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A *Work of Love*. If the real means what is present, what is really there, full blown and unvarnished, then deconstruction, as the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence, is the deconstruction of realism, of any such real or full presence, which can always be shown to be a constituted effect. In just the same way that representation and non-presence precede and make possible the 'effect' of 'presence' (VP, 58/SP, 52),¹ deconstruction would take a devilish delight in showing the way that unreality and irreality precede and make 'reality' possible, making possible and impossible whatever would dare to pass itself off as reality. Deconstruction would never tire of telling realists Nietzsche's story of how the real world became a fable.

3. Again, if realism means that the reach of knowledge extends all the way to the 'thing itself,' then deconstruction will respond that, on the contrary, the thing itself, *la chose m'me*, always 'slips away' (*d'robe*), always eludes the play of signifiers in virtue of which any such so called real thing is signified in the first place. At the end of a famous reading of Husserl, after saying that the path toward presence always takes the way of Icarus, which is to say that the waxen wings of our signifiers are headed straight towards a melt down in the sun of presence, Derrida adds:

And contrary to what phenomenology'which is always a phenomenology of perception'has tried to make us believe, contrary to what our desire cannot fail to be tempted into believing, the thing itself always escapes (*la chose m'me se d'robe toujours*). (VP, 117/SP, 104)

4. The thing itself is what we love and desire. Who would desire anything less? Indeed, we so love and desire the thing itself that we cannot bring ourselves to believe that our desire is denied. But, alas, according to the argument of deconstruction, the thing itself always eludes our grasp, always gives the slip to the net of signifiers in which our desire had hoped to catch it up.
5. All that is true, but that is not all the truth. That is true, but that is not true *enough*, not the *most* true thing we can say, not the best we can do or say about deconstruction. For it leaves out the *point* of the story about how the true world became a fable, at least the way that Derrida is telling it, because in Derrida's hands Nietzsche's tale is transformed into a *love story*." Deconstruction is always writing love stories, in however roundabout a way. Thus to tell this much of the story and no more, to say that the thing itself slips away and then to grow silent, is to leave everyone with the mistaken impression that deconstruction cuts us adrift in a never-never land (a Derri-dada land, it has been said) of fictions and caprice. It creates the mistaken impression that deconstruction cuts us off from the world, that the place

¹. VP: *La voix et le ph'nom'ne* (Paris: PUF, 1967); SP: *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. Trans. David Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

where things are really happening, where 'events' transpire, always slips away. But that is badly distorted idea of deconstruction, inasmuch as everything in deconstruction takes place as a preparation for the event, for something that really happens, that breaks out and breaks over us, that really moves us and fires the passion of our love.

6. By telling only half the story one lends weight to the criticism that deconstruction is a form of nihilism, relativism, or subjectivism, that it denies reference and locks us inside a prison house of differential play. But, as I will argue, the deconstruction of reality and presence, of real presence, is not bad news but a work of love and sacrifice.² Deconstruction is not a way of turning our knowledge into illusion, our faith into despair, or our language into a place of confinement. Deconstruction is not a way of undoing the truth but of doing it, of *facere veritatem*, to cite the expression that St. Augustine uses that Derrida loves to cite and recite. Far from confining us inside something, the deconstruction of presence is meant to release us, to open things up, to open presence up beyond itself and to provide for the possibility of something else, something more, something otherwise than and beyond real presence, something we long for and desire, something *undeconstructible*, in comparison with which the merely real and deconstructible world just will not do. For the real is always deconstructible but what deconstruction loves is not deconstructible.
7. Let us speak, then, of love. What else is there that is worth the time or effort? What do we love more, what provokes more love in us, than something elusive and beyond us, something *impossible* that we just cannot have? What better way to raise love up to a feverish pitch than to be told that what we love is impossible and always slips away? For loving what is merely possible, moderating our love to the median mark of the probable, making a wise and prudent investment of the energies of our love so that we may expect a reasonable return on our efforts, does that not have all the makings of a lover without a passion, which is what Johannes Climacus calls a 'mediocre fellow'?³ Is not the realist just such a mediocre fellow, a fellow who, despite all his brave talk and chest-thumping bravado about reality, has no heart or passion for an elusive lover like the things themselves? Deconstruction's desire is not satisfied with what presents itself to us as real, for what it loves goes *beyond* what presents itself as real to an ultra-real for which we pray and weep, towards a hyper-real, something that is not less than real but more, not below the real but beyond.
8. Thus I will defend here Derrida's 'hyper-realism,' his realism beyond realism or without realism, according to the famous logic of the *sans*, which I will claim is a work of love, and I will do so by way of marking off a series of traits of this love, which mark the *retrait* of the hyper-real. Taking my point of departure from what Derrida says about singularity, the *tout autre*, the impossible, and the other features I will describe below, I will argue that when Derrida says that the thing itself always slips away, this is said in the name of a love of the undeconstructibility of the wholly other. As such, I will argue, deconstruction has nothing to do with the relativism that realists and other critics of deconstruction denounce, for relativism is always something *less* than realism, not more. When Derrida says that the thing itself always slips away he does so precisely in the name of a wholly other that he loves and wants to keep

². For the background of the present reading of deconstruction as a philosophy of love, see my *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); and *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, edited with a commentary by John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997).

