seminar. Benjamin says as much, in the translation the original becomes larger; it grows rather than reproduces itself – I will add: like a child, its own, no doubt, but with the power to speak on its own which makes a child something other than a product subjected to the law of reproduction. This promise signals a kingdom which is at once ‘promised and forbidden where the languages will be reconciled and fulfilled . . .’ This kingdom is never reached, touched, trodden by translation. There is something untouchable, and in this sense the reconciliation is only promised.³²

The reconciliation is only promised. The Garden of Eden, where confusion is abolished and harmony reigns, where there is only one language, the language of God, is only promised. The contract between translators plainly states it: there is no other way, although both parties know that Eden will never be reached. The question of the promise, and of this specific promise without determinate contents, is a crucial one in the context of (the) *à-traduire*. How is one to make sense of it at such a late stage in our analysis? Perhaps the only way is first to reflect on another contract, one which was only touched upon briefly here or there in the preceding pages: the contract between *à-venir* and promise.

The question of the promise is one that is always associated with the question of (*l'*)*à-venir*. This association appears self-evident when reading Derrida’s work. However, I will try to argue here, partly to justify the way this theme was addressed in the preceding pages but also to explore the relevance of this particular commentary on Benjamin’s interpretation of the task of the translator, that there are two ways of approaching this promise. If one only focuses on texts such as *Memoirs for Paul de Man*, ‘Avances’ in Serge Margel’s book *Le tombeau du dieu artisan*, *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthetic of Origin* and of course,

Spectres of Marx, one acquires a first understanding of the promise in relation to *à-venir*. In this last book, Derrida provides perhaps his most clear analysis of this first understanding of how the promise links up with (*l'*)*à-venir*. For him, democracy or justice and promise come together. This promise represents a commitment to a future that is beyond the present of every living being. It can only be an endless promise. Democracy and justice are indeed always to come. However, if one looks closely at the structure of *à-venir* in his work, it becomes clear that it is buttressed by another way of looking at the promise and its relationship with *à-venir*.

In order to fathom this supplementary way of looking at this promise, it is necessary to return to Benjamin's work – one of Derrida's major sources of inspiration in this context – and specifically to his 'Theses in the Philosophy of History'. The second thesis reads like this:

There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. The claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of that.³³

This thesis clearly shows that the past and the present have passed a *secret* agreement that provides each generation with a weak messianic power that one day will redeem us all. The issue that concerns us is on the secrecy of this agreement. This secrecy prevents us from determining who exactly made the promise. There are no identified individuals or group of individuals from the past or the present. The promise is a secret between actors or powers unknown to us. There would be no agreement without this secrecy. As I will attempt to show very briefly, it is *this secrecy* that is crucial in Derrida's supplementary interpretation of the promise and *à-venir*, one which helps us to make sense of the promise that is attached to (the) *à-traduire* and justifies the trait.

In most interpretations of the notion of promise, there is always a reference to Austin's notion of speech acts. A promise is essentially a linguistic act: it takes place in language. Animals do not make promises. Therefore, in order for it to work, in order for it to be heard and for the expectancy of fulfilment to begin, a promise needs to be expressed. When Derrida addresses the notion of promise in relation to democracy and justice he is referring to promises made by politicians, political and legal theorists and judges who make this promise. It is they who promise us what is to come even if they do not announce it as such. However, when Derrida talks of a promise before any form of speech act, he is

referring to a secret promise that is somewhat beyond linguistic formulation and that *a contrario* animals are able to keep. In Derrida's work, this more 'originary' promise or more precisely, this promise before any type of promise, can be found in four other texts: 'Psyche: Inventions of the Other', 'Ulysses Gramophone', and in his reading of Heidegger's distinction between *Zusage* and *Glaube* in *Faith and Knowledge*. In each case, the promise takes the shape of a pre-linguistic *yes*, a *yes* that, like Blanchot's 'come!' is an affirmation that is more ancient than the question 'what is?' This promise is therefore a *yes* before language and knowledge, an inaudible and unpronounceable *yes* that effectively represents an opening to or a departure from the other itself. As such, it constitutes a form of promise that is not only prior to any form of speech act, but also that surges [*viens*], comes about [*survient*], at the same time [*hama*] with the *à-venir*. There can be no distinction between the inaudible *yes* and the dislocation or unhingement of space (and) time. One comes with or as the other.

It is *this* second type of promise that structures the contractual trait taking place between proper names in translation. Promise and *à-traduire* come together in the act of translation. Now it would be wrong to see here a form of promise that can simply be equated to a blind faith lurking behind space, time, and language or to a promise that is so silent or so indistinct that it would become meaningless. A promise before the promise is not strictly speaking *pre*-linguistic or *radically* before language. An inaudible *yes* has to remain perceptible or more precisely traceable for it to acquire the characteristic of inaudibility and for it to be acquiesced to. When Derrida talks of a *yes* before language and knowledge, he is talking of a *yes* that is at once before speech and paradoxically a form of speech itself. Not unlike the proper name, this *yes* both belongs and does not belong to language. Similarly, because it involves an unidentifiable duration, it is at once prior time (prior to its fulfilment) and in time (on the path to fulfilment). In this way, it is at once a secret where actors cannot be identified (who indeed is endowed with the power of establishing the *yes* that keeps speech afloat?) and a performative speech act coming from an identifiable source.

If one now turns to Derrida's reading of Benjamin's 'Task of the Translator', one is then able to expand a little on the simple answer given above: that the promise structures the contractual trait between proper names or between an author and his or her language. The point is obviously to maintain the promise before the promise, to carry out the task of translation for further generations, to expand the knowledge and to fulfil our duties towards our ancestors. However, this promise is a strange

one because it takes place at the cusp of language. On the one hand, the contractual trait refers to a secret agreement: a promise unuttered by no one, not even by the author or the translator. This secret promise says *yes* to both the untranslated and the translator him or herself. Yes, this text is in need of translation. This secret *yes* does not indicate that the text is *worth* translation, only that it *calls* for translation, that it requires deviation – or perhaps, a certain amount of deviancy – in order to live on. Furthermore or similarly, this secret *yes* does not indicate that one's own language is worth expanding, only that it calls for maturation, *sur-vival*, deviation. On the other hand, this promise is very much articulated. This second form of promise – or more precisely, the most common form of promise – is what provokes the translator to take on the task of translation with the aim of bringing a child to life. The promise therefore is clearly *both* prior to speech, in the way that space (and) time dislocates itself between one word and another *and* through speech in the act of bringing life or afterlife to what remains to be translated.

'As a promise, translation is already an event, and the decisive signature of a contract. Whether or not it be honoured does not prevent the commitment from taking place and from bequeathing its record.'³⁴

But let us not fool ourselves. If one stays within the remit of language and not where it flounders, then a translation is indeed, and most simply, an event and the promise that structures it – whereby a text lives on as a newborn child – is equally an event regulated by the economy of contractual agreements. The important issue here is that when considering this event, Derrida make clear that the reconciliation might in fact never take place. It would be wrong to see here a gloomy expression, whereby humanity will never regain the lost language of Eden. The promise is not the simple assurance that somebody or a whole lineage of redeemers, writers, and translators will save humanity from its fall from paradise. The promise that Derrida always talks about is not a pledge or a warning. On the contrary, because it is an event, the promise is necessarily infused on the side of language with desire, longing, appeals, and requests. Again, these should not be understood within a theological or religious context, but in reference to *à-traduire*: it puts forward, as we have seen, a duty: one *must* translate.

In the common sense of the term, a promise is the act of taking hold of speech and holding it over time (hence the fact that a promise always describes the future). In doing so, the person who actively promises to do something becomes *responsible*. He or she holds a responsibility for fulfilling this promise. Inevitably, this entails that one *must* act accordingly; one *must* engage oneself to accomplish something in the future.

One *must* fulfil one's obligations. There is no possibility for a passive resignation in front of the promise. A promise necessarily implies an obligation. The injunction 'one must', which Derrida also elaborates in texts such as 'Psyche', *Positions*, *Eperons* and 'On the Name', should not be understood as an order or a command that has ethical connotations. As he says, "'One must" does not only mean that it is necessary. Etymologically, in French, it also means "a lack", "what is lacking". Fault or deficiency is never far off.'³⁵ The French *il faut* (from the impersonal verb *falloir*, which also gives *faillite* [failure] and 'to fail' in English) thus breaks the endless promise for redemption. With Derrida's understanding of the promise – one that departs from Benjamin's – one is therefore always already engaged in a double bind whereby translation not only responds to the promise, but also calls for the satisfaction of a deficiency or need. The injunction 'one must' is therefore the counterpart of all promises, without which there would be no *uttered* promise and therefore no *à-traduire*.

In this way, instead of an empty promise of what can never be reached (the parousia of language), we have with Derrida the elaboration of a complex linguistic *and* pre-linguistic structure that interweaves itself with the 'unhinging' of space (and) time in a game that can only produce an excess or a surplus, that is, an event, the event of translation, itself necessarily prone to *différance*. To the three questions that were addressed at the start of this section on the promise, one can perhaps now answer the following: the trait plays a role in the act of survival by bringing (or contracting) together the promises engaged in the act of writing or translation. It sustains the power given over to proper names, not thanks to an act of God, but because there is a secret promise, an inaudible *yes*, that never lets go. And finally, the trait maintains itself as law because as we are engaged in an exchange of promises, we are also inevitably engaged in an act of obligation. Translation, i.e. what ends up translated, this excess, or this surplus as event, never *subsists* as such. Even the most established and enduring ones can never escape the audible *and* inaudible promises that structure their *sur-vival*.

***Entfernung* or danger is everywhere**

Even if one cannot honour one's contractual obligations, one must therefore fulfil the promise. One must say *yes*, or one must stay attentive, and carry the task forward, elaborate strategies to complete its fulfilment and envisage ways to counteract the possibility of not being able to fulfil

this promise. The task can never stop. It is engaged on a path (of maturation) and there is no abeyance and no interruption. On this path, the risk or the danger remains: the promise, whether secret *or* identifiable as obligation or lack, *might not* be fulfilled. The fault might always be there. The danger remains because the path is narrow and treacherous; it might give in at the slightest pressure and leave us stranded in a world of madness and silence. How can one then obey the law and *preserve*, *sustain*, or even *maintain* our task at the edge between speech and madness? In order to answer this question, it is necessary before studying what Derrida tells us, to return to a key passage in Benjamin's text. In order to deepen the problematic of translation explored thus far, I will give here three versions of a short passage taken from 'The Task of the Translator': the original German text by Benjamin and two translations, one in English and the other in French. I will focus exclusively on the *afterlives* of Benjamin's work, the French text that Derrida reads and the English text that helps me to read and understand further Derrida's interpretation of Benjamin's German. The reason for this unorthodox focus is simple: again, my aim is not to compare or improve translations, but to read what Derrida is reading and how this reading can in turn be transformed, or plasticized into something different, inevitable, or unexpected. I leave here for Germanists the task of continuing this transformation or metamorphosis into another world. Benjamin and his translators write:

Bei den einzelnen, den unergänzten Sprachen nämlich ist ihr Gemeintes niemals in relativer Selbständigkeit anzutreffen, wie bei den einzelnen Wörtern oder Sätzen, sondern vielmehr in stetem Wandel begriffen, bis es aus der Harmonie all jener Arten des Meinens als die reine Sprache herauszutreten vermag. So lange bleibt es in den Sprachen verborgen. Wenn aber diese derart bis ans messianische Ende ihrer Geschichte wachsen, so ist es die Übersetzung, welche am ewigen Fortleben der Werke und am unendlichen Aufleben der Sprachen sich entzündet, immer von neuem die Probe auf jenes heilige Wachstum der Sprachen zu machen: wie weit ihr Verborgenes von der Offenbarung entfernt sei, wie gegenwärtig es im Wissen um diese Entfernung werden mag.³⁶

