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Grammatologie or Gramma Au Logis: Gramma's Drama

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No one exceeds Derrida in using puns, plays and double entendre. He shows how language, even philosophical language, slips and slides and demonstrates thus that absolute, transcendental signifieds allegedly do not stay fixed to their signifiers. Since the definition of the French word *pastiche* combines imitation and parody, this article is a *pastiche* of Derrida's ideas on deconstruction and of his humorous style. I have attempted to imitate Derrida's play with language and turn it around on him. This play creates a parody, though the parody has purpose. I hope to go beyond mere puns and play, and humorously approximate, fully aware of the procedural gaps and shortcomings, some key concepts.

This article, whose main objective, hidden within linguistic playfulness, is to deconstruct the word *gramma* in grammatology, is divided into three sections. First, the Freudian-Lacanian view of language vis-à-vis the Oedipal desire is quickly summarized and "applied" to Derrida. Second, the title for Derrida's new science, grammatology, is shown to be, because of the fluidity of language, deconstructible mainly through homophony and etymology but also through other such Derridean-Freudian-Lacanian ideas. It is deconstructible not only because Derrida attaches the word *logos* to it but also because he apparently misreads the Greek word *gramma* which he *has* to use instead of the words *grammè* and *gram* when he builds a new science: hence the word *grammatology*. The *gramma-grammè-gram* trilogy, which is inextricably linked when built upon, under-

goes displacement and replacement, or, to use a favored Derridean word, supplementarity. *Gramma* supplements *grammè* and *gram*. Although the science of the trace which emanates from *gramma*, formerly *grammè*, is supposedly "irreducible," this Greek word contains so many traces that I hope to show that it reaches what Michael Riffaterre calls "undecidability."¹ This network of traces means that it has an etymology which makes it a sign, which all combined make it have multiple signifiers and signifieds as it comes down the corridor of history. It has to signify, I shall argue, more than the apparent "nothing" which Derrida decides to assign to it. It is not immune from or privileged over the alleged vagaries of language. Third, I intend to culminate the first two sections by illustrating humorously how Derrida, accusing Freud of imitating his grandson's game of *fort/da*, falls into the same game with language.

A warning, though. Hugh Silverman informs us that "to imitate Derrida's style—employing the puns, play, double entendre, etc.—does not as such make for a deconstructive practice."² I partially agree with him, though playing with language is still a good place to start. I have attempted through all the play to approximate the "deconstructive practice."

We all know that Oedipus unwittingly killed his father and then married his mother. Sigmund Freud adopted the fatherless, wandering character Oedipus to use as a prototype or archetype of what males innately desire to do to the father to have the mother: to kill him and claim intimacy with the mother. Of course the father can be more than just a natural father. He can be the universal incest taboo, societal law, and a host of other noes.

Many literary critics, taking their cues from Freud and his followers, such as Jacques Lacan, have read the Oedipus complex in various works of literature. The premises are these: unbeknownst to the author's consciousness he or she can be governed by the discourse of the unconscious which Lacan says is structured like a language.³ The unconscious contains many things such as repressions, foreclosures, denials, and the Oedipal desire. At times the unconscious manifests the discourse of the Other in textual phenomena such as slips of the tongue, omissions, gaps, automatism of repetition, etc.

It seems that every human being has an unconscious. According to Derrida's reading of Freud every human supposedly has the semantic core of the oneiric content of *Oedipus Rex*, Sophocles' play.⁴ If we accept these premises then Derrida too has an uncon-

scious and an Oedipal desire, and he is manifesting a repetition compulsion. Which repetition compulsion? "For example, the truth. But is truth an example?" (414). Since I am not offering the truth, only a hypothesis, I present the following as an example.

Derrida, in most of his major works, sets out to deconstruct the theories of the founding Fathers of various movements. Plato is thought to be the Father of philosophy. Derrida attempts to dethrone Plato in his *Dissémination*. Jean-Jacques Rousseau is considered one of the Fathers of the Enlightenment, and Derrida, in his work *De la Grammatologie*, challenges Rousseau's idea of writing as a representation of speech. Ferdinand de Saussure is considered the Father of linguistics or of the theory of signs. Again, in *De la Grammatologie*, Derrida tries to dethrone Saussure. Freud is the Father of the psychoanalytical movement. So in some of his briefer essays in *Écriture et différence* and in *La Carte postale* he tries to deconstruct the interpretations of Father Freud. Derrida has also challenged many others: Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Genet, Lévi-Strauss, and Austin, to name only a few. And of course Derrida rejects the idea of a transcendental signifier. He tries to perform the ultimate Oedipal act by attempting to assassinate the heavenly Father. These continuous acts of aggression and even attempted regicides or patricides of the Fathers who, in their smugness, are trapped by logocentrism, clearly manifest a repetition compulsion.

Could Derrida also be trapped under this signifier of automatic repetition, Lacan's discourse of the Other? In the decentering, dethroning and even the murder of these Father figures, does Derrida re-enact the Oedipal act? Can Derrida slip out from under this signifier?