³. Søren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Works*, Vol. VII, *Philosophical Fragments*, ed. and trans. H. Hong and E. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 37.

safe. The thing itself is safe (*sauf*) if and only if it is safely secreted away, if what presents itself as the real is everything save (*sauf*) the thing itself, which safely slips away. Derrida says the thing itself slips away in very much the same sense that Levinas has in mind when he remarks that love 'is a relation with that which always slips away' (*une relation avec ce qui d'robe ' jamais*).⁴ That is why Derrida will say that love means to 'surrender to the impossible,' *se rend*, to render oneself over to, to give oneself back to the impossible:

To surrender to the other, and this is the impossible, would amount to giving oneself over in going toward the other, to coming toward the other but without crossing the threshold, and to respecting, to loving even the invisibility that keeps the other inaccessible. (*Sauf*, 91/ON, 74)⁵

9. For the '(loved) other,' *l'autre (aim')* must remain other, must be kept safe as other, and we must lay down our arms (*rendre les armes*) and surrender, and by sacrificing or giving up the assault of realism upon the world, to allow the thing itself to slip away' just in order to keep it safe and to show it our love.
10. *Singularity*. Deconstruction arises from a love of singularity, an infinite and loving respect for singularity, which is the first mark or trait of what I am calling the hyper-real. Deconstruction is a work of deferring to the demands of singularity. *Diff'rance* (if there is such a thing) is infinitely deferential to the idiomaticity of the singular, its unrepeatable and idiosyncratic make up, in the face of which Derrida is lost for words (never fear).
11. Take the proper name, which Derrida loves.⁶ The whole idea of a proper name, its very 'condition of possibility,' is to come up with a signifier that is just that particular person's own signifier, the sign of just that one person, of that singular one and of no one else, to be that singular one's own personal sign. In a proper name, only that person answers to that name and that sign picks out only that person. That is what we desire, what we love, so that the proper name is a work of love. But that is impossible (which is why we love and desire it all the more), so that the very condition under which the proper name is possible makes it impossible. For were the sign to be utterly proper, absolutely unique and idiomatic, no one would understand it, and we would not even know it was a sign rather than just a noise or a scratch on a surface. To be a name it must be a signifier, and to be a signifier it must be significant, and to be significant it must be repeatable. We must be able to sign this name again and again, call it and be called by it, use it again and again, including when its referent is absent. A signifier must be woven of repeatable stuff or be consigned to unintelligibility. But if this signifier is repeatable, it is assignable to others who can bear the same name, so that its propriety is compromised. It cannot be an absolutely *proper* name, not if it is to be a proper name. A proper name is an attempt to utter something repeatable about the unrepeatable.
12. But the point of this aporia is not to paralyze us before the singular one and to send us home dispirited and in despair, but to inspire us with infinite respect. The entire analysis is offered in an effort to do justice to singularity, to bow before it like a Buddhist monk bowing before the

⁴. Emmanuel Levinas, *'thique et infini* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), p. 59; Eng. Trans. *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), p. 67.

⁵. *Sauf: Sauf le nom* (Paris: Galil'ee, 1993). Eng. trans. "Sauf le nom (Post-Scriptum)," trans. John Leavey, Jr., in ON: *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 33-85.

⁶. See the analysis in 'Signature Event Context' in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 309-330.

Buddha nature in the stranger who stands before him. The point of this aporia is to heighten our love and appreciation for the singularity of the singular, for the structural impossibility of naming the other one with a name that is just that other's name (like the third and most secret name of the cat), to give us a sense of *the* impossible situation in which we find ourselves when we use a proper name. But *the* impossible is not a simple logical contradiction, not a matter of logic at all, but a kind of ethics, or ethicity of ethics, or hyper-ethics, or fine tip of the soul of ethics (ON, 132-33n3), having to do with those things which most amaze us and most command our respect. When we are fully convinced that the situation we face is impossible, *the* impossible, that there is no way to go, that we cannot make a move, then and only then can we be trusted to proceed with caution, with all due respect, with all due deference toward the demands that the situation places upon us. When we are convinced that there is no way to go, then and only then can we be 'on the move.'

