

Derrida's Institutions:  
The Political Philosophy of Jacques Derrida

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

**Preface:**

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

## Thesis Abstract:

*Derrida's Institutions: The Political Philosophy of Jacques Derrida*

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This thesis examines the role of institutions in Jacques Derrida's philosophy. It argues that there is an intimate connection between Derrida's political engagements and his philosophy which has hitherto been neglected. Drawing on a range of unexamined television, print and radio contributions by Derrida, as well as archival research into his unpublished seminars, the thesis places these in dialogue with canonical texts and critical interpretations, thus contributing to a more precise understanding of his philosophy in the light of his substantial political involvement.

The text opens with a consideration of iteration, determination and effacement in Derrida's work. I argue that these are the major terms for understanding Derrida's political philosophy. This is sustained throughout the thesis, through a consideration of *exappropriation* and the terms *promesse* and *mémoire*. Within this framework, and in a broadly chronological way, Derrida's institutional and political engagements are analysed. I coin the term *exappropriating institutions* to describe a shared structure and coherent strategy across these interventions. This includes work on educational reform in the *GREPH* and the *Collège international de philosophie*; support for undocumented migrants, including his neglected collaboration with Pierre Bourdieu to support persecuted intellectuals; his view of media institutions, *télétechnologies* and the need to reform public space; his position on Europe and particularly his support for a European army; and, finally, his focus on international law and its institutions alongside the need to reform the United Nations and his support for *altermondialisme*. Throughout the thesis, I argue that the double movement of Derrida's philosophy, the critique/*plus-que-critique*, is present within his political engagements and that this connects it closely to his philosophy. Through this we come to see the importance of critique for Derrida, but also that the movement beyond this is also closely tied to determination. Ultimately, I argue that *exappropriating institutions* is a normative structure in Derrida's philosophy and represents a model for politics.

Overall, this work demonstrates the important intersection between philosophy and the political that marked much of Derrida's career, and I argue on this basis that these interventions and engagements should be understood as part of a consistent and coherent Derridean political philosophy.

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## **Introduction: A Determined Politics**

If there is one topic that has remained constant in the reception of Jacques Derrida's work, it may well be an effort to decipher his politics and the political implications of his work. Be it questions about dialectical materialism in *Positions* (e.g. Derrida et al. 1972, 84) or Derrida's reception in Literature departments in the United States, where the importance of indeterminacy and linguistic difference in politics was emphasised (e.g. Barbara Johnson (1980)), whenever Derrida's philosophy is referenced, politics follows closely. And, indeed, this seems to hold true regardless of whether we want to discuss the political or not. When more philosophically informed accounts of Derrida emerged, partially in response to Derrida's reception within Literary Studies, these too had to address the political questions in deconstruction (sometimes implicitly, such as in Gasché (1986: 251), and sometimes explicitly, as in Christopher Norris (1987: 144)). The 1990s brought the political issues into further relief; both in Derrida's own work, with books like *Spectres de Marx* (1993b) and interest from other departments, such as critical legal studies. Alongside this, there were a series of important critical texts (often linked to the United Kingdom) published around the ethical and political significance of Derrida's work, most notably perhaps Critchley (1992), Beardsworth (1996), Bennington (2000). While works like this helped expand our knowledge of the political implications of Derrida's work, this has far from settled the issue, and these accounts have been challenged recently by accounts such as Hägglund (2008), Anderson (2012) and Haddad (2013). We will come to these disagreements during the thesis; for the moment, however, it is worth emphasizing that for nearly half a century, across countries, languages and decades, then, one of the first questions for Derrida's work is often: what are the politics of deconstruction?

Given the importance of politics in the way we think about Derrida, therefore, it is really quite surprising indeed that none of these accounts consider Derrida's political interventions. Whether it is the most recent discussions about the practical consequence of the unconditional affirmation, or debates in the 1980s about the importance of style in Derrida's work, or indeed early accusations of being inadequately Marxist, these debates have isolated themselves to the "properly" philosophical texts. The implication being that if we are to work out the political consequences of Derrida's work, it is here that we will find them, not in the derivative, secondary, accidental or even murky world of engagements, interventions, negotiations and positions.



It is not entirely true to claim that these engagements have been completely neglected. They often get a cameo appearance, when challenging allegations of political apathy or nonsensical nihilism (e.g. The 1992 “Cambridge Affair, or Sprinker 1980, 92). Here, it is standard to footnote Derrida’s engagements, usually education, as proof that he clearly did believe in politics: they are rarely given any sustained attention and never considered as a subject worthy of study in themselves. Managing to be both present and absent at the same time, they are worthy of reference, but never of analysis. To offer one example, in a chapter on Derrida and politics, Geoffrey Bennington (2000) carefully works through the political nature of Derrida’s work, and especially its relation to democracy. Bennington mentions these interventions and rightly claims that such interventions are ‘continuous with each act of deconstruction from the start, always more or less obviously marked by a strategic event of decision in a given context’ (2000: 33). However, in a discussion on Derrida and politics, this is the only reference to these interventions, and it is left to the penultimate sentence. There is no time to elaborate and no space to consider the implications of the relationship between deconstruction and these interventions. Both what an understanding of deconstruction might add to these political engagements, and what an understanding of these concrete commitments might add to deconstruction.

The starting point for this thesis, however, does not come from a defence of Derrida, but rather a challenge to him. In ‘Should Democracy Come? Ethics and Politics in Derrida’, Jacques Rancière argues that Derrida’s philosophy offers us little in terms of politics. In a way, though in a much more sophisticated fashion, Rancière repeats the classic accusations of the apolitical apathy against Derrida. However, what is interesting is the way that Rancière frames his approach:

What is worth examining is whether the link between the concepts of deconstruction and his commitments defines a political thinking, a thinking of the specificity of politics. There are two ways of dealing with the issue. The first one consists in re-examining the concepts that define the kernel of deconstructive thought and in discussing whether and how they entail a specific understanding of politics and account for the specificity of his political engagement. I am thoroughly unable to do that. (2009: 275)

Though he ultimately declines such a path, Rancière has generously outlined the approach that this thesis will take. Bringing together Derrida’s philosophy with his political interventions, I

will argue that they do entail a specific conception of the political and that this underlies a consistent and coherent strategy in Derrida's political involvement. Derrida's political engagements are neither anecdotal, nor derivative, but fundamentally philosophical and need to be read in dialogue with his philosophy. My argument thus has three connected but distinct aims: first, to offer a comprehensive account of these engagements; second, to argue that such engagements are not simply reflex responses, but are tied closely to Derrida's philosophical positions; and, third, that institutions are key to understanding the consistent strategy shared across these engagements.

Institutions mark Derrida's understanding of the political and they are a constant reference point in his political involvement: he proposes reforms to institutions, founds institutions and sets the ground for new ones. On one level, a connection between the political and the institutional is far from surprising. It is hardly a radical "postmodern" move to suggest that there is something political about institutions, or that those interested in politics might also be interested in institutions. This is certainly at play. And, indeed, for those who dismiss Derrida's philosophy as 'politically bankrupt' (Foley 1985: 113), there is at least some value in simply pointing this out.<sup>1</sup> However, my argument is a more substantial one: namely, that Derrida's philosophy mandates such an interest in institutions and that it plays a vital role not just in the traditional moment of critique in his philosophy, but also in the deconstructive moment of going beyond such critique, in what he labels the *plus-que-critique*.

My title then, *Derrida's Institutions: The Political Philosophy of Jacques Derrida*, is designed to bring out the necessary links between Derrida's philosophy and his political involvement with institutions throughout his life. However, my subtitle also plays an important role here on three levels.

The first is the explicit use of the word 'philosophy'. It *should* go without saying that Derrida was a philosopher and his work deliberately and purposefully situated within philosophy, but unfortunately it *does not*. As Hobson (2005: 80) has brought out, there is a desire to dismiss this connection, to label Derrida's work as 'theory/critical theory'. Such a desire is not simply a product of a 'basic ignorance of his career, and a basic misunderstanding', but also 'an intention to have things "lite", in the sense that the social drugs, beer and cigarettes, can be "lite"' (2005: 80). It would require a different research project altogether to consider the

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, see the Appendix which lists a significant number of petitions and letters that Derrida signed.

many reasons as to why some academics were keen to dismiss the philosophical nature of Derrida's work; however, within the Anglophone context, at least, we can point to one reason being his original reception within Literary Studies departments. Yet, there is no good justification for this continued dismissal. My use then of the term 'philosophy' in my title, therefore, is designed specifically to counter these positions, and to stress the important role that the philosophical plays in relation to Derrida's political interventions.

The second is the qualification of this philosophy as political philosophy. My aim here is twofold: first to bring out the way in which Derrida's work relates to important themes and questions in political philosophy. Though Bennington (2000: 18) might begin the essay quoted above with the claim that, 'Derrida has never written a work of political philosophy', it remains the case that much of the topics considered here are recognized as important questions in the discipline of political philosophy. These include topics like democratization, deterritorialization, war, terrorism, asylum rights and international law. This is not to say that Derrida's philosophy can be easily accommodated into the traditional canon of political philosophy; however, while Bennington is partially right to stress this difference, it seems to me that this can be overstated and that such overstatement does a disservice to Derrida's philosophy and its potential dialogue with other political philosophies.

My second aim by the term 'political philosophy' concerns the sources that I make use of. I want to argue that even though these interviews, petitions and articles may appear in broadcast media, they still form part of a political philosophy. While acknowledging the specificity of these texts, I will argue that they are in a sustained and important dialogue with the "philosophical" texts. This will be discussed in more detail below, but it is worth emphasizing that such a hard distinction between the philosophical and the political can be found nowhere in Derrida's work, and, as I will argue, it is only through looking at both types of work that we can account for the 'specific understanding of politics' that Rancière mentioned above.

The third point relates to the use of the definite article, '*the* political philosophy of Jacques Derrida'. My argument is not to say that Derrida's philosophy, political or otherwise, can be reduced to one unified position or that this is the only way to read Derrida's work. Indeed, Derrida frequently denies that deconstruction itself can be discussed in the singular at all; but, rather, it is inherently plural: 'il n'y a pas *la* déconstruction, il y a des mouvements singuliers, des styles plus ou moins idiomatiques, des stratégies, des effets de déconstruction

hétérogènes d'un lieu à l'autre ...' (1990a: 161). Indeed, as we will see in detail, Derrida precisely thematises this resistance to one unique and unified context, and the effects of this heterogeneity. However, exactly because of this, it also calls for careful attention to context; I take the proper name 'Jacques Derrida' and his political interventions to be one such context. My aim is thus to articulate this as comprehensively as possible and to offer one way of understanding this philosophy. This is not, however, to say that this is the only way that Derrida's philosophy can be understood, but it is an important one which remains to be articulated.

### **Institution, Media, Archive**

I have already mentioned the importance of institutions above; however, it is worth looking more closely at this term. My aim is not to impose a definition of institution, but to establish a definition based on Derrida's work. However, offering a definition of the institution specifically for Derrida's philosophy is something of a complicated task. In the preface to *Du droit à la philosophie*, Derrida defines his philosophy exactly by this problem: '*La déconstruction est une pratique institutionnelle pour laquelle le concept d'institution reste un problème*' (1990a: 88). Offering a simple definition of the institution would be a distinctly "anti-deconstructive" approach, therefore; and yet, though the term 'institution' remains open for Derrida, there are still some important dimensions to which he returns frequently. In the first instance, then, the term institution is used here to describe any form of social organisation, that repeats itself and operates according to implicit or explicit convention. As we will see, this includes many points that we would easily accept as institutional: educational institutions, international institutions, legal institutions, and so on. However, as we will also see, in the case of the media, this does not need to be a "physical" institution as such. Without entering into the argument here, it is this conventional and repeated nature of institutions that Derrida often focuses on in his interventions and it is this, above all else, which I refer to when using the term 'institution'.

Institution is not the only term that presents problems in this way, 'media' is also a word that I will frequently refer to and it also carries a complex Derridean heritage. The idea of 'mediation' has an important place in Derrida's work, and it is something that we will address during the thesis. However, when I use the term 'media' here and elsewhere throughout the thesis, I am referring not to this general idea of mediation, but rather as shorthand for modern broadcast media: specifically, press, radio and television. This is not to deny that

published books of philosophy are not also media in any sense, but it is rather a way of highlighting the importance and potential of broadcast media as a source for interpreting Derrida. As these represent a major site for Derrida's political interventions, we will need to frequently make reference to them. When I wish to indicate a more general point about mediation, therefore, I will signal this explicitly; when referring to broadcast media, I will use the term media.

As this suggests, this thesis is a product of significant archival research, and it also seeks to position itself within contemporary work on the archives of Jacques Derrida. Recent years have seen the publication of multiple posthumous seminars and more are planned. We can see this, of course, as part of a more general 'archival turn' in the humanities.<sup>2</sup> As Bennington has pointed out, we need to be careful when approaching Derrida's work from this angle: taking Derrida's work as a 'historical object', which context can explain completely, 'guarantees a failure of reading', precisely because Derrida has thematized the very impossibility for context to determine everything in this way (2014: 117, 112). In a related way, though Bennington does not say this explicitly, we need to avoid the belief that these archives will unlock the unique and unified origin of Derrida. There is no ground-zero Derrida waiting to be found in these archives, nor will the eventual publication of all the seminars finally help solve "Derrida". Though this is certainly true, used skillfully, the increased availability and use of biographical information and source has offered nuanced and sophisticated readings of Derrida, such as in the excellent work of Edward Baring (2011). To my knowledge, however, no work has been done on the "archive" of Derrida's public media appearances. In part, this is no doubt because these are not collected in any one archive, but rather spread across the different media institutions where they were originally published. My own research is based on archival work at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France, Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine*, and the *Institut national de l'audiovisuel*, which has allowed me to draw together a varied corpus from these different public appearances. Nevertheless, it is worth underlying the degree to which Derrida was involved in public appearances: for instance, Derrida appeared over 200 times on French radio during his lifetime. While I have had to narrow my specific interest to those appearances which relate most directly to my problematic, there is much to be done here. Indeed, one of the implicit arguments of this

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (2002).

thesis is to make the case for this corpus as a legitimate and important source and one worthy of equal attention to the posthumous seminars.

Furthermore, this also opens up the more general question about the relationship between media and philosophy. My goal here is not to suggest that these can offer us some unhindered or immediate insight into Derrida's work – where Jacques finally “tells us what he really thinks”. Rather, I intend to treat these as complicated and nuanced texts in themselves, while all the time paying attention to the demands of their own specific contexts of production. Similarly, I do not want to use these texts as simple footnotes to the “greater” philosophical texts. Throughout this thesis, I seek to implicitly disrupt such a hierarchy. Indeed, it was something of this hierarchy that was targeted in *De la grammatologie* (1967a), whose first chapter was entitled: ‘La fin du livre et le commencement de l'écriture’. There, Derrida labelled the idea of the book as that which sought to present itself as a totality of protected and secured meaning, ‘la protection encyclopédique de la théologie et du logocentrisme’ (1967a: 31). Though Derrida is not speaking specifically about the book as an object, but rather as a way of conceiving of knowledge and meaning, it remains the case that such a conception can still survive latently in the privilege of the canonical Derridean texts over the more occasional media engagements. In bringing these different types of texts together, this thesis will seek to disrupt any remaining hierarchy and challenge some of the latent remainders of the “book” that inhabit our understanding of Derrida, but also our understanding of philosophy more generally.

### **Plan of the Thesis:**

The thesis is divided into six chapters and progresses chronologically through some of Derrida's main interventions. To anchor this itinerary, I coin the term *exappropriating institutions* to describe the continuous institutional approach that Derrida pursues in his engagements. This is based on only one of Derrida's ‘non-synonymous substitutions’: *exappropriation*. This is, in part, a compositional move; helping demonstrate the ways in which this logic operates in different contexts and interventions. If I offer this term some privilege over other substitutions, however, this is for two reasons: first, because it has received less critical attention than some of the other terms (e.g. *différance*, *écriture*); but, secondly, because I believe it places greater emphasis on the role of determination in this logic. I develop this argument in Chapter 1, where I outline a relationship between determination and Derrida's reading of the Heideggerian ethical affirmation (*Zusage*). I argue that the effacement and determination of singularity play a central role in Derrida's philosophy and that secondary

criticism has tended to neglect this latter point. Through the figures of date, ash, and the counter-signature, I show that effacement and determination are dependent on each other. Demonstrating that it is only through determined instances that effacement takes place, this chapter demonstrates not only that Derrida is interested in decisions, but equally that he is interested in the rules and conventions that these decisions establish. This will have important implications for arguments around lesser violence and how we understand the aporia. We will see that this intimate link between determination and effacement in Derrida's work helps us understand the importance both of appropriation and expropriation in *exappropriation*.

Chapter 2 builds on Chapter 1, showing how this focus on determined instances has implications for how Derrida work on institutions. I demonstrate this by looking at Derrida's work on educational reform and institutions. Though this is perhaps Derrida's most well-known engagement, critical reception has tended to privilege his work on the university, at the expense of his significant work on second level education. Through a distinction between *répondre à* and *répondre de*, I bring out the importance of the double gesture in Derrida's interventions, which recurs in each chapter. It is here that I build on the work in Chapter 1 and coin the term *exappropriating institutions*: this brings together three different characteristics that Derrida frequently privileges in institutions. Through this, I argue that there is an important and neglected link between democratization and education, which only becomes clear through close consideration of his interventions.

Chapter 3 takes up Derrida's engagement in support of undocumented migrants (*les sans papiers*) and his thinking of hospitality. I argue that this double move brought out in Chapter 2 is also at work here. In the moment of critique, I argue against the position that Derrida's work is completely distinct from the Kantian regulative idea, proposing instead that his work on historical critique, as well as his justification for civil disobedience, demonstrate a more nuanced approach. Looking at Derrida's neglected collaboration with Pierre Bourdieu in the *Parlement international des écrivains*, I explore how this too can be understood as an *exappropriating institution*, and I argue that this demonstrates the importance of institutions in both *répondre à* and *répondre de*.

Media institutions are the subject of Chapter 4, and this presents an opportunity to consider Derrida's conception of the media and the intellectual. Returning again to the Derrida-Bourdieu collaboration, I bring forward the importance of changes to public space and the intellectual here. We see the distinction between *répondre à/de* map onto a critique/*plus-que-*

*critique*. I argue that it is Bourdieu, and not Bernard Stiegler, who represents the main interlocutor with Derrida during this period and bring out Bourdieu and Derrida's shared position on *artefactualité*. Such a position involves resisting hegemonic and homogenizing forces in the media. I take this again to be the movement of critique. The *plus-que-critique* emerges through the conception of *actuvirtualité*, which I argue has major implications for our relationship to politics and the public space. We see the pertinence of *exappropriating institutions* once again to help explain Derrida's proposed changes to the public space. Finally, via Derrida's conception of *télétechnologies*, I argue that Derrida has an important thinking of technology, which has been neglected.

The fifth and sixth chapter are tied closely together through their focus on international institutions. The fifth chapter considers the role of Europe within Derrida's interventions. Here again, I argue the importance of the double movement of critique and *plus-que-critique*: the former pointing to ways in which Derrida tries to actively place pressure on existing European institutions, whereas the latter considers the role that the name Europe has for thinking through the problem of universality. Engaging with postcolonial criticism, I argue that Derrida's engagement with Europe is far from Eurocentric. Moreover, I criticize Rodolphe Gasché's reading of Derrida and Europe, maintaining that this misses out on the important effort to re-think international institutions in the context of deterritorialisation through *télétechnologies*.

This argument continues in Chapter 6 in relation to Derrida's work on globalisation and the United Nations. I argue that here, yet again, that Derrida's work on sovereignty is not removed from institutional concerns but tied into thinking new institutions. I bring out the importance of deterritorialisation in Derrida's work and its disruptive effect on our traditional concepts of the political. Moreover, in his support for *altermondialisme*, as well as his re-thinking of the concepts of war and terrorism, and the need to reform the United Nations Security Council, we see that new international institutions form a fundamental part of Derrida's thinking. I consider Derrida's privileging of democracy and argue that there is an important and neglected normative dimension found in *exappropriating institutions*.

Ultimately, I argue that Derrida's political philosophy has a normative dimension, and that this can explain both his life-long engagement with institutions, as well as offer a model for politics. As we will see, this operates between the poles of *critique* and *plus-que-critique*. In the moment of *critique*, we come to see Derrida take on the role of public intellectual. There, Derrida challenges current political and institutional frameworks, but without



challenging their foundations. This is a question of highlighting the ways in which current politics falls below its own principles and promises. In this sense, the moment of *critique* involves accepting the horizon or *telos* of a political institution and working within it. The moment of *plus-que-critique* seeks to go beyond that horizon. As we will see, Derrida himself often associates this moment of *plus-que-critique* with his own understanding of deconstruction. This moment explicitly challenges and contests the foundations of a political institution. Importantly, rather than being an exclusively abstract or intellectual activity, this contestation is achieved through the creation of new institutions. Importantly, this means that the contesting the horizon of an institution also involves replacing it with another horizon. For Derrida, this horizon must have three qualities: it must be self-reflexive, anti-hegemonic and international. Derrida references these continuously throughout his political engagements. I coin the term *exappropriating institutions* to describe this common structure shared by all Derrida's institutional engagements and which Derrida seeks to create in the *plus-que-critique*. The significance of this model is twofold. First, I argue that it has an important explanatory value: in particular, it helps us make sense of Derrida's frequent effort to found institutions. Second, I argue that these three criteria are normative and that this brings out the neglected normative dimension of Derrida's philosophy, as evidenced in this double gesture of *critique/plus-que-critique*.

## Chapter One: *Exappropriation: Determination and Effacement*

At times, politics can give the impression of straightforward, direct, urgent action, and so we might assume that addressing Derrida's political interventions is simply a case of getting "down to it".<sup>3</sup> Apart from perhaps a little bit of context, these should be easily and immediately understood. As we will see though, in Derrida's philosophy there is no such thing as "a little bit of context". Moreover, this thesis does not seek to explain Derrida's political involvement through a simple biographical sketch, but rather consider the ways in which these engagements relate to philosophy and are themselves philosophical. This is a general problem about how we judge the relationship between the explicitly philosophical work of a thinker, and their political positions and occasional writings. There is no general rule here, but rather it is a question of working through the specific context of each philosopher. The case of Derrida, however, only exacerbates this problem further. After all, it would be difficult to think of a philosopher more associated with complex and abstract phrases and terms. However, as I will argue, a careful consideration of Derrida's philosophy offers a framework through which we can understand his political interventions, and importantly one which grants them a significant status within his *oeuvre*.

To do so, I will begin with a reading of the Heideggerian *Zusage*. Outlining how this has taken on an important position in understanding the ethical dimension of Derrida's work, I will argue that commentators miss out on the importance of determination in Derrida's reading. Beginning with 'signature, événement, contexte' (1972b), followed by *Signéponge* (1988a) and *Schibboleth* (1986), I will propose that a process of determination and effacement occupy a central position in Derrida's philosophy.<sup>4</sup> This will be discussed through figures of the date and ash. We will see that effacement of the singular does not take place in general, but always through another determined instance; and we will draw out the implications of this for Derrida's conception of alterity. Building further on this, our analysis of the name and the signature, will help us develop a fuller understanding of determination. I will unify this discussion through Derrida's term *exappropriation* and argue ultimately that this movement of determination/effacement is fundamental to Derrida's philosophy. Finally, through the work of Beardsworth and Menegalle, we will see how this focus on

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<sup>3</sup> For a critique of exactly this 'urgency', see Bennington (2000: 168).

<sup>4</sup> As the original publication of 'signature, événement, contexte' in *Marges de la philosophie* (1972) contained no capital letters, including on the first letter, I will use the title in lowercase throughout the thesis.

determination can build on these accounts and help refine our understanding of the aporia and ‘lesser violence’. Ultimately, I will argue that *exappropriation* provides an important framework for understanding and articulating the normative dimensions of Derrida’s philosophy and his engagements with institutions.

### **Section One: Oui, oui**

The ethical and political dimensions of Derrida have often been discussed around one word: yes. This yes, or more precisely ‘*oui*’, refers to Derrida’s interpretation of the Heideggerian ethical affirmation, or the *Zusage*. The *Zusage* in Heidegger is an original form of acquiescence or assent, which both makes possible language and takes place through language. In other words, as David Farrell Krell (2015: 98) describes it: ‘the interrogation mark of question is suppressed or at least subordinated to the assent of and to language’. It is worth stressing, as Krell does, that such a re-interpretation of the affirmation is one which belongs to a much later Heidegger: dating from 1958 and changing Heidegger’s early use of the question as a foundation for his philosophy. The *Zusage* captures, therefore, an originary acquiescence that emerges from and through a relation to language (Wortham and Weber 2002: 721/2). As we will see, however, though many of these core issues relate to the *Zusage*, Derrida’s interpretation takes them in quite a different direction.

Before considering that direction, it is worth emphasising the importance of the *Zusage* for the ethical and political reception of Derrida’s thought. The most comprehensive early account of this is Simon Critchley’s *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (1992). There, Critchley argues that ‘the ethical moment in Derrida’s thinking’, is based on ‘an unconditional affirmation’, which ‘interrupts the closure of a determinate context, making that context an open structure’ (1992: 32). On Critchley’s reading, deconstruction is motivated by ‘this Yes-saying to the unnameable, a moment of unconditional affirmation’, which prevents any ultimate closure (1992: 41). Derrida’s approach is an ethical ‘*clôtural* reading of a text [...] showing how the undecidability of reading has its horizon in the thought of irreducible responsibility, an affirmation of alterity’ (1992: 199). In a similar way, Drucilla Cornell positions Derrida as appealing to an infinitely demanding ethical affirmation. Published in the same year, Cornell’s *The Philosophy of the Limit* (1992) rigorously brings out some of the important implications of Derrida’s work for critical legal studies. Cornell rechristens deconstruction ‘the philosophy of the limit’ precisely because it continuously points to ‘the limit of any system of positive law’ (1992: 2). Cornell does not reference the unconditional

affirmation or the *Zusage* explicitly, preferring instead the term ‘justice’, but her argument is proximate to Critchley’s: they both agree that the ethical significance of Derrida’s philosophy can be found in its resistance to determination. In recent years, this conception of the unconditional affirmation has been widely challenged. Nicole Anderson, for instance, in *Ethics Under Erasure* (2012), takes aim at the distinction between politics and ethics that Critchley’s approach implies, arguing persuasively that Critchley sets up a hierarchy between Levinas and Derrida, which ultimately determines his analysis (2012: 42). Martin Hägglund offers perhaps the most persuasive and unique challenge to this earlier interpretation of the affirmation. In *Radical Atheism* (2008), Hägglund devotes a chapter to criticizing Critchley’s and Cornell’s approach, proposing that they have radically misunderstood Derrida’s ‘unconditional yes’, offering it an ethical value that is not present in Derrida (2008: 97). However, Hägglund still maintains that it is this unconditional affirmation which determines the most significant dimension of Derrida’s framework, what he labels a ‘radical finitude of survival’ (2008: 1, 36). We will have time to return to Hägglund and these other critics later in this chapter, but for the moment we can conclude that this *oui* or unconditional affirmation has occupied an important position in the reception of Derrida’s work.

It has often been remarked (e.g. Turner and Elliott 2001: 152) that Derrida’s practice of reading involves paying particular attention to marginalia or privileging footnotes, and so it is perhaps no surprise that to unpack this ordinary *oui*, we must turn to perhaps Derrida’s most lengthy and most famous footnote. Spanning seven pages, this footnote in *De l’esprit : Heidegger et la question* (1987a), offers Derrida’s most thorough reading of the concept. While this footnote has received a great deal of critical attention, what triggers the footnote has often been overlooked: a discussion of the promise in Heidegger. Derrida’s main line of interpretation of the *Zusage* is precisely to focus on the importance of this *oui* as a promise. Derrida identifies a Heideggerian conception of promising (*Versprechender*) that is a sense more ‘promissory’, closer to what a promise should be ‘plus propre à la promesse, plus proche de l’essence d’une authentique promesse’ (1987a: 113). By this, Derrida means that the act of language that Heidegger describes does not put anything forward, ‘cette promesse ne pose rien, elle ne pro-met pas’ (1987a: 113). It is language itself then that promises and indeed what it promises would appear to be itself. Heidegger is not describing the typical act of promising, but instead that which makes language possible, which he sees as having the same structure as a promise. Derrida bases his interpretation of the *Zusage* precisely on this promissory dimension, but goes even further by linking this to corruption. Indeed, Derrida announces quite

explicitly that such a move may have departed from the realm of simple commentary (1987a: 114). He insists that even if this language promises, it also ‘se corrompt tout aussitôt et tout aussi essentiellement’ (1987a: 114). A promise has within it the inherent possibility of failure; both that the promise may be insincere, or that the promise may not be kept in the future despite intention. In making such a link, Derrida is thus seeking to expand on the implications of this view of language as promissory: ‘elle est promesse, mais elle ne peut pas ne pas y manquer – et cela tient à la structure de la promesse, comme à l’événement qu’elle institue néanmoins. Le *Verwesen* [corruption] est un *Versprechen* [promise]’ (1987a: 114). In Derrida’s interpretation then, corruption and the promise are tied together from the outset. It is important to stress this connection, as it will appear frequently within Derrida’s work. Moreover, it is not simply that Derrida links this specific conception of the promise to corruption, but also that this conception of the promise is tied to the *Zusage*: ‘cette promesse, cette réponse [...] c’est ce que Heidegger nomme alors régulièrement *Zusage*’ (1987a: 115). While Heidegger may link the *Zusage* to the promise, Derrida once again goes further by insisting that as a promise it must also be a response. Rather than a simple origin, it is a response to something: a type of yes, a ‘*oui* avant toute opposition du *oui* et du *non*’ (1987a: 114). And it is this which motivates Derrida’s description of the *Zusage* as an ‘alliance originaire à laquelle nous devons avoir en quelque sorte déjà acquiescé, déjà dit *oui*’ (1987a: 115). This affirmation thus represents a sort of yes that it replies to. Importantly, this response is produced *a priori* and, indeed, throughout the footnote, Derrida stresses that this is already, *déjà*, at work: ‘il faut bien que nous soyons *déjà* dans l’élément de la parole. Il faut bien que la parole parle déjà pour nous [...] Celle-ci (*Zuspruch*) est *déjà* là’ (1987a: 115).<sup>5</sup> He goes as far as to claim:

Le *déjà* est ici essential, il dit quelque chose de l’essence de cette parole et de ce qui en-gage en elle. Au moment où, présentement, elle se fie ou s’adresse à nous, elle l’a *déjà* fait, et ce passé ne revient jamais, ne redevient jamais présent, il renvoie toujours à un événement plus ancien qui nous aura d’avance engagés dans cette souscription de l’en-gage. (1987a: 120)

There are two points to draw from this. First, that this is not an intentional or empirical issue: the *Zusage* is always at work, and it is not something that can be avoided or sidestepped. Second, not only does Derrida tie this to a promise, but in presenting it as a response, it also

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<sup>5</sup> As this citation and those that follow suggest, Derrida *enthusiastically* employs italics in his writing. This, of course, makes it somewhat difficult to place emphasis in his own citations. Throughout this thesis, therefore, unless otherwise stated, any italics are Derrida’s own.

refers us back to a past. This is a past to which we have already responded. This “past” is a very particular one, however, precisely because it can never be made present. This adds another meaning to Derrida’s focus on corruption: it is not simply that the promise corrupts because it is not kept into the future, it is already corrupted precisely because it refers us to a past that can never be made present.