In the individual, unsupplemented languages, meaning is never found in relative independence, as in individual words or sentences; rather, it is in a constant state of flux – until it is able to emerge as pure language from the harmony of all the various modes of intention. Until then, it remains hidden in the languages. If, however, these

languages continue to grow in this manner until the end of their time, it is translation which catches fire on the eternal life of the works and the perpetual renewal of language. Translation keeps putting the hallowed growth of languages to the test: How far removed is their hidden meaning from revelation, how close can it be brought by the knowledge of this remoteness?³⁷

Dans les langues prises une à une et donc incomplètes, ce qu'elles visent ne peut jamais être atteint de façon relativement autonome, comme dans les mots ou les phrases pris séparément, mais est soumis à une mutation constante, jusqu'à ce qu'il soit en état de ressortir, comme langage pure, de l'harmonie de tous ces modes de visées. Jusqu'à lors il reste dissimulé dans les langues. Mais, lorsqu'elles croissent de la sorte jusqu'au terme messianique de leur histoire, c'est à la traduction, qui tire sa flamme de l'éternelle survie des oeuvres et de la renaissance indéfinie des langues, qu'il appartient de mettre toujours derechef à l'épreuve cette sainte croissance des langues, pour savoir à quelle distance de la Révélation se tient ce qu'elles dissimulent, combien il peut devenir présent dans le savoir de cette distance.³⁸

This passage clearly shows that languages need each other in order to reach *die reine Sprache*. The path towards pure language necessarily takes place through a process of transformation that Benjamin calls the hallowed growth of language. Until the time it reaches this harmonious stage, that which is identified as pure language, *die reine Sprache* remains hidden in all languages. In order for all these languages to reach this harmonious stage – the messianic moment of *die reine Sprache* – it is necessary that they pay particular attention to the process of metamorphosis that translation represents. Translation is indeed, as we have seen, their guiding principle. It represents not only *the test that measures* the distance that separates these languages from the messianic moment of their harmonious revelation, but it also represents *the test that brings* these languages closer to this messianic moment.

The English and French translations end up in different directions. The French emphasizes the messianic revelation taking place in the 'present' [*gegenwärtig*], while the English ignores this crucial word, focusing instead with the help of two questions on the binary structure of Benjamin's last sentence (how far removed/how close). By focusing on the word 'present', and thereby respecting the original German [*gegenwärtig*], the French attempts to focus on the temporal *moment* of the messianic dimension. By contrast, by focusing on the movement of

this messianic dimension ('how close can it be brought'), the English attempts to reveal the *action* implied in this messianic dimension. If one takes both translations together, and allow them to supplement each other, Benjamin's last sentence would then read differently. I propose here a translation as the result of two readings without presupposing that it is more faithful to the original. 'Translation keeps putting the hallowed growth of languages to an *ever renewed* final test: How far removed is their hidden meaning from revelation, how close can it be brought by the knowledge of this remoteness?'

Now, I will argue, without taking sides between the French and the English, that the word *gegenwärtig*, which I have deliberately mistranslated with 'ever renewed', is crucial in our context. It clearly emphasizes Benjamin's messianic dimension, one for whom the present is not perceived as a singular entity squeezed between past and future, but represents instead the experience of time as the interruption that occurs in the immediacy of a present that always remains to be achieved. In other words, the word *gegenwärtig* cannot be discarded because it marks the exact messianic interruption that occurs every second of time. This does not mean that the English is false. This only means that the movement described in the English can only take place at the 'moment' of interruption. It is 'there', at a place never at one with itself, that translation takes place and languages survive. Derrida notes the importance of this interruptive messianic 'moment' when he comments:

Translation, as holy growth of languages, announces the messianic end, surely, but the sign of that end and of *that growth* is 'present' [*gegenwärtig*] only in the 'knowledge of that distance', in the *Entfernung*, the *remoteness* that relates us to it. One can know this remoteness, have knowledge or a presentiment of it, but we cannot overcome it.³⁹

La traduction, comme sainte croissance des langues, annonce le terme messianique, certes, mais le signe de ce terme et de *cette croissance* n'y est 'présent' [*gegenwärtig*] que dans le 'savoir de cette distance', dans *l'Entfernung*, *l'éloignement* qui nous y rapporte. Cet éloignement, on peut le savoir, en avoir le savoir ou le presentiment, on ne peut le vaincre.⁴⁰

In order to make sense of Benjamin's messianic dimension, Derrida distinguishes the *experience* itself from the *sign* of this experience. The experience is indeed the process by which translation distances itself or approaches *die reine Sprache*. The sign, by contrast, brings together

at a moment that can never be defined, the liminality of the messianic dimension (its end) *with* its ever-recurring resurgence (its immediacy). This sign, this most extreme location, this infinitely small point, could be understood as the trait between proper names explored earlier. However, in the context of Derrida's reading of Benjamin, this sign takes on all its resonance in the way he deliberately applies to it the Heideggerian expression: *Entfernung*. Derrida's appeal to this famous Heideggerian notion is not a new one. It can be traced, as we will see, in his analysis of Blanchot's *Pas au delà*, but also in the way Derrida analyses the relation between woman and truth in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*.⁴¹ In our context, the notion of *Entfernung* is already an important aspect of Derrida's expression, *s'at-tendre*. In that context, *Entfernung* is understood as the distancing between *s'at-* and *-tendre*, between *Da* and *Sein*. However, this distancing or distantiation is no straightforward opening or gap between two things. *Entfernung* cannot be dissociated from the aporetic double bind that situates itself between what tends or offers itself (towards its *Da*) and what extends or estranges itself from the Other (*Mit*), and vice versa. How is one then to understand Derrida's use of this famous Heideggerian expression in the context of Benjamin's text?

In order to understand Derrida's use of this word, it is worth recalling here briefly the original context in which Derrida explores this specific expression. Derrida investigates Heidegger's *Entfernung* in his reading of Blanchot's *Pas au delà*. In this book, he writes: '... all Heideggerian thought proceeds in terms of its decisive "turnings", by way of the "same" bringing closer the *dis-stancing* of the near and the far. Distantiation dis-stances the far which it constitutes; the approach then brings it closer by keeping it at a distance.'⁴² With the split word *dis-stancing*, Derrida references Heidegger's concept of spatiality developed in *Being and Time* (§19–24). Heidegger's understanding of *Entfernung* [*dis-stancing*, *de-severance*] is based on the distinction between living *in* space and living *spatially*. The former refers to our common understanding of space, one in which we move *in* space as if space were an independent entity. The latter refers to the *spatial* mode of existence of Dasein. *Entfernung* describes the way Dasein proceeds, not *in* space, but by *spatial self-determination*, by making things available. We do not perambulate *in* space; we *take in* space by making what is distant near. This process of 'taking in space', 'making the farness vanish', or 'bringing things close' is what Heidegger understands by *Entfernung*. However, the notion of *Entfernung* cannot be dissociated from the notion of *Ausrichtung* [directionality]. When one *takes in* space, one is not

going from A to B, but through a movement that requires an ability or a capacity to show or to point to a future direction in which one moves – *Ausrichtung*.

Now, in relation to Benjamin's text, Derrida takes this specific understanding of the act of 'taking in space' at the level of the messianic. The sign [*le signe de ce terme et de cette croissance*], which Derrida uses in order to encapsulate Benjamin's present [*gegenwärtig*], brings together the end of time (eschatological) and the time of the end (messianic time). In between the two, there is again, inevitably, a double bind: what comes to an end and/or the end of what is coming. As spatial beings, one cannot simply contemplate this double bind as if from outside. Engaged *in* this double bind, we *take in* what comes to an end by making the end of what is coming vanish. *In other words*, we bring the end of what is coming closer while making the farness of what comes to an end vanish. The two cannot be distinguished since the shifting spatial and temporal perspectives are opened up as one 'goes along'. The important thing is of course that neither eschatology nor messianic time is an imposition from outside. Our sense of directionality [*Ausrichtung*] shows the direction to which one is going: the end. This means that with this *Entfernung*, time does not merely collapse into the double bind, leaving us stranded in the aporia of undecidability between what comes to an end and the end of what is coming. On the contrary, with this *Entfernung*, with this act of 'taking in space', time becomes indistinguishable from *our experience* of time.

How does this then apply to translation? Within its messianic dimension, translation, as the holy growth of languages, is what most clearly *signals* both the end of time and the coming of the end. In other words, translation not only represents our clearest image of the messianic moment ('*announces* the messianic end'), it also epitomizes the messianic 'moment' itself. Translation makes things available by making the foreignness of foreign words *vanish*. Conversely, or in doing so, translation *distances* the language into which these foreign words are translated. Right 'there', in this act of *taking in space*, of transformation and metamorphosis, *trembles* the *Entfernung*. I write 'there' between quotation marks and I say 'tremble' because there is never the possibility of pinning down the act of bringing closer the distancing of the near and the far. The process of translation therefore not only *signals* the messianic 'moment', it also encapsulates our relationship to – or our experience of – this very specific 'moment'.

Perhaps one way to further our understanding of this use of Heidegger's *Entfernung* in relation to Benjamin's messianic 'present' is to reread what Derrida calls in another context 'a third language':

The expression third language signifies a differentiating, and differentiated moment, a medium that would not be linguistic strictly speaking, but the milieu of an experience of language that ... would allow the passage of one [language] to another, the saying of one and the other, the translation of the one in the another, the call of the one to the other. In other words, in the logic of this hypothesis, one would have to presume, precisely, that signatories and beneficiaries situate themselves between two languages and that the former, the one who warns, presents himself as the one who hands over, translates, mediates. Having a part in both languages, the intercessor speaks both languages, but from the perspective of a third language or at least from something in language [*quelque chose de la langue*] ... that allows to step over the abyss between the two.⁴³

Again, in this text, Derrida clearly specifies that his interest is precisely on communicability and not on what is communicated. The 'something in language', this 'third language', that allows the passage of the one into the other, is precisely what brings closer the distancing of the near and the far.

This third language or this differentiating and differentiated moment or movement, which should never be understood as a metalanguage situated in between languages, brings us to the second part of Derrida's dense commentary on Benjamin's short passage. It brings us to the issue of knowledge. As well as being a spatial act, the *Entfernung* is a sign. It is a sign not because it is essentially knowable, but because it *imparts* knowledge. It indeed *provokes* knowledge through *the use* of words such as *à-venir* or *voir venir*, *survenue* or *venue* and any other word that indicates that *something is afoot*, that a turbulence is occurring 'there', as *this* metamorphosis. The use of these words – words which can multiply endlessly in all directions and in many inflections – is what structures the messianic dimension of translation, it constitutes the 'point' at which the task of the translator begins or carries on. Unfortunately, this knowledge simply cannot be overcome or mastered; it can never be made into a body of knowledge. Why? Simply because it obeys the law of what is 'to-come', or more precisely, the law of (the) *à-traduire*. Hence the fact that it is impossible to totalize the discourse relating to futurity (understood in the sense explored in this book). The discourse is always already infinite. Consequently, the knowledge that Derrida speaks of

can only remain on the edge of what is about to (be) translate(d), what passes over from one language to another or within languages from one translator to the next in the ever-recurring process of maturation and living-on. Inevitably, this knowledge that is not one, is *always on the verge of madness*. This madness does not take place as if one were about to become insane or prey to a mental disorder, but every time a decision needs to be made, every time the translator hears the call of (the) *à-traduire*.

From this limit, at once interior and exterior, the translator comes to receive all the signs of remoteness [*Entfernung*] which guide him on his infinite course, at the edge of the abyss, of madness and of silence: the last works of Hölderlin as translation of Sophocles, the collapse of meaning 'from abyss to abyss', and this danger is not that of accident, it is transferability, it is the law of translation, the to-be-translated as law, the order given, the order received – and madness waits on both sides.⁴⁴

To the question posed earlier ('how can one obey the law and preserve, sustain, or even maintain our task at the edge between speech and madness?'), the answer obviously does not and cannot exist because the answer would have to situate itself beyond the edge, in a world totally inconceivable.