13. The aporia is not solved or resolved or unraveled by a cunning analysis or an adroit exercise of semantic skill; it is embraced and broken by a pragmatic leap, by *using* the name in a context which is, we hope, determinate enough to allow the usage to 'work' or be 'successful,' to hit its target. We keep our fingers crossed that it will not fall into confusion, as it sometimes does, something which is, moreover always structurally possible. Indeed, the possibility of confusion, which is the condition of repeatability, is also the condition of possibility of its success. The context fixes the reference just long enough and keeps it just stable enough to make the name stick, if only for the moment, which is, after all, all we need. The idea is not to have the *right* idea of the truth, but to *do* the truth, *facere veritatem*, to put the truth of the proper name to work, to work its truth into the fabric of linguistic life. Deconstruction has departed from the representational idea of truth, not by sinking to its knees in awe-struck admiration of the depths of Greek *aletheia*, at the sound of which every German knee shall bend, but by replacing it with love, shifting into the Augustinian-Latin land of the *regio dissimilitudinis* and into the mode of *facere*, at the harsh sound of which all Greco-Heideggerians hold their hands over their ears (they can hear the armies of the *Gestell* marching on Freiburg), of making truth into something to make and do in something of a Jewish Augustinianism.
14. Hence, far from constituting a bit of reckless sophistry that throws us all into confusion, or an attempt to play around with the serious work of ordinary language, Derrida's playful aporia of the proper name is a work of love, a work of justice, a work of rendering the singular one its due, of surrendering to it and laying down our arms. 'Far from denying or undermining singularity, deconstruction makes an ethical or hyper-ethical affirmation of the singularity of the other. Derrida is trying to show how proper names work, how they get their work done, while offering a salutary and cautionary bit of advice about not exaggerating our success or inflating our results. For the singular one is the shore for which we have set out but shall never reach, the threshold we dare not cross. To use a proper name is to take the step/not beyond, *le pas au-del'*, the step we are always taking but never making. A proper name is like the Buddhist finger at the moon; we must keep our eye on the moon, not the finger, while conceding, nay, affirming, *oui, oui*, that the finger does not reach the moon, that the intentional arrow of this name does not hit its target or, by hitting it, wound it. The failure of the arrow to nail its target is the condition of its success. The impropriety infiltrating the proper name keeps the singular one *safe'sauf le nom*' by shielding the singular one from the light of a name that would expose its secret, that would subject it to a harsh and killing light, as if the singular one were a delicate flower that can only flourish in the shelter of a shaded, indirect and northern light.
15. *Inaccessibility*. Deconstruction, Derrida says, amounts to an act of 'respecting, loving even the

invisibility that keeps the other inaccessible' (*Sauf*, 91/ON, 74). The threshold of the other must be respected. For the other would perish under the direct gaze of intuition, which is why Derrida owes a great deal to Husserl's *Fifth Cartesian Meditation*. For if I could intuit the other precisely in the other's alterity, enter into the flow of that alien life stream, Husserl would say, then its alterity would dissolve and it would become me and mine, my pain, say, not the other's. So, as Derrida says in a Roundtable discussion at Dublin in 1997, he has learned a "profound lesson" from Husserl:

Husserl insists that there is no pure intuition of the other *as such*; that is, I have no originary access to the alter-ego *as such*...That is why he/she is *the* other. This separation, this dissociation is not only a limit, but it is also the condition of the relation to the other, a non-relation as relation...a non-intuitive relation'I don't know who the other is, I can't be on the other side. (QE, 71)⁷

16. The other is *constituted*, as Husserl would say, by his or her intuitive inaccessibility or unintuitability, by a threshold that cannot be crossed. That means that at the peak or summit of phenomenology'the point of establishing intersubjectivity, which is the key to the most robust sense of phenomenological objectivity'there is what Derrida calls an interruption of phenomenological intuition. But this interruption, this 'break within phenomenology, with the principle of phenomenology,' like a pyramid with its tip knocked off, takes place precisely in the name of phenomenology's infinite task. For phenomenology can be true to its infinite vocation if and only if it is auto-interrupting, if and only if the perception of the alter ego is delimited as apperception. This auto-interruption, this structural darkening of the eye of intuition, does not mean that the ego finds itself trapped within the confines of the *solus ipse*, but precisely the opposite, that the ego finds itself wrenched outside itself and brought into relation with the alien (*fremd*), with the 'stranger.' This break in intuition is the condition of possibility (and of impossibility) of the relation with the other, of keeping the other safe in its alterity, of making that relation possible as a kind of non-relation or non-intuitive relation or relation without relation.
17. But beyond Husserl's phenomenology, Derrida continues, 'it is within this break that Levinas found his way' (QE, 71), and consequently Derrida, for whom Levinas's ethics of alterity is also a profound lesson. For the whole idea of the wholly other (*tout autre*), of the 'infinitely other,' is that the wholly other is, at its core, in principle inaccessible, so that not even an infinite amount of time spent in contact with the other ego will bridge that gap. For Levinas, this gap is not an epistemic gap that must somehow be crossed, but an ethical abyss to be affirmed and honored; indeed it is, as we have seen, the condition of love. But all the very holy things that Levinas says about the wholly other, *tout autre*, by which Levinas means the other person taken on the model of the divine transcendence, which is what is really wholly other, are extended by Derrida to *every* other. On Derrida's accounting, which amounts to a kind of generalized Levinasianism, every other is wholly other, *tout autre est tout autre*, from the alterity of the other person to the alterity of Derrida's cat⁸ and of all the other cats in the world, and from all these cats all the way 'down' to the most lifeless material things, and this just because of their concrete existence, their insistence in and upon their singularity, what Scotus would have called their *haecceitas*:

⁷. QE: Derrida, 'Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility,' in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁸. See Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 70-81.