With whom does Derrida want intimacy? For whom does he kill these Fathers? Who is his symbolic mother? Could Roland Barthes' notion of *jouissance* of/with the text be relevant/*relevant* here? Or could it go deeper than just the text? Could Derrida unconsciously wish to be intimate with "*sa grammair*?" Or deeper still, could he wish to be intimate with *sa Gramma*? Was writing *sa Gramma* pleasurable or was Derrida's meaning too disseminated to be gratifying? Is it Derrida's desire to find pleasure in himself since he can only write and send post cards to himself? So is *sa Gramma* just self-gratification? Or can we go deeper still? In having the sign slip, thus making it soft, cuddly, unfixed, not hard, but weak, is Derrida creating the mother he desires? Since his *grammè* is smaller still than

the Saussurean sign then most likely *sa Gramma* is his target. Homophones are like that: they permit replacement, displacement and supplementarity.

Where is *sa Gramma*? Where does she live? Is she in a language prison? Is *Gramma au logis*? If homophones have any value as revealing a possible discourse of the Other then this sort of evidence points to *Gramma au logis*. *Gramma* is confined to the house that Jacques built. Only Derrida and a few select disciples have a key to this prison of non-truth. They have free access to *sa Gramma*. We can only be voyeurs, an unhappy viewpoint indeed. So only Derridean initiates can consciously disseminate meaning. They "know what they are doing."⁵ Could this be what the Marxist critic Terry Eagleton is referring to when he writes:

one advantage of the dogma that we are prisoners of our own discourse, unable to advance reasonably certain truth-claims because such claims are merely relative to our language, is that it allows you to drive a coach and horses through everybody else's beliefs while not saddling you with the inconvenience of having to adopt one yourself?⁶

What is the *logi(s)e* that Jacques built? What is it made of? Could the answer be found in its history or etymology? Derrida appreciates etymology: the traces of a word spread out into a vast textual network.⁷ Is it possible to get trapped in this network of words. We should feel there/their presence/absence. *Logi(s)e* has its origins in the dreaded logos which Derrida seeks desperately to deconstruct.⁸

Gramma has been given the suffix logos which is the very concept that Derrida wishes to deconstruct. Derrida wants both to tear down (though of course not to "destruct" totally) and build up *Gramma's logi(s)e*.⁹ He wants to play a game which requires its existence yet brings in the deconstructionists. It is as if he has two teams working on it. One team is on one side of the *logi(s)e* taking every brick down. This first team is called *briseurs*. The other team is on the other side of the *logi(s)e* putting every brick back and is called *bricoleurs*.

Derrida has combined binary opposites, according to his definition of *gram* and logos, and defines *gram* as follows: "the *gram* is neither a signifier nor a signified, neither a sign nor a thing, neither a presence nor an absence, neither a position nor a negation" (Positions 43). One consolation: at least *Gramma* comes before *logie* or logos. To Derrida's "Positive Science," *grammatologie*, one must add

the dreaded logos with all its traces. If *Gramma au logie* is to resemble a "science"—which Derrida hesitates to call it (35-36)—then logos has to be added to it. Its meaning now can be disseminated into many irrecoverable directions. Compound words could be primary targets or victims of *différance*. What happens in this combination? What happens between the elements of the "compound?" The very concept Derrida wants to deconstruct is parasitically attached to his *Gramma*, eating away at her, sucking out her strength and force and very life-blood. *Gramma* is getting weaker by the moment. Someone needs to deconstruct the logos off of *Gramma*, which Derrida brought into his own de-constructed *logi(s)e* and attached to her. Could the answer to what happens in the gap between the "divine logos" (*logie*) (35) and *Gramma* be found in her history or etymology? Or will *Gramma's* roots create more problems as well?

Who is *sa Gramma*? Where does she come from? The answer is indeed seen in her etymology. But in order to contrast better her etymology with Derrida's understanding of *sa Gramma* we should first look at one of his descriptions of her, keeping in mind the one cited above.

Gram as *différance*, then, is a structure and a movement no longer conceivable on the basis of the opposition presence/absence. *Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences. . . . (27)

What happens if we "play" with the traces of differences?

The play of differences supposes, in effect, synthesis and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element be *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself. Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving, results in each "element"—phoneme or grapheme—being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. (26)

What happens if we try to "synthesize and refer" to other traces in the word *gramma*? We have just seen how Derrida defines *gram*. Does it contain the "simple element" that Derrida applies to it, or can we see if it is "constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system"? Does *Gramma* refer only to herself, in the trace that Derrida refers to her, or are there other traces? Will these other traces produce a binary opposition to the trace that Derrida has selected? Liddell and Scott, lexicographers of

Classical Greek, can help us partially trace some of the traces of *sa Gramma*.¹⁰ These two scholars trace *Gramma's* heritage and shed a "different" light on Derrida's apparently exclusive descriptions of his *Gramma* cited above.

As it turns out, *Gramma* is Greek. *Gramma*, a neuter noun, which we transpose into a feminine, modern, proper noun in deference to today's *Gramma*, means the following according to Liddell and Scott's lexicon:

(I) that which is drawn; in plural the lines of a drawing or picture; in plural, figures in a picture; (II) that which is written, a written character, letter; in the plural letters, hence the alphabet; b. articulate sound, letter; c. puns; d. inscription; 2. in pl. notes in music; 3. mathematical diagram; 4. letter inscribed on lots which judges or jurymen drew; b. quarters of a town; 5. small weight; (III) in the plural also a piece of writing, an inscription, epitaph; 2. papers or documents of any kind, for proof; records, accounts; in singular, a bill or account; 3. a man's writings, i.e. a book, treatise; in pl. books; in sg. the Law of Moses; opp. *pneuma*; sg. article in a treaty; 4. laws or rules; (IV) letters or learning.