Finally, we reach here what has sustained our thought throughout this book: the idea that the dislocation or the unhinging of space (and) time, this *à-venir* can only be understood in its plurality, (an) infinite contraband of comings and goings none of which can be identified with any certainty. There is not one *à-venir*, one coming/going, or one structure of experience open to what is radically other, but a turbulence of movements without destiny or destination, in one word, a futurity. And the same is true with translatability: *à-traduire*. Derrida articulates this multiplicity (pre-linguistic, an-idiomatic and a/temporal) in many texts, but always, curiously, *at the end* of his texts, always leaving the reader with a promise of multiplicity that somehow is never fulfilled. Let us examine a few of these liminal instances in Derrida's texts.

In his commentary on Benjamin's text he writes *in conclusion*:

This situation, though being one of pure limit, does not exclude – quite the contrary – gradations, virtuality, interval and in-between, the infinite labour to rejoin that which is nevertheless past, already given, even here, between the lines, already signed.⁴⁵

In 'Psyche', he *finishes* his text by writing an exchange of imaginary calls:

What do you mean by that? That the other will have been only an invention, the invention of the other?

No, that the other is what is never inventable and will never have waited for your invention. The call of the other is a call to come, and that happens only in multiple voices.⁴⁶

At the end of 'On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy', he writes in relation to the multiplication of apocalyptic dispatches included in St John the Divine:

'Come' cannot come from a voice or at least not from a tone signifying 'I' or 'self', a so-and-so (male or female) in my 'determination', my *Bestimmung*: vocation to the destination *myself*. 'Come' does not address itself to an identity determinable in advance. It is a drift [*une dérive*] underivable from the identity of a determination. 'Come' is only derivable, absolutely derivable, but only from the other, from nothing that may be an origin or a verifiable, decidable, presentable, appropriable identity, from nothing not already derivable and arrivable without rive [bank, shore] ... (for the 'come' is plural in itself, in oneself ...).⁴⁷

In 'Pas', Derrida follows Blanchot and insists that the expression 'come!' cannot be understood as part of a numerable multiplicity, that it is always singular. And then at *the closing stages* of his text, he adds:

Here is a voice. Several voices in fact. Blanchot always insists on the uniqueness of this voice, but also – at the same time – on their plurality and therefore on the strangeness of their being-together ... Here is then a voice. Here are then voices that cannot be heard, that disrupt the order of time and that of the discourse we believe these voices belong to. Here are voices that come from a location without determinable centre, that come from the pace incurred by a 'drifting alternation' [*qui ont leur lieu sans essence dans l'allure d'un 'va-et-vient errant'*].⁴⁸

And finally, *right at the end* of 'Ulysses Gramophone', Derrida emphasizes the absurdity of attempting to count the many 'yeses' in Joyce's *Ulysses*, and in doing so proceeds to highlight a multiplicity that cannot be defined by the numbered singularity of its many constituents, but by the fact that it is incalculable and unpredictable:

The chairperson's yes, like that of the programme of whoever writes on *Ulysses*, responding and countersigning in some way, does not let itself be counted or discounted, no more than does the yes which it calls for in turn. It is not just binarity, which proves to be impossible, it is, for the same reason, totalisation, and the closing of the circle, and the return of Ulysses, and Ulysses himself, and the self-sending of some indivisible signature. Yes, yes, this is what arouses laughter, and we never laugh alone, as Freud rightly said ...⁴⁹

In every text, the reference could not be clearer: gradations, multiple voices, plurality, what does not let itself be counted or discounted. However, each time, this multiplicity is only announced; it only occurs *at the end*, never at the start, as if one can only reach the stage of multiplicity in a state of exhaustion, after investigating all these breaches that show the instability of words. It is as if Derrida gives up in front of the sheer multitude of deconstructive possibilities. The recurrence of this last-minute announcement should not, however, be seen to imply that Derrida is incapable of addressing the topic. On the contrary, to come or arrive late at multiplicity and to leave it untouched is deliberate. In a way, I will argue that these final remarks on multiplicity show that, for Derrida, multiplicity itself can only be left as remainder [*comme restance*], that is, as a detachment, or testament, as what plastifies the work onto another horizon. In other words, Derrida does not drown at the edges of his texts, as is often the case with conclusive remarks, he simply leaves them undecided, or more precisely, *in suspense*. This liminal remainder should thus be understood as the sign that numbers have ceased to divide and therefore that perhaps *différance* paradoxically and contradictorily ceases to operate as soon as 'it' reaches multiplicity.

At this stage, in this final section of the conclusion, and considering these liminal Derridean observations, one could perhaps risk asking: how can one then *think* of this multiplicity as remainder? However, to ask this question would be to misunderstand Derrida's work. The multiplicity referred to by Derrida is not a sum or as he says in 'Ulysses Gramophone', a totality bringing together a group of instants understood

in their immobile divisibility. Derrida's liminal multiplicity exists not in relation to a numerable or numbered spatial distribution of points in space that would oppose itself to the One, but in relation to a heterogeneity that can only transform itself and from which one cannot extricate oneself or another. As I said earlier, when addressing the issue of translatability, one is in fact addressing the issue of an absolute heterogeneity that unsettles all the assurance of the same within which we comfortably ensconce ourselves. However, the issue is a more complex one. When Derrida refers to infinite gradations and a multiplicity or a plurality of voices or spectral tonalities, he is in fact referring to a *virtual* multiplicity that is not empirically verifiable and escapes phenomenology. Derrida's multiplicity can only effectively be understood *in thought*. This does not mean that it is ethereal. This means that Derrida's multiplicity can only be apprehended *amidst* objects and subjects *already* belonging to this multiplicity and that being awash amidst this vastness prevents any form of rational empirical objectification or phenomenological approach. For example, the plurality of voices haunting the expression 'come!' can only be heard in the actualization of this 'come!' – its variations, gradations, disruptive qualities, as a drift or an event, never as a singularly identifiable 'come!' The injunction 'come!' that hides in these variations is only *virtually* acquiesced to, in the infinite *non-said* of our response.

Now, if one cannot ask the question of how to think of this multiplicity as remainder, perhaps one can ask, more simply: how is one to understand the way in which the many variations or inflections explored in this book interact with this multiplicity? In order to answer this final question, it is perhaps necessary to divide the task in two and ask two separate questions. The first one relates to *à-venir*: how is one to make sense of futurity, that is, of the many *à-venirs* explored in this book, *as* multiplicity? The second one relates inevitably to translation: if one understands *à-traduire* as encapsulating the work carried out in this book, then how does this *à-traduire* relate to multiplicity?

The only way to answer these questions is to see both *à-venir* and *à-traduire* or translatability as a process of contamination. Contamination does not mean that everything ends up being soiled or in a state of chaos. Contamination means here that what stains, infects, and pollutes also purifies and sanitizes. *À-venir* pollutes *and* sanitizes *voir venir*; *voir venir* pollutes *and* sanitizes *survenue*, etc. There is never any possibility of a clear demarcation or identification of the ways space (and) time unhinges itself. And the same goes with translatability. The process stains, infects, and pollutes the other (one's own mother tongue or the

language of the other) while at the same time [*hama*], our language, or the language of the other, also purifies and sanitizes the other. There are no two sides or a pure and a contaminated side, but a multiplicity of contaminating processes that participate or partake in the unhinging of space (and) time or the survival of languages. Translatability or *à-traduire* as contamination simply means that the hallowed growth of language operates only by retaining *and* encouraging the impurity of languages. Conversely, or at the same time, futurity as contamination means that the unhinging of space (and) time operates only by retaining *and* encouraging the impurity of space(s) (and) time(s): here, there, past, present, or future.

What we are left with – if we are left with anything at all – is therefore *not* a perpetually recurring contamination (pollution and purification intermingling for ever), but a ‘state’ of unrest, where one never knows what or how things are coming or going and yet are compelled to take action. However, again this state of unrest should not give the impression that we are always already in a *state* of contaminated immanence and that nothing can be done about it. The word ‘state’ is written with quotation marks thus indicating that *danger* can always disturb or perturb this supposed ‘state’. The dative relation that has sustained our thought throughout this book, Derrida’s *à-* [to], is indeed neither pure nor impure, it points at once to the same and the other. The direction it therefore points to is whatever *threatens* stability and how one responds to it. The direction *à* [to] in *à-venir* [‘to-come’] or the direction *à* [to] in *à-traduire* [yet-to-translate] therefore always already points to *the danger* that maintains *and* threatens contamination. This ‘state’ of unrest is one whereby even restlessness cannot even begin to be made into something that is not already divided or that we divide ourselves. In other words, this ‘state’ of unrest is that which is always already in our hands and in that of the other and as such is always already in the danger of disappearing altogether.

Perhaps, and this is perhaps the only conclusion that one can draw from all this, the multiplicity of ‘to-comes’ that one encounters in the late Derrida and in the work of his students is similar to the multiplicity that governs the early Derridean notion of *différance*. This does not mean to say that the later use in Derrida’s work of the word ‘to-come’ is simply a reiteration of a previous non-concept. This simply shows that ‘to-come’ is, in a Benjaminian sense, a matured version of *différance*. Not a growth, but the breaking down or the plasticization of *différance*. In turn, what is ‘to-come’ can equally not be prevented from producing further verbal and nominal concrescences, excrescences,

inflections, or tonalities, which are then fractured, unhinged, dislocated, dislodged by the incessant work of the logic that governs it. Any attempt to pin down (the) 'to-come', as *a* structure of experience, is necessarily enmeshed in the work to come, a work that pulls it *through* other – and/or *by* further – verbal and nominal concrescences, excrescences, inflections, or tonalities. As Derrida says in relation to the work of dissemination:

Dissemination... although producing a noninfinite number of semantic effects, can be led back neither to a present of simple origin ('*La dissemination*', '*La double séance*', and '*La mythologie blanche*' are practical re-presentations of all the false departures, beginnings, first-lines, titles, epigraphs, fictive pretexts, etc.: decapitations) nor to an eschatological presence. It marks an irreducible and *generative* multiplicity.⁵⁰

Voir venir, survenue, venue, etc., not unlike *différance* – or *spacing*, *blank*, *supplement*, and *pharmakon* – thus continue to mark *for a limited time* this irreducible and generative multiplicity, this unstable 'state' from which there is no abeyance.

Unsurprisingly this is also true of *à-traduire*. This is indeed clearly evidenced by Derrida's remark that, in Benjamin's text, 'everything moves in and about *Übersetzen, Übertragen, Überleben*'.⁵¹ Translatability, or *à-traduire*, can neither be a singular movement from A to B, from one linguistic place to another, from an origin to a non-origin, nor a state of permanent translation that evades the possibility of demarcating a here from a there. Translatability necessarily involves a multiplicity. This multiplicity *passes over* [*Übersetzen*] as multiplicity onto other texts or languages. In other words, there is not one text that survives through its translation, but a multiplicity of texts that transport, transform, or *transcribe* [*Übertragen*] themselves onto *another* multiplicity. *Survival* [*Überleben*] does not concern a text or a language, but a multiplicity of texts and languages interdependent on each other for continued existence. Translatability or *à-traduire* therefore evades all forms of stability because it destabilizes the already unstable ground of the languages of the same and the other, leading them onto an infinite multiplicity of target languages. And this 'state' of unrest is what erodes our thought and forces us to think again.