The other is God or no matter whom, more precisely, no matter what singularity, as soon as any other is totally other. (*Sauf*, 92/ON, 74)

18. In all of this Derrida is obeying the strictures of a medieval axiom, *sola individua existunt*, only individuals exist, which we might rewrite on his behalf *sola singularia existunt*. There is, *il y a*, only singularities, which are unrepeatable and which consequently swing free of our proper names, which are universals and repeatable, even when they are proper names. As soon as we open our mouth we are implicated in the medium of universality and repeatability. The first word a child utters, if there is such a word, represents the moment of his or her entrance into the sphere of ideality. Now however much justifiable excitement surrounds this linguistic event, we should not forget the danger that has thereby set in, the danger that we will forget or leave behind what Johannes Climacus called the 'poor existing individual,' which is, after all, all that exists. The danger is that language is idealizing and abstract, while the poor existing individual is concrete. When Husserl wrote, that 'the particular fact is irrational,' and that it must be lifted up out of what Derrida, commenting on this passage, calls its 'wild singularity,' and when Husserl says that, left to its irrational singularity, the particular fact is the '*apeiron*' unless and until it is smoothed out by the lithesome lines of the 'eidetic abstraction,' Husserl puts more pointedly what philosophy has always thought but hesitated to state so baldly, 'gathering together the entire significance of his enterprise,' as Derrida comments.⁹ Faced with the density of the singular, philosophy's first instinct is to beats a hasty retreat and to leave the rest of us to face the worst. That is why Johannes Climacus cautions us:¹⁰

In the language of abstraction, that which is the difficulty of existence and of the existing person never actually appears; even less is the difficulty explained...If abstract thinking is assumed to be the highest, it follows that scientific scholarship and thinkers proudly abandon existence and leave the rest of us to put up with the worst.

19. In the best traditions of the realists of the Catholic Middle Ages, of good Protestants like Johannes Climacus, and of good Jews like Levinas, Derrida is cautioning us about the deconstructibility of proper names precisely in the name of the undeconstructibility of singularity. But because the singular one is the only thing that exists, and because the things that exist find themselves in singular situations, what Derrida is saying 'all due precautions having been taken' amounts to an affirmation of the undeconstructibility of the *hyper-reality* of the singular one. Responding to a question from another Dubliner about whether *différance* does not cast us into an abyss of hallucinations, Derrida responds first by stating that thinking deconstructively is 'very far from being hallucinatory thinking, although I am very interested in hallucinations,' and that a certain hallucinatory and spectral quality in our thought may be irreducible. But then he adds:

But is there a better way of overcoming hallucination than to pay attention to the other? For me the other is 'the real thing', and reference to the other is what breaks with hallucination, if such a break is possible. In order to respect the transcendence or the heterogeneity of the other, we have to pay attention. (QE, 77).

⁹. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorian Cairns (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1960), '39, p. 81. Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's 'Origin of Geometry'*, trans. John Leavy (Boulder: John Hays Co., 1978), pp. 151-52n184.

¹⁰. *Kierkegaard's Writings*, XII.1, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to 'Philosophical Fragments'*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 301.