As the last citation demonstrates, the term ‘engagement’ plays an important role throughout the footnote. This carries with it two important connections: the first is the relationship to responsibility, *engagement* as commitment to some cause. This link to responsibility has been nicely brought out by Critchley and Cornell, but it is worth highlighting that this is also explicit in Derrida (1987a: 117): ‘D’autant plus que, dans l’exemple qui nous occupe, il s’agit précisément de l’origine même de la responsabilité. Beaucoup plus et autre chose qu’un exemple’. A second meaning, of course, is that this refers us once again to the promise. *Engagé* and *en-gage* are repeated throughout the footnote and this is important because the French *gage* is a type of pledge, commitment or, indeed, promise. The affirmation itself then does not simply have the structure of the promise, but also the effect of a promise. ‘En tout cas, avant le mot, il y a ce mot parfois sans mot que nous nommons le “oui”. Une sorte de gage pré-originaire qui précède tout autre engagement dans le langage ou dans l’action’ (1987a: 115). This question of responsibility then is continuously tied to a promissory structure and Derrida uses his reading of the unconditional affirmation to achieve this.

What this brief exposition of the *Zusage* points to, therefore, is that there is a strong link between the unconditional affirmation and ethics. This is tied into the question of language, and particularly the conception of the promise that Derrida pursues tenaciously; and, we can see how this has offered resources for interpreting ethics in Derrida’s philosophy. Much of the critical debate outlined at the beginning centred on the degree to which this unconditional affirmation operates as a limit to any determined form (Cornell, Critchley), or alternatively can offer us no guidance about these determined forms (Hägglund). And it is worth pointing out that while Derrida (1987a: 115) raises this in the footnote, it is not immediately clear: ‘Mais qu’il précède le langage ne veut pas dire qu’il lui soit étranger. Le gage engage dans la langue – et donc toujours dans une langue’. The promise is certainly determined in a language, but this does not help us decide either way between these two quite different interpretations of determination. It is vital, therefore, to work out precisely how this unconditional affirmation relates to determination. In order to pursue this question, it is important to consider how this *oui* operates in other contexts.

Indeed, while this is one of Derrida's most comprehensive engagements with the explicitly Heideggerian notion of the *Zusage*, it would be a mistake to take this as his final word on the originary affirmation. In other texts, Derrida has pursued this originary *oui*, building on the link between corruption and promise that we saw above. In those texts, this corruption is presented as the splitting of the originary *oui* into a doubled *oui, oui*. Derrida demonstrates this continuously throughout his work, particularly drawing on two connected figures – *promesse* and *mémoire* (meaning both memory and remembrance). If we are to understand this link between the originary *oui* and engagement, then it will be necessary to fully unpack this *oui, oui*. I am not the first to reference this doubling, and it has been acknowledged in other accounts of Derrida, for example in Critchley (1992: 40), de Vries (2002: 262), Hägglund (2008: 35/6). Importantly, however, these commentaries are all too quick to elide the *oui, oui* with the originary affirmation: they pay scant attention to the motive behind this doubling and why Derrida places such emphasis on it. As a result, they miss out on the importance of this repetition for the affirmation.

While the publication of three major books in 1967 has marked this year as Derrida's *annus mirabilis* (Attridge 2005: 46), in a sense, he may have had a second one, exactly twenty years later, in 1987.<sup>6</sup> This is the year of publication of *De l'esprit*, but also two important texts that will help us unpack the *oui, oui* – *Ulysse gramophone; deux mots pour Joyce* (1987e) and *Psyché: inventions de l'autre* (1987), a collection of important essays, of which 'Nombre de oui' (1987c) will be of particular interest for our discussion. In *Ulysse gramophone*, for instance, Derrida insists that the *oui* is never 'simplement originaire', because a second *oui* always exists within it (1987e: 136). This is because, 'avec ou sans mot [...] un *oui* exige *a priori* sa répétition, sa mise en mémoire' (1987e: 136). It is important to emphasise that Derrida is not referring to an ordinary conception of "yes", but rather he is explicitly engaging with the *Zusage* as *oui*, hence his emphasis that this can occur with or without words. Once more, we also see that this argument is occurring at an *a priori* level: the very minimal requirement for this yes to take place is this possibility of repetition, it must memorialise itself. And it is this fundamental requirement which disrupts what would otherwise be its uncomplicated originary status. It is worth stressing, of course, that it still has an originary dimension as an affirmation. It is not that there is an alternative origin somewhere else, but rather that it is the origin and this origin itself is divided by its own repetition. And, importantly, such division is neither

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<sup>6</sup> To paraphrase Oscar Wilde's Lady Bracknell – to have one *annus mirabilis* may be regarded as fortunate; to have two looks like carelessness.

accidental nor external, but inherent in the *oui* itself. Indeed, this need to remember itself, for its *mise en mémoire*, follows precisely from the promissory structure that we have seen Derrida establish above in *De l'esprit*, such that the promise to be a promise projects itself into the future, to be kept at another date, and thus calls for such remembering:

On ne peut dire *oui* sans promettre de le confirmer et de s'en souvenir, de le garder, contresigné dans un autre *oui*, sans la promesse et la mémoire, la promesse de mémoire. (1987e: 137)

Later in this chapter, we will see the importance of this “counter-signature” in another yes, but for the moment we can see here the need to confirm the promise of the *oui*, to guard it, and this links memory and promise together. Such a linkage, ‘la promesse de mémoire’ is a vital move in Derrida’s reconfiguration of the *Zusage* and one which we will see him repeat frequently in other texts. Such a link disrupts any simple origin of the affirmation and integrates its inherently repetitive nature into his analysis.

Furthermore, this is not all Derrida has to say about the link between promise and memory, and in ‘Nombre de oui’ we see this conception developed further. Yet again, there is the explicit focus on the *Zusage*, as a ‘oui archi-originaire’ and also the doubling of this *oui* which occurs so that ‘il doit *au moins* se lier à une confirmation dans un prochain *oui*’ (1987c: 628). What Derrida adds to this is also his focus on the essence of the *oui* itself, which means that not only does it require a response, but is also itself a response: ‘D’une part, il est originairement, dans sa structure même, une réponse. Il est *d’abord second*, venant après une demande, une question ou un autre *oui*’ (1987c: 629). This insistence both on the *oui* having the structure of a promise, but also itself being a response means that such repetition is present at every stage: there is not one stable point to be appealed to. Derrida summarises this dynamic as: ‘Promesse de mémoire et mémoire de promesse’ (Ibid.). If the promissory structure of the *oui* obliged its remembering, its role as a response means a type of recalling of another promise, ‘un autre *oui*’. However, while we might at first read Derrida as attributing a positive connotation to such repetition, we can see that the picture is far more nuanced:

Cette répétition, qui figure la condition d’une ouverture du *oui*, le menace aussi : répétition mécanique, mimétisme, donc oubliée, simulacre, fiction, fable. Entre les deux répétitions, la “bonne” et la “mauvaise”, il y a à la fois coupure et contamination. (Ibid.)

The originary affirmation, the *oui*, requires such repetition, but with repetition comes risks. Though Derrida describes such risk in different terms here, it comes down to losing a



connection with this “first” *oui*. In the context, there is a type of repetition which makes this “first” *oui* possible and is seen as a confirmation or guarding of this “first” *oui*. There is a “bad” repetition, which would repeat in a mechanical or insincere way. This is once again an outworking of the promissory structure: a promise can always be subject to failure in a variety of ways (reneging, forgetting, feigning, etc.). What is important here, however, is that for Derrida this act of repetition, be it “good” or “bad”, produces both a ‘cut’ and a ‘contamination’ simultaneously, *à la fois*. But what is cut and contaminated? On first reading, it might appear that Derrida is simply blurring the lines between these types of repetition, and the use of scare quotes would only strengthen such an interpretation. However, this cutting and contamination actually refers to the relationship of the *oui, oui*. The point is that the act of repetition (in either “good” or “bad” form) both contaminates these two and separates them from each other. We have seen the implications of this contamination already, which thus disrupts the simple origin of the originary affirmation.

The cutting, or we might say separation or division, of the *oui, oui* returns us once again to the link between promise and memory.

Promesse de mémoire, mémoire de promesse [...] Mais la mémoire elle-même doit oublier pour être ce qu’elle a, depuis le *oui*, mission d’être. Promis dès le “premier”, le “second” *oui* doit arriver comme un renouvellement absolu, de nouveau absolument inaugural et “libre”, sans quoi il ne serait qu’une conséquence naturelle, psychologique ou logique. Il doit faire *comme si* le “premier” était oublié, assez passé pour exiger un nouveau *oui* initial. (Ibid.)

This “bad” repetition was seen to cause forgetting, but in fact we can see here that it is itself part of the *promesse-mémoire* structure. And importantly we see that this forgetting is a necessary part not simply of the promise, but also ‘la mémoire’ itself. Without such forgetting, the second *oui* would occur not as renewal, but as a simple consequence. Indeed, Derrida describes this forgetting as ‘structurel, la condition même de la fidélité’ (Ibid.). This is what Derrida means when slightly earlier he describes the ‘fatalité de la *répétition* [...] comme *ouverture coupante*’ (Ibid.: 628). Cutting, therefore, is an essential part of the *mémoire* of the promise, even though it is forgetting: ‘il *se coupe* de lui pour pouvoir être ce qu’il doit être, “premier”, unique, uniquement unique, ouvrant *à son tour*’ (Ibid.: 630). To fulfil the promise of the “first” *oui*, therefore, this “second” *oui* must cut itself off from the “first” and usurp its position as a new *oui*, a unique *oui*. It is this moment which captures the full dynamic of the

*mémoire-promesse* structure, a structure which we will see return frequently throughout this thesis.

The *oui*, therefore, is not simply a response; it is a repetition. This repetition allows Derrida to develop the promissory structure, and its link to the past, by focusing on this *mémoire-promesse* relationship: once again, this is not immune from corruption, but actively exposed to it. And it is the profound consequences of this repetition which are never adequately addressed in the critical debate around the ethical significance of the *Zusage*. The *oui* is, of course, of real importance, but it needs to be connected to the doubling (*oui, oui*) and the link that Derrida makes between affirmation and determination. In sections three and four, we will address how Derrida's concept of determination differs from previous philosophical articulations, particularly the Hegelian concept of determination; but first, we must pursue further this question of repetition.

## **Section Two: Date and Ash**

The *oui* repeats itself, and it is to the implications and structure of this repetition that we will now turn. Though it has received little attention, it is far from surprising that such repetition would find itself central to Derrida's reading. After all, from the very outset, Derrida's work has focused on the problematic of repetition. Indeed if 'signature, événement, contexte' perhaps represents one of Derrida's most influential essays, it is precisely because it offers such an authoritative account of this repetition. Read alongside other important texts on iteration, this can help us unpack what is at stake in this double *oui*.

In this essay, published in *Marges de la philosophie* (1972c), Derrida engages both with the concept of communication in Western philosophy (represented there by Condillac) and the speech act theory of J.L. Austin. Derrida's reading of Austin has received particular attention, because it marks Derrida's first contact with performatives, which would remain an important reference throughout his work. However, it also represents one of the clearest articulations of Derrida's conception of iteration and its greater connection to Derrida's philosophy. It is this latter point which will be of most interest to us here.

In Derrida's reading of Condillac, he brings out the importance of 'absence' for his understanding of communication, and particularly writing. For Condillac, one of the most important characteristics of writing is the absence of the addressee: 'On écrit pour communiquer quelque chose à des absents' (1972c: 372). According to Derrida, this is the only type of absence that Condillac considers; most notably, Condillac does not consider 'l'absence

de l'émetteur, du destinataire, à la marque qu'il abandonne' (1972c: 372). As we will see, this is an important omission for Derrida, and has greater implications; however, before coming to that, it is worth stressing the way that Condillac characterizes such absence: 'L'absence dont parle Condillac est déterminée de la façon la plus classique comme une modification continue, une extenuation progressive de la présence' (1972c: 372). For Condillac, then, we write to those who are not there, but this absence is in fact a type of "not-yet" present: it is as if the recipient was present, with their absence having no structural impact on the writing itself. If it is worth pausing on Derrida's reading of Condillac here, it is because these two connected, but different, points structure Derrida's entire argument in 'signature, événement, contexte'. Though in many ways, Derrida simply takes Condillac as a representative of a particular classical tradition of philosophy of language and communication, it is Condillac's focus on absence that offers Derrida the resources to develop his reading.

Derrida also locates an absence within this framework, but as we might expect, it is a radically different one. He begins by targeting the way that Condillac limits this absence to the addressee only. Importantly, this objection is based on a very different justification as to why writing has an absence at all. For Derrida, the structural absence is not simply a product of writing being a means to communicate over a distance, but rather it is a result of the sign itself which carries within it such absence or distance: 'Il faut, si vous voulez, que ma "communication écrite" reste lisible malgré la disparition absolue de tout destinataire déterminé en général pour qu'elle ait sa fonction d'écriture, c'est-à-dire sa lisibilité' (1972c: 375). For writing to be writing, it must be readable, and this implies the potential and absolute disappearance of any addressee. Importantly, this is not just an empirical fact, but a structural necessity, and is a result of what Derrida labels, *itérabilité*: 'Cette itérabilité [...] structure la marque d'écriture elle-même, quel que soit d'ailleurs le type d'écriture' (1972c: 375). There is an inherent repetition that structures writing here: for it to be recognized or interpreted at all as writing, then it must be repeatable. So, while Derrida and Condillac agree that 'absence' is part of writing, their reason for such 'absence' is quite different indeed. Moreover, because this is a structural iteration, it is not simply limited to the addressee, but also the addressor:

Ce qui vaut du destinataire vaut aussi, pour les mêmes raisons, de l'émetteur ou du producteur. Écrire, c'est produire une marque qui constituera une sorte de machine à son tour productrice, que ma disparition future n'empêchera pas principiellement de fonctionner et de donner, de se donner à lire et à réécrire. (1972c: 376)

As this iteration is structural and part of the sign itself, it also applies to the addressor of the enunciation. The sign, therefore, becomes detached from its “source” of enunciation, and signifies independently of this original moment; and this is a necessary possibility of it meaning anything at all. Derrida goes even further, highlighting that this does not simply apply to the written sign, but in fact that iteration forms part of any type of communication, and that this is not just limited to the addressor or addressee, but to the referent and any other context that would anchor or restrict the potential meaning of the sign: ‘Cette possibilité structurelle d’être sevrée du référent ou du signifié (donc de la communication et de son contexte) me paraît faire de toute marque, fût-elle orale, un graphème en général’ (1972c: 378). For Derrida, therefore, this structural ‘absence’ thus has radical implications for all meaning.

There are two further points to expand here. The first, as already highlighted, is that this absence is far from just a modification of what is present. Derrida presents this absence as the potential death of the addressor or addressee. This is once again due to structural iteration: ‘Et cette absence n’est pas une modification continue de la présence, c’est une rupture de présence, la “mort” ou la possibilité de la “mort” du destinataire inscrite dans la structure de la marque’ (1972c: 375). This absence then is altogether quite different than Condillac’s, which simply extends the present into the absent. Instead, it is the possibility of a radical disconnection and is understood as a structural possibility within the sign itself. The meaning of this absence, therefore, is extended to a more radical ‘force de rupture’, explaining that ‘un signe écrit comporte une force de rupture avec son contexte, c’est-à-dire l’ensemble des présences qui organisent le moment de son inscription. Cette force de rupture n’est pas un prédicat accidentel, mais la structure même de l’écrit’ (1972c: 377).<sup>7</sup> Iteration carries within it the potential and potency to break with any particular context or moment of inscription or determination. There is no referent, context or addressor/addressee that can somehow limit this potential rupture, and it remains a continuous possibility. Derrida will describe this ‘force de rupture’ in a variety of ways both here and in other texts (as we will see below, using verbs such as *s’enlever*, *s’emporter*, *se détacher*, *s’effacer*); however, for the purposes of explanation, I will employ the term ‘de-limitation’. As we will see in future chapters, this is a term that Derrida himself will employ at certain stages. When describing this “rupture”, it is important to avoid exclusively positive or negative connotations and *de-limitation* has the advantage in English of both

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that even though this is discussed in mainly linguistic terms, Derrida is already thinking beyond this: ‘Et j’étendrai même cette loi à toute expérience en général s’il est acquis qu’il n’y a pas d’expérience de *pure* présence mais seulement des chaînes de marques différentielles’ (1972c: 378).

implying the idea of removing limits (i.e. contexts), but also ‘delimitation’ implies imposing limits, particularly the drawing and fixing of borders.

In the same way that *De l'esprit* is not the final word on the *oui*, ‘signature, événement, contexte’ is far from Derrida’s last position on repetition. Derrida expands on this conception of iteration in several other texts, which can help us better unpack the repetition of this double *oui*. The first such text is *Schibboleth: pour Paul Celan*. (1986).

*Schibboleth* is a text concerned with the concept of a date, or specifically how a singular event can become inscribed within a date and the implications of this. Derrida presents this as how a date can become ‘lisible’ (1986: 32). As in ‘signature, événement, contexte’, this becoming readable is a product of the iteration of the date: each year, for instance, a date repeats itself. Dating a particular event, therefore, is to encode it within a general system of repetition. We see here that Derrida follows the logic of the 1972 essay, but places a greater emphasis on the effacement that is tied to the determination of the singular as a date. For Derrida, for the date to take place, it must efface itself: ‘La date *n’arrive qu’à s’effacer*, sa marque l’efface *a priori*’ (1986: 89). The date takes place, but only in its very effacement. An event is something unique and singular, and yet its determination as a date removes part of this singularity. Importantly, this is not an after-effect that could be avoided. Such effacement occurs *a priori* and begins ‘à l’inscription même de la date’ (1986: 40). This effacement then is a necessary consequence of the radical absence that we have already seen elaborated. The sign breaks away from any determined context, addressor, addressee, etc. And, indeed, the date marks this same structural rupture: the date ‘se détache de cela même qu’elle date’ (1986: 31). Through the figure of the date, *Schibboleth* thus offers an important figure for understanding determination in Derrida: determined instances do not simply occur, but in their very act of determination, they are simultaneously effaced.

Though *Schibboleth* can be said to follow the logic of ‘signature, événement, contexte’ closely, there is an important difference. Unlike the 1972 essay, *Schibboleth* also considers the potentially negative consequences of effacement. In ‘signature, événement, contexte’, we have seen such detachment is about breaking from ‘l’ensemble des présences qui organisent le moment de son inscription’ (1972c: 377). Rather than taking this ensemble as ‘presence’, it is understood instead as part of the singular nature of the event: it is the specific context, the specific addressor/addressee, and so on, which make this event a unique one. The date is designed to record this singularity; however, it can only do so by betraying it and separating it

from this moment. In ‘signature, événement, contexte’ (e.g. 377 1972c) this separation has positive connotations, making possible ‘une force de rupture’, whereas in *Schibboleth* a fuller picture is presented, whereby it is not necessarily a positive act. It effaces that which is singular about the event, so that it can continue on. Importantly, this incorporates a degree of unreadability within the readable: ‘Il faut que d’une certaine manière il se divise en se répétant, et du coup se chiffre ou se crypte. [...] Elle doit s’effacer pour devenir lisible, se rendre illisible dans sa lisibilité même’ (1986: 32). A degree of the date must then remain inaccessible and undecipherable: this thus divides the date, however, splitting part of it off from its own singularity. While we might suggest that this is implicit within ‘signature, événement, contexte’, *Schibboleth* differs from this essay precisely in the focus it places on this negative dimension of effacement.

Though this may appear at first as just a difference of emphasis, *Schibboleth* helps bring out two important consequences that are not made explicit within the earlier essay; these are elaborated through the figure of ash (*cendre*) and its relation to the date. The first of these involves a conception of necessary effacement, as that which must take place for the date to live on. Throughout *Schibboleth*, Derrida continuously links ash to the date as a way of both describing and complicating this effacement. In part, the *cendre* is one way of representing this general effacement that occurs in the emergence of determined instances:

L’illisible est lisible comme illisible, illisible en tant que lisible, voilà la folie qui brûle une date par le dedans. Voilà qui la donne à la cendre, voilà qui donne la cendre dès le premier instant. (1986: 72)

We have seen above that this effacement takes place with determination and that this leaves a part of this singularity unreadable or inaccessible: ash, therefore, comes to represent this unreadability. After all, ash itself does not offer any clues as to what was there before its burning: and, indeed, as Derrida stresses this is not a question of finding a moment prior to this annihilation, rather, from the first moment of determination, ash is present in the date. There is an inherent connection to annihilation and destruction in every moment of the determination of singularity: ‘mais il y a un holocauste pour chaque date, et quelque part dans le monde à chaque heure. Chaque heure compte son holocauste’ (1986: 83). Every moment of time is subject to this effacement or burning of the singularity, which leaves only ash as its remains. This type of effacement emerges from the very nature of the determined instance of the date, as we have already seen: it is not something that can be avoided, effacement will always take

place to some degree, and what *Schibboleth* helps bring out is the negative connotations of this. This means that each date carries with it a degree of lost singularity; ash as well as memory.

However, there is a second type of effacement at play also: a risk of total effacement or total annihilation of singularity. In the first type of effacement, the singularity is protected to some degree, remaining “readable as the unreadable”; however, there is also the possibility that this singular unreadability is lost completely: ‘Risquant l’annulation de ce qu’elle sauve de l’oubli, elle peut toujours devenir la date de rien et de personne, essence sans essence de la cendre’ (1986: 66). This risk then means that the singularity would be completely effaced, leaving it not simply inaccessible but annihilated. Importantly, again, such a risk does not happen accidentally or as something that we could simply avoid by being more careful: ‘Cela n’arrive pas *empiriquement*, comme un fait qui surviendrait une fois dans telles conditions et qu’on éviterait d’autres fois, par exemple en multipliant des précautions – ou par chance’ (1986: 66). The threat of total annihilation and the complete loss of singularity is present from the very moment that the date takes place and is not a possibility that we can simply neglect or ignore. Indeed, when we turn to the name in section five, we will see that it is exactly this risk that makes the determination of the singular an ethical question.

In summary, then, the date is a determination of the singular; this determination is an effort to save and protect a singular event. This determination cannot be separated from effacement, and indeed only takes place through effacement: ‘La date *n’arrive qu’à s’effacer*, sa marque l’efface *a priori*’ (1986: 89). Through the figure of ash, Derrida expands on this effacement outlining two forms: one an unavoidable effacement that must take place (the date can never fully capture the singular) and a total effacement that, in the determination of the singular as a date, risks losing the singular entirely. Indeed, with each moment that the singular is determined, there is always some effacement and always the possibility that what is singular about the date will be lost completely in ash. The date, thus, represents an important figure and example of determination, whereas ash is a figure of the effacement that inevitably comes with the determination of the singular as a date.

### **Section Three: Effacement and the Other Date**

The date and ash, therefore, represent figures for understanding the determination and, thus the inevitable effacement, of singularity: in this way, they tie in with the movement towards the protection of the past and memorialisation that we saw in our discussion of the *oui, oui* and *mémoire*. However, this is not the only way that the date and ash connect to the double yes.

We can turn towards the future; that is to say the dimension of *promesse*, which we saw was so important for the unconditional affirmation. This is also something that, though not foregrounded in ‘signature, événement, contexte’, takes on an important role in *Schibboleth* and elsewhere. In *Schibboleth*, when discussing the poetry of Paul Celan, Derrida stresses the necessary effacement of the singular that we have just seen, but he also stresses that it is this very effacement which opens up a relation to alterity. When speaking about the poem, he describes it as ‘*parlante*’, by which he means that it communicates ‘au-delà de ce qui paraît le confiner dans la singularité datée d’une expérience individuelle’ (1986: 35). By describing this as ‘*parlante*’, Derrida is not primarily referring to its ‘expressive’ or ‘revelatory’ nature, as the French could imply, but instead explicitly to the verb as ‘speaking/talking’. This is a direct reference to Celan’s expression ‘Mais il parle!’ (*Aber das Gedicht spricht ja!*), which Derrida places as central to our understanding of this effacement (1986: 21). This is precisely because of the conception of writing that we have already seen: the potential radical absence of any addressor, addressee or reference that would ground the poem in one context, means that it has the possibility of relating to other contexts: ‘pourtant il parle! à tous, à l’autre, à quiconque ne partage pas l’expérience ou le savoir de la singularité ainsi datée’ (1986: 21). Importantly, marking his own moment of interpretation here, Derrida introduces a French translation of Celan’s ‘*von*’. This is the normal German for ‘from’ or ‘of’, but can be rendered also in French as *à*. This presents the poem not simply as speaking of the date, but speaking to a date: ‘Mais le *à* français se porte de lui-même [...] vers l’avenir d’une destination inconnue, ce qui n’était pas littéralement dit par telle phrase de Celan mais correspond sans doute à la logique générale de ce discours’ (1986: 21). In a somewhat analogous move to Derrida’s acknowledgement in the *De l’esprit* footnote that he may have left the order of commentary, here the French is inserted to place emphasis on the relation to the promise that this effacement opens up:

Comme si écrire *à* une date signifiait écrire non seulement tel jour, à telle heure, à telle date mais aussi écrire *à* la date en s’adressant à elle, se destiner à la date comme à l’autre, la date passée autant que la date promise.

Quel est cet *à* de l’*à* venir – en tant que date? (1986: 21)

This writing then does not simply determine a date, in other words a particular singular instance, but also it writes to a future date, even addressing itself to one. The act of determination, therefore, both effaces a singular instance, so as to protect it in *mémoire*, but also opens itself up to be repeated in other contexts and in other singular instances.



Moreover, Derrida does not simply claim that the first date has a necessary relation to the future date; he also asks an important question: ‘Quel est cet *à* de l’*à* venir – en tant que date?’ (1986: 21). Though it can be quickly overlooked, it is important to pay equal attention to the qualification of this question here: he does not ask simply about this ‘*à*’ of the ‘*à* venir’, but what this is *as* a date. The response to this question is crucial, and it reveals something important about the way effacement operates:

Or l’au-delà de la singularité absolue [...] ce n’est pas le simple effacement de la date dans une généralité, c’est son *effacement devant* une autre date, celle *à laquelle* il parle, la date d’un autre ou d’une autre qui s’allie étrangement dans le secret d’une *rencontre*, un secret de *rencontre*, avec la même date. (1986: 23)

Effacement, therefore, does not take place in a generality; rather, effacement occurs through relation to this other date. In other words, effacement only takes place in another act of determination of the singular. We can quickly equate effacement with generalisation, but Derrida’s point is more nuanced: it is only through the encounter (*rencontre*) with another date that effacement occurs. There is no act of general effacement; for effacement to take place further determined instances are required. It is not, then, that all determined instances only imply the effacement of the singular, but also that this very effacement is dependent on determination. This is fundamental to a full understanding of Derrida’s conception of effacement. As we will discuss in the next section, this is not simply important for understanding effacement, but equally for gaining a complete understanding of determination and the relationship between these two terms. However, before doing so, this ‘autre date’ also has consequences for how we think of iteration, which must first be addressed.

First, placing the emphasis on the *autre* of this *autre date* can help clarify the link between alterity and repetition that we saw briefly in ‘signature, événement, contexte’. There, Derrida appeals particularly to the etymological link of the Sanskrit *iter* to ‘other’ in the word iteration: ‘*iter*, derechef, viendrait de *itara*, *autre* en sanskrit, et tout ce qui suit peut être lu comme l’exploitation de cette logique qui lie la répétition à l’altérité’ (1972c: 375). In *Schibboleth*, what we see is this link expanded. It is in fact only through the repetition of the date that an encounter with another singular date can occur. The promise of such a future date is already at work within the date itself, both betraying its singularity in effacement and opening itself up to other singularities in the future. There is not just a general encounter with alterity, something that simply happens, but rather, if this happens at all, then it takes place through the

repetition of the singular in another context. The determination of the singular as a date, therefore, is connected fundamentally to alterity in Derrida's framework.

This also makes an important critical point about Derrida's conception of alterity. The conception of the other in French philosophy has a long history, but one name often tied to Derrida and alterity is that of Emmanuel Levinas. We have already outlined Critchley's work above; however, though it was referenced briefly, we did not focus on the link between Derrida and Levinas. Building on the work of Bernasconi (1988), one of Critchley's main arguments is that Derrida and Levinas share a similar conception of alterity.<sup>8</sup> There is no space here to consider all the ways in which Derrida's concept of the other is influenced by the work of Levinas – it needs to be stressed though, that in spite of this influence, these are different conceptions of the other. Moreover, Derrida himself explicitly articulates his concern around the role of the other in our thinking of ethics on at least two different occasions. In an interview on French radio, published in *Sur Parole*, Derrida states quite explicitly:

Je dois dire, avant d'essayer de répondre à votre question, qu'actuellement les mots "autre", "respect de l'autre", "ouverture à l'autre", etc., deviennent un peu fatigants. Quelque chose devient mécanique dans cet usage moralisant du mot "autre", et quelquefois il y a aussi dans la référence à Levinas quelque chose d'un peu mécanique, d'un peu facile [et édifiant] depuis quelques années. (1999: 63)

Derrida is not referring to his own reception here, but rather the use of the term "other" in philosophy in general; however, behind this, there is also an insistence to differentiate his own thought from that of Levinas. Derrida makes similar comments in some improvised remarks, published as 'Surtout pas de journalistes!', where he predicts that the word other 'va bientôt, je le prédis, devenir absolument imprononçable étant donné l'abus ou l'inflation dont il est victime' (2004b: 39). Derrida (2004b: 45) maintains that we will have had 'tellement assez de ce pauvre beau mot' that it will come to lose all meaning. As the above suggests, the scepticism with which Derrida treats the term "other" should give us pause for thought when equating his conception of the other and that of Levinas.