What does this multiplicity then tell us about translation itself, this supplement? Firstly, translation can no longer be perceived within a topological and/or topographical framework, that is, from the stand-

point of sociocultural, idiomatic, and geographical divisions, but from the perspective of both a spatial and temporal expenditure where no language stands apart from any other language. The 'to-come' of language is the fact that language can only exceed itself, that is, it can only exceed what is already a surplus, a leftover, an excess *of* or *in* language. The delineations of language are thus no longer topological; they form and undo themselves at the limits of their own concreteness, excrescences, inflections, or tonalities. Secondly, this excess or this constant remainder is never strictly speaking to come, that is, it does not always *come*. The direction *à* [to] being always that of danger, language can also inevitable *go*. The opening marking that which comes from the unknown is also inevitably a closure of that which goes into the unknown. In other words, the unhinging of *à-venir* surprises as much as – to take an example that would need further consideration – the straightening of *à-partir* [to go/from this point onwards]. *À-venir* knows no messianic or eschatological direction. And the same is inevitably applicable to translation. The 'to' in the 'yet-to-translate' [*le à de l'à-traduire*] simply points to the unprecedented in language [*l'inouï du langage*], to this excess that limits it and renews it at once, and this from whatever perspective it directs itself. Perhaps and this could be the last fold in answering this last question: we reach here an expanded definition of translation, emancipated from Derrida's understanding of writing [*l'écriture*]. Translation in its expanded definition, follows or precedes writing [*l'écriture*] in the spacing (and) temporizing of (*l'*)*a-venir*, plasticizing itself into yet another translation, thus marking as Derrida says, 'the passage to philosophy'.⁵²

Notes

Series Editor's Preface

1. All citations here are from the letter whose principal signatory was Barry Smith, editor of the *Monist* but which included a number of thinkers including, among the most famous, David Armstrong, Keith Campbell, W. V. O. Quine and Dallas Willard. The text as used here is reprinted in Derrida, J. *Points: Interviews 1974–1994* trans. P. Kamuf et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 419–21.
2. Perhaps, indeed, the best treatment of the matter will prove to consist in abandoning all notion of so-called meanings as entities; thus such phrases as 'having meaning' and 'same in meaning' might be dropped in favour of 'significant' and 'synonymy' in hopes eventually of devising adequate criteria of significance and synonymy involving no excursion through a realm of intermediary entities called meanings/Perhaps it will even be found that of these only significance admits of a satisfactory criterion, and that all effort to make sense of 'synonymy' must be abandoned along with the notion of meaning. Quine, W. V. O. *Methods of Logic* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 200.
3. For the many difficulties Quine motivates concerning translation see the second chapter of Quine, W. V. O. *Word and Object* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1960).
4. See here the reference in the letter condemning Derrida to his supposed invocation of 'logical phalluses', a phrase that Derrida denies ever using and which can therefore be credited to the imagination of the analytic thinkers who would condemn him.
5. This claim is in fact broadly agreed by analytic philosophers and is part of the 'revolt against Idealism' that was brought about by Bertrand Russell.

Foreword

1. Hawthorne, N. 'The May Pole of Merry Mount', in 'From Twice Told Tales', *The Complete Short Stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1959), p. 42.
2. See for example, the way Alexander Kojève interprets desire as the presence of futurity in the world. Kojève, A. *An Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the 'Phenomenology of Spirit'*, trans. J. H. Nichols Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 367.

Introduction

1. Nietzsche, F. *The Will to Power: in Science, Nature, Society and Art*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 3.
2. Derrida, J. *Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression*, trans. E. Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 68.
3. In an analysis of Derrida's *Archive Fever*, Jean-Michel Rabaté established the etymological differences between the French words *futur* and *avenir*.

In French, an etymological investigation yields a first opposition between *l'avenir*, indicating the coming of a future event (or the coming of the future as an event), and *le futur*, indicating the being of the future...[as] Littré concludes... 'The future is what will be, and the "to-come" is what will come.' (Rabaté, J-M. 'Music of the Footure', in *Futures of Jacques Derrida*, ed. R. Rand (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 180–1.)

4. For the importance of the verbs 'to disjoint' and 'to unhinge', see Derrida, J. *Spectres of Marx, the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. P. Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. xvii–xx.
5. Derrida, J. *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. D. B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1979), p. 143.
6. The expression 'always already' occurs frequently in the work of the three philosophers studied in this book and inevitably recurs quite often in this book. The important thing about this expression is that it must not be seen to reflect an a priori of time, but a trace structure, that is to say, a priority without determinable priority.
7. I am trying here as succinctly as possible to distinguish the phenomenology of the event from the instability of signs, which is what concerns us here. Such a distinction would require a lengthy analysis that unfortunately cannot take place here. I can only refer the reader to texts such as Husserl, E. *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, ed. M. Heidegger, trans. J. S. Churchill (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1964), Merleau-Ponty, M. *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. A. Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), and closer to us, Dastur, F. *La Phénoménologie en questions: Langage, altérité, temporalité, finitude* (Paris: Vrin, 2004), and, of course, Marion, J-L. *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. R. Horner and V. Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001) and Marion, J-L. *Being Given: Towards a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. J. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
8. Derrida, J. 'Psyche: Inventions of the Other', trans. C. Porter, in *Reading de Man Reading*, ed. L. Waters and W. Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 29, my emphasis.
9. If *à-venir* can be a re-presentation, it would have to also be a de-presentation. See Derrida's commentary on how re-presentation is tied to the work of spacing in Derrida, J. *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 203.
10. See Derrida's translation of the word *avenir* in Derrida, J. 'Force of Law: the "Mystical Foundation of Authority"', in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of*

- Justice*, ed. D. Gray-Carlson, D. Cornell and M. Rosenfeld (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 36. See also his remarks on the importance of this hyphen or *trait d'union* in Derrida, *Archive Fever, a Freudian Impression*, p. 74.
11. There is no space and no reason to repeat here this well-known argument. See: Derrida, J. 'Ousia et Gramme: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*', in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 29–68; and Deleuze, G. *The Logic of Sense*, trans. M. Lester (London: Continuum, 2003), V.
 12. On this point, see Derrida, 'Ousia and Gramme: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*', in *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 65.
 13. The idea here is to make a distinction between the 'space-time' of the *à-venir* with the 'space-time' of the physicists. The former simply does not call for mathematical calculations. In this way, it follows Heidegger's attempt to forge an understanding of this 'space-time' when he proposed the expression *Zeitraum* (the space of time). See Heidegger, M. 'Zeit-Raum' in *On Time and Being*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper, 1972), p. 14 and Dastur, F. *Telling Time, Sketch of a Phenomenological Chrono-logy* (London: Athlone Press, 2000), p. 13 and notes 43 and 44, p. 105.
 14. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 86.
 15. For the importance of brackets in Derrida's work, see David Allison's footnote in Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 143.
 16. For the importance of the word *hama* in Aristotle's *Physics IV* (218a) and in relation to subsequent interpretations of time from Hegel to Heidegger, see Derrida, 'Ousia et Gramme: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*', in *Margins of Philosophy*, pp. 56–8.
 17. On this point, see Derrida, 'Ousia and Gramme: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*', in *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 56.
 18. Nancy, J-L. *Being Singular Plural*, trans. R. D. Richardson and A. E. O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 35.
 19. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 61.
 20. This (re)fraction(ing) [*partage/partager*] of time (and) space can also be understood with reference to Derrida's use of the words *écart/écarter* [gap/going off track] in Derrida, J. 'D'un texte à l'écart', in *Les temps modernes*, 284 (1970), 1546–52; see also Sean Gaston's commentary on this article, in Gaston, S. *The Impossible Mourning of Jacques Derrida* (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 34–5.
 21. Nancy, J-L. 'Nudité', in *La pensée dérobée* (Paris: Galilée, 2001), p. 14, my translation.
 22. Derrida, J. 'Faith and Knowledge: Two Sources of "Religion" at the Limits of Reason Alone', trans. S. Weber, in Derrida, J. *Acts of Religion*, ed. G. Anidjar (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 83.
 23. Hutchens, B. C. *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy* (London: Acumen, 2005), p. 163.
 24. It would be impossible here to relate the issue of the *à-venir* to the enormous corpus of contemporary studies on messianicity, especially those texts that attempt to free it from its traditional Jewish context. Suffice to say here, for the record and in the most abstract manner possible and without any specific reference, that *à-venir* cannot strictly speaking be understood as a vertical interruption on the horizon of time caused by the fold of two *eons* or

two times (*olam haze* – what is, and *olam haba*, what comes). As the present text tries to show, *à-venir* is emancipated not only from all forms of times (chronological or otherwise) and from all forms of representations of time as such. For an erudite study of messianic time, see Agamben, G. *The Time That Remains, a Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. P. Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), especially pp. 62–72. Finally, it would also be impossible here to list the number of times the theme of messianicity crops up in Derrida's work. For the most straightforward study of this theme, see Derrida, *Spectres of Marx, the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, especially pp. 180–1, note 2.

25. Derrida, J. 'Pas', in *Parages* (Paris: Galilée, 1989), p. 23, my translation.
26. Hamacher, W. 'Ou, séance, touché de Nancy, ici (3)', in *Sens en tous sens: Autour des travaux de Jean-Luc Nancy* (Paris: Galilée, 2004), p. 129, my translation.
27. Hamacher, 'Ou, séance, touché de Nancy, ici (3)', in *Sens en tous sens: Autour des travaux de Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 129, my translation.
28. Nancy, 'Nudité,' in *La pensée dérobée*, p. 18, my translation.
29. Nancy, 'Nudité,' in *La pensée dérobée*, p. 15, my translation.
30. Here, I am going against Derrida's interpretation of the three messianic doors in *Archive Fever*, not in order to contest them, but for the sake of evading the topological and topographical characterization of this extremity. Derrida writes:

The three doors of the future to come resemble each other to the point of confusion, indeed, but they differ between themselves: at least in that they regularly turn on their hinges to open, one onto the other. Their topo-logic thus remains properly *disorienting*. One continually has the feeling of getting lost while retracing one's steps [*en revenant sur ses pas*].

See Derrida, *Archive Fever, a Freudian Impression*, p. 69.

31. Derrida, J. 'I Have a Taste for the Secret', trans. G. Donis, in *A Taste for the Secret, Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris*, ed. G. Donis and D. Webb (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), p. 20.
32. Derrida, J. 'At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am', in *Re-Reading Levinas*, ed. R. Bernasconi and S. Critchley (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 34–5.
33. For example:

The questions traced out on the background of Derrida's Marx book – at least *some* of its questions – can presumably be paraphrased as follows. How can the future bear witness to itself? And how, *as* the future, can it attest to its futurity? How is it possible that the sheer possibility (under whose aspect alone actuality exists at all) appears not as a void of the actual but rather as the way of its arrival – as a path of actualization remaining open to other arrivals? The figure that comes closest to answering these questions, the figure of figuration, is the spectre in all its disparity – as phantom, spirit, ghost, appearance, and spectrum. (Hamacher, W. 'Lingua Amissa, the Messianism of Commodity-Language and

Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*', trans. K. Barry, in *Futures of Jacques Derrida*, p. 147.)

34. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx, the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, p. 37.
35. Derrida, J. 'On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy', trans. J. Leavey, Jr, in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 164.
36. For the most comprehensive and carefully articulated analysis of *Apeiron's* place in both Heidegger and Derrida's work, see Rapaport, H. *Heidegger and Derrida, Reflections on Time and Language* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1989), pp. 45–67.
37. Wood, D. *The Deconstruction of Time* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989–2001), especially pp. 361–83.
38. To focus only on the French reception of the German phenomenological tradition, these names could include: Maurice Blanchot, Emmanuel Levinas, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Françoise Dastur, Françoise Proust, to name only a few.
39. For a comprehensive account of Jacques Derrida's approach to Edmund Husserl's lectures, see Marrati, P. *Genesis and Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger*, trans. S. Sparks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). For the way Jean-Luc Nancy approaches the work of Husserl, see James, I. *The Fragmentary Demand, an Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).
40. See Derrida, J. *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: an Introduction*, trans. J. Leavey (York: Beach, 1978).
41. For a comprehensive account of Derrida's debt to Heidegger, see Rapaport, *Heidegger and Derrida, Reflections on Time and Language*.
42. Benjamin, W. 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt, trans. H. Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1973), pp. 245–55.
43. Derrida's reading of Benjamin's messianism can be traced back to 'Khôra', trans. I. McLeod, in *On the Name*, ed. T. Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); *Spectres of Marx, the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*; 'Marx and Sons', trans. G. M. Goshgarian, in *Ghostly Demarcations. A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*, ed. M. Sprinker (London: Verso, 1999); and most recently in 'Questions à Jacques Derrida', in *La philosophie au risque de la promesse*, ed. M. Crépon and M. de Launay (Paris: Bayard, 2004).
44. Laclau, E. 'The Time is Out of Joint', in *Diacritics*, 25(2) (1995), 85–96 and 90.
45. See Derrida, J. 'Living On/Border Lines', trans. J. Hulbert, in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. H. Bloom (New York: Continuum, 1979), and Benjamin, W. 'On Language as Such and on the Languages of Man', trans. E. Jephcott, in *Selected Writings*, ed. M. Bullock and M. W. Jennings (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004).
46. See Derrida, J. 'Ulysses Gramophone', in *Acts of Literature*, ed. D. Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 253–309.
47. See Benjamin, A. *Translation, and the Nature of Philosophy: a New Theory of Words* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 151.