Sa Gramma retains all these traces. She has inherited quite a number of them. She always has in her possession, passed down through the centuries, musical scores, a bill (*la facture de la non-vérité*), pictures, records, a man's book (whose?), epitaphs, inscriptions, drawings (whose?) hung on her refrigerator, documents, accounts, puns, etc. She is even quite learned when taken in her plural totality.

Derrida describes *différance* in several ways, at least one of which may apply to *sa Gramma's* ancestry (Positions 8-10). *Différance* ". . . is also the production, if it can still be put this way, of these differences" (9). Has *sa Gramma* produced differences? Again Derrida defines *différance*: it "is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences" (27). The traces of *sa Gramma* are now so disseminated that it is hard, if not impossible, to pin her down for study. Her meaning is now so diffused that no one can say what she is or who she is in her totality with any degree of certainty. She plays with presence and absence as if they were a pair of indivisible and inseparable opposites on a magnet.

Most importantly, and the following becomes the focal point, she has laws and rules as opposed to *pneuma*. The New Testament, wherein is found a depiction of the divine Logos, considers *gramma* the Law as opposed to the divine *Pneuma*. *Gramma* is deadly, *Pneuma* is life-giving. If *Gramma* has neither a sign nor a signifier-

signified, nor a thing, nor an absence or presence, neither a negation nor a position, then she has at least laws and rules, especially when combined with logos. Does the combination of these two traces of *gram*, "nothing?" (Derrida) and "laws and rules" (Liddell and Scott) constitute a binary opposition that is susceptible to deconstruction?¹¹ She may not have a concept, but she has laws and rules in her ancestry. Therefore, is it possible for any book to be written on *Gramma* with any firm authority, or even soft authority? Can one say what she is without employing the *sous rature*? She is a dif-fused and con-fused personage. But the principal trace which is the most intriguing and *attirante* is *gram* as Law since the New Testament refers to *gramma* as the Law. Spivak correctly states that logos is Law (Introduction 50), and Liddell and Scott are right to define *gramma* as the Law. So, by clever metonymic and metaphoric, synonymic and paleonymic, homonymic and homophonic, eponymic and pseudonymic, antonymic and nymphonymic replacement, displacement, condensing and supplementarity, *grammatology* is actually nothing more than Law-Law. It is the law of the Law, whose very existence the Oedipal desire seeks to kill. Instead of *grammatology* releasing us from Law it bogs us down in it.

This question also arises: can we substitute Law for *gram*? Is *sa Gram-ma* a "Law-Ma"? Is she more potent than Tibetan and Mongolian lamas? Is the ultimate Law-Ma marked by shamanistic and tantric rituals? No wonder Bernard-Henri Lévy says that Derrida is not a guru: *Gramma-Law-Ma* is the guru of the family.¹² *Gramma*, the Law-Ma, has a religious aura about her. She intimidates people. She intimidates the logos, and rational thought, with her lama-isms.

Derrida, a faithful grandson/*petit fils* (thus he is in a translinguistic, binding, binary opposition from which he cannot escape), does in fact follow *sa Gramma* faithfully and transcendentalizes his ideas when he makes statements or even implies, for example, that *différance* is neither a word nor a concept,¹³ that a trace is a nothing and exceeds the question "what is" (*Grammatology* 75), that *gram* "is neither a signifier nor a signified, neither a sign nor a thing, neither a presence or an absence . . ." (*Positions* 43), and that deconstruction is not a method nor an interpretation (Norris 18). If these are not signifiers nor things nor concepts then what are they? Are they events? Are they processes? And if they are events or processes then how, precisely, can they not be concepts, presences, absences, or methods? If they are not all these in the "strict sense" then what does strict sense mean? Is it everyday usage? Is it philosophical usage?

How is it that they are apparently privileged over other more mundane words that are non-Derridean? These questions are rhetorical. When one's *Gramma* is a Law-Ma then one's own creations are automatically and necessarily above the rest. They hold a transcendental position. They become transcendental signifiers-signifieds. Like the creator's *Gramma* these words have a religious, unapproachable aura about them. *Ma Gramma* is better than yours.

Thus, *Gramma au logi(s)e* is the laws and rules of the divine logos.¹⁴ She is the study (*logie*) of rules and laws. She is the laws and rules of the divine Law. She is the Law of what Derrida says *gram* is. She is the study of divine Law-Ma. By attaching logos to *sa Gramma* does he advance a step, or dance without any forward progress just like he accuses Freud of doing (Post Card 297, 302, 336, *passim*)? Derrida spins pirouettes in a sort of divine, ritualistic, mystical, lama-istic, language dance. Even though *Gramma's* meaning is difficult to determine and even though her signified is diffused into irrecoverable multiplicity, some still ask what does *Gramma au logis* do exactly? What does a logos-Law-Ma do all day? These questions can be answered in three parts.

First, Derrida assigns to her a dutiful, almost urgent, mission. "Grammatology must . . ." (Positions 35). He uses "must" no less than three times, though we only look at one "must" here. "Grammatology *must* deconstruct everything that ties the concept and norms of scientificity to onto-theology, logocentrism and phonologism" (35, emphasis mine). But how can Gramma deconstruct the very word that permits her to exist as a "science" or study? Logos is indivisibly bound to her. Does or should *grammatologie* exist *sous rature*?