One attempt to disrupt the assimilation of Derrida by Levinas is found in Chapter 3 of Martin Hägglund's *Radical Atheism* (2008). There, Hägglund takes particular aim at the likes

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<sup>8</sup> In fact, Critchley has since revised his views somewhat, pointing to some important differences on Levinas and Derrida (though, I think, not on their conceptions of alterity), in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity* (2009).

of Critchley, Cornell and Bernasconi, maintaining that Levinas's conception of alterity and Derrida's differ, precisely because Derrida's involves 'a notion of constitutive violence' (2008: 76). Though it could well be argued that Hägglund somewhat misrepresents Levinas's thought – for instance, acknowledging the importance of *le tiers* quite late in his argument – his overall position is convincing. Indeed, we can see this description of 'constitutive violence' as being one way of understanding part of the dynamic of effacement that we have outlined above. Hägglund, however, still misses the importance of iteration for Derrida's account of otherness. Though he speaks about the 'constitutive violence' in any relation to alterity, he offers little detail as to how this violence emerges and how such an encounter with an alterity (be that a promising or threatening other) might take place. He insists that 'alterity cannot be ethical as such. Rather, alterity marks that nothing can be *in itself*' (2008: 90). Hägglund is partially correct that this is one of the ways that the other functions for Derrida: demonstrating an inherent division within any unified singularity. However, just like Critchley and others he criticises, he does not consider how the other 'is' at all, and what Derrida may specifically have thought about that. He never considers the specific system that Derrida establishes for our relation to alterity, namely iteration.<sup>9</sup> In so doing, *Radical Atheism* risks reifying the other, as something which is simply there, or which we simply come into contact with. Hägglund, therefore, does not go far enough in stressing the specificity of Derrida's conception of the other – occurring not in a generality, but rather only through the effacement (and repetition) of the singular. We will return to this in Chapter 3, where we will see the importance of thinking about the other in terms of iteration to understand Derrida's work on hospitality, and in Chapter 6 where we will consider how this can help bring out the normative dimensions of Derrida's approach. For the moment though, it is worth stressing that in Derrida's framework, it is through iteration, and only through iteration, that a relation to the other can take place.

#### **Section Four: Determination and the Other Date**

We have seen that this '*effacement devant une autre date*' has important implications for how a relationship with alterity can emerge in Derrida's work. Effacement does not occur in general, but rather only through another specific moment of determination. This helps us understand the *autre* of this 'autre date', but we must now ask about the second word here, the *date*. This

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<sup>9</sup> It should be acknowledged that (unlike his critics, such as Hägglund or Anderson), Critchley does come very close to linking alterity and repetition in the way, I describe; for instance, when he speaks of 'the double injunction for both repetition and the alterity that arises within that repetition' (1992: 28). However, exactly because he does not fully take account of the double *oui* nor the iteration outlined, he does not follow through the implications for how alterity in Levinas and Derrida differs.

returns us once again to the determination of the singular and this can help us clarify the meaning of determination further. Indeed, such clarification is all the more necessary because of the significant philosophical history that this term carries (most notably in relation to Hegel). This is a very different conception of determination than the version we see in Derrida's philosophy. Through the interrelated concepts of name/*surnom*, as well as signature/counter-signature, this section will help further refine determination for Derrida and demonstrate the fundamental differences between determination in Derrida and Hegelian determination.

As we have seen in the figures of the date and ash, determination and effacement are closely tied together in Derrida's work, 'La date *n'arrive qu'à s'effacer*, sa marque l'efface *a priori*' (1986: 89). Alongside this, we have also shown that this effacement does not take place in general, but only through its iteration in another date, or more generally we might say another determined instance: 'Or l'au-delà de la singularité absolue [...] ce n'est pas le simple effacement de la date dans une généralité, c'est son *effacement devant* une autre date ... (1986: 23). Determination, therefore, forms as much a part of iteration as effacement itself. Indeed, given its philosophical history, we might at first think that determination is a word that Derrida neglects. And though Derrida does not use the word frequently, he does occasionally use the term in a productive and positive sense. Most notably in 'Violence et métaphysique' (1967b), Derrida's disagreement with Levinas is partially phrased in terms of determination, or rather '*dé-termination*':

Un être sans violence serait un être qui se produirait hors de l'étant : rien ; non-histoire ; non-production ; non-phénoménalité. Une parole qui se produirait sans la moindre violence ne *dé-terminerait* rien, ne dirait rien, n'offrirait rien à l'autre ... (1967b: 218 my emphasis)

Derrida presents violence here as a necessary consequence of determination and a relation to the other. For Derrida, there is no being that would exist outside of this '*économie de la violence*' (1967b: 136) and it is determination that establishes such a violence. Levinas presents the other as outside of a "violent" Heideggerian ontology, but for Derrida such an other would count for nothing, indeed it would be the worst form of violence, 'la pire violence, celle du silence et de la nuit précédant ou réprimant le discours' (1967b: 172).<sup>10</sup> Derrida, therefore, proposes an idea of 'lesser violence'. As part of this, it is worth stressing the splitting of the

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<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Häggglund's account emphasises the need to avoid this 'pire violence', in what was discussed above as 'constitutive violence'.

word *dé-terminerait*. Derrida's argument against non-determination is precisely because this neglects history and finitude: 'toute philosophie de la non-violence ne peut jamais, *dans l'histoire*, - mais aurait-elle un sens ailleurs ? – que choisir la moindre violence en une *économie de la violence*' (1967b: 136). And, later in the essay, Derrida will gloss history as finitude itself: 'Cette *vigilance* est une violence choisie comme la moindre violence par une philosophie qui prend l'histoire, c'est-à-dire la finitude, au sérieux ...' (1967b: 172). *Dé-terminer*, therefore, does not simply describe the determination of beings as entities, but the etymology of *terminus* points to the finite nature of such entities. Furthermore, this is a point that Derrida will return to nearly thirty years later in a critique of Heidegger in *Apories* (1996a). There, we see once again the splitting of *dé-terminer*. This is tied not only to finitude, but to the necessity of decision in the 'double sens de la dé-termination':

... celui de la logique du terme (*terma, peras, finis*) et celui de la décision résolue, de la résolution (l'analytique de *Sein und Zeit* est aussi, ne l'oublions pas, le grand discours de la résolution déterminée, de l'*Entschlossenheit*). (1996a: 129/30)

The double meaning of *dé-termination*, therefore, ties it both to the determination of finite entities and the need for decision. We will return to this point in the final section. However, for the moment, it is worth noting the important and positive role that determination plays in Derrida's thinking of the decision and lesser violence.

To work through this idea more closely, it is worth turning to Derrida's consideration of the name. Dating from some of his earliest work, such as *De la grammatologie* (1967), Derrida has a sustained interest in the *nom propre*. The word 'nom' has three meanings in his usage. First, it refers to a proper noun. This is often understood as a singular and unique entity, in opposition to a common noun which refers to a concept or a generality. The second meaning of *nom propre* refers to the proper name or even the appropriate name: this refers us to an assumption of the correct, or even essential, link between the name and the thing that it supposedly represents. The proper name suggests a recognition and fully present connection between the singular entity and the name. In his analysis, Derrida wants to complicate both meanings of the *nom propre*. Proposing exactly that there is no singular entity that escapes effacement, nor is there any perfect name that might completely capture singularity. Indeed, this brings us to the third meaning of *nom propre*, the *non propre*. Derrida plays here on the French homophone of *nom* and *non*, suggesting that there is no proper name at all. No entity can escape the violence inherent in determination, in spite of the hope of the perfect protection

of singularity that the name offers. In *De la grammatologie*, Derrida describes the ‘effacement originaire du nom propre’, and ‘l’effacement structurel de ce que nous croyons être nos noms propres’ (1967a: 159). Importantly, Derrida’s position on the *nom propre* is not distinct from his more general work on naming. Indeed, the *nom propre* is used here because it represents ‘the name par excellence’ (1995: 58).<sup>11</sup> Effacement is not reserved for the *nom propre*, but it is common to all acts of naming. And, indeed, as the ideas of *sur-nommer* and counter-signature suggest determination is never far behind.

Much of Derrida’s most compelling and interesting work on the name emerges in the early 1990s. In 1993, we have the publication of three interconnected texts (*Sauf le nom*, *Khôra*, and *Passions*), but also a significant interview which considers the name published in *Points* (1992): ‘Passages – du traumatisme à la promesse’. It is here that we can begin to understand the further ethical dimensions of naming. In the interview, Derrida discusses the idea of victimisation and violence. He proposes that the worst form of victimization is being deprived of the very status of the victim, ‘On ne peut même pas l’identifier *comme* victime’ (1992: 403). Importantly, for our interests, this is yet again a question of ash and dates:

Le malheur absolu – et c’est le malheur de la centre -, c’est que le témoin disparaît. La cendre est une destruction de la mémoire, et telle que le signe même de la destruction est emporté. Le nom de la victime est effacé. Il s’agit aussi du paradoxe du nom, qui est le même que celui de la date. Le nom est l’appellation d’une singularité mais aussi, dans la possibilité de répéter cette appellation, c’est l’effacement de cette singularité. (Ibid.)

Ash comes to represent the importance of the victim, precisely because it destroys the very singularity of the victim. This effacement leaves no trace to even recognise that there has been violence. This point has already been made in our earlier discussion of the *cendre* and *date*. What is added in the interview is firstly the emphasis on the ethical risk of effacement: it represents the potential for the worst and most violent victimisation. And, secondly, how this is framed precisely in the terms of the name. To name the victim is essential to recognise the victim *as* victim, and yet in so doing this places the singular victim under a common category, thus potentially removing what is singular about the suffering of that specific victim. As Derrida continues: ‘Nommer et faire disparaître le nom, ce n’est pas forcément contradictoire.

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<sup>11</sup> Due to the closure of the university library, I have not been able to access this text in French again, so have had to quote from this citation in English. All other citations of *Sauf le nom* are from the French original.

[...] Quelquefois l’effacement du nom est la meilleure sauvegarde, quelquefois c’est la pire « victimisation » (Ibid.). The name, therefore, is far from innocent: carrying the potential to both recognise and remove the singular. Caught between effacement and determination, the act of naming is invested with an ethical importance: ‘Ce *double bind* sur lequel nous revenons tout le temps rend impossible une décision déterminée ou déterminable quant à ce qui vaut mieux: bien souvent inscrire le nom, c’est effacer le porteur du nom’ (1992: 403/4).<sup>12</sup> There is no simple rule or principle to the name that can help us resolve this problem and it is this lack of rule which makes naming an ethical problem.

The final line of this paragraph in the interview ends with a type of affirmation of the necessity of naming: ‘Il *faut* le nom, l’amour consiste peut-être à *sur-nommer*’ (1992: 404). We can say “type of affirmation”, because the terms at work here are deliberately complex and nuanced; in particular, the stress on *faut* and *sur-nommer* complicates matters significantly. Far from neglecting the *double bind* of the name that Derrida exposes earlier, this sentence takes this *double bind* even further. Indeed, this opens up a link to Derrida’s three texts on naming, all published in 1993: *Khôra*, *Passions* and *Sauf le nom*. There we find that both *faut* and *sur-nommer* play a central role in the argument.

In everyday French, the term ‘il faut’ means ‘it is necessary’. Derrida’s claim that ‘il faut le nom’, thus, seems to affirm the necessity of naming. This, of course, is consistent with the claim in ‘Violence et métaphysique’ that determination is necessary to avoid the ‘pire violence’. However, in *Sauf le nom*, we see that this ‘il faut’ is somewhat more complex:

— « il faut » ne veut pas seulement dire c’est nécessaire mais, en français, étymologiquement « cela manque » ou « fait défaut ». La faute ou la défaillance n’est jamais loin. (1993b: 96)

We see then that this emphasis on *faut* is designed to stress the fault implied by its etymology. There is no unconditional affirmation of naming here, but rather a complex one which both points to the flaw in the name (its effacement of the singular), and yet its necessity (determination of the singular). Indeed, this is at stake already in the very title of the text: *Sauf le nom*. This is difficult to render in English, but can mean both ‘except the name’, as well as ‘safe, the name’ or ‘save the name’.<sup>13</sup> The name is both that which is not singular, that which

<sup>12</sup> We will return precisely to the double bind in section six of this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Dutoit (1995), the English translator of *Sauf le nom* selects ‘safe, the name’. This sounds somewhat unidiomatic in English and the necessary addition of the comma separates the two terms. ‘Save the name’ would avoid this problem, but at the cost of turning *sauf* into an imperative.

deprives us of singularity: our interest is not in the name, but everything *except* the name. However, the name also represents a site that secures and protects (at least to some degree) the singular: and, thus, the name is safe.

It might appear then that Derrida's emphasis on 'il faut' is simply a concise and clever way to capture yet again the same double bind. It is here that we need to turn to the second emphasis in the sentence: 'l'amour consiste peut-être à *sur-nommer*'. This can help point us to what needs to be done with the flaw in the name. The term *sur-nommer* carries three distinct meanings. In ordinary French, a *surnom* stands for a nickname or romantic pet name, hence Derrida's inclusion of love here. Equally, in including such a hyphen, the verb can mean to 'over-name', that is to name too much. Once again, this same double bind emerges. However, another meaning can add to our discussion: *sur-nommer* as 'to name over', that is to add another name or to name again. It is this meaning that Thomas Dutoit (1995: x) in his introduction to the English translations of *Sauf le nom*, *Khôra* and *Passions* rightly brings forward. He points to the "supplemental nature" that any surname in fact is'.<sup>14</sup> This 'supplemental' dimension directs us to the need to name again, to add another name on top of the name that is already there.<sup>15</sup> To make up for the lack of the name, by re-naming. As Derrida asks: 'Que se passe-t-il surtout quand il faut surnommer, re-nommant là où, justement le nom vient à manquer? Qu'est-ce qui fait du nom propre une sorte de surnom ...' (1993a: 1). This link between the act of re-naming exactly when the name lacks turns one's proper name into a type of nickname itself: another name that seeks to make up for the structural failure of the name to protect and capture the singular. There is not just one act of naming, therefore, but rather the name demands a new name. Derrida's interest is not only in one act of determination and effacement, but also of further acts of determination (and effacement), that is to say of naming again.

Derrida's analysis of the name, therefore, does not simply point to the double bind of effacement and determination, but rather in *sur-nommer* also points to the need to determine and name again. Importantly, this point is not just demonstrated by *sur-nommer*. We find further support for this in Derrida's analysis of the signature and counter-signature.

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<sup>14</sup> Though Dutoit carefully justifies his choice of surname as a translation of *surnom*, it is worth stressing that *surnom* in French does not have the same meaning as the English "surname". The French term for which is *nom de famille* (or often simply *nom*).

<sup>15</sup> Importantly, such a repetition is iteration. Far from a bland repetition of the same, this is closely tied to the inventive nature of Derrida's work, as we will see in Chapter 2.



Returning to ‘signature, événement, contexte’ we can see that a similar question of naming and naming again is already present in the first term of the title: signature. There, the signature is presented as the equivalent of the ‘source’ of oral enunciations, designed to maintain a “presence” and to nullify the effacement, that we have seen above. In the final section, Derrida takes aim at this, exposing it to the same analysis and demonstrating its necessary reliance on iteration to function. However, he goes even further, multiplying his signatures:

(*Remarque* : le texte – écrit – de cette communication – orale – devait être adressé à l’association des sociétés de philosophie de langue française avant la séance. Tel envoi devait donc être signé. Ce que j’ai fait et contrefais ici. Où ? Là. J.D.) (1972c: 393)

Image of Jacques Derrida’s signature redacted.  
Copyright Jacques Derrida.

There are at least three signatures at work here: the handwritten sign, itself reproduced; the printed version of the name underneath; and, Derrida’s initials which reconfirm the first signature. We can say ‘at least three’, because part of Derrida’s point is the repetition of the signatures, so that the very signature itself calls for another signature. This is once again the dynamic of iteration. Added into this is the use of the term ‘contrefais’: emphasising that these repetitions are not without risk, but that each carries the potential for perversion or falsification.

In ‘signature, événement, contexte’, therefore, Derrida brings forward some of the important connections between iteration and the signature; however, this is not all Derrida has to say about the signature and the link with the ‘counter’ of ‘contrefais’. In much the same way as *Schibboleth* takes up effacement, *Signéponge* (1988b) takes up the question of signature from the 1972 essay and foregrounds some of the implicit or latent parts of this discussion.<sup>16</sup> Importantly, for our earlier discussion of the name, what it adds to this conception of signature is the counter-signature. For instance, we see the central role of the signature in the emancipation of a text from its author:

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<sup>16</sup> To avoid confusion, my claim is not that there is a “turn” in Derrida’s thinking on iteration and delimitation. Neither *Schibboleth* nor *Signéponge* could be said to belong to a ‘different’ Derrida than the Derrida of ‘signature, événement, contexte’. Indeed, though *Signéponge* was published in the 1980s, its first form dates from 1975 at a conference at Cerisy-la-salle, and so is only a few years apart from ‘signature, événement, contexte’.

C'est aussi la condition pour que mon texte s'émancipe de moi et parte comme une fusée n'obéissant qu'à sa propre catapulte, affranchie, en mon nom et sous la législation de ma langue, et de mon nom et de ma langue. (1988b: 102/3)

It is his name and his language which makes this movement of separation and emancipation possible – opening up the connection to the promise, as the potential for repetition of the singular in a future context. Though we might often think of the signature as the final word, the legislating sign-off on a text or contract, in Derrida's thought this is far from the case. The potential effacement means that the signature is not a final word or "sign-off", but instead a generative mark which makes it possible for the text to become separated from its original singularity.

For effacement to take place, the signature, therefore, is required. But this is not everything Derrida has to say about the signature. Like the name, the signature also requires a further moment: the counter-signature. In the same way that the name required a *surenom*, a supplemental act of naming, the signature also calls for reconfirmation and repetition. It is this which leads to 'un débordement de la signature' (1988b: 67). This excess or overflowing of the signature comes from its demand to be reconfirmed or repeated in a second signature, or a countersignature. It is not simply that iteration is a condition of possibility of the signature, but rather the act of signing calls for its iteration and reconfirmation in a countersignature. 'C'est donc dans la contresignature qu'une signature est proprement *enlevée*. Et c'est dans l'instant où s'enlève ainsi qu'*il y a du texte*.' (1988b: 104/5). It is this which makes the promise possible, by removing the previous signature in a countersignature. This is the act of determination, which makes effacement itself possible. Importantly, this determination is not simply a subject re-confirming its presence or intention: as in the analysis of the rupture of the addressor/addressee, there is a radical disconnection (to the point of death) once the signature is determined. As Peggy Kamuf (1988: 201) points out: 'The counter-signature, in other words, does not vouch only for some truth, in the matter of the witness. It also has to affirm a space of invention that is always, in some sense, invention of the other('s)'. The counter-signature, therefore, is not the banal repetition of a prior determination. Like the *surenom*, that made up for the lack/fault in a prior name, the counter-signature is necessary to supplement what is lacking in the signature. It is not the final re-confirmation of a fully-present subjectivity, but itself a new act of determination in another context.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> It is for this reason that Derrida describes all signature as signature of the other.

In 2000, Derrida spoke once again at Cerisy-la-Salle, and he returned once again to the counter-signature.<sup>18</sup> There, he emphasised the double nature of this counter: ‘The word “contre”, counter or against, can equally and at the same time mark both opposition, contrariety, contradiction and proximity, near-contact’ (2004a: 17).<sup>19</sup> The notion of counter-signature is such a significant figure here for Derrida precisely because of this double movement or meaning that maps onto the movement of effacement and determination. The counter-signature is that which effaces the prior signature before, but at the same time determines this very signature in a new way. In discussing Genet and *Glas* (1974), Derrida repeats, yet again, the phrase *arrive à s’effacer*:

... a signature destined to sign only to *bring about its own effacement* [*arrive à s’effacer*] That is, to attain, to arrive at its own effacement, but also to come about, to happen, *as* its own effacement. Simultaneously event and effacement. (2004a: 38)

Determination in the counter-signature is key to this effacement. Like the need to name again in the act of *surnommer*, the counter-signature brings forward the ways in which effacement only takes place through an act of determination and that this occurs simultaneously. The relation between the signature/counter-signature, as well as the name and *surnom*, both demonstrates the importance of this relationship between determination and effacement, as well as the need for any analysis to consider the stages of determination and effacement that follow from this.

In the previous section, we have seen the importance that iteration has in establishing a relationship to the other. We have seen that effacement only takes place through an act of determination. What our discussion of the name/*surnom* and signature/counter-signature demonstrates is that such determination is itself called for by previous acts of determination. Earlier, it was acknowledged that the term determination carried with it a substantial philosophical history, particularly in relation to Hegel. Through these two points, we can now demonstrate the substantial differences in how Hegel and Derrida conceive of determination.

Determination is a central concept in Hegel’s philosophy and indeed is one of the foundations of his dialectic. Determination operates at the three different stages of the dialectic. In the first moment, things are understood: they are determined in a fixed and stable meaning,

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<sup>18</sup> This was published posthumously in *Poétiques de Jean Genet* (2005). This is unavailable in the University of Cambridge library. I am citing from the translation by Mairéad Hanrahan published in 2004 in *Paragraph*.

<sup>19</sup> For a close analysis of this text, see Leslie Hill, *Radical Indecision* (2010), pp. 302-32.

in what is called ‘the side of abstraction or of the understanding’ (Hegel 1991: § 81, p. 128). The second moment is ‘negatively rational’ (Ibid.). This represents a moment of *Aufhebung*, where the previous determination is sublated. Importantly, this creates a second determination; one which is the opposite of the first determination. Through the *Aufhebung*, the first determination is both negated, but also lives on in this new determination; or, in other words, the first determination is ‘suspended’ (Suchting in Hegel 1991: xxxvi). Finally, the third moment is the moment of the ‘positively rational’; this captures the unity of these two prior determinations, in their apparent opposition: ‘The *speculative* or *positively rational* apprehends the unity of the determinations in their opposition, the *affirmative* that is contained in their dissolution and in their transition’ (Hegel 1991: § 82, p. 131). In so doing, the dialectic reveals both the inner meaning and internal contradiction of thoughts (Ross 2014: 34). Hence, the dialectic produces a unified determination of these two previous moments of determination, ‘a unity of distinct determinations’ (Ibid.).

As this brief sketch suggests, there are some apparent similarities between Derrida’s conception of determination-effacement and Hegel’s approach. Careful consideration, however, shows how these are in fact radically different conceptions of determination and effacement.<sup>20</sup> In terms of determination, in Hegel’s work the movement between one determination to the other is a necessity.<sup>21</sup> One moment leads directly on from the other, forming ‘an *immanent coherence and necessity*’ (Hegel 1991: § 79, p. 125). In Derrida’s conception of determination, there is no necessity between determinations. While determination, as signature, name, or date, fails and lacks, and thus calls to be better determined, it is not a given that such determination will take place. There is no direct connection between Derrida’s multiple determinations and the multiple determinations of Hegel’s method. This ‘*immanent coherence*’ leads to another point, which is the notion of progress and teleology operating in Hegel’s work. For Hegel, there is a moment of unification found in the third movement of determination. Such unification is completely at odd with a Derridean conception of determination. As we have seen, Derridean determination involves the loss of singularity: this is neither a progressive nor cumulative process, in which determinations become closer to the truth. These determinations do not build on one another, but rather each

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<sup>20</sup> This is not to deny that there are indeed interesting and important connections between Derrida and Hegel, or what Derrida describes as ‘les rapports d’affinité très profonde que la différence ainsi écrite entretient avec le discours hégélien ...’ (1972a: 15). For a good review of the influence of Hegel on Derrida and other French philosophers of the period, see Brent Adkins (2014).

<sup>21</sup> For a careful account and critique of necessity in Hegel’s dialectic, see Chapter 3 of Ermanno Bencivenga’s *Hegel’s Dialectical Logic* (2000).

time singularity is lost in different and incomparable ways. This also means that each determination carries with it its own risk: there is no guarantee that a *surnom* or counter-signature will improve on the loss of singularity, and indeed it is altogether possible that a new determination may well be worse.

This risk at the heart of determination, as well as the incommensurable loss of singularity, point not simply to the difference around the concept of determination in Hegel, but also to a difference between Hegelian negation and Derridean effacement. As we have stressed frequently, the concept of determination in Derrida is tied inseparably to effacement. In Hegel, each stage of the dialectic involves the negation of prior determinations. However, for Hegel, each act of negation carries the previous determination within it. This allows for the progression that we have seen above. For Derrida, however, each act of effacement does not keep or maintain the previous determination in any sense. As the figure of total annihilation of ash suggested, this type of “negation” divorces itself completely from the singularity that was captured in a prior determination. It is not simply determination, then, that marks a fundamental difference between Derrida and Hegel, but also effacement.

The *surnom* and the counter-signature, therefore, emphasise firstly that effacement takes place through determined instances. These determined instances are not isolated or fully present entities, but rather they call for further determined instances. Such further determination is not progression or refinement towards the truth, nor is it governed by a progressive movement towards any *telos*. Rather each determined instance effaces the previous determined instance, and itself calls for its own effacement in a new act of determination. Thus, when thinking about determination, we need to both take account of the effacement that occurs of the determined instance, as well as that this effacement only occurs in another act of determination.

In Derrida’s discussion of the counter-signature, we have once again seen the phrase *n’arrive qu’à s’effacer*. And, indeed, this is a phrase that we also find in both *Sauf le nom* and *Déplier Ponge* (Derrida and Farasse 2005: 35).<sup>22</sup> What is interesting about the usage in these two texts, however, is that both introduce a new term to describe this phrase: *ex-appropriation* (Derrida and Farasse 2005: 34) or what *Sauf le nom* refers to as ‘le double bind de l’ex-

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<sup>22</sup> In fact, in *Sauf le nom*, the verb used is *advenir*: ‘n’advient qu’à s’effacer’ (1993b: 77).

appropriation' (1993b: 77). It is to this term and its relation to determination and effacement that we will now turn.

### **Section Five: *Exappropriation***

*Exappropriation* is first formed in *Signéponge* but appears with increasing frequency and importance in Derrida's work. Sometimes presented as *ex-appropriation*, it is a portmanteau word bringing together appropriation and expropriation. The meanings of these words in French match the English almost exactly. Though in current usage these terms are often used interchangeably, with appropriation the more common, they in fact have distinct meanings. Appropriation refers to the act of claiming possession and ownership, of taking for oneself, whereas expropriation describes the opposite, the act of dispossession and the loss of ownership. The prefix Ap- comes from the Latin prefix *Ad-*, meaning direction towards or to something. The prefix Ex- implies direction away from or out of something. The meaning of these words in relation to the claiming or depriving of property already exist in Latin in *appropriare* and *expropriare*. As we will see, though this property element is not neglected in Derrida, the term itself goes far beyond these more ordinary meanings.

To unpack this term, it is useful to begin with a discussion between Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, and Derrida. This is helpful precisely because *exappropriation* is presented in terms that we have already explored in 'signature, événement, contexte':

Ce que je voudrais entendre par « exappropriation », c'est que le geste de s'approprier, et donc de pouvoir garder en son nom, marquer de son nom, laisser en son nom, comme un testament ou un héritage, il faut l'exproprier, il faut s'en séparer. C'est ce qu'on fait quand on écrit, quand on publie, quand on jette des choses sur la scène publique. ... il faut perdre ce que l'on veut garder et on ne peut garder qu'à la condition de perdre. (2006: 94)

One way of understanding this point is precisely in terms of the signature and the name. As we have seen, an act of signature does not guarantee the presence of the author or the meaning of the text; instead, it risks iterating in another context and becoming radically different. As we have seen in the discussion of the date and ash, however, this risk is not one that can be avoided. In order to hold onto something, to protect its singularity, we have to determine it in such a way that it is effectively lost. In the same interview, Derrida refers to his own archives that are themselves dispersed and separated from him, and as a result at risk of distortion or destruction:

L'« exappropriation », c'est donc ça : j'ai voulu tout garder pour m'approprier, mais pour pouvoir le garder et l'approprier, il a fallu d'abord le mettre dans un lieu *safe*, un lieu « sûr ». Et quand on met quelque chose dans un lieu sûr, il faut que ce soit ailleurs, ailleurs que sur moi. Et le lieu sûr, c'est toujours le lieu le moins sûr, c'est toujours le lieu où c'est objectivé, conservé à l'extérieur, et donc finalement pas sûr et à l'abri de rien. (2006: 96)

*Exappropriation* thus captures this inherent problem with determination and the protection of singularity: it always involves a necessary risk of destruction. It is important to emphasise, yet again, that such a risk is not avoidable or accidental, but an inherent part of determination itself.

This is not the only context in which Derrida employs *exappropriation* as an important term. Indeed, it extends beyond the act of publication to meaning and language in general. In *Échographies de la télévision*, Derrida speaks of *exappropriation* as the very condition of sense itself. Here, intentionality is presented as a process of appropriation: 'L'intentionnalité, c'est un processus d'appropriation par répétition, par identification, par idéalisation : je m'approprié l'autre ou bien un objet ou quoi que ce soit' (1996: 124). For something to make sense for me, I must appropriate its alterity, placing it in my own terms. And, by the same token, 'le sens ne dépend pas de moi, c'est ce que je ne pourrai pas totalement me réapproprier', so that 'il faut que ce que je m'approprié reste dehors, reste assez autre (que moi) pour avoir encore un sens' (1996: 123/4). Alterity must be violated for sense-making, but it is also that which creates a limit for the appropriation of sense. And it is on condition of this limit, for Derrida, that sense occurs:

La condition du sens, en général, c'est une appropriation finie, une exappropriation. Pour un être infini, il n'y a pas de sens. Pour un être qui ne peut rien s'approprier ou qui peut tout s'approprier, il n'y a pas de sens. La condition du sens, c'est la tension de cette loi, la double loi (*double bind*, si vous voulez) de la loi la plus générale à partir de laquelle on peut « approcher » le sens, l'existence, l'intentionnalité et le désir. Cette approche ne peut qu'éloigner ... (1996: 124)

*Exappropriation*, therefore, is a way of expressing this double bind of sense-making for Derrida, whereby that which creates desire for meaning (alterity) is exactly that which prevents ultimate or final meaning. A similar point is made about the link between language and *exappropriation*. In *De l'hospitalité*, for instance, Derrida stresses that language is at one and the same time that which appropriates and expropriates. In contrast to Arendt, who described

the German language as the lasting feature of her connection to Germany, for Derrida this is only a partial view of language: ‘Si elle paraît être aussi bien, et par là même, la première et dernière condition de l’appartenance, la langue est aussi l’expérience de l’expropriation, d’une irréductible *exappropriation*’ (1997: 83). Language is both that which allows us to belong, to appropriate meaning, while at the same time that which – both because it is inherited and relational – fundamentally limits any potential appropriation. Language establishes the ‘chez soi’ while also being that which transgresses such a site. In this sense, ‘la langue dite « maternelle » est déjà « la langue de l’autre »’ (1997: 83).<sup>23</sup> This is a point that Derrida continues in *Le Monolinguisme de l’autre* (1996b), where language is once again tied to *exappropriation*. Derrida describes ‘une structure universelle’ which ‘représente ou réfléchit une sorte d’« aliénation » originaire qui institue toute langue en langue de l’autre : l’impossible propriété d’une langue’ (1996b: 121). And, indeed, this originary alienation is defined precisely as *exappropriation*: ‘la même ex-appropriation, de la même « aliénation sans aliénation », sans propriété à jamais perdue ou à se réappropriier jamais’ (1996b: 50/1). *Exappropriation* thus takes on a central role in Derrida’s understanding of meaning and language.