48. See Heidegger, M. *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. G. Fried and R. Polt (London: Nota Bene, 2000), pp. 10–13.
49. See Derrida, J. *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. P. Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
50. See for example in Derrida's work, the polyphonic reading proposed in *Glas* or the circular reading proposed in *The Truth in Painting*; two types of writing that prevent the possibility of reading these books from cover to cover.
51. Although this book concerns itself with translation, it is not *about* translation per se, the task of the translator or about the relationship between translation and philosophy. Firstly, there will be no reference here to key texts on translation in the context of philosophy (for example, Cicero's *Libellus de optimo genere oratum*, Seneca's *Epistulae Morales*, Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Benjamin's *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy: a New Theory of Words* or Davidson's *Truth and Interpretation*). Secondly, there will also be no reference to the temporal structures of signs, narratives, or languages. No mention will be made of the work of Ricoeur, Barthes, Genette, or Silverman in relation to the deployment or preservation of time in writing. Finally, there will also be no reference in this book to the relationship between origin and translation or between interpretation and the object of interpretation. This book starts from the premise that the relationship between one and the other is necessarily undecidable. The field of inquiry is the issue of the spacing (and) temporizing of translation within the context of contemporary French deconstruction.
52. See Derrida, 'Ulysses Gramophone', *Acts of Literature*.
53. Derrida, 'Ulysses Gramophone', *Acts of Literature*.
54. See Derrida, J. *The Post Card: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
55. Derrida, *The Post Card: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond*.
56. See, for example, Lyotard, J-F. *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), Rorty, R. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), and of course, Derrida's attempt to put forward the idea of a 'de-linearized temporality' in *Of Grammatology*, pp. 85ff.
57. Here, I am proposing to go against Derrida's idea that time is 'multidimensional' and to propose instead to think time as multiplicity. On this point, see Derrida, J. *Of Grammatology*, pp. 85ff and David Wood's attempt to come to terms with this multidimensionality in *The Deconstruction of Time*.
58. See Hamacher, 'Ou, séance, touché de Nancy, ici (3)', in *Sens en tous sens: Autour des travaux de Jean-Luc Nancy*, pp. 126–37. In this text, Hamacher explores the commonplace notion of the 'arrow of time'. His argument is that in any analysis of *à-venir*, one has to forgo the idea of what is ahead or behind us. His point is that, if this were the case, then time would obstruct our opening onto it.
59. Blanchot, M. *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. L. Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).
60. Derrida, J. 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', in *The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. R. Mackey and E. Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), p. 267.
61. This constituency is obviously not intended to be comprehensive. As Derrida himself asks: [How to]

cauterize around 'destinal' prepositions, 'to,' 'towards,' 'for,' around adverbs of place 'here', 'there', 'far', 'near', etc? around the verbs 'to arrive' in all its senses, and 'to pass', 'to call', 'to come', 'to get to', 'to expedite', to all the composites of *voie*, voyage, voiture, viability? It's endless, and I will never get there, the contamination is everywhere and we would never light the fire. (Derrida, *The Post Card: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, p. 224.)

62. Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1999), pp. 327–8.
63. Derrida, J. 'Some Statements and Truisms about Neologisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and other Small Seismisms', trans. A. Tomiche, in *The State of 'Theory': History, Art, and Critical Discourse*, ed. D. Carroll (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 79.
64. Malabou, C. *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture: Dialectique, destruction, déconstruction* (Paris: Editions Léo Scheer, 2005), p. 46, my translation.
65. See Malabou, C. 'Homage à Jacques Derrida', in *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger*, 43 (1990) and Malabou, C. and Derrida, J. *Counterpath: Travelling with Jacques Derrida*, trans. D. Willis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).
66. Malabou, C. *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture: Dialectique, destruction, déconstruction*, p. 99, my translation.
67. See amongst others Nancy, J-L. *Les fins de l'homme: à partir du travail de Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Galilée, 1981).

1 Voir Venir

1. Malabou, C. *Le Change Heidegger, Du fantastique en philosophie* (Paris: Editions Léo Scheer, 2004), pp. 367–8, my translation. Heidegger's quotation is taken from Heidegger, M. 'Why Poets?' in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 210.
2. Malabou, *Le Change Heidegger*, pp. 368–9, my translation.
3. Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture: Dialectique, destruction, déconstruction*, p. 18, my translation.
4. See, for example, Malabou, C. 'La Plasticité spéculative', in *Philosophie*, No. 19 (Paris: Minuit, 1988), 53–81 and closer to us, Malabou, C. *Que faire de notre cerveau?* (Paris: Bayard, 2004).
5. Malabou, C. *The Future of Hegel, Plasticity, Temporality Dialectic*, trans. L. During (London: Routledge, 2004). *L'Avenir de Hegel, Plasticité, Temporalité, Dialectique* (Paris: Vrin, 1996). All subsequent endnotes reference the English version followed by the French version between square brackets.
6. Heidegger, M. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1988); Hyppolite, J. 'Essai sur la Logique de Hegel', in *Figures de la pensée philosophique (1931–1968)*, ed. D. Dreyfus (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), Vol. 1; Kojève, A. *An Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the 'Phenomenology of Spirit'*, trans. J. H. Nichols Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980); Koyré, A. 'Hegel à Iéna', in *Etudes d'histoire de la pensée philosophique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 148–89.

7. Faithful to his early commentary in 'Ousia et Gramme: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*', in *Margins of Philosophy*, pp. 56–8, Jacques Derrida insists again on the importance of Malabou's expression 'at once', one that exposes one idiom's ability to conjugate two contradictory meanings *at the same time*. "'At once" synchronizes or symmetrizes at the same time, simultaneously, in the Same, two contrary, sometimes two contrary salutations, one that attempts to save, the other that abandons its right to save...' In 'A Time for Farewells: Heidegger (read by) Hegel (read by) Malabou', Preface to *The Future of Hegel, Plasticity, Temporality Dialectic*, p. xxxvi, translation modified. Previously published in French as 'Le Temps des Adieux: Heidegger (lu par) Hegel (lu par) Malabou', in *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), Vol. 188, 35. All subsequent endnotes reference the English version followed by the French version between square brackets.
8. Malabou, C. 'Plasticité Surprise', in *Plasticité* (Paris: Editions Léo Sheer, 2000), p. 319.
9. This double negative is coined by Malabou as editor of a collection of philosophical texts published by Editions Léo Sheer. In the jacket of her book dedicated to Heidegger, she writes: 'Thinking is to say no. Twice. Once for nothing and once for all.' Malabou, *Le Change Heidegger*.
10. Derrida, 'A Time for Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. x [7].
11. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 13 [28].
12. Derrida, 'A Time of Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. ix [6].
13. Neither Malabou nor Hegel uses this German expression. I only use it here to emphasize the transformative character of Malabou's work.
14. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 170 [229].
15. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 13 [27].
16. Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*, pp. 33–4, my translation.
17. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 10 [24].
18. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 12 [26].
19. For a comprehensive analysis of the context of Malabou's reading, see Malabou, C. 'Négatifs de la dialectique: entre Hegel et le Hegel de Heidegger, Hyppolite, Koyré, Kojève', in *Philosophie*, No. 52 (Paris: Minuit, 1996), 37–53.
20. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 18 [33]. See also Derrida's comment on this Kantian term of hypotyposis in the preface, pp. xx–xxi [18].
21. Derrida, 'A Time of Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. xxi [18].
22. Barthes, R. *Mythologies*, trans. A. Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 97.
23. During, L. 'Catherine Malabou and the Currency of Hegelianism', in *Hypatia*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Fall 2000, 193.
24. Nancy, J.-L. *The Speculative Remark (One of Hegel's Bons Mots)*, trans. C. Surprenant (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 12–13.
25. Malabou also acknowledges this way of reading; see Malabou, *Philosophie*, No. 19, pp. 53–81.
26. Nancy, *The Speculative Remark*, p. 13.
27. See Malabou, *Philosophie*, No. 52, p. 42.
28. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 16 [32].
29. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 17 [32].

30. Malabou, C. 'Malabouté, Entretien avec Catherine Malabou', interview with M. Alizart, <http://perso.club-internet.fr/mul/mul20-3.htm> (11.01.2003).
31. Malabou, *Plasticité*, p. 311.
32. Malabou, <http://perso.club-internet.fr/mul/mul20-3.htm> (11.01.2003).
33. Derrida, 'A Time of Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. x. [8]. Translation modified:

la plasticité n'est pas un *deuxième* concept, un autre concept qui viendrait s'ajouter au 'voir venir' pour former une sorte de couple dans *L'avenir de Hegel*. C'est le *même* concept dans son processus de différenciation et de détermination. En raison de sa propre autocontradiction dialectique et de sa mobilité, le voir venir est lui même un concept plastique, il donne à voir venir la plasticité.

34. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 12 [27].
35. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 12 [27].
36. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 163 [220–1]. 'Le philosophie Hegelienne assume absolument le surgissement de l'aléatoire au sein même du nécessaire, et le devenir nécessaire de l'aléatoire.'
37. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 169 [219], translation modified.
38. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 12 [27]. '... le mot grec pour accident... signifie à la fois découler de et arriver... Nous entendrons dès lors par avenir dans la philosophie de Hegel, le rapport que la subjectivité entretient avec l'accident.'
39. Malabou, <http://perso.club-internet.fr/mul/mul20-3.htm> (11.01.2003).
40. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 163 [221].
41. During, *Hypatia*, p. 207.
42. Malabou, C. 'The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, Dialectic', trans. L. During, *Hypatia*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Fall 2000, 207.
43. Malabou, *L'Avenir de Hegel, Plasticité, Temporalité, Dialectique*, p. 27.
44. Malabou, *Hypatia*, p. 208.
45. Derrida, 'A Time of Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. ix [6], translation modified.
46. During, L. 'Preliminary Remarks', in Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. xlix.
47. During, *The Future of Hegel*, p. xlix.
48. During, *The Future of Hegel*, note 4, pp. 194–5.
49. Derrida, 'A Time of Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. xxiii [21].
50. There is a curious feature in Malabou's book. The expression *voir venir* never undertakes the test of conjugation. Would the formation of the future not benefit from the various inflections of both verbs *voir* and *venir*?
51. With regards to this theme, see also the way Malabou analyses Aristotle's concept of experience. See Malabou, C. 'Les Temps de l'expérience: Le style d'Aristote', in *Papiers du Collège International de Philosophie*, Paris, No. 22, October 1993, 1–10.
52. See Malabou, Part 1, Chapter 4, in *The Future of Hegel*, pp. 65–74 [95–107].
53. See Malabou, Part 1, Chapter 3, in *The Future of Hegel*, pp. 57–64 [82–94].
54. As Malabou notes in a reading of Heidegger's commentary of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

L'expérience, en tant que présentation du savoir apparaissant est le 'scepticisme s'accomplissant', 'nous regagnons ainsi au mot de sceptique' poursuit Heidegger, 'sa signification originelle; car *σκεψιζ* signifie la vue, le regard, l'in-spect, qui respecte ce qu'est l'étant et comment il est en tant qu'étant.' L'expérience est vue de ce qui advient. (In Malabou, *Philosophie*, No. 52, 50.)