Secondly, Gramma is destined to rescue writing from its inferior position. Writing has been subordinated to speech (faith-in-pre-sence) for too long. According to Derrida's reading of Plato, Plato condemns writing to "wandering and blindness, to mourning" (Grammatology 39).

[Intrusive Digression: the descriptive words which Derrida lifts (*relève*?) from all the other possible words in Plato could be significant. "Wandering, blindness, mourning?" Did Oedipus himself act out these words? Why did Derrida choose such words? What did he find in them that he had to quote them from that logocentered man, Plato? *Le discours de l'Autre*?]

Gramma's task is enormous. She will save writing from an apocalyptic, transcendental signifier.

Thirdly, when asking if *Gramma au logis* performs scientific acts, Derrida calls it a science in *Of Grammatology* (74), but hesitates in *Positions* (35-36), where he answers what she does in general. (Is his hesitation-statement *différance*?)

In a word, I would say that it [elle] *inscribes* and *delimits* science; it [elle] must freely and rigorously make the norms of science function in its own writing; once again, it [elle] *marks* and at the same time *loosens* the limit which closes classical scientificity.

(Positions 36, emphasis his)

Spivak clarifies and informs us that *Gramma au logis* is "the science of the *sous rature*" (50). Even if we omit the word "science" in Spivak's definition since Derrida hesitated to call it that, Spivak still has a valid point. This *sous rature* is precisely what *sa Gramma* does, according to Derrida's description. *Sous rature* is easy to understand but nearly impossible to define in French, and hence, difficult to translate.

At first glance it can be translated as "under erasure." *Sous rature* allows us to undo language even though we preserve it (20). "It deletes and leaves legible at the same time" (32). We use words, and their use is permissible provided that we suspend them and do not try to stabilize the signified under the signifier. We can use words only if we let them slide. But, at second glance, how is one to determine the meaning of these two apparently simple French words? The French dictionary *Petit Robert* says that it not only means *sous* as *sous* is usually understood, but that it has some other "grands rapports de sens."

Figuratively it can mean "derrière" as used in this example provided by the dictionary, "elle dissimulait tant de bonté sous des dehors austères." When *Gramma* employs the abstract concept of the physical *rature* is she being figurative? How can one retain meaning, free it at the same time and still use *rature*? How can abstract meaning be put under physical *rature*? Is it possible, with the retention of all the traces and *différences*, to push *sous rature* to figurative limits, and consequently to see the subject as *derrière* and *sous la rature*? We present it thus with the X's representing the *rature*:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Gramma au logis ?

Sous can also be used with the idea of *devant* as in this example given by the dictionary: "sous les fenêtres de qqn." Therefore we see a curious blend of below and before, of *sens dessous et devant*, which removes the subject out from underneath, from direct contact with, but still in proximity to, the elevated window. It is then also possible to represent *sous rature* in this way:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Gramma au logis

Sa Gramma is left standing outside and under the *logis* and is too short to look in. We know who the *qqn.* is in *Petit Robert's* example.

The *Petit Robert* dictionary does say that one can be near and below "sans contact avec l'autre" as in the phrase provided, "Rien de nouveau sous le soleil." So it is possible, retaining all the traces and *différences*, to represent *sous rature* thus:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Gramma au logis

(What would happen if we now placed the Saussurean bar between *les ratures* and *Gramma*?) *Sa Gramma* is exposed in the light of the sun. There is nothing new about her: she is wearing an old hat.

So we find that *sous* can mean under-behind, under-before, and under-without-contact. Is all of this under-stood? The concept of *sous rature* has apparently experienced *différance* and undecidibility in its play with the presence and absence of the signifier-signified. Does *sous rature* have only one signified-presence, the one that *Gramma* gives it? Can it be the same/different or is it protected and shielded from *différance*? *Le sous, qui habite dans une soue, a dépensé son dernier sou afin d'être soûl avec les sens/l'essence.*

We have already begun to probe the depths of Derrida's opaque "concept" of the trace. Its movement is "occulted," another word with "hidden, religious" traces.¹⁵ It is "unmotivated" (46). Instituted, it is "the possibility common to all systems of signification" (46). It has a double use and is the function of the play of language and of the pathbreaking (*frayage*) into the unconscious by externality. The latter concept is based on Freud. Derrida reassures us that outside of linguistics, psychoanalytic research seems to provide the "greatest likelihood" of deconstituting "founding concept-words of ontology" (21). And this deconstituting is done by the original/non-original trace. The traces are associated with the marks or the *grammè* made

in the unconscious. These traces are the smallest marks in the unconscious. They are irreducible. But upon which part of the unconscious do these traces leave their mark? According to Freud repressions are "merged" into the *id*.¹⁶ In this new science of *gramma-trace-logie*, *it/id* is the receptacle of the trace.