20. The 'real thing' is a phrase that has played no affirmative role in working out deconstruction because it would almost always mean real presence, and deconstruction is the deconstruction of what would pretend to be real presence. But in the context of the objection that deconstruction confines us to hallucinations, illusions, or the prison house of subjectivity, what classical philosophy calls 'reality' or the 'real thing' (as opposed to the hallucination) would correspond to the *tout autre*, the love and respect for which is what deconstruction is all about. To love the *tout autre*, which phenomenology calls 'transcendence,' is to love and respect its *inaccessibility*." Let us return to this phenomenological point for a moment. Our access to what is transcendent is always limited, not because of the limits of our faculties, but because of the transcendence of the other, because of the recessiveness or structural withdrawal from us of the transcendent. The transcendence of the *tout autre* is not a function of our limitations; rather, our access to the *tout autre* is limited because it transcends us. It is the absence or non-givenness in what is given that bears testimony to its transcendence, which is why the thing itself always slips away.
21. *Realism without Realism*. If, in Derrida, the discourse on alterity, on the 'other,' does the work of the 'the real thing,' or of speaking about 'reality,' then, since everything in deconstruction is organized around loving and respect the *tout autre*, deconstruction clearly amounts to a *certain* realism, a realism beyond or without realism, what I am calling *hyper-realism*.
22. By speaking of the 'hyper-real' I mean to get past the presence or real presence that deconstruction deconstructs, the reified thing, be it a chunk of matter or even a soul-thing (*res extensa, res cogitans*). I mean something that impinges upon from me without, that surprises and surpasses my horizons, that even shocks or traumatizes me, that overtakes and brings me up against what is *not* me, what is *otherwise* than me, or even otherwise than being in Levinas's sense, all the while remaining out of intuitive reach. Such a hyper-realism goes beyond the reifying ontological realism of classical ontology, where *ens et res convertuntur*, where being is reified and the real is ontological. What better way to overcome hallucination, on the one hand, and to overcome reifying realism, on the other hand, than to pay attention to the other who comes knocking at my door? The 'hyper-' quality of this hyper-realism lies in the transcendence of the other, for the other is *au-delà*, on the other side, over there, confronting me by the claim it makes upon me, a claim of which I am not the origin, which does not even depend upon me to ratify or assume, but a claim that comes to me from what Levinas calls the *kath'auto, secundum se*, on its own.
23. That is why Levinas says that to be related to the *kath'auto* is to enter into a relation where the relata tend to withdraw from the relation.¹¹ The relation to the other is a relation to the wholly other, or infinitely other, or absolutely other, not in the sense of being absolutely unrelated to it, which would break the relation, but in the sense of being related to something that absolutely resists being absorbed by and drawn into this relation without remainder. In this relation, the other is *given* precisely in such a way as to refuse to *give in* to the relation, to let itself be consumed by it, because it is *kath'auto*. That is what gives the relation its strength, its tension and teeth, for I am continually reaching out to something, or someone, who withdraws from my reach, who resists being subsumed under my anticipatory horizons.
24. Classical or more garden variety realism 'without the 'hype' (or the 'hyper-')' operates within a horizon of *adequatio* or correspondence, assuming a certain congenial fit between *intellectus* and

¹¹. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), pp. 64, 102, 180, 195, 208, 220.

res, a suitable proportionality, so that the *res* is in principle knowable by the mind, knowable as it were all the way down, and does not slip away. But in hyper-realism, alterity is constituted by excess, by exceeding the reach of the self absolutely and irreducibly, which allows the other to be safely secreted away from the arrows of intentionality. The model, after all, upon which Levinas, and after him Derrida, conceives the other, who is inconceivably other, is God, the wholly other, who is the *ens realissimum* of classical ontology. God is the most real because the most high, the most high because the most irreducible to my horizons, the most irreducible to my horizon because the most other, infinitely other. The *tout autre* functions like a kind of *ontos on*, or *hyperousios*, not in the sense of a sphere of absolute and timeless being beyond temporal worldly being, which is what Derrida thinks is afoot in negative theology, but in the sense of what I did not see coming, what I cannot imagine or conceive, what shatters, upsets and disorganizes my horizon of expectations.

25. The hyper-real at work in Derrida is neither real nor unreal in the classical sense, neither a hallucination nor the domesticated *res* of ontological realism. But neither is it hyper-real in the Baudrillardian sense of a dazzling and seductive display of simulacra which replace and displace commonplace reality, of which the world wide web is not merely the example but the incarnation, the apotheosis. Baudrillard's hyper-reality would correspond to something in which Derrida is profoundly interested, the effects produced by the advanced information technologies, which Derrida analyses as a phenomenon of 'spectrality.' But that is not what I mean by the 'hyper-real' which I am attributing to Derrida, which would have to do instead with what precisely withdraws from view and slips away, which makes no display of itself, which is sheltered and secreted on the other shore, eluding the phenomenality of both commonplace phenomenological givenness and the spectral hyper-givenness of 'virtual reality.'¹²
26. Derrida's hyper-realism should be thought of a realism beyond realism, a 'realism without realism,' according to the logic of the *sans*, as in his 'religion without religion.' Indeed this hyper-realism is a bit of a religion without religion inasmuch as it maintains an ethico-religious fidelity to singularity and alterity. For the *sans* is never a simple negation but a certain crossing out of something that continues to stand as struck out, which comes back like a ghost (*revenant*), and in that sense which is not Baudrillard's would be a bit of a ghostly or spectral realism. His hyper-relativism, if there is such a thing, must rigorously discipline itself to restrain from invoking what has hitherto been called 'real,' what has hitherto laid claim to speak on behalf of reality.
27. If realism means the epistemological attempt to prove the existence of the real world, then, as Heidegger says in *Being and Time* ('43a), such a project, when it is undertaken by a being whose being is being-in-the-world, makes no sense. As soon as Dasein comes to be, the world is already there. As soon as we open our mouth we are already responding to the address of the other. For Derrida, our words are responsible before we ever assume responsibility for them, because they arise in response to the solicitation by which all speaking is inhabited, which makes all speaking a response to the other. For Derrida, we begin where we are, in the text, which means in the context, in the midst of multiple contexts of which we are not the author and which we have no hope of saturating or making transparent.