I give here my translation, with the help of the English translation of Heidegger's text:

Experience, as presentation of coming knowledge is 'skepticism thoroughgoing [*sich vollbringende*]. We thus restore to the word '*skepsis*' its original meaning: *σκεψιζ* signifies the seeing [*Sehen*], watching [*Zusehen*], inspecting [*Besehen*], that oversees [*nachsiecht*] what and how beings are as beings. *Skepsis* understood like this follows the being of beings with its eyes open.

See Heidegger, M. 'Hegel's Concept of Experience', in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 114.

55. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 13 [28].
56. For the importance of opposite meanings in speculative words, see Nancy, *The Speculative Remark*, pp. 53–71.
57. See Lyotard, J-F. *Discours*, Figure (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971), and Catherine Malabou's own analysis of the 'eye at the edge of discourse' in Malabou, C. 'Un oeil au bord du discours', *Etudes Phénoménologiques*, Nos. 31–32, Vol. XVI, Louvain la Neuve, 2000, 209–22.
58. Derrida, 'A Time of Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. xxiii [20].
59. Derrida, 'A Time of Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. xxxii [30].
60. Malabou, *Plasticité*, p. 311.
61. This desire to find a 'flaw' or something 'not quite right' does not mean that there is something 'wrong' with Malabou's *voir venir*. To qualify something as 'not quite right' is not a gratuitous act of critical repartee against Malabou's Post-Derridean Hegelianism. On the contrary, it simply constitutes the chance of the attempt to test the plasticity of *voir venir*.
62. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 13 [28], translation modified.
63. Derrida, footnote 18 in 'A Time of Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. 196 [20].
64. Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*, p. 99.
65. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 60 [88].
66. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 61 [89].
67. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 61 [89].
68. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 256 [193].
69. Derrida, 'A Time for Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. xlvii [47].
70. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 74 [109].
71. Modern subjectivity is the mirror opposite of Divine hypotyposis, in the sense that it contrasts with the incarnation of God (God alienating himself when becoming human). This new acceptance of modern subjectivity (a type of reversed kenosis) is, according to Malabou, quite clear if one looks

at the passage from Greek sculpture to modern painting. The latter represents the plastic process of modern subjectivity: timely and representational. Malabou gives the simple example of the Western conception of the curriculum vitae. In our understanding of a CV, time is at once represented and posited *ahead of itself* [*vor-stellt*]. Modern subjectivity therefore corresponds to the translation of the sensible as conceived by a time that looks ahead to time. See Malabou, Part II, Chapter 8, 'Divine Plasticity or the Turn of Events', in *The Future of Hegel*, pp. 115–24 [162–72].

72. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 5 [16].
73. For this specific Hebraic reversal, see Tresmontant, C. *Le Christ Hebreu* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1992), p. 108. See also Bensussan, G. *Le temps messianique, Temps historique et temps vécu* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2001), pp. 41–3.
74. Derrida, 'A Time for Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. xlii [41].
75. Derrida, 'A Time for Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. xl [29].
76. Derrida, 'A Time for Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. xxx [28–9].
77. Derrida, 'A Time for Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. xl [38].
78. Derrida, 'A Time for Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. xlv [44], translation modified.
79. Derrida, 'A Time for Farewells', in *The Future of Hegel*, p. xlvii [45].
80. See Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*, pp. 49–58.
81. Derrida, J. 'Ousia and Gramme: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*', in *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 9.
82. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 189 [251].
83. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 189 [251].

2 Survenue

1. Barthes, R. *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. R. Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 4, translation modified.
2. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, pp. 40–1, translation modified.
3. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 56, translation modified.
4. For a comprehensive introduction to Jean-Luc Nancy's work, see James, *The Fragmentary Demand, an Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy*; Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*; and Sheppard, D., Sparks, S. and Thomas, C. (eds) *On Jean-Luc Nancy, the Sense of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997).
5. Levinas, E. *Existence and Existent*, trans. A. Lingis (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1978), pp. 45–6.
6. See Derrida, J. *On Touching Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. C. Irizarry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), especially pp. 66–91.
7. Nancy, J.-L. *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel* (Paris: Galilée, 2001), p. 10, this and all subsequent translations are mine.
8. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, pp. 9–10.
9. Nancy, J.-L. *Ego Sum* (Paris: Aubier Flammarion, 1979), p. 121, this, and all subsequent translations are mine.
10. Nancy, *Ego Sum*, p. 22.
11. Nancy, *Ego Sum*, p. 22.
12. Nancy, *Ego Sum*, p. 37.

13. Nancy, *Ego Sum*, p. 124.
14. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 66.
15. Lacan, J. 'La Troisième (Lacan's Third Rome Discourse)' [1974], *Lettres de l'IEP*, No. 16, 1975.
16. Nancy, J-L. 'The Forgetting of Philosophy', in *The Gravity of Thought*, trans. F. Raffoul and G. Recco (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993), pp. 17–25 and 57–64.
17. Nancy, J-L. *Corpus* (Paris: Métailié, 2000), p. 103.
18. Nancy, J-L. *58 indices sur le corps* (Quebec City: Editions Nota Bene, 2004), p. 33, my translation.
19. See also how Nancy understands the body as sense in *Corpus*, p. 103, partially translated by Claudette Sartillot in Nancy, J-L. *The Birth to Presence*, various translators (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 189–207.
20. Nancy, 'The Birth to Presence' in *The Birth to Presence*, trans. B. Holmes, p. 5.
21. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 33.
22. There is unfortunately no space here to develop this theme. It would require a lengthy analysis of the relationship between *jouissance* and the *yeses* that Jacques Derrida analyses in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. (Derrida, J. 'Ulysses Gramophone, Hear Say Yes in Joyce', trans. T. Kendall and S. Benstock, in Derrida, J. *Acts of Literature*, ed. D. Attidge (London: Routledge, 1992).) It is worth noting here, however, that *jouissance* is indeed a 'yes' that is not part of a sentence or a statement. It is an inarticulate cry, stammer, or preconceptual vocalization. A 'yes!' of relief that is necessarily mute. It has nothing to do with the moaning and groaning that takes place in sex. These utterances are essentially interjections that constitute an elaborate and often coded form of language. The true 'yes!' of coming, that of *jouissance*, even if it is vocal, even if it is translated into the language of pleasure, is a 'yes' that can never be grasped, it is irreducible to an occurrence that might stabilize it in a certain unity or number. In a way, this 'yes' is similar to the 'volo' that Michel de Certeau analysed in the birth of mysticism, which begins with a singular original and reiterated affirmation, 'I will.' This 'yes' is a 'willing from which a saying is born or can be born' (De Certeau, M. *La Fable Mystique*, Vol.1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), p. 240, my translation). It is the 'yes' that interrupts the performative. In our context, this disruptive and inaudible 'yes' is directed not only from me to me, from me to the other in me, but also from the other to me, and this, whether alone, masturbating, with another or in the company of others. Borrowing (dis/respectfully) from Derrida's 'Ulysses Gramophone' (*Acts of Literature*, p. 297), one could say that when I come, I say yes, there we are, I stiffen, I contract, I am about to come, yes, yes, you can feel me, I can feel you, yes, we are in the process of coming, you are receiving me or I'm receiving you, it is like this, it takes place, it happens, it is marked, yes, yes. In this way, 'yes' is necessarily a non-uttered response, and this even if it is a response to oneself. It is always internal and yet always directed towards the other. For this reason, the 'yes' is 'like a dispatch to oneself, a sending-back of self to self, which both never leaves itself and never arrives at itself' (Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 303). 'Yes' always takes place in an exchange of silent cries. Perhaps we

only always come to ourselves as a mark of assurance that we are here. "I-here", listen, answer... there is some other' (Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p. 298). Finally, and this again would require further analysis, there is the *tonality* of *jouissance*. Derrida noted, in an accent that recalls the previous operation of terms like *arche-writing*, *supplement* and *différance*, the importance of the *double* tonality of laughter in Joyce's *Ulysses*: yes-laughter [*oui rire*], yes-saying [*oui dire*], yes-hearing [*oui ouïr*], yes-heard [*oui ouï*], hear-say [*ouï-dire*], hear-say/yes-laughter [*ouï-rire*] (Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, pp. 291–3). As is well known, this series of double tonalities intends to affirm the absolute other (that is to say, *me*) and the exchange of calls and answers that operate between the two. Without reconstructing the perfect semantic effects created by the juxtaposition of all these words, one might perhaps ask, to finish: can one reconsider *jouissance* as a yes-come [*oui-jouir*] with other qualities, modalities, genres of coming that could equally never be distinguished or classified into some sort of taxonomy or typology?

23. Nancy, *L'Il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 11.
24. Nancy, *L'Il y a' du rapport sexuel*, pp. 15–18.
25. Nancy, *La pensée dérobée*, pp. 79–80, my translation.
26. Nancy, *L'Il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 18.
27. Nancy, *L'Il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 18.
28. Nancy, 'In Statu Nascendi', in *The Birth to Presence*, p. 229.
29. See Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 84.
30. Spinoza, B. *On the Improvement of the Understanding* (New York: Kessinger, 2004), p. 87.
31. See the example given by Sextus Empiricus in 'Against the Professors', 10.254–5 (H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Leipzig, 1903–5, 2.221), in Long, A. A. and Sedley, D. N. *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary*, Vol. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 51H, p. 306.
32. Bréhier, E. *La théorie des incorporels dans l'ancien Stoïcisme* (Paris: Vrin, 1928), p. 11. Also quoted in Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 8.
33. A comparative analysis of Nancy and Deleuze's approach to Stoicism is unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter. However, for the sake of clarity, it is important to note that the main difference between Nancy and Deleuze focuses on the distinction between corporeal and incorporeal. While Deleuze clearly distinguishes between the two, creating a 'dualism' (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 9) that engenders two radically different temporalities (*Chronos* and *Aion*), Nancy, by contrast, is much less definite. Nancy refuses, for example, to conceive the corporeal and the incorporeal as two *events* overlapping or cutting each other. Staying close to the Stoics, he would probably reject Deleuze's hesitant Epicurean reading of the incorporeal as an *event* ('Events are not *exactly* incorporeal entities', footnote 4, p. 14 and 'the event does not *properly speaking* have the status of an incorporeal entity', footnote 40, p. 319). For Nancy, the incorporeal is what *allows* the corporeal event to take place. By making them co-dependent, Nancy does not end up generating a different temporality (*Aion*) that would be specific to the incorporeal world. Both the corporeal and its underside or

- its counterpart, the incorporeal, constitutes *the taking place* of the rapport as such.
34. Nancy's remark was originally made by Sextus Empiricus in 'Against the Professors', 10.218 (SVF, 2.331), in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 27D, p. 162.
 35. Long, A. A. 'Ontology', in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, p. 165, my emphasis.
 36. Laertius, D. 7.53 (SVF, 2.87), in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 39 D, p. 238, my emphasis.
 37. See Derrida, 'Pas', in *Parages*, p. 25.
 38. Seneca, 'Letters', 117.13, in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 33E, p. 196.
 39. Diogenes Laertius, 7.55–6, in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 33H, p. 197.
 40. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 84.
 41. Ammonius, 'On Aristotle's De Interpretatione', 17, 24–8, in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 33E, p. 198.
 42. Laertius, D. 7.55–6, in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 33H, p. 197.
 43. See Sextus Empiricus, 'Against the Professors', 8.11–12 (SVF, 2.166), in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 33B, p. 195.
 44. Sextus E. 'Against the Professors', 8.70 (SVF, 2.187) and Laertius D., 7.63, in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 33C, p. 196.
 45. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 8.
 46. Chrysippus, 44 (SVF, 11 173, 20) in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 33C, p. 196.
 47. Stobaeus, 1.106, 5–23 (SVF, 2.509), in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 51B, p. 304.
 48. Stobaeus, 1.106 (SVF, 2.164 15), in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 51B, p. 304.
 49. Aristototele, *Physics*, IV, trans. H. Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 13, 222a10.
 50. See Stobaeus, 1.105, 8–16 (SVF, 3 Apollodorus 8), in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1, 51E3, p. 305.
 51. Either the excitation of the pleasure for resistance [*tension*] is not 'preliminary' as Freud would have it, or it precedes the threshold – the *limen* – on which the intimacy of the excited-being takes place. This corresponds to the logic of erogenous zones, around which plays the pleasure for resistance as resistance to pleasure. The erogenous zones are nothing other than the differentiation of sex within the body. The body is here transcendental as empirical (or existential as existentiell): the way it divides itself in parts, a division neither given nor pre-established, a division largely foreign to physiological division (I leave here, for lack of time, the issue of the coming together of the genitals and its reproductive functions: the possible, but necessary conjunction of the excess of pleasure and that of fecundity), a division that generates the spacing of the sexual or the sexualised [*sexuant*]. Sex zones itself [*le sex s'y zone*], if I can put this way: it divides itself (zoned, in Greek is crown in the sense of separation and delimitation). The difference from one zone to another (from breast to abdomen or ears, from lips to armpits – but can one give names to zones already anatomized? Zones are also the spacing

itself [*le zonage lui-même*], what one calls the embrace in which kissing is one register) is a difference that is at once void and absolute, a difference that cannot be differentiated, because it represent differentiation itself, in act and therefore in excess over the entire encounter.