As suggested above, the meanings of appropriation and expropriation are usually concerned with property and the possession of objects and assets. And Derrida does not neglect this economic dimension of these terms. In the Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy discussion, Derrida claims that *exappropriation* ‘vaut ... pour tout; pour le capital, pour l’économie en général’ (2006: 94). Furthermore, in *Spectres de Marx*, Derrida presents *exappropriation* as the ‘radicale contradiction de tout « capital », de toute propriété ou appropriation, comme de tous les concepts qui en dépendent, à commencer par celui de subjectivité libre, donc de l’émancipation qui se règle sur ces concepts’ (1993c: 148). This radical contradiction is pursued in another discussion of possession and the economy, published as ‘Politics and Friendship’: ‘Each time I have discussed economy, I did so by bringing in all sorts of elements that were not simply forces of production or effects of ownership or appropriation. And nonproductivity, nonappropriation, what I call *paradoxical ex-appropriation*, that movement of the proper expropriating itself through the very process of appropriation ...’ (2002b: 171).<sup>24</sup> That Derrida stresses the paradoxical nature of *exappropriation* when discussing property is no surprise. Indeed, properly understanding this paradox can help avoid a potential misunderstanding of

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<sup>23</sup> Importantly, as in *Échographies de la télévision*, this is tied to the development of new technologies (1997: 83).

<sup>24</sup> No French publication of this text.



the term. After all, it is far from paradoxical to think of appropriation and expropriation occurring at the same; indeed, if we think about this as a question of perspective, they normally do. For example, if a government appropriates the bank's property, then, from the unlucky bank's point of view, its property has been expropriated. There is nothing paradoxical about this and this is not at all what Derrida is suggesting by merging these two terms together. Rather than being two different perspectives on possession and dispossession, Derrida's point is that the act of appropriation for yourself, simultaneously involves the expropriation of that which you are appropriating. My appropriation of something is at one and the same time my expropriation of that very thing. Any claim of possession I make is also immediately dispossessed. This radical contradiction is a defining characteristic of Derrida's concept of *exappropriation*.

The economic is not the only important resonance of *exappropriation*. There is an important philosophical context which can help refine our understanding further. This returns us once again to Derrida's reading of Heidegger. One of the major concepts in Heidegger's philosophy is *Ereignis*. This is translated in many different ways in both French and English, but this is often in terms of appropriation: event (*événement*), appropriation, the event of appropriation. With the term *exappropriation*, therefore, Derrida is making direct reference to Heidegger. And, indeed, Derrida is clearly thinking about Heidegger in terms of appropriation well before he coins the term *exappropriation*. In a footnote in 'La différence', where he insists on distancing *différance* from *Ereignis*, Derrida points out:

'Elle [la différence] n'est ni la position (appropriation) ni la négation (expropriation), mais l'autre. ... Dès lors, semble-t-il, mais nous marquons ici plutôt la nécessité d'un parcours à venir, elle ne serait pas plus que l'être une espèce du genre *Ereignis*' (1972a: 27)

Here, therefore, Derrida is placing this explicitly in relation to appropriation and expropriation. Though he does not expand on this at this stage, he is clear to distinguish *différance* from *Ereignis*, and indeed it could well be argued that this 'parcours à venir' finally emerges in *exappropriation*. To understand the meaning of the term *Ereignis*, we must first consider the semantic framework in which Heidegger places the term. The term itself has an etymological link to the eye and sight (*Er-aügnis*), but Heidegger also links it to *Eigen* as property or possession, as well as authenticity in *Eigentlichkeit*. Bringing out these links, and their consequences, forms a major part of Derrida's reading of Heidegger in 'Le retrait de la

métaphore' (1987b: 76). Importantly, for our purposes, Derrida ties determination once again to effacement and in terms that we are now very familiar with. Heidegger's conception of *Ereignis* is framed here in terms of the double movement of effacement and determination: 'Son inscription, comme j'ai tenté de l'articuler de la trace ou de la différance, *n'arrive qu'à s'effacer*' (1987b: 89). As an event, *Ereignis* 'n'arrive et n'advient qu'en s'effaçant' (1987b: 89). Thus, *Ereignis* is not seen as one moment of taking place, of "arrival", but rather in Derrida's interpretation, it is also effaced.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, in *Apories*, Derrida brings forward how Heidegger's problematic has 'un besoin essentiel de cette distinction entre l'authentique et l'inauthentique', particularly in his thinking of death (1996a: 135). Via Blanchot, Derrida proposes that the 'possibilité la plus propre du *Dasein*', that is death, becomes in fact 'la plus impropre et la plus ex-propriante, la plus inauthentifiante' (1996a: 134). For Derrida, this means that 'une certaine expropriation de l'*Ereignis* aura toujours habité le propre de l'*Eigentlichkeit* avant même d'y être nommée' (1996a: 135). *Exappropriation*, thus, has a major role in Derrida's interpretation of Heidegger. Derrida explicitly borrows the term from Heidegger's philosophy, but deprives appropriation and event of their meaning of authenticity or fulfilment. He does this by bringing forward an original effacement, or *expropriation*, that is an inherent part of the appropriation of the event. This is *exappropriation*.

*Exappropriation*, therefore, operates for Derrida in multiple contexts. It articulates the paradoxical result of appropriation, whereby this appropriation simultaneously expropriates itself in the very act. The importance of this double movement and *exappropriation* is regularly stressed by Derrida (e.g. *Déplier Ponge* (2005: 55)). As we have seen, this is not limited to the strict sense of appropriation and property, but includes meaning, language and the Heideggerian event. Indeed, in the 'Afterword' to *Limited Inc*, *exappropriation* is represented as a way of defining deconstruction: 'Deconstructions are the movements of what I have called "exappropriation"' (1988a: 141).<sup>26</sup> Indeed, *exappropriation* frames multiple other issues too,

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<sup>25</sup> This, of course, is not everything there is to say about *Ereignis* in Heidegger. Heidegger himself has his own concept of expropriation, *Enteignis*, but this is once again determined by a distinction of authenticity/inauthenticity. There are two basic meanings of *Enteignis*. The first is a negative meaning, whereby *Enteignis* is that which deprives of us the concealment of the truth of Being (Vallega-Neu 2010: 144). In this sense, it is an inauthentic experience and responsible for a lack of authentic *Ereignis*. The second meaning is a positive one and only emerges in his much later work, for instance 'Time and Being' from 1962. There, *Enteignis* is fundamental to ensuring the original concealment of Being. Though taken in more positive terms, therefore, this expropriation is still thought of in terms of an authentic origin. Derrida's concept of expropriation, or effacement, does not carry this connotation in any sense.

<sup>26</sup> First published in English. French version of the text not available at the University Library.

these include: Derrida's understanding of technology (1996: 46); the human & non-human animal relationship (1992: 288/9); nationalism (1996: 91); and, European and non-European philosophy (1997: 32). We will have reason to return to some of these throughout the thesis. All this is not to argue that *exappropriation* is a unique term for Derrida. Indeed, on the one hand, it articulates the same complex structure that we see in his other non-synonymous substitutions, such as *différance*, *trace*, *itérabilité*. If there is a difference here, it is simply a question of emphasis and particularly the way in which *exappropriation* stresses both appropriation (or determination) as much as expropriation (or effacement). Indeed, this is a point that Nancy observes in the discussion with Derrida and Lacoue-Labarthe:

Je voudrais, cependant, ajouter un autre aspect à la question. C'est ceci : dans l'« exappropriation », j'ai souvent, le plus souvent, l'impression qu'on y entend uniquement accentué le *ex-* ; comme si c'était un doublet, de « expropriation ». Mais, puisque tu as fabriqué le mot « exappropriation », c'est bien que ce n'est pas seulement à l'*expropriation* que tu penses, mais aussi à la *propriation*. (2006: 93)

*Exappropriation*, or even deconstructions as *exappropriations*, is or are never simply or only effacement, but rather also determination. Appropriation points to the fact that Derrida's philosophy does not simply efface determined instances, but also generates them. The inclusion of appropriation in the term itself helps emphasise the importance of this. As we will see in future chapters, a precise focus on appropriation, as much as expropriation, will be necessary to fully understand Derrida's engagement with institutions. When describing this structure, therefore, I will regularly appeal to *exappropriation* to capture this.

## **Section Six: Aporia and Lesser Violence**

*Exappropriation* brings to the fore both the importance of expropriation (effacement), but also appropriation (determination). It is in this shared focus, but particularly on appropriation that this thesis will locate the importance of institutions in Derrida's work. It is in a thorough account of the appropriative nature of *exappropriation* that the political and normative dimensions of Derrida's work will come to the fore. Through this, we can see that there is a focus on determined instances, as much as the effacement of these determinations. Indeed, *exappropriation* captures both how determination is dependent on effacement, but it also helps better articulate how precisely this effacement depends on a further determination. Once again, this insists that the relationship to alterity does not take place "in general";

however, only through determined (and repeatable) instances. One of the major ways that these determined instances take place is through the aporia.

The aporia is often seen as one of the most important political terms in Derrida's *oeuvre*. The aporia, or its connected terms double bind and undecidability, describes a moment of non-passage. It occurs at a moment when the choices available are no longer governed by a calculable program. It thus contains a structural moment of risk, where no higher rule can determine the right course of action: 'One must also cut. But one is never sure of the right time, there is always a risk. A negotiation that is certain of its strategy is not a negotiation, it is a bad negotiation' (2002: 31).<sup>27</sup> Importantly, this structural moment is not a general indeterminacy, but rather marks a hesitation between two determined poles: 'l'oscillation entre deux significations ou deux règles contradictoires et très déterminées, mais également impératives' (1994: 53). No more than expropriation or effacement, undecidability has given rise to misunderstandings that suggest that this simply describes a moment of paralysis or indecision. Quite the opposite is true. Derrida insists that the decision is a necessary consequence of the aporia, and indeed that the aporia is the 'condition de la décision responsable' (1993: 152). Moreover, Derrida does not shy away from presenting this as central to his political thinking. In *Spectres de Marx* (1993: 269), it is precisely the aporia and the *double bind* that are central to inheriting this Marxist tradition and thus to its re-invention. In *L'Autre cap* (1991), Derrida schematises some central political questions in terms of the aporia. These includes such issues as: respecting difference and universality; respecting history, while also re-inventing it; cultivating a culture of critique, while also deconstructing this tradition (1991: 74–77). Hence, the aporia occupies a central position in any political consideration of deconstruction.

The aporia thus marks a moment of radical undecidability, which carries with it an important political potential. However, as we will see in Beardsworth and Menegalle, what is often neglected in such accounts is that this is not the only moment of the aporia that interests Derrida. Derrida is not simply interested in the moment prior to the decision, but also the moment after the decision, that is, between the aporia and the legislative or decisive intervention and invention it paradoxically brings forth.<sup>28</sup> Though the aporia deprives us of a

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<sup>27</sup> No published French translation.

<sup>28</sup> It is worth stressing that the idea of being "after" the undecidable is in itself problematic: 'Une fois l'épreuve de l'indécidable passé (si cela est possible mais cette possibilité n'est pas pure, ce n'est jamais une possibilité comme une autre : la mémoire de l'indécidabilité doit garder une trace vivante qui marque à jamais une décision comme telle) ...' (1994: 64).

rule on which we can decide, our own decision will instead establish a new rule. It is here that the importance of adequately stressing appropriation in *exappropriation* becomes clear. We can see this, for instance, in *Force de loi*, where Derrida asks what happens after the undecidable:

Une fois l'épreuve de l'indécidable passée ... elle a de nouveau suivi une règle, une règle donnée, inventée ou réinventée, réaffirmée : elle n'est plus *présentement* juste, *pleinement* juste. (1994: 54)

It is not simply that the aporia breaks with the rule, but rather it also establishes its own rule. This is not a secondary part of the aporia, or indeed of Derrida's philosophy. As we will see in Chapter 2, Derrida is concerned precisely with the type of institutions and conventions that deconstruction *decides* to establish: 'La déconstruction est inventive ou elle n'est pas [...] son écriture n'est pas seulement performative, elle produit des règles – d'autres conventions – pour de nouvelles performativités' (1987: 35). Indeed, in *Force de loi*, Derrida stresses not that we must negotiate without a rule, but rather without a rule that is not to be re-invented: '... *il faut* calculer, négocier le rapport entre le calculable et l'incalculable, et négocier sans règle qui ne soit à ré-inventer là où nous sommes « jetés », là où nous nous trouvons ...' (1994: 62). This is not to suggest that the moment of incalculable undecidability in the aporia is not of central importance, but once again that determined instances and decisions have an important part to play in Derrida's political thought.

The central aim of this thesis will be to show that this interest in the determined instance that emerges from the aporia, or in other words the rule that it establishes, offers an important normative dimension to Derrida's philosophy. One important account that has already emphasised this link between the normative and the aporia is Richard Beardsworth's *Derrida & The Political* (1996).<sup>29</sup> There Beardsworth argued for the central place of the aporia in Derrida's work and that the recognition of the aporia leads to judgements that are "less violent". Beardsworth's work served as an important intervention into the critical debate in the 1990s around the ethical and political dimension of Derrida's work. First and foremost, it represents one of the most thorough rebukes of the accusation of nihilism or political apathy in Derrida. *Derrida & the Political* skilfully demonstrates how Derrida's thinking of the aporia has always had a political dimension and that this dates at least from 'Ousia et

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<sup>29</sup> It should be stressed that Beardsworth never uses the term "normative" to describe his work, but nevertheless his text does amount to a claim about the normative potential of Derrida's work.

gramme' (1972). In an interconnected way, Beardsworth bring forward how Derrida's interpretation of Heidegger, Levinas and Hegel all emphasise the political nature of the aporia. Through careful and complex readings of these philosophers, we come to see that the aporia is a major political lens that can bring the political dimension of Derrida's philosophy into view. Beardsworth's text is structured around two central aporias: the aporia of time and the aporia of law. The aporia of time is 'irreducibility of time to *all* forms of organisation', and yet the need to determine time in an organisation (1996: xiii). The aporia of law is the need for law and judgement, alongside the impossibility of law to justify itself. Beardsworth goes further and proposes that these are in fact the same aporia: '*The aporia of law is an aporia of time*' (1996: 99). For Beardsworth, this aporia is the central aporia for understanding the political potential of Derrida's work. *Derrida & the Political* thus argues that judgements that respect and pass through the aporia must acknowledge the general economy of violence and that, through this, they (can) come to be less violent.

To begin it is worth fully unpacking Beardsworth's understanding of the aporia, focussing on the aporia of law.<sup>30</sup> As Beardsworth puts it, 'the aporia of law emerges from the impossibility of finding, or inventing the origin of law' (1996: 31). The impossibility of a stable origin of the law ensures that 'the judgement one makes is without grounds, violent' (1996: 44). Indeed, it is this impossibility which establishes a 'general economy of violence' within which the argument for lesser violence can emerge (1996: 12). Though this is fundamental, it is worth also stressing that the aporia of law is not simply of interest to us because of this normative argument, but also because the aporia of law is framed in terms of institutions. From the outset, Beardsworth presents this as a question of re-opening 'deconstruction's relation to institution, and to its thinking of the institution in general' (1996: 3). Institutions embody the aporia of law because they are structurally incapable of justifying their own foundation. Moreover, they must maintain their limits and foundation via repeated violence (1996: 62). Through his reading of the 'Déclarations d'Indépendance', Beardsworth brings forward this problem of foundation and the 'institutions attempt to fill (this) in by justifying the violence of law' (1996: 100).<sup>31</sup> Beardsworth is right to focus on this problem of justification and foundation, and particularly the political potential that this presents. Like Cornell, he sees part of the political potential in the 'radical "critique" of *institutions*' in

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<sup>30</sup> We will address Beardsworth's conception of temporality in Chapter Four. For a careful consideration of the aporia of time, see Bennington in *Interrupting Derrida* (2000).

<sup>31</sup> For Beardsworth this is a temporal issue and hence he can merge the aporias of law and time into one.

Derrida's work, which offers 'an account of why all political projects fail' (1996: 19). However, though Beardsworth goes beyond Cornell, his focus on institutions remains focused entirely on the issue of their foundation. As we will see in the chapters that come, Derrida interest and critique of institutions is not reserved to the issue of foundation alone. As I have already stressed in the general account of the aporia, Derrida is not simply concerned by the moment of the indecision, or here the decision of foundation/non-foundation, but also the rules, or we could say institutions, that emerge after this decision. Beardsworth's account of the aporia does not give this adequate consideration, and thus his account of institutions must focus solely on the foundation of the institution.

What's more, this lack of consideration of this next stage of institutions has an impact on his account of 'lesser violence'. We have already seen the term 'moindre violence' in our discussion of determination in 'Violence et métaphysique', and this is precisely where Beardsworth takes the claim from. He correctly links this to a general economy of violence, whereby no judgement or decision is non-violent. For Beardsworth, it is enduring the aporia that makes judgements less violent. As he states clearly in the introduction: 'Political judgements which recognise difference according to the lesser violence are those that have endured this experience' (1996: xvi/xvii). However, there are problems with this account. The first is we are never given an explicit or clear statement as to how exactly these judgements are less violent. Indeed, as the book continues, another problem follows from this: the weakness of the terms on which the account of 'limited violence' are made. Beardsworth first claims that 'the acknowledgement of the prescriptive force of one's statements *may* make one more ready to transform the field that is posited by the nature of one's decision. [...] This is the argument of a "lesser violence"' (1996: 12 my emphasis). As the 'may' here suggests, this is not a given but rather a possibility. In fact, this becomes diluted even further, by later being stated simply as a probability: 'Judgements and inventions which have endured this experience have *greater chance* of recognizing difference according to the lesser violence' (1996: 101 my emphasis). Even if we agree with Beardsworth's assertions here, we can acknowledge that these are very weak normative claims. Such a weakness is demonstrated by the fact that Martin Hägglund can also appeal to 'lesser violence' in his argument for the lack of normativity in Derrida's philosophy (2008: 83). This is not to completely dismiss the political potential of Beardsworth's account of 'lesser violence', which – in spite of the normative weakness – offers a convincing account of how recognising the aporia of time and law can allow for the invention of new political concepts

(1996: 102).<sup>32</sup> However, this means that ‘lesser violence’ on its own cannot describe the normative potential of Derrida’s engagements and philosophy. Without rejecting this argument for ‘lesser violence’, therefore, this thesis will build on Beardsworth and demonstrate that there are criteria that can be articulated. These criteria are not only consistent with Derrida’s philosophy, but indeed form a central part of his engagement with institutions.

Though Beardsworth’s focus on the aporia and his argument for a political dimension offer an excellent foundation to build on, his particular account of lesser violence is incomplete. Giovanni Menegalle proposes a somewhat different account of ‘lesser violence’ towards the end of his doctoral thesis, and this can help refine our argument further. Menegalle offers the most comprehensive account of the early Derrida’s relationship to Husserl and argues that this sets the ground for Derrida’s more explicitly political engagements from the 1980s onwards. He argues that Derrida’s interpretation of Husserl determines much of deconstruction. To demonstrate this, Menegalle privileges an aporetic structure of ‘originary mediation and temporal alterity’ (2016: 6). This allows Menegalle to argue for a “hyper-rationalist” politics at the heart of Derrida’s work (2016: 9). Importantly, such a politics is not prescriptive, but rather descriptive (2016: 185). This is in keeping with a Husserlian understanding of phenomenology as ‘a descriptive science of reason’ (2016: 9). Indeed, if Derrida’s philosophy can appear prescriptive, this is only in its affirmation of ‘a state of radical epistemic precarity and error as the always possible disavowal or forgetting of this originary condition’ (2016: 185). This preference for description over prescription motivates Menegalle’s account of ‘lesser violence’ and his disagreement with Simon Critchley. Against Critchley, Menegalle argues that to think of deconstruction as providing, or as seeking to provide, a ‘binding injunction’ is to misunderstand what deconstruction is about (2016: 181). For Menegalle, Critchley is wrong to understand deconstruction ‘as critique, as if its aim should be that of disclosing a form of binding injunction, and not, as is in fact the case, to develop a quasi-transcendental account of the conditions of possibility (and impossibility) of theory and, indeed, of any truth, law, ethics, politics, judgement, or decision in general’ (2016: 181). Instead, this lesser violence only emerges through the affirmation of ‘a radically free, and thus ethical and political, decision *for* philosophy’ (2016: 182). Menegalle’s account thus offers another way of understanding the value of the aporia

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<sup>32</sup> Though, again, there would be no guarantee that these would be risk-free or, through this recognition, superior to our current concepts.



for ‘lesser violence’: it is not that by enduring the aporia our judgements become less violent, but rather only in affirming its very possibility that politics and ethics are not foreclosed and determined in advance.

Like Beardsworth, Menegalle is right to focus on the aporia and its important political potential. Yet, once again, the issue of what comes after such a decision *for* philosophy is not addressed. For Menegalle, deconstruction should offer a transcendental account of the moment of decision; but this emphasis comes at the expense of a consideration of the determined instance that emerges inevitable and paradoxically from the aporia. As we will see in future chapters, it is only through this latter focus that we can fully understand Derrida’s engagement with institutions. However, despite this disagreement, Menegalle’s approach can make an important contribution to our argument. Menegalle correctly identifies that the effort to resist “closure” lies at the heart of Derrida’s politics. Where this thesis will disagree with his approach is in its insistence that this resistance should remain at the level of the ‘arche-political’ (2016: 183). Instead, we can see this same resistance to closure in Derrida’s focus on institutions and indeed in his consideration of the rule that emerges from any given aporia. Moreover, Menegalle astutely ties his reading of Derrida to a ‘hyper-rationalist’ politics and the importance of reason is indeed an essential and neglected point in Derrida’s work. By ‘hyper-rationalist’, however, Menegalle means an ‘affirmation [...] of the fundamental conditions and limits of rationality’ (2016: 185). However, this ‘hyper-rationalist’ politics need not be reduced exclusively to such an affirmation. Indeed, we can also see the practical implications of this hyper-rationalist politics in a very definite sense: the aporia of *critique/plus-que-critique*. Indeed, this is one of the important aporias that Derrida points to in *L’Autre cap*:

Le même devoir dicte de cultiver la vertu de cette *critique*, de l’*idée critique*, de la *tradition critique*, mais aussi de la soumettre, au-delà de la critique et de la question, à une généalogie déconstructrice qui la pense et la déborde sans la compromettre.  
(1991: 76)

There is a need both to develop critique and at the same time go beyond it. Though Derrida does not use the term *plus-que-critique* here, we will see in multiple texts that this term comes to represent exactly this move beyond critique. During the thesis, I will return to this aporia of *critique* and *plus-que-critique* to demonstrate the consistency in Derrida’s approach to institutions across multiple contexts. It is this aporia which will develop our argument

beyond a position on lesser violence and provide the framework through which the normative dimension of Derrida's philosophy will emerge.

Framing our discussion in terms of *critique/plus-que-critique* will help us see the importance of *exappropriation* and particularly enable us to pay adequate attention to the role of appropriation here. In *critique*, we will see Derrida remain within the horizon of an institution and to make decisions with this context; whereas, in the *plus-que-critique*, Derrida will propose an alternative horizon, calling into question the foundations and principles of the context (including that of the institution of *critique* itself). Importantly, between these two, there is no rule that can decide which is the more just approach. Each chapter will begin with a consideration of *critique*, demonstrating Derrida's engagements in particular contexts. In the *plus-que-critique*, I will demonstrate that Derrida's interests lie not simply in the moment of decision, or indeed the conditions of possibility of a decision, but also in the determined instance that is established in each decision. From this an explicit model of politics will emerge that concerns itself with the rules and conventions that result from decisions. This politics will seek to both resist any closure or determined instance that would prevent the emergence of the aporia, as well as seek to establish determined instances that better allow for the emergence of aporias. Via *exappropriation*, and the careful analysis of specific institutional engagements, this model will be outlined through three criteria that mark Derrida's institutional politics. We will see that Derrida has a distinct and continuous preference for institutions that are self-reflexive, anti-hegemonic, and international. These characteristics are shared throughout his engagements, ranging from education to democracy, and from migration to the media. Indeed, we will see that it is this common structure which determines his approach to these issues. In the next chapter, we will see how these criteria emerge in the specific context of education.

### **Conclusion:**

*Exappropriation*, therefore, will serve as a unifying term that can help group together the diverse implications of effacement and determination. The importance of determination of the singular has been underestimated, as I have argued, both in Derrida's reading of Heidegger, and his conception of alterity. As we have seen, singularity does not simply become effaced, but it is always effaced in another determined singular date. A *mémoire* of the here-and-now is saved from effacement (appropriated), but also through the *promesse* projected into the future (expropriated). It is the combination of these two that marks Derrida's philosophical work, and which we will see ties closely into his political interventions. Importantly, this focus on

determined instances brings out the normative dimensions of Derrida's philosophy helping us to build on and refine previous conceptions, such as the account of 'lesser violence'. As future chapters will discuss in detail, building on the aporia of *critique/plus-que-critique*, this is particularly true for Derrida's engagement with institutions.

## Chapter Two: Education and Exappropriating Institutions

In the previous chapter, we have seen the importance of determination in Derrida's philosophy; however, we have yet to say anything at all about institutions. To that end, we will now turn to one concrete example of such determination: educational institutions. Of all Derrida's political interventions, his work on education is undoubtedly the most well-known and is often offered as passing "proof" of Derrida's politics. Recently, there has been more thorough critical interest in Derrida's work on education, such as that of Orchard (2011) and Wortham (2006). This sort of substantial and rigorous work has significantly deepened our understanding and awareness of Derrida's interest in education. Yet, in different ways, these texts and others miss two interconnected questions about education: what is the status of these engagements in relation to Derrida's larger philosophy? And, how does Derrida's work on and through educational institutions relate to his other political interventions? It is these questions that we will pursue in this chapter.

Beginning with an outline of Derrida's political engagements on education, I demonstrate Derrida's consistency on several points around the teaching of philosophy and show that his interest, while across education, was mainly focused on second level. This is then tied to his philosophical work on the principle of reason. Building on this, I address the double movement in his work, and the two types of response that this generates. I argue that commentators have failed to fully grasp the implications of this and the profound connection it establishes between his political interventions and his philosophy. I demonstrate how this is at work in his institutional engagement with the *Collège international de philosophie* and coin the term *exappropriating institutions* to describe a recurring structure that we see here and will see elsewhere. Finally, I demonstrate that understanding Derrida's interventions in education as closely tied to his philosophy can explain the link to democracy and education that he forms both in his early and later work.

### Section One: Engagements

Derrida's engagement with educational institutions and pedagogy in general continued from the early stages of his career until the end of his life. Within this, we can identify four interconnected but different institutional commitments that are worth outlining. The first is his central role in *GREPH*, the *Groupe de recherches sur l'enseignement philosophique*, established in 1974 and formally founded in January 1975. An important collective movement of philosophers aimed at opposing the Haby reforms of philosophy and education in France, it

included figures like Sarah Kofman, Jean-Luc Nancy, as well as lycée teachers like Roland Brunet. This was a collaborative movement, and by June 1975 had 600 members (Orchard 2011: 48). Despite this broad reach, however, Derrida was identified at the time as a leading figure.<sup>33</sup> As we will see, *GREPH* established a series of positions on education, which remain relatively consistent throughout Derrida's work. The second engagement, which though closely related to *GREPH* remained distinct, was the *États-Généraux de la Philosophie* in 1979. This was a widespread and public collaborative effort, involving two days of open discussion in the main amphitheatre of the Sorbonne, opposing government reforms, as well as discussing the future of philosophy in France more generally. Though opposed by the SNES, the major union for second level teachers, it received a large following not just from professional philosophers, but from members of the public. A national petition was organized and a committee of 21 members was set up.<sup>34</sup> With the election of the Mitterrand government in 1981, Derrida received political support and founded, with a number of others, the *Collège international de philosophie*, where he was the first director. This is an important institution, and as we will see represents a significant practical effort to change the shape of philosophy in France. Finally, Derrida and Jacques Bouveresse were appointed by Lionel Jospin in 1988 to head a committee on philosophy and epistemology designed to look at reforms into education and philosophy. A report was published in 1989, which ultimately was not implemented by the government, but which did provoke significant backlash (Derrida falling foul once again of the main teaching union). Rather than being the one signing petitions, this time he was on the receiving end of a petition; but, as we will see, even his response to this is remarkably consistent with his other public positions on education. In this section, while respecting the differences between these different engagements and their contexts, I will bring forward some of the shared and interconnecting concerns around pedagogical institutions.