But perhaps the greatest *frayage* made in the *id* of every human is the primal scene, the Oedipal desire. And if our hypothesis is correct, that Derrida is manifesting the Oedipal desire, then we need to look more closely at this Oedipal *frayage*. The *id* is "connected" with the primal scene. In fact one might equate the primal scene with the *id*, *le ça* or *das Es*. The Oedipal desire is *frayé* into the *id*. Freud says that the ego has mastered the Oedipal complex and has "placed itself in subjection to the *id*" (36). If this is so, then the Oedipal complex is also subjected to the *id*. Freud goes on to say that the Oedipal complex is the "energetic cathexis of the [ego], springing from the *id*" (39). So the Oedipal complex is so powerful that it can "spring" from the *id*. For something to be able to "spring" implies that it is wound up tight and has a strong ground or foundation from which to "spring." It might even be considered the strongest trace or *grammè* in the psyche.

Yet since we have seen the confusing undecidability of what *gramma* actually means, since *grammè* is the science of the mark or trace and yet it still has connections with the *gramma* or Law mentioned in the New Testament, and since the *id* is the "king" of the traces or *grammè* or mark then perhaps we will not be presumptuous in suggesting another name for *sa Gramma*. After all, Derrida wanted to substitute his grammatology for Saussure's semiology in his so-called "program" (Grammatology 51, emphasis mine).

Gramma and *grammè* are too confusing since they are intertwined. *Grammè* is supposedly the irreducible mark yet must be dropped in deference to *gramma* when a science or study or logos is built. A better Greek word is "iota." The New Testament says that not one *iota* will perish from the Law, thus making the *iota* smaller than the *gramma* or *grammè* or Law, and invincible. The *iota* is a sub-part of the *grammè*. Thus we have found that *grammè* is not irreducible. *Iota* is smaller and truly irreducible. And since the principal trace or *grammè*, now the *iota*, is "merged" into the *id* or *le ça*, which used to be *sa/ça Gramma*, the more complete and all-emcompassing name is the *id-iota*. This word combines the most powerful and smallest and most irreducible and relevant (*relevant?*) trace, the *iota*, with the

receptacle of the *iota*, the *id*. These two can no longer be separated since the *id* is the target of the *iota*. An *iota* must be merged into something before it can be retained as a repression. The new science of the *sous rature* is by all neo-linguistic, post-structuralist, post-modern, Derridean rights to be called *id-iota-tology*, instead of grammatology.

Yet somehow we must get away from the *effrayant* logos in grammatology, now id-iota-to-logy. It has too many bad memories, caused by negative *frayages*. We must not have the *iota* and the *id* running to the logos, we want them running from the logos. It so happens that the *Gramma's* Greek language has a word that protects its readers and speakers from the horrible logos. It is *apo-logos*. This convenient word combines the preposition "apo" which means "away from" and the logos. Hence one is automatically getting "away from" the logos when one uses this word, even without the genitive. In using *apo-logos* we also maintain the science of the *sous rature* and *différance* because we both keep and remove the logos with the tiny preposition "apo."¹⁷ We can now create an even better and clearer word for this new science: *id-iota-apo-logy*, or, with elision, famous among literate Greeks, *id-iot-apo-logy*. It used to be the *ça-grammè*, which changes to *ça-gramma* the moment one wants to add suffixes to it, like logos: *ça-gramma-to-logy*. Now the new name is not so inconsistent and confusing: *idiotapology*.

Before leaving the Oedipal desire and examining the game of little Ernst, one more comment about some common traits is required. Several translators and commentators have written about Derrida's opaque syn-tax and meaning.¹⁸ And this opaqueness is not a one time occurrence. He repeats this manifest content or behavior over and over again. What is the latent meaning of this repetitive behavior? Since our analysis of Derrida's manifesting an Oedipal complex is valid, perhaps the answer to this new question can be located in this myth too.

Oedipus was an expert at solving riddles. In fact he stated in no uncertain terms that he had solved the riddle of the sphinx and that he could solve the mystery of why the city was plagued. He challenged just about everyone to outdo him in riddle-solving. Could it be that Derrida is challenging his readers to solve his syn-tactical riddles? Could he unconsciously be manifesting his propensity for riddles by writing in riddles? Is his writing style a *rébus*, in every sense (trace) of that French word? Or is he playing with *un bloc*

magique from which he peels off the top layer as soon as he sees us "peering" over his shoulder, keeping all the traces to this English word? Now that a plague of deconstruction has hit literature, will Derrida help us solve the riddle? Will he stop having relations with *sa Gramma* so that the plague will cease? Will he help us solve the riddle of his writing style which profoundly reenacts, in every sense, deconstructive "principles?"

In Derrida's deconstruction of Freud he reveals part of his reading strategy: "it is in order to place in relation, as I have been doing from the beginning, what Freud says and what Freud does, what *Beyond* . . . treats (its object, hypotheses and laws, its problems) and its writing procedure [*démarche*], its performances and operations" (Post Card 390-91). Derrida analyzes not only the content but also the strategy or performance (behavior?) of Freud as seen in his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; not only what Freud says but also what he does; not only his objects, but his performance. It is only natural that someone who wants to employ the "method" behind deconstruction would imitate Derrida's actions. Yet what is Derrida's performance or behavior? If we permit the validity of Freud's discovery as Derrida does what could be lurking in his unconscious waiting to surface like a spring unsprung?