¹². Baudrillard *Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. M. Kane (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 75; for Derrida's on the spectral effect of the advanced tele-technologies, see Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).

28. If realism means essentialism, the claim that our universals and eidetic types correspond to real ontological orders, then Derrida's hyper-realism makes its way without this realism, for every such universal *eidos* or ideality is for Derrida a construction, a formation forged from repetition and *différance*, which is deconstructible just because it has been constructed in the first place. Everything in deconstruction is organized around the idea that we have no access to the essential nature of things, that the work of interpretation may never be left off, for we will never finally have made contact with the essential nature of things.
29. If realism means the affirmation of the transcendental signified, of some *Ding an sich* which is left standing when the play of signifiers collapses in a heap, if realism means that we are silently joined with 'real being' without a trace of a sign in sight, then realism makes no sense." For the thing itself always slips away, just because it is the thing itself. The sign-less silence of such a realism is for quadrupeds, who, freed from the obstacles that language places between themselves and their world, are free to swing from reality's trees and burrow beneath reality's earth for shelter. For Derrida's much abused observation, *il n'y a pas de hors-texte* does not mean there is no reference, but that there is no reference without difference, without *différance*, without the operations of textuality, differential spacing, and contextuality. 'When I say there is nothing outside the text,' he tells the Dubliners, 'I mean there is nothing outside the context' (QE, 79). That means not that there is no reference but that reference is not what it is cracked up to be, not what it passes itself off for, not the serene operation of an autonomous subject-archer picking out objects with unfailing accuracy by means of signs wholly submissive to its intentional aims. Reference is a much more slippery affair, caught up in the slippage of signifiers that continually slip into each other, producing effects within preconstituted chains of differential spacing, which make reference possible. We have to learn to cope with the inescapability of these differential chains, which have us every bit as much and rather more than we have them, like an archer trying to cope with powerful winds that not only threaten to blow him away but also give his arrows lift in the first place. We have to learn to respect the inaccessibility of the referent, which, in virtue of its very transcendence, always slips away.
30. Derrida's hyper-realism is a realism without these standard form realisms, indeed I would say without anything that hitherto has been called realism. But it is without them not by because it is less than them but because it is more, because it is beyond them. For the whole idea of deconstruction is not to lock us inside a prison house of language how many times do we have to say this? or to encase us inside the play of signifiers, our noses pressed against the dark glass of our linguistic cell trying to see the world beyond. The idea is to bow like a post-structural Buddhist with infinite respect before the alterity of what is *tout autre*, of what is other than me and mine, for the *tout autre* always 'slips away' (*d'rober*) and eludes our attempts to seize it round about. The deconstructive archer thus is not an intentionalist archer, depending entirely upon taking careful intentional aim, but more like a Zen archer, dependent upon the operations of an anonymous 'it shoots.' Better still, it simply lays down its arms and surrenders to what withdraws.
31. What finally makes Derrida's hyper-realism a realism without realism is that, whatever might be or be called Derrida's realism would not be a matter of knowledge and proof, of epistemology and legitimation. It does not transpire in the medium of knowing or intuition but of love, of doing and making true, *facere veritatem*. Derrida's realism without realism would correspond to his ethics without ethics, his ethics beyond ethics, the very ethicicity of ethics (ON, 132-33n3), which has to do not with proof but with testimony and hospitality, not

with demonstrating the reality of the other but with respecting and loving the other, not with proving that reality corresponds with my representations, but with welcoming the other and bearing testimony to the other, who lays claim to me and interrupts my complacency. I am always already laid claim to by the other who comes knocking at my door, whose demands I can accept or reject, mock or ignore, but whose approach I cannot nullify. For even to reject, scorn or ignore the other is already to respond to the other, to acknowledge the other's coming. As soon as I open my mouth, I have acknowledged the other and responded.