Before doing so, it is worth addressing one final point, or rather acknowledging an omission. A careful reader will have observed that there is no reference here to Derrida's thinking on the university, most notably captured in *L'Université sans condition* (2001b). This is a deliberate exclusion, but one which is not intended to imply that Derrida had no interest in the politics of the university. Indeed, he took a number of public positions on different

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<sup>33</sup> This is in spite of the fact that the major published output from this was signed not in individual names, but as simply *GREPH*

<sup>34</sup> The event received particular attention due to an infamous physical interaction between Derrida, Bernard-Henry Levy and others. After the fact, Derrida would describe the scuffle as 'une brève et légère bousculade' (Brunet and others 1980: 74).

appointments within universities, each time affirming the autonomy of the university and its decision making. He opposed, for instance, the appointment of the right-wing and antisemitic philosopher Pierre Boutang to a position as *maître de conference* through both a petition and public letter published in *Le Monde* (1976: 9); or, again through petition and published interview (1988b: 59), he criticised the refusal of Sarah Kofman for a university position. Equally, in 1992, he signed a public petition ‘Pour repenser l’Université’ (Derrida and others 1992b: 24), about the need to rethink the funding of universities and the role of administration, and similarly on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 1995, he wrote a letter to the *Ministre de l’enseignement supérieur et de la recherche* protesting the threats of closure of the centre for gender studies (*études féminines*) at Paris VIII (see Appendix).<sup>35</sup> Derrida’s thinking on education, therefore, is closely connected to the university. The late prominence of *L’Université sans condition*, however, has skewed our understanding of Derrida’s interest in education, when in fact the interventions outlined above have a strong focus on all parts of education, particularly second level education. *L’Université sans condition* is not the only reason for this false impression, however. This is partially because Derrida’s own work on education has inspired a number of excellent academic books on the university (e.g. Peggy Kamuf (1997), Samuel Weber (1987)). More than that, the 1990s and millennium triggered a series of discussions around the university and its relation to neoliberalism (which *L’Université sans condition* could be said to anticipate). Simon Morgan Wortham’s *Counter-Institutions* (2006) is particularly strong in bringing forward the relevance of Derrida’s philosophy for this debate; however, this is at the cost of marginalising Derrida’s interest in second level education, which is mainly unconsidered. The most important exception to this trend is the work of Vivienne Orchard, on whose excellent work, *Jacques Derrida and the Institution of French Philosophy* (2011), I wish to build on in this chapter. Orchard carefully outlines how Derrida’s educational work has been sorely neglected, taken ‘largely (as) a citation reference’, or a “‘lieu d’engagement”, which turns out in these accounts to be not itself worthy of engaging with’ (2011: 5, 79). Orchard thus offers the first account to correct this perspective on education in Derrida. That said, as we will see, while Orchard’s analysis is excellent and the historical focus is welcome, it neglects to fully place this in contact with the deeper questions of Derrida’s philosophy and his work on institutions.

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<sup>35</sup> It is not clear that the letter was published, but this part of a general campaign against the proposed closure of the research centre. See: (Derrida 1995b).

One of the most consistent public positions that Derrida took on education was his proposal that philosophy be treated as a foundational or progressive subject, like mathematics or French. At the time, and in the French system today, philosophy enters at a late stage in second level, or even at third level. Rather, through many of his institutional engagements, Derrida actively argues for the need for philosophy to be there from the beginning of education. This is first outlined in *GREPH* and represents one of their main propositions. Indeed, it has an important position in a group radio interview from 1977. There, Derrida insists that ‘il n’y a pas d’âge naturel’ to begin philosophy (1977, 15:26).<sup>36</sup> He proposes that all forms of teaching involve a form of “pre-ideology”, which students will inherit and internalise: philosophy, however, would allow this to be brought to light (Ibid.: 15:30). This is an important point worth stressing. Derrida’s support for philosophy as a foundational subject is not based on a claim that education is incomplete without the canon of philosophy, or that philosophy is a type of “legislator” subject which would rule above all others. Instead, philosophy is important simply because it offers a language in which to reflect on education itself and a space for self-reflexive consideration of pedagogy. In case we might think that this was a purely abstract endeavour, *GREPH* also actively tried to trial this in classrooms; and, in this radio interview, we hear extracts from a recording of Roland Brunet and Jean-Luc Nancy leading children in philosophical exercises that merge together literature and philosophy. Far from purely theoretical, therefore, *GREPH* actively sought to bring about practical changes in how philosophy was taught in France.

This focus on philosophy as a foundational subject is worth underlining, because it will be a core aim in all of Derrida’s educational involvement. It is no surprise then that it occurs a few years later in the *États-Généraux*. In this regard, Derrida was happy to accept that *GREPH* may have inspired the *États-Généraux* to some degree, but that it was not a direct continuation, neither in ideas nor in personnel. In a round table in 1980 on the *États-Généraux*, the influence of *GREPH* is discussed, and Derrida emphasises that ‘les membres du GREPH étaient en minorité dans le Comité de préparation et plus encore au cours des EG eux-mêmes’ (Brunet and others 1980: 63).<sup>37</sup> Derrida does acknowledge, however, that *GREPH* did play a role in its creation: ‘le GREPH a sans doute provoqué l’événement mais n’a pas voulu se l’approprier

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<sup>36</sup> When citing audio-visual material, where feasible, I will include the timestamp on the file. This is in hours:minutes format.

<sup>37</sup> Here I am citing the original publication in the journal *Esprit*. Derrida republished this in *Du droit à la philosophie* (1990a) as an appendix ; however, the latter only includes his lengthy responses and did not include the questions and responses of the four other participants.

ou le dominer – et ne l’a pas fait’ (1980: 63). Indeed, if there is one way in which *GREPH* left its mark on the *États Généraux*, it is the resolution in favour of philosophy as a foundational subject: ‘Le meilleur exemple en a été la résolution votée au sujet de l’extension de philosophie à partir de la seconde, mais il ne faut pas oublier que cette résolution reste encore en retrait par rapport à nos propres perspectives’ (1980: 63). And even here it is important to point out that the view of philosophy as a progressive subject is once again a question of how philosophy itself is taught, ‘selon des modes à inventer et des formes qui ne reviendraient pas à dispenser ailleurs un enseignement déjà connu et constitué’ (1980: 67). This is not simply a passing interest for Derrida in the 1970s, but rather becomes one of his major recommendations over a decade later when he co-authors the *Rapport de la Commission de Philosophie et d’Épistémologie*.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the second of the report’s five points describes philosophy as a ‘discipline fondamentale’, which should be split between times of ‘initiation’, ‘formation’ and ‘approfondissement’ (1990a: 621/2). The moment of initiation would begin ‘au moins en première’ (the penultimate year of second level.)<sup>39</sup> This first stage also would be linked to other subjects, grouped under three headings: natural sciences, social sciences, and arts and literature. This moment of initiation then would serve to deepen the links between philosophy and these subjects, but also help save philosophy from being dominated exclusively by ‘des modèles littéraires’ (1990a: 622). Moreover, when the report was not implemented, it is precisely these two points which Derrida and others rally around. They complained that the interaction of philosophy within other subjects, disciplines and qualifications was ignored, as was the idea that philosophy be taken as a fundamental subject from the beginning of second level: ‘Or nous constatons que l’idée d’une initiation philosophique en première, partiellement confirmée depuis par le Conseil national des programmes, est totalement rejetée par le ministre’ (Derrida and others 1992a: 12).. This is published as a signed letter by members of the committee (Bouveresse, Bourdieu, Derrida, Jean-Jacques Rosat and Catherine Malabou) in *Libération*, with the title ‘Philosophies, en toute indépendance...’. That the extension of philosophy is highlighted as such a strong point indicates how, over at least 15 years, this interest remained constant and highly significant for Derrida.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The report itself is also published as an appendix in *Du droit à la philosophie* (1990a)

<sup>39</sup> It is worth noting that this is something of a compromise with Derrida’s previous stated aim of extending philosophy throughout second level. This most likely reflects an awareness of the material limitations and context with which he and others were working.

<sup>40</sup> As already mentioned, this can give the impression that Derrida is seeking to establish philosophy as the “legislator” subject of all knowledge. As Vivienne Orchard (2011: 64) points out Derrida is far from promoting, as others might, ‘philosophy’s role as overseer and legitimator of all forms of knowledge’;



Alongside this focus on the extension of philosophy beyond the final year of second level, there is a substantial focus on the material conditions of teaching across education. This appears at different stages but features prominently as we might expect in the *États-Généraux*. Returning to the round table, Derrida emphasises that responsible teachers must ‘défendre leurs conditions de travail’ (1980: 72). Derrida is particularly concerned to resist governmental reforms which have seriously degraded these conditions: ‘Les conditions sont de plus en plus difficiles, elles se dégradent d’année en année’. And this includes, ‘La réduction massive du nombre de postes mis au concours [...] d’autre part on privait de leur poste un grand nombre d’enseignants de philosophie dans les Écoles normales’ (1980: 60). It is not only that there are fewer teachers, but that this also has an impact on the number of students, when ‘tout avenir professionnel est interdit’ (1980: 66). Indeed, this focus on the material conditions of teaching also occurs in the 1990 report, despite criticism to the contrary: this was a particular concern of many *lycée* teachers, who interpreted the extension of philosophy to the first year of second level as a way of adding further work to their stretched contracts.<sup>41</sup> However, as Derrida points out in his response, the issue of the concrete conditions is emphasised clearly and the report to the government includes a condemnation of the contemporary conditions of work:

Pour la même raison, les conditions concrètes et intolérables qui sont faites actuellement à tant des professeurs de philosophie (nombre excessif de classes à horaires réduites, nombre excessif d’élèves par classe, etc.) devraient être profondément transformées. Les propositions que nous faisons n’auraient aucun sens, aucun intérêt, aucune chance, elles rencontreraient une opposition légitime de la part de tous les professeurs si elles n’étaient pas mises en œuvre dans un contexte nouveau. (1990a: 628)

What this citation demonstrates, however, is a significant focus on the material conditions of education. Ironically, then, when the report was opposed by teachers, it was Derrida who became the target. Derrida’s response was to stress again the necessary material conditions for education.

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instead, this is about ‘a redistribution and redefinition of boundaries and practices’. Indeed, in the *GREPH* roundtable, Derrida stresses that this approach is not something which will be done simply by philosophers, but ‘dans un travail commun avec les chercheurs, enseignants, et étudiants d’autres disciplines’ (Brunet and others 1980: 68).

<sup>41</sup> See the vociferous response of some commentators and teachers on a current affairs program on *France Culture* (Philosophie 1990).

To briefly summarise, throughout a sustained period from the 1970s into the 1990s, Derrida was involved in several important engagements with education. Importantly, these were not focused on third level education as such, but rather the whole education system and particularly second level. These often returned to similar questions, and though they should be regarded as distinct efforts, we can also see them as part of an overall perspective on education and the teaching of philosophy. These recurring issues include changing the position of philosophy within education, the extension of philosophy across secondary school, and a focus on the material conditions of education. We will see further issues emerge later in this chapter, particularly around the relationship between institutions and education; however, for the time being we can conclude that, over a number of decades, Derrida has a sustained and substantial engagement in education and educational reform in France.

## **Section Two: Foundations**

One of the reasons that Derrida's work on education is best known of all his political positions is because of the large collection, that he published in 1990, *Du droit à la philosophie* (1990a). Alongside a substantial preface, this brought together a series of essays and talks on education in general, but also formal reports on the establishment of the *Collège international de philosophie* and the Derrida-Bouveresse report mentioned already above. In this collection, then, the philosophical is mixed together with political, and it is no surprise then that this can help us link the points outlined above about Derrida's engagement to his larger philosophical work. There are two essays published there of particular importance: 'Les pupilles de l'Université: Le principe de raison et l'idée de l'Université' et 'Mochlos, ou le conflit des facultés'. While both have a focus on the university, we will see that they have implications for education in general, and Derrida's specific engagements in particular. In these, we can see a continued engagement with the question of institutions, but also a more general connection into Derrida's broader philosophical positions.

'Les pupilles de l'Université' is in part an interpretation of Heidegger's 1957 text, *Der Satz vom Grund*. There, Derrida refers us to the 'principle of reason' (one of the potential translations of Heidegger's title) as that which founds the university.<sup>42</sup> This foundation insists that the principle of reason must itself be rational. At first this may sound like something of a trivial claim, but through Heidegger's reading of Leibniz, Derrida demonstrates that it is far from simplistic. Reason demands that it be explained through rational means and that it be

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<sup>42</sup> *Satz*, for instance, could also be translated as 'sentence', or indeed *Grund* as 'ground'.

justified completely and fully through reason; we must be able to ‘rendre raison’ of reason (1990a: 472).<sup>43</sup> Through Heidegger’s concept of the *Anspruch*, Derrida engages in an interrogation of this principle. The *Anspruch* is a name not for the principle of reason, but that which founds this principle:

Nous avons à répondre devant l’appel du principe de raison. Dans *Der Satz vom Grund* (*Le principe de raison*), Heidegger a un nom pour cet appel. Il l’appelle *Anspruch* : exigence, prétention, revendication, demande, commande, convocation. Il s’agit toujours d’une sorte de parole adressée. Elle ne se voit pas, elle doit s’entendre et s’écouter, l’apostrophe qui nous enjoint de répondre au principe de raison. (1990a: 472)

*Anspruch*, therefore, is the name for that which calls us to respond to the principle of reason. And, as we can see, the description maps closely onto the originary affirmation or *Zusage* that we have seen discussed in Chapter 1. Both are described as a type of demand or convocation, and importantly ‘une sorte de parole adressée’. Like the *Zusage* then, the *Anspruch* is the way of describing an originary call or relation. In the case of the *Anspruch*, this call is in response to the principle of reason itself.

Yet just like the *Zusage*, the *Anspruch* is not immune from iteration, and the splitting that this implies leads to two different types of responses. It is these two types of responses that dictate Derrida’s interest here, and he understands them according to a distinction in French between *répondre à* and *répondre de*. The first one is a somewhat conventional conception of response, meaning to obey the principle itself. It would be ‘expliquer rationnellement les effets par les causes. [...] rendre compte à partir du principe (*arkhé*) ou de la racine (*riza*) (1990a: 472). Importantly, Derrida does not dismiss this as a type of response, but he also wants to elaborate a new conception of responding, one which does not just obey: ‘répondre *du* principe de raison [...] ce n’est pas simplement lui obéir ou répondre *devant lui*’ (1990a: 473). Instead, this response involves questioning the very meaning of this principle: ‘On n’écoute pas de la même façon selon qu’on répond à un appel ou qu’on interroge sur son sens, son origine, sa possibilité, sa fin, ses limites’ (1990a: 473). Derrida is also here appealing to the meaning of *répondre de*, as being responsible for an action or event, or guaranteeing something. Denise Egéa-Kuehne (1995: 307/8) has highlighted the implications of these different responses for educational history. It is worth stressing, as Egéa-Kuehne brings out so well, that asking

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<sup>43</sup> ‘Rendre’ is an important term for Derrida, and indeed this is one of the major ways in which Derrida defines reason throughout his work. See, for instance, ‘Préjugés: devant la loi’ in *La Faculté de juger* (Derrida and others 1985)

ourselves about the meaning, history, and limits of the principle of reason is not then to cede to some irrationality, but instead to be fully responsible not just before reason, but for reason itself: it should not be taken ‘as an act of demolition, but as a striving for awareness’ (1995: 299).

Though Derrida insists on the substantial difference between these two types of response, it is important not to see them as in opposition to one another. Derrida does not simply wish us to think exclusively about the foundation of the university, at the expense of rationalism or rigour: ‘Ils peuvent continuer d’assumer *au-dedans*, avec la mémoire et la tradition de l’Université, l’impératif de la compétence et de la rigueur professionnelles’ (1990a: 491). The questioning of the foundations does not oblige us to reject out of hand that which is already built upon them; indeed, Derrida states that we need to hold onto these. We must both *répondre à* and *de*. And this is the basis of what Derrida labels ‘a double gesture’:

Il y a là un double geste, une double postulation : assurer la compétence professionnelle et la tradition la plus sérieuse de l’Université tout en allant aussi loin que possible, théoriquement et pratiquement, dans la pensée la plus abyssale de ce qui fonde l’Université. (1990a: 491)

This double gesture thus forms the framework around which Derrida thinks through the university and the principle of reason. Importantly, such a new thinking of the university institution calls for a re-thinking of the meaning of institution itself: ‘Une telle pensée, il n’est pas sûr qu’elle puisse rassembler une communauté ou fonder une institution au sens traditionnel de ces mots. Elle doit re-penser aussi ce qu’on nomme communauté et institution’ (1990a: 488/9). As we will see in our discussion of institutions below, this re-thinking represents a fundamental part of Derrida’s work on education.

This double structure is taken up again in relation to education in the essay, ‘Mochlos, ou le conflit des facultés’. This essay is more focused on Kant’s conception of the university; however, once again we see that the re-thinking of the institution is not done in the name of a non-institutional space, but a thoroughly institutional one.<sup>44</sup> Towards the end of this essay, Derrida asks:

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<sup>44</sup> Indeed, though there is little space to enter into this discussion here, we can see that this echoes Derrida’s argument in ‘Violence et métaphysique’ (1967b), which challenges a conception of alterity that would operate outside of determination. This focus on necessary departmental determinations is, therefore, quite consistent with this earlier work. For more on this, see Wortham (2010)

Comment s'orienter vers la fondation d'un nouveau droit ? Cette fondation nouvelle négociera un compromis avec le droit traditionnel. Celui-ci devra donc fournir, sur son propre sol fondateur, l'appui depuis lequel sauter vers un autre lieu fondateur. (1990a: 436)

While Derrida here is speaking explicitly about the foundation of law, we can see that this is relevant specifically for any type of foundation, including educational institutions. What Derrida describes, however, is not the type of radical revolution or separation that we might expect from a new foundation; rather, it is one of negotiation or compromise. While such a new foundation must still leap (*sauter*), it is from this old foundation that it does so. And, indeed, Derrida introduces the term 'mochlos' to describe this lever which would allow such a leap: a Greek term for that which enables a leaping or pushing movement, that on which one 's'appuie pour forcer et déplacer' (1990a: 436). For Derrida, the question then is not whether one should have a relation to the old foundation, but rather how one should relate and to what degree: 'la difficulté consistera, comme toujours, dans la détermination du meilleur levier, les Grecs diraient du meilleur *mochlos*' (1990a: 436).<sup>45</sup> This question is not removed from that of the university, of course, and referring to Kant's depiction of the university, split between the left (philosophy) and the right (those faculties with varying degrees of proximity to power or government), Derrida finds a double movement:

Kant nous l'aura dit, il faut que l'Université marche sur deux pieds, le droit et le gauche, que l'un soutienne l'autre pendant qu'il se soulève et fasse, à chaque pas, le saut. (1990a: 437)

As with the pushing-off of the lever, the depiction of the university as walking, is once again a question of finding the right balance: at each step, one relies on the other. Importantly, this is not simply true for the creation of new foundations, but also when the other foot goes forward to. Each time, there is a leap, "fasse ... le saut". This is once again the 'double gesture', these two different responses, that we have seen before: keeping parts of the previous foundation (professional competence and rigour, as Derrida says above), while also using these to move towards a new foundation itself.

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<sup>45</sup> Derrida also employs this for the idea of 'déplacer un navire', which we will see employed in the nautical metaphors of *L'Autre Cap* (1991a)

### Section Three: Double Movement

In elaborating the double gesture and its relation to the university, I have followed a rather orthodox trajectory. Simon Morgan Wortham, for instance, devotes the third chapter of *Counter-Institutions* to what he labels the ‘Double-keeping’ of Derrida. Similarly, Vivienne Orchard’s third chapter is entitled ‘The Double Strategy’: both chapters consider the texts above, alongside this double movement, and both reach similar conclusions about Derrida’s “strategy” in relation to educational institutions. Although we may have followed a similar itinerary, however, I wish to now raise a fundamental difference in how this “strategy” relates to Derrida’s overall philosophy.

Both Wortham and Orchard articulate this problematic in similar ways. Though both make efforts to link it to Derrida’s greater philosophy, in the end, they both also settle on simply demonstrating that Derrida is involved in a double gesture here, which he himself describes as strategic. Wortham captures the importance of the ‘double-keeping’ that forms part of this approach, and doubts ‘that there is a single text that would not allow some kind of illustration or reading in these terms’ (2006: 75). Indeed, there is good reason, which both explicate well, to think of this as a strategy. In ‘Mochlos’, Derrida himself insists ‘that the movement from one foundation to another can be thought of as ‘un conflit entre plusieurs stratégies du *mochlos*’ (1990a: 436). Orchard focuses in on this double movement of ‘defence and attack’ that she sees as defining Derrida’s engagement with *GREPH*, and carefully demonstrates that this maps onto the double movement of ‘transformation and reinscription’ (2011: 94). This recalls one of the standard outlines of deconstruction that Derrida proposes in ‘signature, événement, context’. There, Derrida described ‘un double geste’, which involved both reversing oppositions and deplating the general system that they were a part of (1972b: 392). Furthermore, this was also described in terms of “strategy”, as the need to keep the “old name” for a concept was done ‘provisoirement et stratégiquement’ (1972b: 392). We can see, therefore, that this double movement or ‘double garde’ has something to do with the strategic movement that forms part of an early definition of deconstruction. And, moreover, that Derrida is thinking about both deconstruction and his own philosophical engagement with institutions in terms of strategic moves.

However, this does not mean that it is only strategy that is at work here. Without dismissing either Orchard or Wortham’s accounts, there is also something more substantial at play which neither fully articulates; and, importantly for our interests, this is vital not simply

for understanding Derrida's institutional engagements in education, but also his other work outside of education. Indeed, though Orchard makes some effort to account for Bennington's claim that this 'double geste' is 'quasi une règle de politique déconstructive' (1991: 244),<sup>46</sup> she does not fully accomplish this. To do so, however, we need to look more closely at the meaning of the 'double garde' in the university and the *promesse-mémoire* structure that we have seen earlier, and which we labelled *exappropriation*.

Indeed, returning to 'Les pupilles de l'Université', we can see that this argument continues, but on notably less strategic terms. Derrida describes how in moments of crisis, institutions bring together two contradictory impulses:

En période de "crise" [...] la provocation à penser rassemble dans le *même* instant le désir de mémoire et l'exposition d'un avenir, la fidélité d'un gardien assez fidèle pour vouloir garder jusqu'à la chance de l'avenir. (1990a: 497/8)

What is important here for our interests is the double terminology here, both *mémoire* and *avenir*. In the previous chapter, we saw the terms *mémoire* and *promesse* were important parts of *exappropriation*, and we can see that this same movement is at work here also. As we can see, these are not two completely separate movements, but rather occur in the same moment. Indeed, in Chapter 1, we saw that this was often discussed in terms of 'garder', and this is also present here too:

Je suis plutôt tenté de penser que l'une ne se garde pas sans l'autre, sans garder l'autre et sans garder de l'autre. Différemment. Cette double garde serait assignée, comme sa responsabilité, à l'étrange destin de l'Université. (1990a: 498)

With this notion of a 'double garde', we can see that Derrida insists on the necessary interconnection between the *mémoire* and *promesse* (or the term used here, *avenir*). This notion of *double garde* is the *exappropriation* that we introduced in Chapter 1: placing an inherent connection between both determination as memorialization, that is appropriation, and the potential for the singular to repeat in other contexts, to de-limit itself in expropriation.

What we see in Derrida's use of the *Anspruch* and the idea of this 'double garde' is an appeal to the affirmation structure and its own splitting into promise and memory in determination. This idea of a 'double garde' is, therefore, not an external strategy applied onto education, but rather something which belongs to a deeper structure of which Derrida's work

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<sup>46</sup> Cited in Orchard (2011: 69).

on education is a part. Indeed, this also allows us to explain how these occur, as Derrida claims above, in ‘le *même* instant’. Derrida stresses the ‘same’ here, so as to make clear that these are not two separate movements, but rather part of the same one. Indeed, the advantage of thinking about this not only as strategy, is that it can be tied into another related problematic: the *à la fois*. This allows us to see that this is not only part of education, but part of his philosophy more generally. Throughout his work, Derrida reflects on the *à la fois*, and indeed in ‘Nombre de oui’, directly after having introduced the splitting of the *oui, oui*, he insists:

Le second premier *oui* rompt avec le premier *oui* (qui était déjà double), il *se coupe* de lui pour pouvoir être qu’il doit être, “premier”, unique, uniquement unique, ouvrant à *son tour, in vicem, vice versa*, à sa date, chaque fois la première fois (*vices, ves, volta, time, Mal*, etc.). (1987c: 630)

We see here then that the *fois* plays an important role in relation to the singular, as that which takes place one time and uniquely.<sup>47</sup> The *fois*, like the date, ash and signature, comes to be a way of thinking through the relationship between singularity and iteration, or as Derrida details in a much later text, *Voyous*: ‘la nécessité de penser ce que veut dire telle chose énigmatique qu’on appelle la “fois” et chaque fois le “re-tour”’ (2003a: 19). ‘Une fois’, therefore, is something which is unique, which will only happen ‘one time’, but as the link to ‘chaque fois’ also emphasizes, this is part of a system of iteration. The double gesture that Derrida wants to engage in, both upholding and deconstructing the singularity of the university, therefore, is part of this *à la fois* structure and takes place in the same movement. This is what we have understood in the previous chapter as *exappropriation*.

Certainly, of course, this can give rise to strategic engagements, and Derrida is precisely doing that. In particular, Derrida’s account here offers a powerful resource to critique any determination of education or the university which falls short, while at the same time upholding these institutions. However, we also need to see that while this is strategic, it is also the outworking of a deeper structure. This is important for two reasons: first, it helps us fully account for all aspects of Derrida’s work on education, which we will see shortly; and, second, it helps us understand why Derrida’s engagements with education are so intimately tied to institutions, to which we will now turn.

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<sup>47</sup> At other stages, Derrida will stress the linguistic differences between ‘à la fois’ and other translations. For instance, there is no temporal reference, as the English ‘at the same time’ carries: ‘L’anglais *one time* y nomme le temps, ce que ne fait ni *once*, ni *einmal*, ni le français, l’italien ou l’espagnol’ (1986: 12).



#### Section Four: *Ciph* and Institutions

To understand how this problematic relates to institutions, it is necessary to look closely at an educational engagement we have yet to consider, the *Collège international de philosophie (Ciph)*.<sup>48</sup> This has already been briefly mentioned above, but it is worth looking closely at its function as an institution. Established in 1983, this was an important collaboration between multiple philosophers, but was founded by Derrida, François Chatelet, Dominique Lecourt, and Jean-Pierre Faye.<sup>49</sup> In May 1982, these four were tasked with creating an international college by the then Minister of Research and Industry, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, under the Mitterrand government. Derrida was elected the first director of the college. One of the major aims of the college was to enable research that could not find support in already established institutions. And, in many ways, it continued much of the spirit of *GREPH*, and included supporting *lycée* teachers to engage in independent research.<sup>50</sup> Importantly, though the government offered it financial support and assisted in its foundation, it was deliberately founded as a non-governmental institution, part public and part private. Derrida regularly referenced this status throughout a series of different interviews and public comments; however, to unpack the importance of this institutional structure, I want to refer to a late talk given about the *Ciph*. ‘Le modèle philosophique d’une contre-institution’ was a talk originally given in 2002 at Cerisy-la-salle, where Derrida proposes that the *Collège international* represents what he labels a ‘contre-institution’. Understanding the different meanings of this term can help us unpack both the importance of institutions for Derrida’s engagements in education, but also help us more fully understand Derrida’s conception of institutions in general.

One of the first meanings of ‘contre-institution’ is not, in fact, a negative one. Derrida is keen to stress that this term *contre* does not imply an aggressive opposition, but rather a relational approach with regards to other institutions:

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<sup>48</sup> Whether or not the *Ciph* only has its first letter capitalised or has all its letters capitalised (as in *GREPH*) is somewhat inconsistent. I have chosen to follow its use in *Du droit à la philosophie*, where only the first letter is capitalised; however, it is worth noting, for instance, that it is sometimes all capitalised, such as in ‘Le modèle philosophique d’une contre-institution’ (2005).

<sup>49</sup> It should be noted that Jean-François Lyotard, though not an “official” founder, seems to have played an important role at the beginning. Michel Deguy, for instance, describes him as one of the founders (Deguy 2007: xiv).

<sup>50</sup> As Derrida says in *Libération* : ‘C’est d’ailleurs dans cet esprit que nous avons fondé le Collège international de philosophie: depuis sept ans, de nombreux professeurs du secondaire (philosophes ou non) y conduisent des travaux d’enseignement et de recherche’ (1990c: 34). Vivienne Orchard looks closely at the ways in which many of the principle positions of *GREPH* were endorsed in the founding documents of the college (2011: 145/7).

C'est une contre-institution, à savoir une institution (avec un statut, des règles de fonctionnement, un lieu) qui, contrairement à ce que pourrait laisser penser le mot de *contre-institution*, n'est pas destinée à faire la guerre, à contrer, à s'opposer [...] par exemple [à] celui qui domine les institutions universitaires d'enseignement ou de recherche d'État ; mais plutôt à en équilibrer ou à en questionner librement l'hégémonie, à en ouvrir et occuper les marges. (2005: 253)

The *Collège* is a contre-institution therefore, insofar as it challenges an institutional consensus and hegemony; such challenging, however, does not commit it to an inherent negativity or naysaying, but rather involves a collaborative approach with other institutions. In an interview in *Libération*, to mark the founding of the college, Derrida foregrounds this; describing the *Ciph* as an 'instrument supplémentaire à la disposition d'autres institutions' (1983: 15). Equally, in a radio program celebrating the tenth anniversary of the founding of the *Collège*, he explains that the *Ciph* had a non-combative approach to other institutions, instead seeking to work 'autant que possible en collaboration avec ces institutions' (1993: 21:35). One meaning of 'contre-institution' then is that the *Ciph* is not simply an institution itself, but also a purposeful intervention into a network of institutions, designed to open these up and challenge over-arching hegemonies.

Indeed, this resistance to established hegemonies can be seen in the *Ciph*'s focus on new subjects. In this same radio interview, Derrida described 'la nouveauté des problématiques' as 'notre principe régulateur' (1993: 21:40). Furthermore, this is a point repeated in the 2002 talk, when he insists that 'la recherche de ces nouveaux objets, nouveaux thèmes, nouveaux champs [...] ce fut notre impératif majeur, notre souci primordial, constant, actif' (2005: 253). This commitment to developing new problematics, therefore, is a core motivation behind the college, and one shared with *GREPH*. It also represents one of the most effective methods of challenging institutional consensus, by providing a space for objects of study that might otherwise be neglected or pushed to the margins. As we might imagine, this had a natural tendency towards what could be labelled 'interdisciplinary' or 'transdisciplinary' approaches; however, Derrida more than once (e.g. (2005: 253)) registers his scepticism with regards to such terms. He objects to the idea precisely because it assumes pre-determined objects of study, as well as disciplines determined in advance. The *Ciph*'s purpose was precisely to resist these pre-determined disciplines. Of course, departmental distinctions are one way of assuring competence and rigour in a subject, and so such an approach risks missing out on this. This is not something that Derrida neglects; instead, however, he proposes that the

risk of ‘incompetence’ is always necessary to fully engage with new problematics (1993: 21:41). By the same token, it is important to emphasise that Derrida is also acknowledging that the *Collège* is itself an institution, which will inevitably have its own divisions of knowledge. In fact, in his introduction of the term ‘contre-institution’, Derrida stresses the second part of this term first: ‘c’est une contre-institution, à savoir une institution (avec un statut, des règles de fonctionnement, un lieu)’ (2005: 253). Derrida is not denying, therefore, that the *Ciph* will have to necessarily divide knowledge. It will do so, however, as a ‘contre-institution’. In other words, by proposing alternative divisions and determinations than those within present educational institutions.