Unlike substances, (and in our case, organs) zones have no value in themselves: if they are substances – or more precisely, organs – it is because they are, in other words pleasure-desire, organs of an incorporeal and not physiological body. Zones give value in the same way as *Eros*, which they neither produce nor contain, but *are* as long as they excite themselves (or allow themselves to be excited): they give value to a value that cannot be calculated, because it differentiates and exceeds itself. In this way, one cannot calculate either the determination or the quantity of zones: as Freud suggested, the entire body can become erogenous. Zones are mobile and unstable circumscriptions not akin to the gestures that draw, excite or exalt them. In this way, there are as many zones as there are gestures, indefinitely disowned or readapted.

Of course, bodies have their own favourite regions, in which the genital, therefore the generational, combines itself to the erotic. This does not mean that one should exhaust one's own determination through the other: pleasure and the child could well be two distinct figures – not necessarily related – of the incalculable remain [*l'incalculable excédence*]. This explains why neither of them wants to hear from each other: pleasure does not want to calculate its potential for generation, the child cannot recognise itself in the relation from which he or she is the result. In this sense, the rapport states that there is no child and the child states that there is no rapport. Both must state that there is between them no rapport: denegation with which individually they must make do. In what mutual relation can one find the body of pleasure and the body of the child? The body of the child could be understood as the erogenous zone that detaches itself and assumes an autonomous destiny. From the body of pleasure to the body of a child, there is perhaps only the communication of orifices, what opens, absorbs or rejects: breath, temper, fluids, heat, flesh, and resistance.

Could we say that the discourse of the body divided in zones is an interpretation? The spacing of the body in zones and eros is nothing but the body interpreting itself (the soul if one prefers this term). One should even say that sex interprets itself: by this I mean that it plays and acts itself as it sexualises itself [*en se sexuant*]. It plays as one plays a score: it plays its own score, the division of multiple sexes. Divided in zones, the body imprints itself as the 'there is' of the act of differentiation. (Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, pp. 41–3.)

52. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 21.

53. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 22.

54. Lacan, J. 'God and the Jouissance of the Woman', Chapter 6 of *The Seminar, Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge: Encore*,

- trans. J. Rose in *Feminine Sexuality, Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. J. Mitchell and J. Rose (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 138.
55. Lacan, J. 'God and the Jouissance of the Woman', in *Feminine Sexuality, Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, p. 138.
56. Lacan, J. 'The Rat in the Maze', in *The Seminar, Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge: Encore*, trans. B. Fink (New York: Norton, 1998), pp. 138–42.
57. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 25.
58. See also Nancy's use of the word 'transport' in the sentence:

The rapport therefore rekindles, if one can put it this way, with the logical – philosophical register of the 'relational' in generation (relation and rapport, these two terms derived from verbs designating acts of transferring and transporting are synonymous in many ways; however, a relation, which should be limited to lover's liaisons instead of the act of copulation, puts emphasis on a dynamic possibility as in a narrative. (*L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 12.)

59. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 26.
60. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 21.
61. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 27.
62. Nancy, 'Cum', in *La pensée dérobée*, p. 117, my translation.
63. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 81. See also Derrida's reading of this expression in *On Touching Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 199.
64. See Nancy, 'Cum', *La pensée dérobée*, p. 120.
65. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 44.
66. Richard Howard, 'A Note on the Text', in Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, pp. v–vi.
67. Alan Sheridan, 'Translator's Note', in Lacan, J. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. A. Sheridan, ed. J-A. Miller (London: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 281.
68. Gallop, J. 'Beyond the Jouissance Principle', in *Representations*, No. 7, Summer 1984, p. 112.
69. Lis Garbus and Simona Sawhney, in Nancy, J-L. *A Finite Thought*, various translators, ed. S. Sparks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), note 6, p. 346.
70. Robert Richardson and Anne O'Byrne in Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, footnote 9, p. 207.
71. See for example Nancy, J-L. 'Nudité', in *La pensée dérobée*, p. 14.
72. This aporetic coming is addressed in the third chapter, dedicated to Derrida's *Aporias*.
73. Nancy, J-L. 'Nudité', in *La pensée dérobée*, p. 19.
74. See Nancy, J-L. *Le discours de la syncope*, I. *Logodaedalus* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1976).
75. Nancy's book was originally a conference paper entitled 'Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel.' It was presented on the occasion of the *Centenary of Lacan*, organized by the School of Lacanian Studies at the Cité des Sciences, Paris, on 5 and 6 May 2001. Some papers were later published in *Unbevue*, No. 18, 2001. Speakers included Jean Allouch, Marcelle Iacub, Jean-Paul Brighelli,

- David Halperin, Leo Bersani and Annie Le Brun. Jean-Luc Nancy preferred to have his text published separately, by Galilée.
76. Nancy, J-L. *The Sense of the World*, trans. J. S. Librett (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1997), p. 134.
 77. See Nancy, *Corpus*, pp. 24–5.
 78. Levinas, E. *Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 254.
 79. In his lengthy study on Nancy's work, Derrida highlights the importance of this border when it comes to the syncope. See Derrida, *On Touching Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 109.
 80. Hume, *Traité de la Nature Humaine*, Book II, Part 2, Section XI and Book III, Part 3, Section III, ed. A. Auchatraire (Paris: Ellipses Marketing, 2002).
 81. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, pp. 38–9.
 82. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 102.
 83. See Nancy, *Le discours de la syncope*, especially pp. 12–15.
 84. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 39.
 85. Nancy, 'Différance', in *The Sense of the World*, p. 35.
 86. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 35.
 87. See Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, pp. 57–61 and 76–9.
 88. Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, p. 57.
 89. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 159.
 90. Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, p. 59.
 91. This differentiation between the event and a happening without entity or unity references a parenthesis in Nancy, J-L. 'L'Amour en éclats', in *Une pensée finie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), p. 262. 'Jouir n'est pas un achèvement, et ce n'est même pas un événement (ou du moins, cela n'a pas l'unité d'un événement: mais c'est peut-être ainsi le paradigme de l'événement).' This insistence on the lack of unity echoes that of Lacan in relation to *jouissance*: 'jouissance... is marked, dominated by the impossibility of establishing as such, anywhere in the enunciable that unity which uniquely interests us'. Jacques Lacan, quoted in Melville, S. 'Psychoanalysis and the Place of Jouissance', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Winter 1987, p. 366, extract taken from Lacan's *Seminar XX, Encore*, trans. S. Melville, ed. J-A. Miller (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), p. 13. Nancy's remark placed between parentheses is omitted in Simon Sparks's English version included in *A Finite Thought*.
 92. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 169.
 93. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 171.
 94. Nancy, J-L. *Être singulier pluriel* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), p. 197.
 95. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 170, translation modified.
 96. See Heidegger, M. *Identity and Difference*, trans. J. Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 32–41.
 97. The 'to rapport' or the 'to distinguish' represents, according to Nancy, 'the yawning [*l'entre'ouvrir*] of the *between* itself, of the amongst-ourselves, or of intimacy: sex differentiating itself represents the spacing of intimacy'. (Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 31). In this difficult sentence, Nancy attempts to make sense of this 'in-between', this space between two entities or subjectivities who cannot be referred to as 'things' placed at either end of this 'in-between'. His expression is extraordinarily awkward. The

'entre'ouvrir de l'entre' brings together or amalgamates verb and noun in an attempt to evade the motion of the one (to set ajar in order to enter) and the stillness of the other (the 'between' understood as 'a den', [l'antré]). His attempt is really to ex-pose or to open the différence of sex, the *in-between* [l'entre] of an embrace.

98. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 170.
99. Nancy, 'Spanne', in *The Sense of the World*, p. 64.
100. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 160.
101. Nancy, *Être singulier pluriel*, p. 186.
102. Malabou, *Plasticité*, p. 311.
103. Nancy, *Être singulier pluriel*, p. 185.
104. Nancy, *Être singulier pluriel*, p. 186.
105. Nancy, *Être singulier pluriel*, p. 187.
106. Nancy, *Être singulier pluriel*, p. 192.
107. Nancy, *Être singulier pluriel*, p. 196.
108. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 13.
109. Nancy, *La pensée dérobée*, p. 34.
110. Nancy, 'Concealed Thinking', in *A Finite Thought*, trans. J. Gilbert-Walsh, p. 39.
111. Nancy, *58 indices sur le corps*, p. 51, my translation.
112. Lacan, J. *Écrits, a Selection*, trans. A. Sheridan (London: Tavistock-Routledge, 1977), pp. 171–5.
113. Nancy, 'Concealed Thinking', in *A Finite Thought*, p. 39.
114. Nancy, 'Nudité', in *La pensée dérobée*, p. 12, my translation (this essay is not included in the English translation, *A Finite Thought*).
115. Nancy, *L'il y a' du rapport sexuel*, p. 52.
116. Nancy, 'Shattered Love', in *A Finite Thought*, trans. L. Garbus and S. Sawhney, p. 271.
117. Derrida, J. *Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante'?* (Paris: L'Herne, 2005), pp. 69–72.
118. Lacan, 'A Love Letter', in *Feminine Sexuality*, p. 150.

3 Venue

1. Fathy, S. 'D'ailleurs, Derrida', Arte, 29 March 2000, my translation.

Safaa Fathy Ici, c'est le lieu d'un fait divers qui a donné à Lorca sa pièce, *Les Noces de Sang*, parce qu'il y a eu une mise à mort tout a fait symbolique d'une femme et sa mémoire endeuillée hante encore ce lieu.

Jacques Derrida Le deuil infini de la femme est une hantise générale du lieu. Ce que je voulais suggérer en parlant de la différence sexuelle ou plutôt des différences sexuelles, c'est que chaque fois il y a comme un tresse de voix, disons une plurivocité dans ce mot qui a plus d'un sens, une plurivocité qui travaille laborieusement ou non chaque voix. Ici, puisque on parle de plusieurs personnages de femmes, de Lorca et de tous ses fantômes qui viennent hanter le même lieu et que d'une certaine manière nous prenons en nous au moment du deuil ou du recueillement; il faut bien que ces fantômes même, qui sont des voix, masculines, féminines,

composent entre elles, s'enchevêtrent ou se tressent entre elles et d'une certaine manière dès que l'on parle, dès que je parle, dès qu'un 'je' parle, ce 'je' lui-même est constitué et rendu possible dans son identité de 'je' par cet enchevêtrement de voix. Une voix habitant l'autre, hantant l'autre et la repression, toutes les repressions et en particulier la repression sexuelle commence là où on essaie de faire taire une voix ou de réduire cet écheveau ou cette tresse à une seule voix, à une sorte de monologique. Donc la multiplicité des voix est aussi d'entré-de-jeu, l'espace ouvert aux fantômes, aux revenants, au retour aussi de ce qui est refoulé, exclu, forclos. Donc, moi j'essaierai de penser ensemble la multiplicité des voix, la hantise, la spectralité et aussi tout ce dont nous parlons depuis un moment du côté du meurtre et de la repression, des différences sexuelles, de la femme, etc.