Is Derrida also reenacting the serious *fort/da* game of little Ernst since he uses language to deconstruct language? When he adds logos to *sa Gramma* and then deconstructs logos, is he imitating the little boy at play? Derrida similarly critiques Freud who imitated his own grandson: "Freud does with (without) the object of his text exactly what Ernst does with (without) his spool" (Post Card 320).¹⁹ Indeed he recalls that Freud, Ernst's grandfather, often observed his grandson playing a sort of "Hide-and-Go-Seek/Greek" with a spool (and with a string attached, Derrida noted) reasoning and deducing that the game was a repetition compulsion compensating for his mother's absence (Post Card 314-16, 321). Derrida apparently repeats "fo-o-o-rt!" to the signifiers-signifieds of his resented Father figures and then yanks back the once absent meaning of the sign, "da-a-a!," so as to rediscover meaning in his own use of language. What is *derri(ère) da*, before *l'ère-De-(rri)-da*, anyway?²⁰ The signifier-signified is present for Derrida when he wields it like a long sword against language, but it is absent in his Fathers' use of language (What a *différ(e/a)n*ce Derrida permits himself as compared with his resented Father figures!). Was this the "play" that Barbara Johnson

was alluding to in her celebrated deconstruction of Derrida's deconstruction of Lacan's analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Purloined Letter*, whose text had undergone un-author-ized abridgement, which probably did not change a trace of the signifier-signified? "Derrida, by filling in what Lacan left blank is repeating the same gesture of blank-filling for which he criticizes Lacan."²¹ Thus in order that his own critique of Lacan be transmitted in all its pregnant meaning, Derrida postpones his postponing of meaning, defers his deferring of meaning, delays his delaying of meaning, detours his detouring of meaning, retards his retarding of meaning so that what he means means something, not nothing. Is this play with absence and presence of meaning, this *sous rature*, what Derrida is doing when on the one hand he posits the precariousness of translating (Post Card 382), but then on the other (sleight of) hand goes right ahead and loosely (admittedly so) translates a passage from Freud at his own "risk and peril" (385)? Could Derrida be "disinseminating" meaning at the same time? Since Derrida plays with language like little Ernst played with his spool, with strings attached, then Freud's conclusion about his grandson and Derrida's conclusions about Freud apply to Derrida as well. Will little Ernst, shot skyward like a fireworks display during the grand finale, one day reach mythic proportions like Oedipus? In that mythical future the main title of this speculative essay would be "The Importance of Being 'Ernst'."

Of course Derrida has an answer. Besides the fact that he knows what he is doing (Spivak 45), Derrida places metaphysical language and difficult concepts *sous rature*. Also, he does not care whether he reenacts deconstruction since he is promoting it. He cannot lose and only proves his point even further. Once again he hides behind the concept of *sous rature*. But as we have already seen *sous rature* raises more problems than it solves. Doing is one thing, talking is another, or, more precisely, not talking but *traçant* (*je trace-parle, tu traces-parles, il/elle/on trace-parle*, etc. Remember: *le tracer* comes before *le parler* which comes before some forms of *l'écrire* which comes before *le logos*. Even though traces are supposed to be irreducible, will someone step forward and decenter the privileged "tracecentrism" which decentered logocentrism? Can iota-centrism rise to the deconstructive occasion? What will become the center/sinner?). The response to Derrida's possible response is the same as the response with which we just responded: he still must play *fort/da* with ab-

sence and presence of meaning. Meaning is no(w)here-now there, whether one calls it *sous rature* or *fort/da*.

Some unexpected positions of *sous rature* were used above: below and before and behind and without contact. Now, however, I place *sous rature* *sous rature*: ~~*sous rature*~~ in the Derridean sense and I leave *fort/da* open, uncensored and elevated:

fort/da

But when I place *sous rature* *sous rature*, what is to stop me from placing the *sous rature* which is already *sous rature* *sous rature* again (Différance 44)? Is the first *sous rature* cancelled by the second *sous rature*: are we back to the first *sous rature*? Or are we reinforcing the original *sous rature* before/after it was activated and applied? What happens if a third *sous rature* were added to the second *sous rature* which is "under" the first *sous rature*? Can we employ *sous rature* ad infinitum, ad absurdum, ad nauseum? Little Ernst's game of *fort/da* must quickly and desperately replace and displace *sous rature* if deconstructionists want to keep their common presence/absence. Out of the mouths of babes. . . .

Have Oedipus and little Ernst found themselves, or is their *différance* too great to be established with any degree of linguistic certainty? Is literary agnosticism ruling the day so that we cannot trace it or anything else, anywhere? Have Oedipus and little Ernst been successfully *tracés* and even *frayés* in Derrida's unconscious? Does Oedipus have a leg to stand on? Does he have the "Legs' de Freud"? And more importantly for little Ernst, has he achieved the same mythic status as Oedipus? Has he been traced into all of our un-pre-sub-super-ego-id-iotic-consciousnesses like Oedipus?