However, there is another meaning of this ‘contre-institution’ at play, which can help us understand the specific institutional setup of the *Ciph*. It is not simply that Derrida wants the *Ciph* to be constantly responding to other educational institutions, but he also wants it to be in constant response to itself. Derrida makes this quite explicit, promoting the status of the *Collège* one of its central political themes: ‘la réflexion politique du collège porte sur son propre statut’ (1993: 22:10). To achieve this, the *Collège* itself has a deliberately unstable structure, working ‘contre toute stabilité définitive’ (1993: 21:33). This involves concrete institutional structures, such as having no permanent positions available, as well as being originally founded without a president.<sup>51</sup> The international nature of the *Ciph* also contributed to this. Derrida describes this as ‘un principe sacré dans la charte et dans le titre du Collège’ (2005: 254). As Orchard (2011: 145) states, the inclusion of foreign academics was not simply superficial, but they were integrated even into the ‘administrative, decision-making process of the running of the college’. This does not simply have the important effect of introducing ideas from other national contexts, but also brings the question of translation and other languages to the fore, ‘surtout autour des langues et des traductions de la philosophie’ (2005: 254). Moreover, though we have seen that the *Ciph* is committed to an openness to new problems, in the 1983 *Libération* interview, we also see a privileging of a new articulation of certain traditional concepts: ‘Le concept de “critique”, celui de “légitimation” [...] peuvent appeler à leur tour, comme celui d’institution et tant d’autres, de nouvelles élucidations’ (1983: 15). In his insistence on many others, Derrida clearly wants to keep the potential of this college open, but the three that he privileges here also relate precisely to the legitimation of knowledge and the very status of the institution itself.

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<sup>51</sup> The position of director was designed to run the college, according to annual terms; however, eventually the role of president would be created.

This opens up another meaning of the ‘contre-institution’, an institution which responds to and to some degree resists its own status as an institution.<sup>52</sup> Peter Pericles Trifonas (2000: 119) makes a brief link between institutions and the *Ciph*, but does not expand on how this might link into Derrida’s thinking of institutions and education. There are three characteristics that can be outlined here, and which will see recur in future chapters: first, the *Ciph* is part of a network of other institutions, and within that seek to resist a hegemonizing consensus; second, it is committed to continuous self-reflexivity, that is to say a need to reflect continuously on what it has become and what it is becoming. This is not to suggest that there are not moments of stability – once again, Derrida insists this is an institution – but that these moments are subject to continuous iteration and de-limitation in the future. And thirdly, as we have noted above, the ‘international’ in this title is not simply an afterthought, but rather an effort to resist one of the most significant original contexts, the national, and the ways that this might restrict iteration.<sup>53</sup> As we will see in future chapters, this is the common structure which will link his engagement with institutions. Importantly, these three characteristics (anti-hegemonic, self-reflexive, and international) are all connected to the question of iteration and *exappropriation*. Recall that in Chapter 1, *exappropriation* was given as a term which described both the necessary appropriation of the event, and in this very act the effacement of singularity. This emphasised the importance of determination, as that which allowed singular events to continue on in *mémoire*. This determination also opened up the second part of this process of *exappropriation*, whereby this could be repeated into the future in other contexts.

In the previous chapter, determination in general was addressed. On the one hand, therefore, institutions represent simply one form of this determination. Institutions clearly do not exhaust the many ways in which determination can occur; however, they do represent an important example of determination, and indeed help us further understand Derrida’s focus on determination in his philosophy. However, as we see here in relation to education, and as we will see repeatedly throughout this thesis, Derrida has continuous recourse to institutions in his political interventions. This is no doubt partially because institutions are quite often an

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<sup>52</sup> It is worth noting, of course, that Simon Morgan Wortham has taken up this figure of ‘contre-institution’ also to describe Derrida’s work on the university, and he nicely brings out the ‘with-against’ structure of this “contre” (2006: 4). However, though Wortham develops this ‘contre’ through a series of other texts, he does not include ‘Le modèle philosophique d’un contre-institution’, but also – for reasons outlined in our section on the double structure – he fails to link this ‘contre-institution’ into the deeper question of iteration and *exappropriation*.

<sup>53</sup> For more on the complex relation between nationalism, nations and philosophy in Derrida and others, see Oisín Keohane’s excellent recent work, *Cosmo-nationalism: American, French and German Philosophy* (2017).

important part of any form of political engagement or activism; however, a more substantial reason for this, is that institutions are not simply one potential form of determination, but also represent a site where the act of determination takes place itself. They are not just one iteration, but also limit and determine future iterations. In this sense then, establishing self-reflexive, international and relational institutions becomes a way of exposing the institution itself to iteration: instead of limiting *exappropriation*, there is an effort to remain open to all of its effects. As we will have reason to return to this in future chapters, I will label these *exappropriating institutions*. My use of *exappropriating* as a present participle is deliberate here: both emphasising that Derrida's engagement with institution involves *exappropriating* them, but also that these institutions themselves are continuously in the process of *exappropriating* themselves.

One way we can see how this dynamic of *exappropriating institutions* tie into the double movement that we have seen above is by considering Derrida's essay 'Psyché: invention de l'autre', published in the volume that carries its name: *Psyché: inventions de l'autre* (1987d). In this essay, Derrida considers the concept of invention, but also how this relates to institutions. There, Derrida speaks about the limitations of the concept of invention: both its 'humanisme métaphysique', which presents human creation as an all-powerful act, but also that the present concept simply limits itself to articulating latent possibilities, 'à inventer le possible à partir du possible' (1987d: 58). Instead, Derrida wants to think through a new concept of invention, but importantly it is not 'contre elle (the old form of invention) mais au-delà d'elle que nous cherchons à ré-inventer l'invention même, une autre invention, ou plutôt une invention de l'autre' (1987d: 59/60). And, indeed, Derrida ties this new concept of invention closely to his own philosophy: 'La déconstruction est inventive ou elle n'est pas' (1987d: 35). This might give the impression that deconstruction is involved in some form of radical break from previous systems. This is partially true. However, what really links invention and deconstruction is precisely the way in which this takes place: iteration. Rather than this new concept of invention breaking all the rules, it breaks these rules by following them in a particular way:

Le mouvement même de cette fabuleuse répétition peut, selon un croisement de chance et de nécessité, produire le nouveau d'un événement. [...] En tournant ces règles dans le respect de ces règles mêmes afin de laisser l'autre venir ou s'annoncer dans l'ouverture de cette déhiscence. [...] Ce geste consiste à défier et à exhiber la structure

précaire de ces règles : tout en les respectant et par la marque de respect qu'il invente.  
(1987d: 58/9)

It is repetition, or precisely iteration, which allows this invention of the other to come forward. There is no guarantee that such an arrival will take place, but it is only on this condition that it can take place at all. Though this may at first appear counter-intuitive, the relation to the other does not take place through the radically new, but rather 'à travers l'économie du même, voire en la mimant ou en la répétant' (1987d: 60). Importantly, following these rules also involves demonstrating these rules. Throughout the thesis, for explanatory reasons, I will often break up the double movement of deconstruction. Yet this movement occurs simultaneously, and we can see that it takes places through repetition. The rules are followed, *répondre à*, but this opens up the possibility of re-thinking the very foundation of these rules and a deconstructive response, *répondre de*.

There is a second point to be made here, one which highlights the importance of this link between iteration and institutions. Derrida's interventions do not simply take place in the present; as we have seen in the previous chapter, there was also a focus on how determination necessarily allows a taking place in the future. This is also true of Derrida's interventions in politics. These do not simply criticise established institutional structures, but also establish institutions themselves. Derrida underlines this when linking invention and deconstruction: 'La déconstruction est inventive ou elle n'est pas [...] son écriture n'est pas seulement performative, elle produit des règles – d'autres conventions – pour de nouvelles performativités' (1987d: 35). These are not, therefore, just a 'once-off' interruption, but rather each intervention necessarily establishes its own conventions and their own systems of repetition. We will return to the implications of this in later chapters, but for the moment it is worth emphasising the importance of these institutions not simply as one example of iteration, but also as determining contexts of iteration themselves.

Institutions, therefore, are at least one privileged form of determination, precisely because they are themselves both an iteration and a site for iteration to take place. If Derrida is interested in educational institutions, this is not simply because they raise inherently important political questions in general – but rather because they raise inherently important political questions for Derrida's own philosophy.

### Section Five: Democratisation, ‘une chance historique’

Indeed, it is to this political dimension that we can turn to conclude. In this context, it is worth stressing the importance of one recurring term in Derrida’s educational interventions: democratisation. Democratisation represents a core concern for Derrida in all his engagements with education. Indeed, this is something that we see in every institutional involvement that we have discussed so far. In the 1977 radio interview supporting *GREPH*, Derrida insists that the potential changes to education represent ‘une chance historique’ for democratisation (1977: 15:46).<sup>54</sup> Orchard has nicely demonstrated that the adoption of this rhetoric of democratisation is in part a response to the Haby reforms themselves, which claimed to be a modernising and democratising force (2011: 51). However, though Orchard is entirely correct, the idea that education could become more egalitarian and serve as a democratising force is something which remains with Derrida throughout his work. Indeed, in the ‘Rapport de la Commission de Philosophie et d’Épistémologie’, published twelve years after the interview, we see this same term ‘une chance historique’ used to describe the extension of philosophy to a greater number of students: ‘la philosophie atteint désormais un public qu’elle n’a jamais eu, ni en nombre, ni quant à son origine sociale, son héritage culturel, et sa formation scolaire. Il y a là pour elle une *chance historique* qui jusqu’à présent a été complètement perdue’ (1990a: 636). We see, therefore, a real awareness of concrete demographic differences and a belief that such an extension can have an impact on people’s lives. Moreover, it is a phrase he repeats in a radio interview in 1990 on *France Culture*, defending the report as ‘une chance historique’ for ‘démocratisation’ (Philosophie 1990: 23:21).

This democratisation, of course, goes both ways and involves philosophy becoming more democratic in its content and form, as well as being open to more people. In an interview in *Libération*, defending the 1989 report, we see Derrida making a similar point about the potential for ‘la philosophie populaire’:

Une certaine démocratisation est en cours, elle est largement insuffisante, mais si on ne tient pas compte des conditions et des *données* de ce processus [...] on la conduira à l’échec. Et je le répète, tenir compte des faits (sociaux, linguistiques, etc.), cela ne consiste pas à se contenter de les enregistrer. [...] Aucune pédagogie n’a d’ailleurs jamais été possible sans la prise en charge de ces différences. (1990c: 33)

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<sup>54</sup> In fact, this is a point that Sarah Kofman makes strongly in the interview and with which Derrida concurs.

Derrida's main point here is that access to philosophy needs to be democratised and that this cannot be the case of simply applying the same curriculum to different people. Instead, rather, there must be certain adjustments that enrich the present system already established. Taking account of socio-demographic differences does not mean diluting the system, however: 'non pour s'y ajuster, comme on nous en accuse parfois bêtement, mais pour en tirer le meilleur parti' (1990c: 33). Rather, it is about accepting these differences, not simply to acknowledge them, but also to adapt to them and take the best from them. Yet again then, we see the importance of this democratisation and the concrete awareness of socio-political differences.

It is worth stressing that this interest in democratisation has implications for our understanding of the history of Derrida's engagement with democracy. There is something of a consensus that Derrida's interest in democracy is a late arrival in his work. Samir Haddad, for example, can claim in his book, entitled *Derrida and the Inheritance of Democracy* (2013), that 'democracy was absent in name from Derrida's writings for a long time. It only started appearing regularly in his work in the early 1990s, and the majority of these appearances involves a fleeting reference to the term' (2013: 45). As the above suggests, this is simply untrue. Equally, while Henry A. Giroux (2005: 78) brings forward the implicit connections to education in Derrida's position on education as a 'resource to enhance the capacity for civic action and democratic change', he pays no attention to the quite explicit relation that Derrida establishes between pedagogy and democracy. It is this focus on democratisation which helps bring out a much longer and active engagement with the idea of democracy across Derrida's work.

There are two further implications for the role of democratisation in understanding Derrida. The first is for our understanding of *démocratie à venir*. This is a concept that will be more thoroughly addressed in Chapter 6; however, for the moment, we can acknowledge that it represents one of the most important political concepts for Derrida. For his work, it captures an inherently inexhaustible perfectibility and non-presentability within democracy, whereby democracy can never be fully present or adequate to itself – there always remains something about democracy that is promised and is yet to come. This concept has courted controversy. Specifically, it has been taken as meretricious: an empty concept, donning the rhetoric of the political, but totally abstract and useless in practice. The most vigorous critique of this comes from Jacques Rancière. In his contribution to the *Adieu Derrida* volume, entitled 'Does Democracy Mean Something?', Rancière describes Derrida's conception of democracy as inscribing him within an impractical conception of alterity, one which commits him to 'an



endless process of deconstruction, crossing-out and apophasis' (2007: 99). For Rancière, Derrida's *démocratie à venir* both gives too much, insofar as it is too abstract, and too little, insofar as its emphasis on otherness means that Derrida cannot take account of political subjectification.<sup>55</sup> However, what this focus on democratisation and education suggests is that this is far from the case. Taking account of Derrida's consistent and substantial interest in pedagogy and educational reform, we can see that his interests in democracy is far from hollow or exclusively abstract. Rather, education is seen as a democratising force, and one which also requires itself to change with this democratisation. Such an inclusion will change what philosophy means, but it will also change society itself: in this sense, it is a thoroughly concrete way of thinking about democracy, one not simply focussed on a time to come, but also engaged in a time here and now. In fact, this suggests that the distance between Rancière and Derrida is rather small. For Rancière, politics takes place when the divisions in society are re-worked so that those who are marginalised and voiceless, 'les sans parts', take on a position of power and agency. For Derrida, this focus on democratisation demonstrates the need for the contingent forms of democracy to be continuously and exorbitantly opened. Somewhat ironically, then, Rancière's critique helps demonstrate one of the close links between their respective philosophies. It also helps underscore the important political role that Derrida grants to education.

Secondly, and of equal importance, this can help us understand the genealogy of Derrida's later work on education too. In the early 1990s, Derrida introduces a focus on the *right to philosophy* (le droit à la philosophie). This occurs particularly in two texts, the long preface to *Du droit à la philosophie* (1990a) and also *Le droit à la philosophie du point de vue cosmopolitique* (1997d).<sup>56</sup> There are multiple different meanings to the phrase and much depends on where we place the emphasis. However, the interpretation that I wish to focus on is 'droit' as a 'right', that is to say 'the right to philosophy'. This particular interpretation is given more space in *Le droit à la philosophie du point de vue cosmopolitique*. There, Derrida focuses on UNESCO as an exemplary international institution, and one which implicitly promotes a right to philosophy:

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<sup>55</sup> Rancière appears to mean this both in his own specific terms, and in general (2007: 96).

<sup>56</sup> The latter was published only in 1997, but originally given at an event in 1991. Trifonas (2000: 136) maintains that this was given in April 1994, but the published French version maintains that the UNESCO conference took place in 23 May 1991 (1997d: 7).

Ces institutions [...] sont déjà des *philosophèmes*. [...] Telles institutions impliquent le partage d'une culture et d'un langage philosophique, engageant dès lors à rendre possible, et d'abord par l'éducation, l'accès à ce langage et à cette culture. (1997d: 13)

There will, of course, be more to say about these international institutions in Chapter 6. For the moment, however, it is worth stressing the way Derrida presents this right to philosophy. As we can see, it passes first via education, but the right itself is implied by the very existence of international institutions.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, while we cannot dwell on this here, this right is implied in any state which supports these institutions, and this includes non-democratic states:

Dès lors, qu'ils le disent ou non, le sachent ou non, se conduisent ou non en conséquence, ces États et ces peuples, par leur adhésion à ces institutions contractent un engagement philosophique, et donc au moins un engagement à assurer la culture ou l'éducation philosophique indispensable à l'intelligence et à la mise en œuvre de ces engagements. (1997d: 14)

Therefore, whether the state is aware of it, it is supporting a minimum right to philosophy by virtue of its support of the charter of UNESCO or any other international institution. This is a question of assuring a right to education so that these people can understand their rights under these international institutions.

In the *right to philosophy* then, we can see, as with Derrida's other educational engagements, an interest in the democratic expansion of knowledge itself. This is a direct continuation of his previous work in education, bridged by a shared interest in the expansion of philosophy beyond restricted groups. We can see then that such a politically focused thinking on education is not something new for Derrida, but part of decades of reflection on the relationship between education and democratisation. Importantly, this does not just occur spontaneously or automatically, but as Derrida's focus on UNESCO suggests, this takes place with and through institutions.

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<sup>57</sup> Indeed, it might well be asked why Derrida does not simply employ the classic terminology of 'demos' in his thinking on philosophy. Though this will be addressed in chapter six, the international dimension of his thinking I believe suggests that Derrida does not want to restrict such a 'community' to a national demos, but also wishes to use it to generate new thinking around an international demos and its formation.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, we have seen that education represents an important political question for Derrida. An issue in which he frequently intervened, since at least the 1970s, and a question which, while mainly neglected in our understanding of his work, has received some attention. However, as I have argued even though these accounts (especially Orchard's work) help to expand our knowledge of the specifics of this intervention, they miss out on the deeper links to Derrida's work. I have demonstrated the important institutional structures that Derrida emphasises (self-reflexivity, anti-hegemonic, international) and argued that these are far from accidental but related to the dynamic of iteration in his work. This structure is what I have described as an *exappropriating institution*. Finally, I have shown the important link that Derrida forms between education and democratisation, which helps offer both a better understanding of democracy in Derrida's *oeuvre*, but also shows the importance of education and institutions within his philosophy.

### Chapter Three: Hospitality and Unconditional Institutions

In the previous two chapters, we have begun to explore the implications of *exappropriation* and have seen that this has an institutional form. It is now time to consider this in another context: Derrida's work in support of undocumented migrants, *les sans papiers*. This has often been understood through a small number of publications on hospitality; however, as I will demonstrate, restricting ourselves to these, severely limits our understanding of hospitality in Derrida's work. Most notably, it obscures the fact that Derrida was actively involved in different political campaigns and institutions designed to support asylum seekers and migrants. As we will see, this is once again a question of two different types of response and the structure of *exappropriating institutions* that emerged in the final sections of the last chapter.

Beginning then with Derrida's organising against the 'délit d'hospitalité', I outline the context of Derrida's political interventions and demonstrate that these are motivated by a desire to make political and legal changes. Turning to the distinction between the conditional and the unconditional, I outline the importance of the concept of hospitality in Derrida's work. I argue that there are two versions of the unconditional at work there and that these return us to the double movement explored in the last chapter. The first version of the unconditional justifies his historical approach to hospitality and his argument for civil disobedience. This is closely tied to his position on the regulative idea. The second version has a different type of inaccessibility and this returns us to *exappropriation*. Through this, we see once again the importance of two types of response, and I argue that Derrida's co-founding of the *Parlement international des écrivains* represents another example of *exappropriating institutions* and helps confirm this as central to his philosophical and political work.

#### Section One: Délit d'hospitalité

Perhaps the most neglected dimension of Derrida's conception of hospitality is the role of his political interventions in support of migrants. As we saw in Derrida's educational engagements, much of Derrida's work was inspired by a response to proposed or established government reforms. And this is also very much the case for his engagements around migration and hospitality. They are a response to a series of political events in France and abroad, and this can be best summarized by the term 'délit d'hospitalité', or 'crime of hospitality': this was installed through a series of laws aimed at criminalizing anyone assisting undocumented migrants. These laws, summarized at the *lois Pasqua-Debré*, began in 1986, but were substantially increased in 1993 and 1997. Alongside this, we can add the proposed 1995 law,

*la loi Toubon*, as an important context. These laws did not simply impact on undocumented migrants, but also on the obtention of visas and the rights of those born in France to nationality. Alongside this, there were two important geopolitical events. The first was the emergence of the Schengen area, which came into effect in 1995. Derrida references this within his seminars, where he explains that dissolving the European Union's internal borders has in fact strengthened the external borders of Europe.<sup>58</sup> The second is the outbreak of the Algerian Civil War in 1991, lasting until 2002. Coming from Algeria, this represents an important context for Derrida and, indeed, it is support for Algerian refugees that marks one of his first public engagements around asylum. At the time, this was viewed as a type of 'refugee crisis', though as Derrida stresses himself, there was no substantial statistical increase, and 'le nombre des demandeurs d'asile politique diminue régulièrement' (1997b: 26). Derrida's interest in hospitality was not exclusively philosophical, therefore, but also humanitarian, political and legal.

It is also one which is greatly connected to the media. Derrida regularly and publicly criticised the actions of the French government on migration. The first public sign of this dates back to a response to François Mitterrand employing the phrase 'seuil de tolérance', which carries with it a racist notion of a threshold beyond which one cannot pass.<sup>59</sup> Derrida maintains that 'cette métaphore organiciste est horrible [...] tout usage non critique de cette expression, dans un discours de droite ou de gauche est condamnable' (1990b: 29). And this continues apace throughout the 1990s. In an interview in *Le Monde* in 1997, Derrida is direct in criticising the government and the *Pasqua-Debré* laws and insisting that: 'Nous avons besoin, ici, de courage politique, de changement de direction, de fidélité aux promesses, de pédagogie civique (il faut rappeler, par exemple, que le contingent des immigrés n'est ni croissant ni menaçant – bien au contraire – depuis des décennies)' (1997e: 15). Or, indeed, we can see important public petitions and letters published (often with Pierre Bourdieu) against the laws in 1994/1995. We can see here that there is a strong and direct criticism of the present political parties:

Nous dénonçons le crime de non-assistance à une personne en danger. Nous dénonçons l'ignominie de lois raciales déguisées en retour au droit commun. Chaque fois qu'elle a voulu être le pays des droits de l'homme [...] la France a dû combattre la haine xénophobe et les masques patriotiques de l'égoïsme sordide. Ceux qui voulaient

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<sup>58</sup> Such as in session 7 and session 9 of the first year of hospitality seminars.

<sup>59</sup> An idea which the philosopher Marc Crépon has recently challenged and rewritten, see *Inhumaines conditions* (2018)

condamner Dreyfus ont ouvert la voie à ceux qui plébiscitèrent Pétain. (Bourdieu and others 1994: 2)

To call this language strong, particularly the reference to Dreyfus and Vichy France, would be something of an understatement. Such language is repeated across these public positions. And these critiques were not simply general, but often targeted specific articles in the law. For instance, in *Libération*, Derrida and others criticised ‘la loi Méhaignerie [qui] condamne de jeunes étrangers, dont toute l’existence est souvent française, à l’humiliation d’une requête explicite de cette nationalité’ (Bourdieu and others 1995: 6). Or, when they target the removal by the Pasqua law of social services to migrants: ‘sous prétexte de dissuader l’installation d’étrangers en situation irrégulière, M. Pasqua leur a pratiquement barré l’accès à la protection sociale. Il a ainsi gravement porté atteinte au principe du droit de tous à la santé’ (Ibid.). Or, again, when Derrida and Bourdieu specifically target the hostile conditions created by the government for Algerians and others to obtain visas: ‘Et, au moins autant que contre l’exigence d’un visa, nous protestons contre les conditions inédites et terriblement rigoureuses qui, sous couvert de ces nouveaux décrets, sont faites aux Algériens et tant d’autres’ (Bourdieu and Derrida 1995: 20). We can see then that Derrida’s engagement with hospitality is explicitly and publicly political. An important point, and one we will see returned to, is that such engagements also sought to effect legal change. Derrida’s engagements are designed either to challenge proposed laws, or else to help build an electoral majority to remove these laws: ‘un débat public et approfondi sur la législation française doit s’engager, notamment dans la campagne électorale, pour des raisons humanitaires et aussi pour assurer la défense des libertés universelles et des droits de tous’ (Bourdieu and others 1995: 6). This legal focus represents a core part of his thinking around hospitality.

## **Section Two: Unconditional and Conditional**

Whenever we discuss Derrida’s position on hospitality, therefore, it is worth keeping in mind this strong focus on the concrete, legal and political conditions that he sought to change. Judith Still (2010: 10) rightly criticises commentators for focusing too much on the ‘Law’ of hospitality, and not enough on his interest in the conditional laws. With this interest in the conditional thoroughly established, we can now examine the relationship between the conditional and unconditional.

For Derrida, hospitality is split between two different concepts or poles: conditional hospitality and unconditional hospitality. Conditional hospitality refers to the norms,

procedures (legal and political) of immigration and asylum. This is about welcoming and reception in a concrete and practical sense. This is a question of weighing up the risks and responsibilities of providing assistance and support. Such calculation, however, is completely foreign to unconditional hospitality. The unconditional belongs to another order, one which resists any type of economy or exchange: ‘the concept of hospitality must be rigorously distinguished from any relation of reciprocity or exchange between two parties’ (Naas 2008: 22). Indeed, if the conditional is about calculation, the unconditional has a different relationship to knowledge; as Dikeç observes, it is a mode of not knowing, ‘placing one at the threshold of knowing, pointing beyond the boundaries’ (2002: 230). The unconditional, therefore, is a persistent and intractable obligation to welcome the other, even when we do not know who or what the other is. Here, then, we see the first important characteristic of the conditional-unconditional relationship: the conditional and unconditional exist and operate on different realms. There is no way of neatly combining these together, of finding some form of equation or rule which would accommodate both the conditional and unconditional. As Derrida insists repeatedly, they are radically heterogeneous.

Positioning the unconditional and the conditional as heterogeneous is far from a novel move; however, what makes Derrida’s work here interesting is how this heterogeneity is coupled with something else: indissociability. The conditional and the unconditional are both radically different, and radically dependent. Moreover, Derrida emphasises this from his first published works on hospitality: ‘l’une appelle, implique ou prescrit l’autre’ (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 1997: 131). This is true for both terms. In the case of the conditional, it requires the existence of an unconditional hospitality in order to make sense. As Haddad (2013: 15) observes, the ‘conditional law depends on the unconditional law *in order to be hospitable*’. It is the unconditional which gives the conditional meaning, ‘that which draws and inspires all effective hospitality’ (Naas 2008: 24). Indeed, as we will see shortly in relation to civil disobedience, the dependence of conditional action on the unconditional is not simply a logical requirement, but very much a pragmatic one too. Without the unconditional, therefore, the conditional would not be possible. Olivia Custer (2002: 204) goes so far as to argue that this indissociability makes the unconditional a condition of impossibility of the conditional. While we will see that this is true in the opposition direction, I believe Custer misunderstands how this impossibility argument operates: though conditional hospitality does require something heterogeneous, the existence of an unconditional hospitality does not contradict conditional

hospitality. That said, the important point here is that conditional hospitality cannot exist in the world alone, it requires and implies an unconditional dimension.

And, similarly, this unconditional hospitality is indissociable from the conditional. Unconditional hospitality cannot simply remain abstract, it calls for its own conditioning: to do otherwise is to risk inactivity, silence and ultimately to risk hospitality becoming its opposite (Haddad 2013: 13). Derrida stresses time and again the need for the unconditional to ‘become effective’. As he states on *France Culture* in 1997: ‘Pour que cette hospitalité inconditionnelle s’incarne, qu’elle devienne effective, il faut qu’elle se détermine et que par conséquent elle donne lieu à des mesure pratiques, à des conditions, à des lois’ (1999b: 71). Or, in a different context, when discussing unconditional forgiveness, he claims: ‘si l’on veut, et il le faut, que le pardon devienne effectif, concret, historique [...] il faut que sa pureté s’engage dans une série de conditions de toutes sortes’ (Derrida and Wieviorka 2001: 119). This focus on the need for the unconditional to become effective is an important one. In spite of Derrida’s explicitness about this, however, it has not stopped many from presenting his view of the unconditional as apolitical or apathetic. Most recently, such a claim was made by Alain Finkielkraut, describing Derrida as an ‘apôtre de l’hospitalité inconditionnelle’ (Crépon and Finkielkraut 2015: 64). This is to completely misunderstand Derrida’s problematic. As we will see, it is precisely the different meaning of this ‘becoming-effective’ which also determines his engagements around hospitality and asylum. Here, we can see also that conditional hospitality is a condition of impossibility for the unconditional: this need to become effective means that the unconditional must become the conditional. While the conditional can still live on as conditional in relation to the unconditional, the unconditional cannot remain unconditional. What is important about this indissociability, particularly in relation to the unconditional, is that it is not presented as a failure or a tragedy. As Barnett (2005: 17) notes, it is not the loss of an ideal purity.

The conditional-unconditional relation, therefore, is one of radical indissociability and radical heterogeneity. As Derrida puts it: ‘cette hétérogénéité ne signifie pas une opposition’ (1999b: 71). And indeed, this needs to be understood, if we are to properly appreciate Derrida’s approach here. Two further points need to be added to this: the first is the lack of preference for one over the other. The equal importance of the unconditional and the conditional captures why this is an aporia (Haddad 2013: 14). Moreover, as others have noted, this is one of the main ways in which Derrida sets himself apart from other philosophers (Dikeç and others 2009:



8/9).<sup>60</sup> Secondly, as a consequence of this, it is a relationship of extreme tension. As Rosello notes, hospitality simply is tension (2001: 11). We cannot neglect the heterogeneity in this account, and the need to continuously balance the demands of these two different orders. Derrida maintains:

La responsabilité dans ce cadre ne consiste ni à inventer un cri imprévisible et sans précédent, ni à répéter des règles où appliquer la loi, mais à trouver à chaque fois un compromis unique entre ces deux pôles. (1999a: 114)

Each time, then, it is a case of keeping this tension and working through the equally competing demands of the conditional and unconditional. As we will see, this is not all that Derrida has to say about how this responsibility operates, and the way the unconditional ‘becomes-effective’; however, for the moment, it is worth emphasising this movement between these two poles and the need to operate between these.