2. It is Safaa Fathy who chooses the theme of sexual difference. For a commentary on the film, see 'Tourner sous surveillance', and 'Tourner sous tous les fronts' in Derrida J. and Fathy S. *Tourner les mots, Au bord d'un film*, Galilée/Arte Editions, Paris, 2000, pp. 27–70, 127–67.
3. See Derrida's commentary on Fathy's film in 'Lettres sur un aveugle, Punctum caecum' in Derrida J. and Fathy S. *Tourner les mots, Au bord d'un film*, pp. 71–126.
4. Lorca, F. G. *Blood Wedding*, trans. T. Ronder (London: Nick Hern, 2005), pp. 88–9.
5. The theme can be traced back to a number of commentaries on sexual difference, for example: in Derrida, J. 'Choreographies', in *Diacritics*, No. 12, Summer 1982, pp. 66–7 and later in an exchange of letters published as Derrida, J. 'Voices II', in *Boundary*, No. 2, Winter 1985.
6. Lorca, *Blood Wedding*, p. 33.
7. Lorca, *Blood Wedding*, p. 100.
8. Lorca, *Blood Wedding*, p. 101.
9. Derrida, J. *Aporias Dying – Awaiting (One Another at) the 'Limits of Truth'*, trans. T. Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 8. Derrida, J. *Apories Mourir – s'attendre aux 'limites de la vérité'* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), p. 25. All subsequent endnotes reference the English version followed by the French version between square brackets.
10. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 8 [25], my emphasis.
11. Derrida himself provides the texts and the places in which he experienced previous aporias. See Derrida, *Aporias*, pp. 13–19 [32–42]. For a comprehensive analysis of these occasions, see Gasché, R. 'L'expérience aporétique aux origines de la pensée. Platon, Heidegger, Derrida', in *Études Françaises*, Vol. 38, Nos 1–2, 2002, pp. 103–22.
12. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 11 [31].
13. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 12 [32].
14. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 21 [44–7].
15. Heidegger, M. *Plato's Sophist*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 86. Originally published in German as *Platon: Sophistes* (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), p. 126. All subsequent endnotes reference the

English version followed by the German version between square brackets.

16. Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 982b–985b, trans. H. Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin Books, 2004), pp. 7–18.
17. Kofman, S. *Comment s'en sortir?* (Paris: Galilée, 1983), pp. 45–6, my translation.
18. Kofman, *Comment s'en sortir?*, p. 18.
19. Kofman, *Comment s'en sortir?*, pp. 26–7.
20. Kofman, *Comment s'en sortir?*, pp. 18–19.
21. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 78 [137].
22. Kofman, *Comment s'en sortir?*, pp. 52–3.
23. Gasché, *Études Françaises*, p. 118, my translation.
24. Derrida, *Aporias*, pp. 20–1 [44–7].
25. For the way Derrida plays with games of contamination, see Marrati, *Genesis and Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger*, p. 181.
26. Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 87 [126].
27. Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 88 [127].
28. Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 88 [127].
29. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 11 [30].
30. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 7 [24].
31. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 78 [136].
32. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 12 [31].
33. 'The aporia of death would be one of the place-names for what forms the braid [*la tresse*] and keeps it from coming undone.' Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 41 [78].
34. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 20 [44].
35. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 40 [77].
36. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 41 [78].
37. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 41 [78].
38. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 21 [44–7].
39. Derrida, *Aporias*, pp. 32–3 [65].
40. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 33 [66].
41. Derrida, *Aporias*, pp. 33–4 [66].
42. Derrida, J. 'Passages – From Traumatism to Promise', trans. P. Kamuf, in *Points ... Interviews, 1974–94*, ed. E. Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 387.
43. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, p. 168.
44. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, pp. 180–1, note 2.
45. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p. 168.
46. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p. 168.
47. See Royle, N. *Jacques Derrida* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 111.
48. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 32 [65].
49. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 34 [66].
50. Dutoit, T. in Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 86, note 13.
51. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 34 [66].
52. Derrida, *Aporias*, pp. 34–5 [68–9].
53. Derrida, 'Pas', in *Parages*, p. 23, my translation. 'Il revient à soustraire quelque chose en toute position, telle se propage et récite à travers les modes du venir

- ou de la venue, par exemple, l'avenir, l'événement, l'avènement, etc. mais aussi à travers tous les temps et modes verbaux de l'aller-et-venir.'
54. Derrida, 'Pas', in *Parages*, p. 52, my translation.
 55. Derrida, J. 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy', in *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 248.
 56. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 34 [66].
 57. Kofman, *Comment s'en sortir?*, p. 18.
 58. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 74 [130].
 59. Levinas, E. 'Dasein and Death, Friday, December 12, 1975', in *God, Death, and Time*, trans. B. Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 33–4.
 60. Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, p. 312, translation modified.
 61. Lévesque, C. in Derrida, J. *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation: Texts and Discussions with Jacques Derrida*, trans. P. Kamuf (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), p. 93. Derrida's reply is 'Every proper name [says]: translate me, don't translate me.' p. 102.
 62. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 14 [34], translation modified.
 63. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 62 [113].
 64. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 62 [113], my emphasis.
 65. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 64 [115–16].
 66. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 64 [113].
 67. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 64, 'je m'attends moi-même, et rien d'autre, je m'attends moi-même à moi-même, et c'est le rapport à soi le plus identifiable, le plus identifiant, la mémoire ou la promesse de soi'. Derrida, *Apories*, p. 116.
 68. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 64 [116].
 69. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 65 [117].
 70. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 65 [117].
 71. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 65 [117].
 72. Derrida, *Parages*, pp. 25–31.
 73. Derrida, *Apories*, p. 119.
 74. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 66.
 75. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 76 [133].
 76. See Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 65 [117–18]: '... (death is ultimately the name of an impossible simultaneity and of an impossibility that we know simultaneously, at which we await each other, at the same time, *hama* as one says in Greek: at the same time, simultaneously, we are expecting this anachronism and this contretemps.)'
 77. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 65 [117].
 78. See Derrida, *Memoirs: For Paul de Man*, p. 35.
 79. For the issue of late arrival, see Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 65–6 [118]: 'Both the one and the other never arrive together at this rendezvous, and the one who waits for the other there, at this border, is not he who arrives the first or she who gets there first.'
 80. Derrida, J. *Demeure, Fiction, and Testimony*, trans. E. Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 64.
 81. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 65 [117].
 82. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 8 [25].
 83. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 21 [47].

84. Derrida, 'Psyche: Inventions of the Other', in *Reading de Man Reading*, p. 61.
85. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 41 [78].
86. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 21 [47].
87. Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 8 [25].
88. Derrida, 'Psyche: Inventions of the Other', in *Reading de Man Reading*, p. 61.
89. Derrida, 'Psyche: Inventions of the Other', in *Reading de Man Reading*, p. 61.
90. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 69.
91. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 69.
92. Lorca, *Blood Wedding*, p. 79.

Conclusion

1. Derrida, J. 'Des Tours de Babel', in *Difference in Translation*, trans. and ed. J. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). All subsequent endnotes reference the English version followed by the French version between square brackets, both of which are in the same book. In this case: p. 175 [219].
2. It is impossible here to do justice to the context in which Benjamin and Derrida formulate their interpretation of translation. For a comprehensive account of the issue of translation in philosophy, see Benjamin, A. *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy: a New Theory of Words* (London: Routledge, 1989) and Sallis, J. *On Translation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).
3. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 175 [219].
4. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 176 [220].
5. Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin*, pp. 65–6.
6. See Jacques Derrida's remarks on Rodolphe Gasché and Paul de Man in Derrida, 'A peine', trans. Avita Ronell, in *Memoirs for Paul de Man*, p. xxiii.
7. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 178 [221–2].
8. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 178 [221–2].
9. The conjunction *et* [and] can to some extent be used to make sense of this Benjaminian maturation. In *Et cetera*, Derrida argues that the 'and' [*et*] is an indispensable conjunction that always invites another conjunction or gap. The conjunction *et* [and] calls in fact for its own disjunction. There is no rest to this movement. As he says: 'C'est une loi générale de logique formelle: une conjonction se glisse et s'insinue d'avance dans toute disjonction, et *vice versa*. [It's a general law of formal logic: a conjunction always slips itself into every disjonction and *vice versa*]' See Derrida, J. *Et cetera (and so on, und so weiter, and so forth, et ainsi de suite, und so überall, etc.)* (Paris: Cahiers de l'Herne, 2005), p. 31.
10. Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin*, pp. 60–1.
11. Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin*, pp. 61–2.
12. Derrida, J. 'Theology of Translation', trans. J. Adamson, in *Eyes of the University, Right to Philosophy 2* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 70.
13. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 180 [223–4].
14. Derrida, J. 'Theology of Translation', in *Eyes of the University, Right to Philosophy 2*, p. 65.
15. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, pp. 181–2 [225–6].

16. Benjamin, 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man', in *Selected Writings*, p. 62, translation modified on the basis of Derrida's reading of the French translation: Benjamin, W. 'Sur le langage en général et le langage humain', trans. R. Rochlitz, in *Oeuvres*, vol. I (Paris: Folio Essais, Gallimard, 2000), p. 143.
17. Benjamin, W. 'Über Sprache Überhaupt und Über die Sprache des Menschen', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, II-I, ed. R. Tiedemann and H. Schwepenhäuser (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977), p. 142.
18. Benjamin, W. 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man', in *Selected Writings*, p. 63.
19. Benjamin, W. 'Sur le langage en général et le langage humain', in *Oeuvres*, vol. I, p. 145.
20. Benjamin, W. 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man', in *Selected Writings*, p. 63, translation modified on the basis of Derrida's reading of the French translation: Benjamin, W. 'Sur le langage en général et le langage humain', in *Oeuvres*, vol. I, p. 143. The German version is taken from Benjamin, W. 'Über Sprache Überhaupt und Über die Sprache des Menschen', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, II-I, p. 141.
21. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 184 [227].
22. Caputo, J. *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 54.
23. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 167 [211].
24. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 183 [227].
25. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 185 [228–9], my emphasis.
26. Derrida, Jacques. 'The Art of Memories', trans. J. Culler, in *Memoirs for Paul de Man*, p. 50.
27. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 228, my emphasis.
28. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 185 [228–9].
29. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 190 [234].
30. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 189 [233].
31. De Man, P. "Conclusions" Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" Messenger Lecture, Cornell University, March 4, 1983', in *Yale French Studies*, No. 69, The Lesson of Paul de Man (1985), 25–46.
32. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, pp. 190–1 [234–5].
33. Benjamin, 'Theses in the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, pp. 245–6.
34. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 191 [235].
35. Derrida, J. *Sauf le Nom* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), p. 96, my translation.
36. Benjamin, W. 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers', in *Illuminationen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1961), pp. 61–2.
37. Benjamin, W. 'The Task of the Translator', in *Illuminations*, p. 75.
38. Benjamin, W. 'La Tâche du Traducteur', trans. M. de Gandillac and P. Rusch, in *Oeuvres*, vol. I, p. 251.
39. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, pp. 202–3.
40. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 246.
41. See Derrida, J. *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. B. Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 48–51.
42. Derrida, 'Pas', in *Parages*, p. 25, my translation.
43. Derrida, J. *Les yeux de la langue* (Paris: L'Herne, 2005), p. 34, my translation.
44. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 203 [247].

45. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 205 [248].
46. Derrida, 'Psyche: Inventions of the Other', in *Reading de Man Reading*, p. 55.
47. Derrida, 'On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy', in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy, Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, p. 163.
48. Derrida, J. 'Pas', in *Parages*, p. 77, my translation.
49. Derrida, 'Ulysses Gramophone, Hear say Yes in Joyce', in *Acts of Literature/Jacques Derrida*, p. 308.
50. Derrida, J. *Positions*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 45.
51. Derrida, *Difference in Translation*, p. 178 [222].
52. Derrida, J. Preface to *Plato's Phaedra* (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1989), p. 267, my translation.

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