This analysis is, of course, speculation. I am "speculating on Derrida" (Post Card 259-409). I am speculating on Derrida's signifiers of repetition compulsion which in all cases surfaces from the unconscious, symbolizes the "language of the unconscious" and speaks for the Other. Derrida does repeat the Oedipal act with multiple Fathers, riddle-writing and the *fort/da* game with language. He apparently does have a maternal figure too. Clearly Derrida's repetition compulsion of "attack philosophy" is a symptom which has a cause. But of what? Derrida offers a psychoanalysis of Freud showing how Freud might have come up with his hypothesis about his grandson (Post Card 320-37). He briefly looks at the events swirling around

Freud during the season of Freud's visit to his daughter's house. He speculates that maybe the tragic events influenced Freud's conclusions. Perhaps, in so doing, Derrida is being ironical, perhaps not—still his method used on others cries out to be approximately imitated or *pastichée*. Is he resisting the death principle through *sa Gramma*? Alas, I am not a psychoanalyst and do not feel as qualified as either Freud or Derrida to comment on life's circumstances as they affect a man's soul. I therefore elect to leave the analysis and therapy to the psychoanalysts. I am quite sure that Derrida would willingly and gladly put his soul or psyche in their hands, if only he knew how to materialize the soul so that his hands could grab it and transfer it to the hands of the psychoanalysts, in other words, if only the sign which represents the metaphor could just sit still long enough, quit squirming like a *petit fils* waiting in the psychoanalyst's waiting room so that it could be grabbed—in other words, if only in other words. . . .²²

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Notes

1. Michael Riffaterre, in "Syllepsis" *Critical Inquiry* 6 (1980) 625–38, warns us that ambiguity "is not the polysemy most words display as dictionary entries but results from the context's blocking of the reader's choice among competing meanings. Undecidability results when the 'syntax will not let him choose' " (628). This is precisely what I am trying to do even though I list all the various meanings of *gramma* from a Greek lexicon. How are words blocked if one does not play with the various meanings and antonyms and synonyms of those words found in the dictionary? Meaning can also be blocked by traces which help govern syntax and context since traces are smaller than both of these. Riffaterre illustrates his own point with Derrida's uses of the word *source*, which, Riffaterre says, is a "perfectly unequivocal word which he [Derrida] transforms into an undecidable word" (630). Derrida does this transformation, according to Riffaterre, by substituting/adling, supplementing or shifting to the words *point d'eau*, or "no water" or "point of water" (630) making of it at once a synonym and an antonym, as well as a dictionary entry. I propose to do a similar transformation by contrasting Derrida's definition of *gramma* with the definitions found in the lexicon, isolating one entry among many of *gramma*, "laws and rules" and seeing how it matches with Derrida's concept of *gramma*.

2. Hugh J. Silverman, "Writing (On Deconstruction) at the Edge of Metaphysics" *Research in Phenomenology* 13 (1978) 97–111.

3. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits II* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971) 112, 158–59, 232–33.

4. Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 414.

5. Gayatri C. Spivak, Introduction in *Of Grammatology*, by Jacques Derrida (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974) 45.
6. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) 144.
7. Jacques Derrida, *Positions* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980) 40, note 5; 42 note 10. Spivak adds in "Revolutions that as Yet Have No Model: Derrida's *Limited Inc.*" *Diacritics* 10 (1980) 31, that "right from the start Derrida's project has been *paleonymic*, urging a rereading of old words such as 'writing.'" Traces are discussed later.
8. Spivak makes this connection: logos being added to *gramma* (Introduction 50), but she does not mention the deconstructibility of *gramma*, which does subsume *grammè*.
9. Spivak points out that "in the first published version of *De la Grammatologie*, Derrida uses the word 'destruction' in place of 'deconstruction'" (49). If deconstruction is not a method or an interpretation or a concept (Norris, *Derrida* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987) 18) then how can one begin to conceive of changing the word? One must have an idea of what the word means conceptually, be dissatisfied with it, and then change it.
10. Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek to English Lexicon* 9th ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).
11. I use "nothing" advisedly since Rodolphe Gasché in "Deconstruction as Criticism" *Glyph* 6 (1979) 180, warns us that Derrida's philosophy is not nihilistic. If it is not nihilistic then it appears to "brush by" nihilism as one brushes by death.
12. Bernard-Henri Lévy, "Derrida n'est pas un gourou" *Magazine Littéraire* 88 (1974) 60.
13. Jacques Derrida, "La Différance" *Théorie d'ensemble* (Paris: Seuil, 1968) 46.
14. Spivak sees logos as "law" at one extreme and *phonè* at the other, and *grammè* as the *sous rature* (50). However, I take *gramma* as laws and rules combined with the *gramma* as Derrida defines it. Logos I take to be as Bass reviews it in "The Double Game" *Taking Chances* ed. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984) 74, and as reasoned discourse, laws, and the study of something as seen in -logy, omitting, of course, the New Testament description of the Logos as the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ (John 1:1; 14).
15. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974) 47.
16. Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1961) 19:24.
17. *Apo* can also mean "from" in the sense of "source," so we can keep the *sous rature* idea since *apo* combines "away from" and "source from."
18. To name just a few: Norris, 64; Riffaterre, 633; Lévy, 60; Dominique Janicaud, "Presence and Appropriation" *Research in Phenomenology* (1978) 67; Samuel Weber, "It" *Glyph* 4 (1984) 38; Richard Klein, "Prolegomena to Derrida" *Diacritics* 2 (1972) 29; Alan Bass, "The Double Game" in *Taking Chances*, eds. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984) 66.
19. "Just as Ernst, in recalling the object (mother, thing, whatever) to himself, immediately comes *himself* to recall *himself* in an immediately supplementary operation, so the speculating grandfather, in describing or recalling this or that, recalls *himself*" (Post Card 320-21). Could Derrida's own analysis of Freud be turned back on himself?