32. What makes Derrida's hyper-realism so different is that it is a realism against realism, against what realism typically argues, what realism usually 'has tried to make us believe,' what it 'desires' (VP, 117/SP, 104). For instead of confessing inaccessibility, realism usually seeks a 'privileged access,' and it usually claims that we are hard-wired to Reality so that when we speak we do nothing but reflect, like a clean mirror, the categories and structures of reality. But the whole idea in deconstruction is do without that illusion, which is the hallucination *par excellence*, the hallucination that I think has tended more or less to define the standard forms of realism.¹³ The claim to speak on behalf of what is Really Real, to be the mirror in which Reality Itself reflects itself, is positively dangerous 'in religion, politics, or ontology' where it regularly proves to be a danger to the health of everyone else who beg to differ from the self-appointed defenders of Reality.
33. *Secrecy*. When it comes to the idea of Reality, Derrida is an advocate of the *secret*, defending the idea that such a Reality, such a Capitalized Reality, if there is one (One), is safely secreted away beyond our reach.¹⁴ The secret is, there is no Secret, no Big Capitalized Secret (none that we know of). That, in Derrida's view, keeps things safe, keeps us all safe. The secret is constituted by its recessiveness. We have no access to this recess, which is structural, and which accordingly consigns us to signs, compels us to interpret, enjoins us to interpret again and again (and even then we have just started), a process that would be short-circuited were we ever struck by the lightning of the Really Real Reality. But Derrida's idea of the secret is not pronounced in the name of setting loose an endless and wanton free play of signifiers, of releasing us from the demands of something other than ourselves so that we may frolic freely among our own fictions. On the contrary, it arises from love and an infinite respect for alterity, which Derrida (following Husserl and Levinas) has characterized precisely in terms of its retreat and recessiveness, its lying on the other shore. What better way of overcoming fictions than to say that the wholly other is safely secreted away? Would not the real hallucination, if I may say so, lie in thinking we know the Secret?
34. This is not to say that the secret refers to an uninterpreted fact of the matter, like a Kantian noumenon, an unknowable *Ding an sich*, whereas all knowledge would have to do with appearances. The inaccessibility of the secret for Derrida refers rather to the inescapability and inextinguishability of interpretation, to the ongoing and incessant need to interpret anew. There is no 'end' of interpretation, neither a telos nor a terminus, in which we would sink into the arms of the *Ding an sich* and fall fast asleep, all our limited perspectives having melted

¹³. That idea is particularly dangerous in religion, when we allow our faith and hope that God has spoken to us in the Scriptures to be transmuted into knowledge which is then absolutized and allowed to terrorize everyone else who does not share our faith." It is not an accident that the doctrine of papal infallibility is declared for the first time in the nineteenth century, at the same time as rigorous 'neo-scholastic' defenses of realism emerge; both reveal the same anxiety, that the Real World will not be there when we awake in the morning.

¹⁴. See the excellent account of the secret in Derrida, 'Passions: 'An Oblique Offering',' trans. David Wood, in ON, pp. 3-34.

away in the presence of the thing itself. On the contrary, the effect of the secret is to multiply interpretations, to interpret without end, so that the end is without end, and this for love of the things themselves which always slip away.” In the place of the idea of some uninterpreted fact of the matter, the inescapable necessity of interpretation, which is what I have also called a radical hermeneutics,¹⁵ thinks in terms of the sum total of all possible interpretations, what the classical tradition calls a potential infinity, which means it does not end and you cannot in principle get there from here. All you can do is to try to go where you cannot go, to go on multiplying interpretations, which must shift with the shifting sands of the situation, and cope with the swift and choppy currents of changing historical circumstance.

35. Interpretation always takes place under a condition of undecidability. That means we cannot still the play, the tensions, and the multiplicity that besets texts and situations, beliefs and practices. But undecidability does not mean indeterminacy; it does not mean that we are lost in a haze of confusion, under-determination and ‘anything goes’ relativism. That is something that Derrida comes back to in the Dublin interview:

Undecidability is not indeterminacy. Undecidability is the competition between two determined possibilities or options, two determined duties...Now, because there are contexts and singularities, there are movements, processes and transformations, and for transformation to occur something has to be determined, something is determinable...There is, however, the future, what is to come, and I would say there is indeterminacy of the coming of the future. But that is not a relativity of meaning. (QE, 79)

36. Undecidability means that we are caught between a number of well determined possibilities, that we have to resolve the conflict, but that we have no algorithm to invoke to resolve the undecidability. It means that in order to get by we must proceed by a mix of faith, insight, instinct, and good luck, of past experience and our anticipation of the future. For we cannot run the possibilities through a program. We do not have decision procedure that will nail down the right result. Instead, we must take responsibility, deliberate and choose, and then hope for the best. That is not because we are hopelessly cut off from reality and are abandoned to our fictions, but because the real thing for Derrida is always contextualized and idiomatic, because we always find ourselves face to face with singularity, with a person or a situation of idiosyncratic unrepeatability whose coming was not foretold by our textbooks. So we must judge what to do, in the concrete, in the singular situation whose demands now weigh upon us.
37. *Messianicity*. If deconstruction, as I have been describing it, is a work of love, then the famous ‘a’ in *différance*, is a love letter, not an alpha-privative but an alpha-amorous. Everyone knows by now that this ‘a’ was meant to signify a two fold operation of spatial differing and temporal deferring. Up to now I have mainly had the more spatial dynamic of the *tout autre* in mind, the way it slips away into inaccessibility, safely secreted away on the other shore beyond the reach of intuition and the proper name. But on this telling of this famous misspelling, *différance* should be understood not only in terms of a loving respect for the (spatial) slipping away of the wholly other, but also in terms of a temporal deferral that Derrida nowadays no longer hesitates to refer to as a ‘messianic’ coming. Just as it is true that what deconstruction loves is