### **Section Three: Civil Disobedience**

As we have seen, then, the unconditional and conditional have a fundamental role in Derrida’s thinking about politics. To help unpack its practical implications further, it is worth turning to an important example around undocumented migrants: Derrida’s argument for civil disobedience. Here, we can see that though the unconditional remains abstract, it still has an important effect that needs to be accounted for.

‘Manquements du droit à la justice (mais que manque-t-il donc aux “sans papiers” ?)’ is the transcription of an improvised speech given on the 21st of December 1996. This speech took place at the *Théâtre des Amandiers* during a demonstration of support for *les sans papiers*. Importantly, this is not the only public forum where Derrida calls for such resistance, but it is the most thorough presentation of his position.<sup>61</sup> The title itself refers us to the distinction between justice and law, which Derrida makes in *Force de loi* (1994a) and which maps onto the unconditional and conditional distinction (De Ville 2011: 37). In this speech, Derrida is identifying the failures/breaches (manquements) of justice by the law, and particularly the ‘*délit d’hospitalité*’ that we saw was his major domestic political target in his thinking on hospitality. Derrida analyses the way these laws contradict justice in multiple ways, and particularly through a comparison with laws implemented under the Vichy regime. We will see the importance of

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<sup>60</sup> Dikeç et al. suggest that this is particularly true for Levinas.

<sup>61</sup> See the call for ‘un vaste mouvement de résistance civique’ in ‘Non-assistance à personne en danger’ (Bourdieu and others 1994).

this historical approach, when we look more closely at his seminars in the next section, but for the time being we will restrict ourselves to the argument for civil disobedience.

Derrida is far from content to simply point out the gap between what is legal and what is just: rather, he also maintains there are certain cases when action needs to be taken, in opposition to what is legal: ‘Nous devons aussi, comme certains d’entre nous l’ont fait, défier le gouvernement en nous déclarant prêts à juger nous-mêmes de l’hospitalité que nous voulons apporter aux “sans papiers”, dans les cas que nous jugeons appropriés (1997: 90).<sup>62</sup> For Derrida, such resistance against the law is only justifiable if it is done with reference to a ‘higher law’, and it is here that he introduces civil disobedience:

C’est ce qu’on appelle aux États-Unis la désobéissance civique par laquelle un citoyen déclare qu’*au nom d’une loi plus élevée* il n’obéira pas à telle ou telle disposition législative qu’il juge inique et coupable, préférant ainsi la délinquance à la honte, et le prétendu délit à l’injustice. (1997: 90)

It is in ‘in the name of a higher law’ that such civic or civil disobedience is necessary. Though Derrida does not name this explicitly, the reference to law and justice in the title suggests that this higher law is precisely that of the unconditional. There are two important consequences of this: first, we can see that the conditional requires the unconditional not simply as a logical reference point, but also as a pragmatic and political one. The unconditional thus allows and guides conditional actions and engagements. The second point follows that rather than being abstracted or removed from the “real” world, the unconditional has an important effect and impact on the here-and-now of political action. This is something which must be taken into account.

This is one way of understanding the ‘becoming effective’ of the unconditional. It is not simply that the unconditional needs to become determined in a finite world, but rather that it can still be effective as an abstract pole to refer to. Such an effect is far from negligible, and as we can see in Derrida’s argument, this anchors and justifies his commitment to resist French legislation.<sup>63</sup> However, as we saw in the first section, simply because Derrida proposes to

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<sup>62</sup> Though there is no space to address it here, Derrida also makes frequent reference here to “human rights” and dignity. We will discuss human rights in chapter six, but it is worth noting at this stage, that it is at work here in the discussion of civil disobedience.

<sup>63</sup> A strategy which has, indeed, been re-confirmed most recently. Cédric Herrou, a farmer and immigration activity, has been convicted multiple times of assisting undocumented migrants, but these were ultimately dismissed and his actions judged as constitutional on the ‘principe de fraternité’ by the French Constitutional Council, *Le Conseil constitutionnel*, in July 2018.

disobey French legislation does not mean he does not also wish to change it. What is important about Derrida's argument for civil disobedience is that he also insists on a longer-term approach, beyond the here-and-now, which will change the legislation:

Enfin, au cours de toute sorte de manifestations et de déclarations publiques, il me semble qu'il faut aussi lutter pour changer un jour la loi : car c'est la seule perspective qui permette d'espérer sérieusement un jour faire plus et mieux que résister empiriquement au coup par coup et interminablement. (1997: 90)

Derrida thus suggests that civil disobedience alone is not sufficient and must be complimented by an effort to change the legislation itself. And, indeed, this also mandates an engagement in the messy world of electoral politics. Derrida both explicitly critiques the right within France, such as 'Chirac, Juppé, Debré', while also criticizing the left for its lack of presence: 'la gauche parlementaire était ou bien absente sur les bancs de l'Assemblée nationale, ou bien discrète et en retrait dans son opposition' (1997: 78). This form of political engagement, therefore, is not above or beyond electoral politics, but also seeks to be involved with and affect this. Hence, Derrida insists on the need to pose these questions to the left before the next election and to insist that it develops legislation which is consistent with what is just: 'exerçons des pressions, posons des questions, exigeons des réponses précises, [...] pour un autre politique [...] [et] un droit des étrangers qui ne soit pas un manquement à la justice' (1997: 91). While the questions that are posed here are precisely around how politics will create better legislative conditions, it is worth noting that it is once again through a reference to justice or, in our terms, the unconditional. This follows then a structure of 'in the name of a higher law' and demonstrates that the unconditional is thus necessary not simply for resistance against present oppressions and restrictions, but also in establishing longer-term legislative change. It is the unconditional which places pressure on these conditioned instances of policy and politics. Once again, then, we see an interest in making practical changes to legislation around migration and asylum.

#### **Section Four: Unconditional Meditations**

This reference to *au nom de* is an important one in Derrida's conception of unconditional hospitality. And this is not only a positive reference: indeed, though it serves an important function in his argument for civil disobedience, it takes on a more sinister role in another context. *De l'hospitalité* represents Derrida's first explicit text on hospitality; published in 1997, it is a near exact copy of the third and fourth seminar of the first year of his hospitality

seminars. Towards the end of this text, Derrida mentions two protocols: the first relates to the unconditional and conditional, much of which we have already seen, but the second refers us to this *au nom de* structure. In the penultimate paragraph of the text, after recounting the gendered violence contained in biblical conceptions of hospitality, specifically in Genesis and in Judges, Derrida states: ‘Au nom de l’hospitalité, tous les hommes se sont *envoyé* une femme, plus précisément une concubine. L’hôte, le “maître” de la femme, “prend un coutelas, saisit sa concubine et la morcelle, suivant ses os, en douze morceaux” (1997: 137). It is *in the name of hospitality* that such violence is committed and a woman is dissected. Acting in the name of the unconditional does not, therefore, guarantee a positive ethical action. It is this problematic, and our access to the unconditional, which Derrida devotes a great deal of time to in his seminars and to which we now turn.

Looking more closely at this example of gender-based violence, we see that Derrida wants to emphasise the sexist and patriarchal structure of hospitality:

Tous les exemples que nous avons choisis jusqu’ici mettaient en évidence la même *prédominance* dans la structure du droit à l’hospitalité et du rapport à l’étranger, qu’il soit hôte ou ennemi. Il s’agit d’un model conjugal, paternel et phallogocentrique. C’est le despote familial, le père, l’époux et le patron, le maître de céans qui fait les lois de l’hospitalité. (1997: 131)

The examples or evidence through which Derrida has understood hospitality, therefore, all repeat this same problem. The most important work on this topic is Judith Still’s *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice* (2010), in which Still carefully analyses the biblical passages that Derrida uses. Still brings forward the way in which ‘Derrida reminds us at the close of *Of Hospitality* of the patriarchal structure by which the master of the house makes the laws of hospitality, represents them and bends them in order to make others bend to them’ (2010: 56). Derrida presents two biblical stories, both inter-related. The first is that from the book of Genesis. Lot welcomes two angels, disguised as men, into his home. The men of Sodom want to rape them, and instead Lot gives his two daughters to them. Derrida points out that this establishes a hierarchy of responsibility, tied directly to sexual difference. This is carried on in a second piece in Judges, where a host welcomes a man and his “concubine”, and then the men of the town arrive demanding to rape him. The host, out of “hospitality”, offers his daughter to these men, but they refuse; the guest, then, gives his concubine to them. The concubine is then raped by all the men. She is found in the morning near death; her body is mutilated and sent to

representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel (Derrida states, specifically, that these are men): ‘Au nom de l’hospitalité, tous les hommes se sont *envoyé* une femme, plus précisément une concubine’ (1997: 137). Derrida thus suggests that this ‘au nom de’ structure is at work here also. Derrida’s analysis recalls Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s work on the concept of *homosociality* in the canon of English literature, where she proposes that ‘patriarchal heterosexuality can best be discussed in terms of one or another form of the traffic in women: it is the use of women as changeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men’ (1985: 25/6). Derrida concludes this analysis with a challenging question: ‘Cette tradition des lois de l’hospitalité, en sommes-nous les héritiers ? Jusqu’à quel point ? Où situer l’invariant, s’il en est un, à travers cette logique et ces récits ?’ (1997: 137). This question of inheritance is an important one: Derrida’s aim is to point out that this horrific biblical story is done, not because of conditional laws, but rather done *in the name of* unconditional hospitality. Derrida’s engagement with the *au nom de*, therefore, is far from non-critical: instead, it calls for a critical engagement with the determined instances, which have formed our very idea of what is unconditional. Derrida’s analysis, therefore, seeks to bring out the potential violence and hierarchies that can operate even within our conceptions of the unconditional.

Due to the canonical position of *De l’hospitalité*, as well as its contemporary relevance, this patriarchal dimension has become one of the major ways of understanding this critique in Derrida. However, it is important to put *De l’hospitalité* in context: it represents only two sessions of a twelve-session, year-long seminar, and that seminar represents only one year of two that were explicitly devoted to hospitality. Indeed, it is not simply the familial or patriarchal figure that Derrida is interested in exposing, but rather he also seeks to consider hospitality from a series of other perspectives. Though this has rarely been acknowledged, this is one of the major motives behind his engagement with Levinas in *Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas* (1997a). This is an effort to analyse the Hebraic tradition of hospitality, which represents an important resource for his own engagements. Moreover, the text of *Adieu* is a near exact copy of the first five sessions of the second-year seminar.<sup>64</sup> In both seminars and publications, we see an effort to critique our understanding of the unconditional, and an effort to expose that which conditions our very access to it. And Derrida does not limit himself to the Christian and Jewish traditions, but also considers Islam, the final sessions of the seminar being devoted to thinking through the Islamic conception of hospitality and substitution. Though this has remained unpublished, there is a gesture towards this in a long footnote in *Adieu*, which references Louis Massignon

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<sup>64</sup> Derrida inserts others texts within this in some cases, such as Kafka in the third seminar.

(1997a: 128/9). Massignon was a major figure for the understanding of Islam within France during the twentieth century. Moreover, his work on hospitality in Islam (which were published under that title, *L'hospitalité sacrée* (Massignon and others 1987)) had a significant influence on Derrida's thinking here. In particular, Derrida wants to stress that the 'spiritualité judéo-chrétienne' (1997a: 128) on which Levinas places such emphasis must also be considered alongside Islam as an Abrahamic religion (one of Massignon's major positions). Furthermore, Derrida also brings in etymological references to Arabic to suggest that this is both a similar and different way of mediating the unconditional. For instance, Derrida focuses on terms such as *Djiwar* (meaning both protection and neighbouring), *Dakhil* (meaning both intimate, interior and foreigner), and draws on the Islamic poetry of Hatim al Ta'i to consider different scenes of hospitality. In fact, this plays such an important role that when he gives these same seminars at the EHESS, he renames them: 'Hospitalité II: entre Abraham et Ibrahim'.<sup>65</sup> Derrida's engagements with these different cultural contexts and versions of hospitality is not simply designed to demonstrate that hospitality is a culturally informed idea, but through critique and comparison, he is trying to bring out the ways in which what we take to be *unconditional* conceptions of hospitality are at risk of always being conditioned themselves.

In light of the many terrible misunderstandings of Derrida's relationship to context and history (e.g. Skinner 1985: 7/8) this is worth stressing.<sup>66</sup> Derrida's seminars are devoted to careful analysis of different social, cultural and historical traditions: and this is not simply true of hospitality, though hospitality does seem to represent a particularly diverse example. Rather than dismissing the importance of context, therefore, Derrida is entirely committed to careful consideration of history and tradition. This allows us to see that our access to the unconditional is itself conditioned, and though it remains an important reference for political action, it is not an unproblematic one.

### **Section Five: Kantian Regulations**

The importance of the *au nom de*, therefore, plays a key role in Derrida's thinking about the unconditional and in its political use. It is precisely because we can act in the name of a higher law, as Derrida suggests in civil disobedience, that our conception of this higher law needs to be interrogated and analysed. As we have seen this commits Derrida's hospitality seminars to important and careful analyses of different traditions of hospitality and their different ways of

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<sup>65</sup> See bibliography of folder 219 DRR 236.2 at *IMEC* archives

<sup>66</sup> For a detailed review of Skinner's position, see Burns (2011).

conceiving the unconditional. This *au nom de* structure, therefore, represents a core part of how Derrida understands the unconditional, and this brings to mind an important reference: Kant, and particularly the Kantian regulative idea. Kant himself is a major figure in Derrida's conception of hospitality: indeed, his early work on the topic begins with a focus on the ways in which Kant's conception of cosmopolitanism and unconditional hospitality is in fact conditioned (La Caze 2004: 316). Indeed, one of the earliest articles around Derrida's work on hospitality suggested that Derrida's unconditional is highly influenced by the Kantian aesthetic Idea (Custer 2002: 215). Moreover, as Derrida points out cryptically, there is a certain proximity between the categorical imperative and the unconditional: 'Notons entre parenthèses qu'au titre de quasi-synonyme pour "inconditionnel", l'expression kantienne de l'"impératif catégorique" ne va pas sans problème ; nous la maintiendrons avec quelques réserves' (1997: 77). All this suggests that Derrida's original formulations of hospitality carry a strong Kantian influence. What is of interest for us here is the way that this determines the inaccessibility of the unconditional. Derrida states quite explicitly towards the end of *De l'hospitalité*:

Même si cette inconditionnalité pure paraît inaccessible, et inaccessible non seulement comme une idée régulatrice, une Idée au sens kantien et infiniment éloignée, toujours inadéquatement approchée, mais inaccessible pour les raisons structurelles, "barrée" par les contradictions internes que nous avons analysées ? (1997: 131)

We can see then that there are two reasons for this inaccessibility: the kind displayed by the regulative idea, and other structural reasons. We will turn to the latter shortly, but first it is worth thoroughly addressing the regulative role here. In the Kantian sense, a regulative idea is that which gives direction to our thought, around things which cannot belong to our thought. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant names three: the systematic laws of nature; freedom and God. These are things which cannot be the object of experience, and therefore cannot be "known" as such. However, they can offer our thought direction, and a *telos*. Such a *telos*, precisely because they cannot be part of our experience, can never be reached: it is forever receding. We can see that this is part of the inaccessibility of the unconditional, and that at least part of the *au nom de* is based around the type of direction for thought and action that Derrida requires in civil disobedience.

However, that is not to suggest that the unconditional can be equated immediately with the regulative idea. We have already seen Derrida maintain some reserve in relation to the categorical imperative, and indeed Derrida's relationship to the regulative idea is defined by

himself as one of hesitation or reserve. In *Force de loi*, for instance, he claims, ‘J’hésiterais à assimiler trop vite cette “idée de la justice” à une idée régulatrice au sens kantien’ (1994b: 56). As the ‘too quickly’ here suggests, it is not that he rejects the link completely, but rather sees some differences that need to be respected. Indeed, he follows on from this by stressing that he keeps ‘une réserve à l’égard de tous les horizons, par exemple de l’idée régulatrice kantienne’ (1994b: 57). We see similar language feature in *Voyous* (2003a) and in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (2003), where Derrida’s infamous “three reservations” to the regulative idea are copied verbatim.<sup>67</sup> What is often missed here is the emphasis Derrida places on his proximity to the regulative idea:

Il reste que, faute de mieux, si on peut dire “faute de mieux” à propos d’une Idée régulatrice, l’Idée régulatrice reste peut-être une ultime réserve. Ce dernier recours a beau risquer de devenir un alibi, il garde une dignité. Je ne jurerais pas de ne jamais y céder. (2003a: 122)

Here, then the reserve of *Force de loi* has received even greater prominence, carrying the potential of becoming an alibi; such an alibi, however, contains a dignity, which Derrida does not wish to shrug off lightly. Instead, the regulative idea remains here an ultimate reserve. From this, we can see that it is not simply the complexity of the unconditional that is at stake here, but also a complex relationship that Derrida’s own work carries in relation to the regulative idea itself.

Indeed, as such hesitations might suggest, it is important not to see a conflict between the unconditional and the regulative idea. Rather, Derrida presents the regulative idea as being one version of the unconditional. In his first seminar for the first session of the hospitality seminars, Derrida proposes that ‘nous ne savons pas encore ce que c’est l’hospitalité’ (1998: 32).<sup>68</sup> Here, Derrida offers multiple reasons for why we do not yet know what hospitality means, including a certain resistance in hospitality to knowledge (as *savoir*) itself. However, what is of interest for our purposes, is his manner of interpreting this *pas encore*. For Derrida, there are two meanings to this ‘not yet’, which maps onto the inaccessibility of the unconditional being both a product of the regulative idea, and being something more structural.

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<sup>67</sup> Please note that the French publication of this is unavailable in the University library, and so throughout the thesis *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* will be quoted in the English translation. It was later published in French as *Le “concept” du 11 septembre* (Derrida and others 2004a).

<sup>68</sup> This was published nearly exactly as ‘Hostipitalité’, in a Turkish journal called *Cogito* in 1998, and from which I will now cite.



Derrida proposes that ‘le système du droit [...] qui détermine les obligations et les limites de l’hospitalité [...] nous donne au moins une idée, l’Idée régulatrice’ (1998: 32). The regulative idea of hospitality emerges from these determined instances of conditions, laws and limitations: the idea of hospitality that is offered implicitly within these determinations, and which goes beyond these determinations, has an important role here for Derrida. And, what’s more, it is precisely because hospitality has a history, that we do not yet know what it will mean:

Cette histoire et cette histoire de l’histoire appellent des questions et des délimitations (dont nous reparlerons bien sûr) qui autorisent à penser que la détermination et l’expérience de l’hospitalité gardent un avenir par-delà cette histoire et cette pensée de l’histoire. (1998: 32)

In this context then, it is this determined history which confirms the view that there remains something still to be thought in hospitality. These determined instances in history offer our thought a direction and a goal, which may always face limitations, but through which we can also resist against these limitations. In this context, importantly, Derrida is particularly keen to stress our Eurocentric idea of hospitality: ‘donc nous ne savons *pas encore* ce que c’est que l’hospitalité par-delà ce droit européen, universellement européen’ (1998: 32).<sup>69</sup> Though it is through this context that we are given an idea of the potential of hospitality, this European context also limits what we might understand as the unconditional. As we have seen, it is precisely this position that underpins his engagement with Judaism and Islam in his seminars a year later.

In short then, the inaccessibility of the unconditional is partially a result of its regulative nature. This is not to say that such regulation is a given or unproblematic, but rather it requires careful critique of our intellectual inheritance and the sources of our access to the inaccessible. Even though it is inaccessible, this does not deprive it of concrete effects in the here-and-now of politics: offering us an idea of what this hospitality could be and what are actions should be *in the name of*.

### **Section Six: Invention and Naming**

If the regulative nature of the unconditional has an important role here, it is crucial to underline that this is the only reason for the unconditional’s inaccessibility. Recall that Derrida stressed

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<sup>69</sup> In chapter five, we will come to the relationship between Derrida and eurocentrism; however, it is worth noting that the need to go beyond a European conception of hospitality forms a core part of his thinking of hospitality, as we will see.

that the unconditional was inaccessible for other reasons also: ‘non seulement comme une idée régulatrice [...] mais inaccessible pour les raisons structurelles, “barrée” par les contradictions internes’ (1997: 131). It is now time to turn then to these other structural reasons. And, indeed, Derrida makes it clearer what these structural reasons might be with his second interpretation of the *pas encore* of the ‘Nous ne savons pas encore’ of hospitality, which we have just seen:

Le “pas encore” peut définir la dimension même de ce qui, toujours de l’avenir, de ce qui reste à venir, vient de l’hospitalité, s’appelle et reste appelé par l’hospitalité. (1998: 33)

This “not yet” thus emerges not simply from a necessary falling-short of an unconditional ideal, but also another dimension of what is still to come. Importantly, this still to come suggests a somewhat complex relation to hospitality: it is both what calls itself (*s’appelle*) and remains called (*reste appelé*) by hospitality.<sup>70</sup> Derrida stresses this structure as being key to the inaccessibility of the unconditional: we do not know what is called hospitality, because we do not know ‘ce qui *s’appelle* dans l’hospitalité, à savoir que l’hospitalité, d’abord ça *s’appelle*’ (1998: 33). This inaccessibility emerges from something within the unconditional, something that calls within it.

This different type of inaccessibility returns us to *exappropriation* that we saw in Chapter 1. There we saw that one important dimension of *exappropriation* was de-limitation, whereby the date promised itself into the future in iteration. The “saving” of the date in *mémoire*, also implied its potential repetition in the future. This repetition in another context is the condition for a relation to alterity. Recall, Derrida’s question from *Schibboleth*, linking this movement to the *avenir* and specifically the *à*: ‘Quel est cet *à* de l’*à* venir – en tant que date ?’ (1986: 21). What Derrida described as the ‘parlante’ nature of this structure, whereby the date both described its singular context, as well as “speaking” to future dates. This means that the date is never fully accessible, because it is always *promised* into the future: though it requires determination, in any act of determination, it is never fully determined. The singular instance is never fully present, and so always promises itself into the future: this installs an inherent inaccessibility, and one which Derrida brings forward in relation to hospitality.

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<sup>70</sup> Derrida acknowledges that this *s’appeler* is particularly French, insofar as this verb can both be reflexive and non-reflexive (1998: 33); however, Derrida’s point, confirmed later by his discussion of Heidegger, is that this is not a uniquely “French” conception of hospitality, but rather a general structure that the French language helps us observe.

It is worth pausing on the way this inaccessibility is addressed here, as it emphasises yet again the importance of determination, even in relation to the *Zusage*. Indeed, in this session of the hospitality seminar, Derrida selects a very particular passage of Heidegger to think through this, and one which places the emphasis on the need to name or determine. The passage focuses on the name of ‘Fribourg-en-Brisgau’, and what Heidegger considers a deeper meaning of ‘calling/naming’: ‘Appeler ne veut pas dire originellement nommer, mais à l’inverse c’est nommer qui est une sorte d’appeler au sens originel : désirer la venue et confier’ (1998: 36). Calling, therefore, is not originally a form of naming, but rather it is the act of naming that has a sort of calling within it, that is to say a desire for the arrival of someone or something. And, importantly for our context, Heidegger focuses on this in the context of hospitality:

Nous saluons (Heissen) un hôte comme le bienvenu. Ce qui ne veut pas dire que nous lui donnons le nom de “Bien Venu” mais que nous l’appelons précisément à venir et à effectuer sa venue comme un arrivant familier. Ainsi cependant, dans le salut de bienvenue en tant qu’invitation à la venue, il y a du même coup une dénomination, une invocation qui place celui qui est venue sous une certaine “vocation”, dans une certaine renommée : celle d’un hôte qu’on a plaisir à voir. (1998: 36)

What this passage offers Derrida here, then, is a way of thinking this coming of the other through the act of naming: importantly, however, such a naming (or “saluting” even) is not something that involves interpolating the other. Rather, without bringing the other under my language, this greeting still names, by presenting the other under “une certaine renommée”. The choice of this passage is to precisely bring forward the link between the unconditional and a certain type of naming. It is this naming which holds the key to a hospitable relation to the other. Inscription in the name is a necessary part of determination and if Derrida selects this particular passage from Heidegger, it is at least in part to offer further justification for his interpretation of the *Zusage* that we saw in Chapter 1. In short, the calling of hospitality requires its determination as a name.

This link to determination is worth underlining, precisely because it helps demonstrate one of the major misreadings of unconditional hospitality. In interpretations of Derrida, this has often been associated with anonymity of the other. For example, Barnett (2005: 12) stresses the priority of the anonymity of the other in unconditional hospitality and Michael Naas focuses on the need to address singular others in order to welcome (2008: 23). Though Naas possibly comes closest in his insistence on the need to address singularly, he still locates this as a

requirement of conditional hospitality.<sup>71</sup> What these positions have in common is that they all too quickly assimilate Derrida's idea of alterity to Levinas's. Indeed, one of the radio interviews that was cited in Chapter 1 was devoted to the subject of hospitality, and there Derrida stressed the need to be careful of terms like "autre", "respect de l'autre", "ouverture à l'autre", etc., and even that there was something 'mécanique' in the reference to Levinas (1999b: 63). While there is no doubt that hospitality has a link to unconditional anonymity, insofar as any act of naming involves conditioning, we need to be careful to avoid thinking that Derrida conceives of a hospitality that would take place outside of this naming. What Naas and others have tended to do is think of hospitality as a one-on-one encounter; however, for Derrida this is not the model to think through alterity.<sup>72</sup> The relation to alterity, if it occurs at all, must take place through a dynamic of iterability. Such iterability is not possible without some form of naming: Derrida's emphasis on the Heideggerian passage above is designed to demonstrate that this is true not simply for conditional hospitality, but for the structurally inaccessible part of unconditional hospitality.

### **Section Seven: Parlement International des écrivains**

There is not just another dimension of this unconditional then, but also another type of *devenir-effectif* which is associated with it. This is one which does not position the unconditional as regulative. Instead, as I will argue, though it may appear even more inaccessible, it commits Derrida's engagements to a focus on inventing hospitality. This will help us both make sense of the way the relationship between Derrida's engagements and the *à venir*, as well as understand the role that invention plays in Derrida's conception of hospitality. To do this, we will now turn to one of Derrida's most important engagements, the *Parlement international des écrivains*.

The *Parlement* was a collective institution with two explicit aims: to support persecuted intellectuals and to change the public space. The *Parlement* itself emerges out of an important, but almost completely neglected, collaboration with Pierre Bourdieu. We will look more closely at the importance of the public space, and particularly the importance of Bourdieu as a interlocutor in the next chapter; however, for the moment, it is worth noting their collaboration

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<sup>71</sup> In their defence, Derrida himself often uses this encounter as a shorthand for hospitality. We see this even with the Heidegger citation above, or in *De l'hospitalité* (1997: 31).

<sup>72</sup> The link between hospitality and love is a complex one and one we cannot consider here. Derrida regularly gestures towards this without ever expanding. In *De l'hospitalité* (1997: 31), he claims: 'ce qui paraît très humain et parfois aimant, à supposer qu'il faille lier l'hospitalité à l'amour – énigme que nous laisserons pour l'instant en réserve' or similarly in *Adieu* (1997a: 182).

in spite of what may at first seem like substantial philosophical differences (particularly around Kant and Heidegger). Their work together began in 1993 when they established an initiative to support persecuted Algerian intellectuals in the *Comité international de soutien aux intellectuels algériens*. This was designed to support Algerian intellectuals (such as journalists, academics, clinicians) who were being assassinated in Algeria; more generally, however, it sought to campaign to defend the asylum rights of Algerian refugees, which were under threat from the legislative changes, as outlined in the first section of this chapter. While this organization remained in existence, it was somewhat superseded by the *Parlement*. Though both carry “international” in the title, the *Parlement* was a truly international endeavour and a much larger initiative. Salman Rushdie was elected as president, with Derrida serving as vice-president. Derrida stressed continuously that their aim was not simply to protect intellectuals or engage in symbolic acts, though as we will see in the next chapter on media this had a vital role; however, it also involved practical and concrete initiatives, the most notable of which was the *villes-refuges* or refugee cities.<sup>73</sup>

The *villes-refuges* initiative was as conceptual as it was concrete. It was concrete insofar as its charter received mass support from over 400 European cities, at least 24 whom offered asylum to refugees, and on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 1995 was supported in the European Parliament through a resolution seeking financial support from the European Commission. Conceptually, the *villes-refuges* was a direct critique of Kant’s limitations of hospitality by the state (Derrida 1997c: 55). Instead of accepting the sovereignty of the state, the *villes-refuges* proposed a counter-sovereignty in the city: this alternative sovereignty allowed action and support precisely when states themselves were failing to act.

It is important to stress, as Derrida does, the network of concepts and relations that are contained within the concept. On more than one occasion, Derrida explores the many historical resonances that the term *villes-refuges* contains within it, and he does this in order to find new resources to re-think this alternative model of sovereignty. The first is a reference to the Medieval European tradition of sovereign cities: ‘celle-ci pouvait décider elle-même des lois de l’hospitalité, des articles de loi déterminés, pluriels et restrictifs, donc, par lesquels elle entendait conditionner *La grande Loi de l’hospitalité*’ (1997c: 46). Derrida finds then, within this historical case, a form of thinking which matches his own around hospitality or at least one

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<sup>73</sup> As I argue in the next chapter, while Bernard Stiegler has often been seen as an important influence on Derrida’s understanding of media and the public space, it is really Pierre Bourdieu that is the more significant interlocutor.

which is relatively analogous. In this context, the city could claim a degree of sovereignty by appealing to its right to condition the unconditional itself, and not have this limited by the state. As he states in an address to a meeting of the *Parlement*, published in *Libération*: ‘Ce sont des lieux d’hospitalité souveraine, au-delà de la tradition des cites médiévales. Ces villes-refuges ressembleront à ces États sans État ouverts à la “citoyenneté de résidence”’ (1994e: 12). Derrida makes other references here also, such as to St Paul, Kant, and the role of churches in offering sanctuary, but the second heritage that we should look closely at here is the Torah itself. Derrida reminds us of ‘cette tradition hébraïque de la ville-refuge’, whereby those who had committed manslaughter or were being pursued by ‘une justice aveugle’ could seek refuge within six specific cities (1997c: 44). Derrida then refers us to *The Book of Numbers*, which he sees as ‘le texte fondateur d’une telle jurisprudence’ (Ibid.).<sup>74</sup> Derrida’s effort to ground the *villes-refuges* in multiple philosophical traditions, both represents a valuable legitimizing move for these cities of refuge, but also offers different conceptual resources for thinking through the different models and approaches to counteracting the sovereignty of the nation-state.