20. See Gregory Ulmers, "The Post-Age" *Diacritics* 11 (1981) 44-45, for some remarks about Derrida's puns on his own name. Also see Spivak's comments on Derrida's play on words with Searle's name, SARL (Société aux responsabilités limitées), Limited Liability in English, Incorporated in American (*Revolutions* 33). I would like to thank Jean-Pierre Barricelli for providing the pun on Derrida's name to which I added my own twist.

21. Barbara Johnson, "The Frame of Reference" *The Purloined Poe* Eds. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974) 218.

22. Thanks go to Prof. Ben Stoltzfus and the members of the French 266 seminar for their help and support.

REVIEW

William VanderWolk. *Flaubert Remembers. Memory and the Creative Experience*. New York: Peter Lang, 1990.

VanderWolk's text characterizes Flaubert's creative development in two early works, *Madame Bovary* and *L'Éducation sentimentale*, in terms of the general ideas on memory and in terms of the psychological assimilation of fictions projected from the past onto the present in the lives of Flaubertian characters. The pivotal enigma of Flaubert's artistic enterprise—"être présent partout et visible nulle part"—is outlined in reference to the play of memory and Flaubert's gradual development from self-referential, auto-biographically based juvenile works to a pantheistic supra-self capable of embracing, or reading and writing, the world.

VanderWolk examines how memory, based in sentiment, is retained as a source of experience but is subjugated by the creative interference of the writer, who imposes a critical irony stemming from an impersonal, worldly intelligence. He also suggests that Flaubert, in appropriating *bovaryste* tendencies in artistic projects, forged a constructive tool from a potentially ruinous inclination to self-delusion.

Effacement of the narrative persona and its implications for the Subject, have become the process upon which hinges much post-modern Flaubertian criticism: in this work, the question of effacement is cast in a contiguous relation to the elimination of the present. VanderWolk shows that Flaubert's two key protagonists, Emma and Frédéric, interpret and redefine lived experience according to ar-

bitrary realities derived not only from literature but also from their own lives. Hence the special status of memory which by its nature makes artists of us all. If we accept that not only the future but also the past may be invented, we might then want to attempt to determine whether writing the past is a more radical procedure than prescribing the future and whether it is more invasive of the Subject. This issue would tie in with the broader theoretical question of the lost Subject, and it would have particular significance for *L'Éducation sentimentale*, where a fundamental issue for any analysis is the potential analogical relation between personal Subject and historical *Zeitgeist*. VanderWolk does not pursue this angle however. His interest lies in the reverse implication of the maxim, "Madame Bovary, c'est moi"—i.e., not just that the text is permeated with a unique Flaubertian style, but that Gustave himself had a strong dose of *bovarysme*. It would seem that the *thèse manquée* of this book would have revealed a kindred relation between Madame Bovary and Monsieur Flaubert, an empathy more profound than the cynical deconstruction of the protagonist's self-delusion which seems to constitute the denotative message of the text.

One would expect that attention to memory would offer more potential insight into *L'Éducation sentimentale* than into *Madame Bovary* given that, in addition to that of the protagonist, the collective memory of the nation is intended by the text. However the ultimate irrelevance of the latter to the former leads VanderWolk to a rather brusque conclusion that the novel is not historically analytic. The pairing of Emma and Frédéric opens up a rich comparative panorama, yet VanderWolk prefers to assimilate the two in a study of a consistent process of memory. Such a process is not then identified in relation either to the suggested Flaubertian affinity for his characters, or in terms of an overall theory of memory.

In fact, this key term is not specifically examined, and the lack of analytic precision in this book is consistent with the shortage of theoretical development. This can be anticipated from the general circularity of the preface as, for example, in the following statement about the particular significance of memory for Flaubert:

The fusion of art and life, of experience and imagination, can be found in memory, for it is through the mind's transformation of real memories that imagination creates fiction. For Flaubert, memory was the key to creation, the richest source of material and inspiration. (xiii)

Thus *Flaubert Remembers* has little theoretical contribution to make and the text never really responds to the title's suggestion that it contains insights into the memory of Gustave Flaubert. This is compensated, however, by the freedom it displays in assimilating previous readers of Flaubert in an organic reading of the juvenile works, *Madame Bovary* and *L'Education Sentimentale*. Critical theorists are invoked in reference to key themes in the text, rather than in speculative theoretical relation to each other, and as such, *Flaubert Remembers* is an extremely useful work for the critical debutant faced with an edifice of Flaubertian theoretical criticism tangentially related to its ostensible subject.

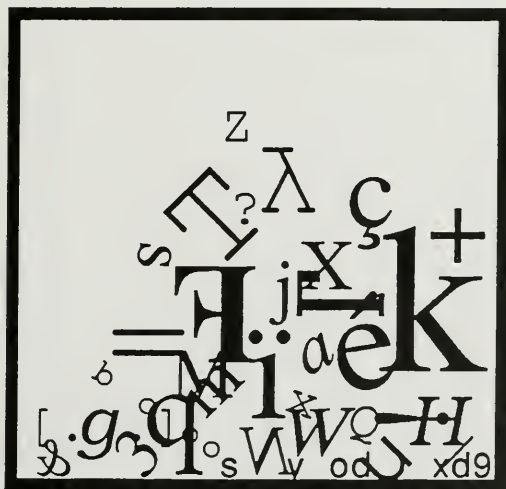
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Ce serait le moment de philosopher et de
rechercher si, par hasard, se trouverait
ici l'endroit où de telles paroles dégèlent.

Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*

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