¹⁵. See my *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) and *More Radical Hermeneutics: On Not Knowing Who We Are* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

not here but over there, on the other shore, it is also true that it is not now but always coming, 'venir'. Whatever is here and now is deconstructible, but deconstruction is madly in love with what is not deconstructible. As it would be a mistake to omit its temporal dimension, I will conclude these remarks by at least pointing to the structural deferral of the coming of the *tout autre*, the 'messianic' structure of this hyper-realism.¹⁶

38. Derrida distinguishes between 'the invention of the same and of the possible' (*l'invention du m'ême et du possible*), which means the experience of something whose coming we could plan for, imagine and foresee, and *l'invention de l'autre*, the incoming or encounter with what we did not plan for and indeed whose coming we cannot imagine or foresee, the coming of 'the absolute surprise,' the unprogrammable *tout autre*. After all, the invention of the same, which confirms or fills in a present horizon, gets a little tiresome (*nous sommes fatigués*) 'more work of Climacus's mediocre fellow who requires a daily nap. That means that we must reinvent invention and allow for something wholly other, something surprising which shatters our horizons. Of this preparation for the incoming of the wholly other, Derrida says, 'that is what we call deconstruction.'¹⁷
39. In the end, what the realists desire when they speak of the real thing, which for Derrida goes under the name *tout autre*, will always be *to come* ('venir'), always lie beyond our reach, will belong to a structural future that keeps the present open. Indeed I would say that the hyper-real for Derrida, the *tout autre*, acquires its strongest and most decisive sense in the structure of the 'venir', which is the most important sense of *the impossible*. For *the impossible* does not mean a simple logical contradiction, but that whose coming shatters the present horizons of intelligibility and possibility, that whose coming takes us by surprise and leaves us bewildered, wondering how that was possible, how *the impossible* was also possible, how it was possible to go where we cannot go.
40. The hyper-real, the real beyond the real, what is most beyond our reach, the most beyond of all, is what is to come, what we hope and pray and weep will come, with the restless heart of a Jewish Augustine. What is coming is always *structurally* to come, so that the other's coming (*venue*) is not to be confused with future presence (*pr'sence*). In the hyper-real, reality is always large with expectation. The world is the object not so much of our perception but of our prayers and tears. That is what keeps what the world that presents itself from hardening over, keeping it open-ended and revisable, its fractures and its splits providing openings for new growth. That does not ruin and destroy the world, but it exposes it to the risk of the future, allowing the world to stir and be disturbed by the expectation of what is to come 'of justice and hospitality, messianic peace and the gift, of the democracy to come. What is *ontos on* and *epekeina tes ousias* for Derrida is not present, but coming, for the present is too disappointing. Indeed, if the Messiah ever showed up in the flesh, in the present, the first thing we would say to him (or her, since the Messiah will always be a 'surprise') is 'When will you come?'¹⁸ The idea behind this messianic hyper-real is not to leave us in despair and distress at the prospect

¹⁶. On the messianic, see Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp. 167-69 et passim, and compare "The Force of Law: 'The Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" trans. Mary Quaintance, in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, eds. Drucilla Cornell et al. (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 25 with Derrida, *Force de loi* (Paris: Galil'ée, 1994), p. 56. I have analyzed the question of the messianic in Derrida in *Prayers and Tears*, ch. III, pp. 117 ff..

¹⁷. Derrida, *Psyché: L'invention de l'autre* (Paris: Galil'ée, 1987); Eng. trans. "Psyche: Inventions of the Other," trans. Catherine Porter, in *Reading DeMan Reading*, eds. Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 53, 59-60.

¹⁸. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London & New York: Verso, 1997), pp. 7, 46n14, 173-74.

of never getting where we want to go, but precisely the opposite, to make sure that we are never complacent with where we are, that we are always astir with a desire to go where we cannot go, that we never mistake the present state of things with what is to come, which means, for example, that we never confuse the present democracy with the democracy to come.

41. The hyper-real is never given because what is given is never enough, never real enough. What shows up in the present, *in re*, does not meet our expectations, does not saturate the horizon of possibilities, which includes first and foremost the possibility of the impossible. For what we long for and desire is the coming of what we cannot foresee, lest, having foreseen it, we compromise its alterity. We love *le pas au-del'*, the step beyond we cannot take. The structural futuricity, the messianicity, of the *tout autre* does not rob it of reality; it merely robs what presently lays claim to reality of any claim to finality. The *tout autre* is a certain ultra-reality beyond the present, a hyper-real that eludes our reach and keeps us on the go.
42. The thing itself always slips away leaving us to pray and weep, to hope and long for it to come. That is *the impossible*, and we get going, we begin, *by the impossible*. For that is what we love.
43. '*Inquietum est cor nostrum*' is the motto of this Jewish Augustinian messianic hyper-realism, whose 'Circumfession' opens with a prayer: *viens, oui, oui*.¹⁹

Notes

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¹⁹. Augustine, *Confessiones*, I, 1; see Derrida's *Circumfession: Fifty-nine Periods and Periphrases*, in Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). *Viens, oui, oui*: Derrida, *Parages* (Paris: Galil'ee, 1986), p. 116.

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