However, this is not all that can be said about the importance of invention here. For Derrida, with the *villes-refuges* and the *Parlement*, the aim is not simply to take action now, but also to invent a new concept and experience of hospitality itself:

En réactivant le sens traditionnel d’une expression et en réveillant à sa dignité un héritage mémorable, nous avons tenu simultanément à proposer, sous le vieux mot, un concept inédit de l’hospitalité, du devoir d’hospitalité et du droit à l’hospitalité. (1997c: 15)

Importantly, this is not just limited to creating concepts, but also of rights and obligations. We can see the first part of this quotation links us back into previous concepts of hospitality, offering us a regulative idea of what the unconditional may be, ‘un héritage mémorable’. However, what this does not address is the invention and creation of new concepts; and it is here that the *Parlement* sets itself apart from the other engagements around hospitality. This is the second type of response that we saw in Chapter 2, a *répondre de* rather than a *répondre à*; this second part of the movement involves inventing a new conception of hospitality. It is worth stressing the use of the word ‘simultanément’ here; this other type of response is not separated from the *répondre à*, but in fact the both of these take place at the same time. It is only within

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<sup>74</sup> This also represents an opportunity to engage with Levinas’s reading of *villes-refuges* in *L’au-delà du verset: lectures talmudique* (1986), though for reasons of space this cannot be considered more closely here.

the previous framework, within this ‘héritage memorable’, and through its de-limitation and iteration in other contexts, that a new concept of hospitality can be proposed. This new concept of hospitality requires its determination, the naming that we have seen above. Importantly, this does not take place purely in the abstract; it is not a question here of just coining a new idea. Rather, it only occurs through the invention that Derrida associates with the *Parlement*.

Indeed, there is a second important point to be made about the *Parlement*, which relates to its status as an institution. In the previous chapter, we saw that ‘Psyché: invention de l’autre’ proved useful in highlighting the importance of institutions, and once again if we turn to that essay, we can see that it too addresses this dynamic. The new concept of invention that Derrida pursues there is grounded around a notion of ‘laisser venir’, letting-come. By this, Derrida insists that there is no guarantee that a relation to the other will take place, all that can be done is to create the space for its arrival: ‘Mais on ne fait pas venir l’autre, on le laisser venir en se préparant sa venue’ (1987d: 60). Importantly, this does not commit us to a simple passive welcoming of anything or anyone: ‘Il faut pourtant s’y préparer, car pour laisser venir le tout autre, la passivité, une certaine sorte de passivité résignée pour laquelle tout revient au même, n’est pas de mise. Laisser venir l’autre, ce n’est pas l’inertie prête à n’importe quoi’ (1987d: 53). For Derrida, it is not a question of encountering the other outside of institutions, but instead ‘à travers l’économie du même’; however, this is not to say that all types of determination are equal. The act of preparing for the other requires an institutional engagement to challenge that which prevents such iteration:

Je dis bien *laisser venir* car si l’autre, c’est justement ce qui ne s’invente pas, l’initiative ou l’inventivité déconstructive ne peuvent consister qu’à ouvrir, déclôturer, déstabiliser des structures de forclusion pour laisser le passage à l’autre. (1987d: 60)

Derrida’s conception of our relation to the other, therefore, is not based on an ideal of anonymous welcoming; instead, it is centred around an active effort to disrupt institutional convention that prevent iteration. Importantly, this does not prevent Derrida from creating institutions, but as we will see it ties once again into their self-reflexive nature as *exappropriating institutions*. Derrida, thus, does not simply engage as an individual, but deliberately engages with and through institutions, such as the *Parlement*.

In his address to the *Parlement* in 1994 in Lisbon, Derrida suggests that what is unique about this institution is not its interest in the ethical and political problematic of migration or politics. He stresses that these are shared across many similar organisations that bring together

intellectuals and writers, such as the International Committee for the Support of Salman Rushdie, PEN, or the Writers in Prison Committee, and he acknowledges that they often work closely together. These organisations are all interested to different degrees in the role of the intellectual today. What Derrida sets aside as unique to the *Parlement* is invention: ‘*S’il y avait une singularité à notre projet, elle tiendrait d’abord à des nécessités et à des devoirs d’invention*’ (1994e: 12). With the conditional “si” here, Derrida is not strictly trying to monopolise this focus on invention but is insisting that invention is a core part of the *Parlement*. This invention is precisely around the meaning of concepts like belonging, ‘nous appartenons sans bien savoir ce qu’est “appartenance” désormais’, but also community, as the quotation marks in the headline of the extract of the address suggests, ‘Les devoirs de notre “communauté”’ (Ibid.). Or, as the Derrida quotes from the preparatory document for the *Parlement*: ‘Le Parlement sera ce que les écrivains en feront à condition qu’ils ne s’arrêtent pas indéfiniment à le définir, à s’interroger sur ce qu’il doit être, etc.’ (Ibid.). We see here then that the same self-reflexive dimension in the *Ciph* is present here also. In fact, Derrida references this explicitly in ‘Le modèle philosophique d’un contre-institution’, describing the *Parlement* as ‘une contre-institution internationale [...] le lieu de l’hospitalité même’ (2005: 255). In both the *Ciph* and the *Parlement*, we see the same self-reflexive structure, but also a focus on the international. The latter, as we discussed, was taken as a particular target to avoid any limitations for the potential of iteration by the specific national context in which the institution takes place; the former, in a similar way, seeking to establish a self-reflexive foundation, which left even its very origins open to this effect of iteration. It is exactly this international self-reflexive structure which allows for this *exappropriation* to take place more freely and frequently. Through the *Parlement* then, we see that this invention does not simply take place through institutions, but also that these institutions have important characteristics that make this invention possible.

### **Conclusion:**

Hospitality represents one of the most important political concepts in Derrida’s work, and as this chapter has demonstrated, it is one thoroughly bound up with institutions. Through multiple political engagements, we see this same double movement from the previous chapter at work, this time articulated through two different versions of the unconditional. One closely tied to the regulative idea, and which justifies his argument for civil disobedience; the other, connected to his work with the *Parlement international des écrivains*, which mandates invention.



Importantly, such invention takes place through the structure of *exappropriating institutions*, which once again takes on a prominent position in Derrida's philosophy and politics.

## Chapter Four: Media Institutions and Public Space

So far in this thesis, our argument has drawn regularly on Derrida's engagement with broadcast media, be that TV, radio, or press.<sup>75</sup> What we have yet to thematise is Derrida's specific relation to the media, and particularly its role as an institution. That will be the purpose of this chapter. Given Derrida's reputation for complex and abstract philosophical texts, it may well be helpful to begin with an example to demonstrate the importance of the media throughout Derrida's career. In Chapter 2, I cited a radio interview about *GREPH* in 1977, where Derrida and others outlined the positions of the movement. What we did not consider there was the importance of the notions of demonstration and transformation in this interview. Here, Derrida employs the term 'faire apparaître' several times. The project seeks to 'faire apparaître' what has been presented as 'impossible'; to 'faire apparaître' the implicit philosophy behind the proposed educational reforms; and to 'faire apparaître' the relationship between master and student ('maître-disciple') (1977: 15:04, 15:47, 15:38). It should be stressed that this term, 'faire apparaître' is one in common usage. That said, it is not a phrase that we would automatically associate with Derrida, who is known more for his complications than his clarifications. His repeated resort to the term seems to suggest otherwise, however. Furthermore, what is important to understand is that for Derrida it is through the demonstration of these ideologies, that the relation can be transformed. And, indeed, in this interview, the word 'transformer' features as prominently. The aim is not simply to make the relationship between master and student explicit, but in so doing to 'décloisonner' philosophy and to thus 'transformer' the relationship itself (Ibid.: 15:39). Equally, it is only through the activity of revealing ('mettre à nu') the intersection between the educational reforms that Derrida is challenging and the philosophy on which these are based, that these relations can be transformed (Ibid.: 15:47). It is important then to stress that this act of demonstration is itself an effort to transform. What this example thus itself demonstrates is the important position as an intellectual that Derrida is taking up: this is not the standard and stale *cliché* of deconstruction, but a serious effort to change a system. Most importantly, this involves Derrida actively assuming the position of "the intellectual", whose role it is to raise this awareness and consciousness. This has been

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<sup>75</sup> It is worth stressing, as mentioned in the introduction, that when referring to 'media' or 'the media', I mean broadcast media. When referring to mediation in general, this will be made explicit. It should also be noted that the French for media is *média*; however, Derrida is inconsistent with his usage and it varies depending on the text, sometimes excluding the accent. I have quoted Derrida exactly in these cases.

implicit in much of what we have seen so far in the thesis; however, by looking at the media we can now thematise it and consider it more closely.

In this sense, therefore, we see Derrida assume a standard model of critique and the intellectual: someone who effects political action by exposing the conditions or implicit structures at work in society. Like *'faire apparaître'*, 'critique' is not a term that fits easily into our understanding of deconstruction. Indeed, Derrida has sometimes defined his philosophy as *'plus-que-critique'* (e.g. *L'Université sans condition* (2001c: 14/5), *Du Droit à la philosophie* (1990a: 160)). Derrida is keen when offering definitions of his work to avoid its reduction to critique: as Bennington (2000: 152) says, in part, it is *'especially not critique'*.<sup>76</sup> However, we also need to add to this, as Bennington does in his own way, that Derrida is not looking to renounce or dismiss critique. For instance, Derrida writes of deconstruction that: *'elle (la déconstruction) ne détruit pas plus qu'elle ne discrédite la critique ou les institutions'* (1990a: 88). Or, similarly, when describing *GREPH*, he proposes that it negotiated a double requirement: *'la nécessité de ne renoncer ni à une déconstruction [...] ni à une critique philosophique'* (1990a: 178). This double requirement recalls the double movement that we elaborated in Chapter 2, and which was not only strategic, but also directly tied to *exappropriation*. While Derrida wants to distinguish between critique and his own philosophy, it is not to raise one above the other, or to suggest that deconstruction is in opposition to critique. In fact, through the *'faire apparaître'*, Derrida is partially assuming this particular mode of critique. Moreover, we can see an analogy between this and his focus on the conditional in the last chapter: bracketing off the questioning that deconstruction requires to allow for an engagement within a specific setting. However, it would be simplistic to suggest that Derrida only ever engages in critique in the media; saving instead his "real" philosophy for the "big" texts. Rather, this *'plus-que-critique'* is also about making determined interventions. In *L'Université sans condition*, Derrida insists that the need to go beyond critique implies the need to do so *'affirmativement [...] en produisant des événements, par exemple en écrivant, en et donnant lieu [...] à des œuvres singulières'* (2001c: 15). This should remind us of what we have just seen in Chapter 3, where Derrida positions the need to invent as being linked not to the conditional, but the unconditional, as a way of responding to the call of the *à venir*. What we will see in this chapter is that though Derrida is open to engaging with critique

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<sup>76</sup> For a consideration of how this critique relates to Kant and teleology, see Bennington, 'Almost the end', in *Interrupting Derrida* (2000). As I want to suggest in this chapter, I believe we can make similar conclusions about critique by looking closely at Derrida's use and description of the media.

(particularly though the concept of *artefactualité*), his work also involves a thinking that is different to critique: this will become explicit in the final section, when we turn to the use of reason in the public space.

The second point worth emphasising in this example is the manner in which Derrida explicitly thematises the media. In Chapter 2, we saw that Derrida's focus on education brought out the link between education and the political. A point that he repeats in the 1977 interview: 'Tout ce qui touche à la scolarité et l'enseignement touche à tout, et touche d'une manière plus ou moins médiatisée' (1977: 15:37). Derrida goes on to underline that this 'tout' includes the social and the political. Similarly, Derrida repeatedly stresses, 'encore une fois', that this form of relation is a mediated one: 'touche d'une manière plus ou moins médiatisée' (Ibid.: 15:40). It is not just accidental, therefore, that Derrida draws our attention to the act of demonstration-transformation in this interview: rather, it is an effort to engage precisely with this question of mediation. Importantly, this is tied to an economic and material question: it is only in an industrialised society that education, media and politics are so closely linked (Ibid.: 15:36, 15:45). Indeed, this focus on the changes that have occurred with advanced industrialisation directs us towards a particular interest in newly developed media and the technological developments which underlie them. And, as we will see, even though Derrida has not yet begun to thematise the media explicitly, the positions he outlined in 1977 already begin to address some of the core concerns that will emerge in his later thinking on media.

This chapter begins, therefore, with a discussion of these technological changes in the media (*télétechnologies*) and the relationship between these changes and the figure of rhythm. It then returns to the *Parlement international des écrivains* to consider the position of the intellectual within this. From this vantage point, we also look at Derrida's concept of *artefactualité*, which I argue is closely linked to Bourdieu's thinking on media in the same period, and which supports their shared political engagement. We will also look closely at *actuvirtualité*, arguing that this has important implications for de-limitation, and particularly deterritorialisation. Building on this, our discussion turns to the debate around Derrida and technics, arguing that it is through media that Derrida takes account of the relationship between technology and time, and that this is tied closely to our account of *exappropriation*. Concluding with Derrida's position on the public space, I argue that we see once again the *exappropriating structure* at work here, and that this marks a fundamental difference between Bourdieu and Derrida.

## Section One: Rhythm and *Télétechnologies*

To understand Derrida's view on the media, it is important to fully appreciate Derrida's position on technology, or more specifically *télétechnologies*. This is Derrida's term for referring to the new forms of media that have emerged during the twentieth century, and particularly since the invention of the telephone and television. The addition of the prefix *télé* is designed to emphasise the capacity to communicate over distance, but as we will see it also carries a more important implication for our understanding of space in general. These *télétechnologies* are both new developments and an extension of a much older structure. And so, Derrida will make clear that writing itself, in a certain sense, is a *télétechnologie*: 'La manière dont j'avais essayé de définir l'écriture impliquait qu'elle fût déjà ... une télétechnologie' (1996: 46).<sup>77</sup> However, simply because this makes an appeal to a general structure, does not mean that Derrida wants to dismiss the novelty of these new technologies. Some of the examples that Derrida refers to as *télétechnologies* include: emails, fax, television, the telephone, the internet, cinema, radio. While some critics have criticised Derrida for his merging of these different technologies, e.g. Carsten Strathausen (2009: 155), this somewhat misses the point: Derrida's aim is to bring forward the effect on space and distance that these *télétechnologies* share. Certainly, bringing in distinctions of different media can help build on such analysis, but as Wolfe (2008: 90) has shown in the case of analog and digital technologies, this does not dismiss Derrida's emphasis on the shared characteristics of *télétechnologies*.

One of the major political impacts of these new *télétechnologies* is the changing nature of the public space, and specifically a blurring of the distinction between public and private. It is the impact on this relationship that Derrida wants to foreground in the term *télé*. In *Mal d'archive* (1995a), for instance, email has the capacity to 'transformer tout l'espace public et privé de l'humanité, et d'abord la limite entre le privé, le secret (privé ou public) et le public ou le phénoménal' (1995a: 35). Derrida stresses that this *télétechnologie* is 'pas seulement une technique, au sens courant et limité du terme'; but the way it radically changes 'cette possibilité instrumentale de production, d'impression, de conservation et de destruction' and our capacity to communicate over distance, changes what we understand as public (1995a: 35). Equally, Derrida makes the same point in reference to other *télétechnologies*: such as the telephone in *Sur Parole* (1999b: 43) and mass media in *Spectres de Marx* (1993). They 'affectent aussi de façon essentielle le concept même de l'espace public dans les démocraties dites

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<sup>77</sup> Indeed, we can already see the importance of distance and space in 'signature, événement, contexte', when Derrida speaks about the radical absence of the addressee (1972b: 375).

libérales' (1993: 92). It is not simply, therefore, that *télétechnologies* make some adjustment to what is considered public or private, but rather that they change what the public space means. For Derrida, this division is less assured than ever and 'se déplace sans cesse' (1993: 89). And this is precisely because of the change to the medium of the media: 'le médium dans lequel elle s'institue, à savoir le médium des média même (l'information, la presse, la télécommunication, la techno-télé-discursivité, la techno-télé-iconicité, ce qui assure et détermine en général l'*espacement* de l'espace public, la possibilité même de la *res publica* et la phénoménalité du politique)' (1993: 89). The *télé* of the *télétechnologie*, therefore, carries with it fundamental implications for our experience of space, and this includes how we partition space between public and private, or indeed where and how the political is located within this.

Furthermore, this relationship between media and the public space is of such importance that Derrida continuously uses it as a way of understanding the collapse of totalitarian regimes. For Derrida, one of the reasons why states like the Soviet Union collapsed was a result of the media, or more specifically the development of *télétechnologies*. In *Sur Parole*, he claims, 'on a souvent dit qu'un régime totalitaire ne survivrait pas à une certaine densité du réseau téléphonique. Il ne résiste pas non plus à une certaine densité de l'information télévisuelle, du courrier, etc.' (1999b: 43). This is a point also stressed in *Échographies* (Derrida and Stiegler 1996: 83) in relation to the telephone and police-control, and in 'Surtout pas de journalistes!' where he maintains that the television has allowed for the transportation of 'des modèles [...] de la démocratie occidentale' over borders and this has assisted in 'la décomposition du totalitarisme' (2004a: 44). To avoid confusion, Derrida is not suggesting that this media somehow allows Western media to seduce those in totalitarian states; rather, Derrida views totalitarianism as being based on the control of public discourse, so that state discourse and public discourse are one and the same. Derrida expands on this point more thoroughly in *L'Autre cap*. Here, we see that it is the formation of 'public opinion', which is decisive:

Le téléphone devient alors, pour le totalitarisme, la préfiguration invisible et la prescription impérieuse de sa propre ruine. Car, de surcroît, le téléphone ne laisse plus en place la limite entre le public et le privé, à supposer qu'elle ait jamais été rigoureuse. Il amorce la formation d'une *opinion publique* là où les conditions habituelles de la 'publicité' lui sont interdites. (1991b: 44/5)

Here, we see once again it is the impact of these *télétechnologies* on the relationship between the public and private space which is of real importance. Of course, as the language here

suggests, Derrida is not stating that the telephone is all it takes to end a totalitarian regime; rather, instead, it creates the possibility for a separate public space, that creates the conditions for different forms of resistance and manifestation.<sup>78</sup> *Télétechnologies*, therefore, represent an important factor in Derrida's understanding of politics and political events, and particularly in the changes to the public space.

This is not just a spatial question, but also a temporal one.<sup>79</sup> Derrida's discussion of and, importantly, *in* the media centres on one term: rhythm. This is used repeatedly, but never defined. As we will see, this is at least in part a figure to describe the way these new technologies structure and partition our experience of time and speed. In *Mal d'archive* (1995a: 35), for instance, Derrida stresses that it is not simply the technologies that are new, but the speed at which they are progressing: 'à un rythme inédit, de façon quasi instantanée'. In a series of interviews on French radio, collected in the book, *Sur parole*, Derrida also focuses on this speed and rhythm. The interviewer refers to recent political events, such as the fall of the Berlin wall and asks if this has changed Derrida's political approach in his work. Derrida's response is to focus on this acceleration and foreground that 'l'accélération est justement l'un de mes thèmes de réflexion, s'agissant de la chose politique' and that the Soviet Union, South Africa, eastern European countries and Latin America, 'tous ont connu une accélération imprévisible' (1999b: 43). Derrida maintains that 'même si le *sens* de cette accélération était, lui, prévisible,' as in the case of the end of apartheid, what is significant is the acceleration which occurred around it (1999b: 43). As such, the interest here is not the end-result, but the mode in which it happened and for Derrida this is a question of rhythm: 'Essayer de comprendre pourquoi et comment, à quelles conditions, le rythme des processus politiques a changé' (1999b: 43). And these changes to rhythm are partially a result of technological changes:

Cela dit, je crois que la transformation technologique est un des facteurs essentiels de l'accélération politique. Les phénomènes politiques dont nous avons parlé n'ont pu

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<sup>78</sup> We could, of course, suggest that there is a certain idealization of the media here. Though Derrida does seem to be careful with his phrasing, he also does not seem to consider the increased capacity for surveillance that might emerge with these technologies and the various ways that this might enable totalitarianism or forms of this even within "liberal democracies".

<sup>79</sup> In the following discussion, for clarity, I will write about these effects as being separately spatial and temporal. This is partially true; however, this is not to deny that they are a product of what Derrida labels *espacement* which intermingles the temporal and spatial together.

accélérer leur devenir qu'à la mesure de l'accélération technologique. [...] La technologie et la politique vont de pair dans leur accélération. (1999b: 43)

This change of pace in politics, which Derrida seeks to explain, has a direct link to these changes in technology. While it should be stressed that it is not the only factor, it is certainly an essential and determining one and one which makes this new rhythm and acceleration possible. As a major factor within this, *télétechnologies* thus form an important part of Derrida's understanding of the political.

These *télétechnologies* have changed, therefore, both the rhythm of politics and our ability to distinguish between the public and private sphere. This is not their only impact, however. In Derrida's view, these new technologies both centralise and homogenise. The portmanteau term he uses to describe these two impulses is '*homohégémonique*' (1996: 57). Derrida stresses that the increased power of the media can lead to an intense form of centralization, whereby media companies become larger and fewer, with the result that power remains in the hands of a small number. In *Sur Parole*, he states: 'La concentration du pouvoir économique qui commande les médias, les télécommunications, l'informatisation, est en effet un danger pour la démocratie' (1999b: 44). The tendency that Derrida points to within these *télétechnologies* to become centralized and to leave control in the hands of a small group of people can threaten the democratic process itself. In *L'Autre cap* (1991b), Derrida illustrates this in the context of Europe and the political changes occurring there. He stresses that the question of cultural power and hegemony has emerged with even greater significance, precisely because of the effects of these *télétechnologies* (1991b: 39). Furthermore, it is not simply their tendency towards centralization, but also, as we have seen, their disruption of the place of politics that is important here. It is no longer necessary for such a hegemonic power to be linked to the state or a particular site, and indeed this inability to locate capital makes it even more difficult to deal with: 'On n'a plus besoin de lier désormais la capitale culturelle à une métropole, à un site ou à une cité géographico-politique, mais la question de la capitale reste entière; et d'autant plus envahissante' (1991b: 42). These centralizing and capitalizing powers do not need to be linked to a state and due to this rhythm can install themselves almost immediately anywhere: 'c'est n'importe où et à tout moment qu'une telle normalisation installerait une capitale culturelle, un centre hégémonique' (1991b: 42). For Derrida, one fundamental impact would lead to public discourse being subject to a series of norms, determined by financial interest, and which would lead to 'l'homogénéité d'un médium, de normes de discussion, de modèles discursifs' (1991b: 54). Importantly, this *homohégémonique*



effect is not an inevitability. Instead, it is a product of a particular relationship between capital and the media. And Derrida warns against simply rejecting technology or the media: ‘il ne faut pas s’en prendre seulement à la technologie [...] sans savoir que ces machines peuvent également servir de la démocratie’(1999b: 33). These can represent ‘une chance de démocratisation’, and so we are obliged to ‘inventer une stratégie singulière’, which can consider the merits, effects and risks of these technical changes (1999b: 45). In the final section, we will return to this democratisation and the public space; for the moment, it is worth emphasising the level of political importance with which Derrida frames these new *télétechnologies*.

To summarise then, Derrida is keen to both acknowledge the familiarity and novelty of these new technologies. While *télétechnologies* share many characteristics with writing, what Derrida presents as unique is the radical increase in distance and the acceleration which these changes allow. This has the effect of breaking down conventional distinctions between the public and the private. As we have outlined above, such an implication has political effects on our understanding of what and where the political is. One of the major threats that Derrida identifies with these new technologies is their increased tendency towards homogenisation and centralisation. However, with this also comes the potential for increased democratic engagement.

## **Section Two: Intellectuals and Rhythm**

We have seen then that rhythm and acceleration form an important part of how Derrida understands *teletechnology*; however, this has implications beyond a change to how quickly politics operates. This is particularly true for the figure of the intellectual. It is worth understanding fully Derrida’s engagement with this position, because, as we saw in our introduction to this chapter, Derrida is articulating and assuming public positions that are typical of an intellectual. One of the most important points that Derrida returns to frequently is the claimed “silence of the intellectuals”.<sup>80</sup> This was a narrative, particularly strong in France, that intellectuals had withdrawn themselves from the political scene. In a world without Sartre or Foucault, there were no longer “left-wing” intellectuals willing to speak publicly in the media. And, indeed, Derrida is asked precisely about the ‘silence des intellectuels de gauche’ in an interview in *Libération* in 1983. Derrida begins by acknowledging that, for some time, ‘cette notion d’“intellectuel” est soumise à une réélaboration critique’ (1983: 16). This re-

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<sup>80</sup> The debate about ‘la silence des intellectuels’ was initiated by Max Gallo in *Le Monde* (Gallo 1983).

elaboration is particularly necessary in light of the changes to media that we have seen outlined above. Moreover, Derrida is particularly critical of the very idea that intellectuals have been “silent” at all: ‘Comme si une prise de parti ou une activité politique d’“intellectuel-de-gauche” ne pouvait prendre que cette forme: le “*tout à fait pour*” dans une tribune du *Monde* !’ (Ibid.). Derrida thus rejects the idea that intellectuals cannot take nuanced positions, or indeed that their only form of political activity involves a column in the newspaper. Furthermore, while Derrida suggests that there is something interesting about the withdrawal of the public intellectual *à la Sartre*, he maintains that this silence has been misinterpreted. Rather than representing this “silence” as exclusively negative, he sees a potential within it. He suggests that perhaps this “silence” is ‘une réserve croissante [...] à l’égard du style “matamore” dans la prise de parole, à l’égard d’un type de manifestation’ (Ibid.). This silence then is a resistance to a form of speaking out in the media, which Derrida describes as ‘boursofflure, dogmatisme bruyant, petit théâtre’(Ibid.). For Derrida, ““intellectuels” et média méritent mieux’, and this very reserve could be ‘le passage à un autre mode de manifestation, y compris dans les média’ (Ibid.). Thus, for Derrida, there is a problem with the relationship between the media and intellectuals; however, this problem is not a result of a lack of effort from intellectuals, but rather the saturation of one mode of engagement in political and public life.

And, indeed, this saturation is a question of rhythm. As we have seen earlier, Derrida is concerned by the centralization and homogenization that is associated with contemporary broadcast media. If there has been a “silencing” of intellectuals, it is precisely a result of this. Such homogenization imposes ‘une grille d’intelligibilité’ on all public discourse, so that it is determined by the interests of capital: audience figures and profit (1991b: 41). From this also a series of norms emerge around ‘transparency’ and ‘consensus’, which claim to support democracy and ‘communication dans l’espace public’, but instead seek to impose purely one model of intellectual intervention (1991b: 55). What is important for our discussion is the role that rhythm plays here. Derrida stresses repeatedly that the major difference between his public interventions and his philosophical works is one of rhythm:

Je ne sens pas de divorce entre mes écrits et mes engagements, seulement des différences de rythme, de mode de discours, de contexte, etc. [...] Les différences de vitesse semblent en effet déterminantes. Le différentiel des rythmes compte beaucoup pour moi, il règle presque tout. (2001a: 386/7)

The question of the intellectual, therefore, is a question of rhythm. Certainly, based on this citation, it seems difficult to understate the importance of this rhythm for his writing. This should be no surprise given the important relation between *télétechnologies* and rhythm that we have seen in the previous section. For Derrida, then, negotiating the media is a question of adapting to different speeds and rhythms. The ‘censure’ of the media that Derrida has identified is, therefore, a question of an overbearing, singular urgency and rhythm: one which does not allow for alternatives to operate, such as precisely the ‘le rythme, la mémoire et les “vertus” héritées de la culture du livre’ which he associates ‘à tout intellectuel’ (2001d: 238).

And, thus, Derrida moves from thinking about the “silence” of intellectuals to the system that leads to their “silencing”. And this is described through rhythm. It is precisely this rhythm that Derrida stresses determines intellectual intervention and, indeed, the figure of the intellectual. It is not simply the case that the intellectual is limited by the medium, though certainly Derrida seems to discuss this in these terms, but rather the possibilities of a particular discussion are determined by this *télétechnologie*. Rhythm as a figure thus serves a double-function: first, of describing the macro-changes and acceleration that have occurred in politics; and, second, on a micro-level, setting the limits of what can be understood and said in the public space.

Indeed, it is here that we can return to the *Parlement international des écrivains*. As we saw in the last chapter, this was an important collaborative effort, with Bourdieu and Derrida playing prominent roles, aimed at providing refuge for persecuted intellectuals, but also changing the public space. It is the latter that Derrida sees as one of its major tasks of invention, to think through new ways of being an intellectual: ‘que signifie *aujourd’hui* manifester dans l’espace public? Y “écrire” “parler”, “savoir”, “créer”, “penser”?’ (1994e: 12). And, indeed, alongside thinking through a new international law, he presents the need to engage with new media as one of the fundamental issues of the *Parlement*. In a 1993 interview for *Radio France Internationale*, alongside Bourdieu, he states that the *Parlement* exists to reflect on ‘la condition de leur [intellectuals’] intervention dans l’espace public’ (Bourdieu and Derrida 1993: 34:00). In the language of rhythm, this is about thinking through the different ways in which time can be organised and the ways in which this can prevent intellectual participation.

Moreover, we also see that the specific interest in persecuted intellectuals is also, in part, a product of *télétechnologies*. In a 1994 interview on *France Culture*, Derrida focuses on the changed conception of the intellectual, and particularly the figure of the *intellectuel engagé*:

Les conditions ont changé. Le concept d'engagement n'est pas défini par ce qu'on appelle la littérature engagée dans les années 50s ou après la guerre. La parole de l'intellectuel, journaliste, écrivain, professeur, etc. peut avoir de façon immédiate une portée que même en tant que la littérature engagée, elle n'avait pas. (1994: 12:17)

What we see here then is first that the figure of the intellectual has moved away from that of the intellectual as engaged literary author: this is extended to journalists, other writers, professors. Indeed, this 'et cetera' is revealing precisely because in the *Parlement* this also included professions such as medical doctors. As such, the main intellectual mode is not necessarily or exclusively that of engaged literature but can include other less 'literary' approaches.<sup>81</sup> What's more, such a difference is a result of temporal and spatial changes: the 'parole' of an intellectual can now be received immediately anywhere. This is a change both of rhythm and space, whereby an intellectual's criticism can be received almost instantly in another part of the world. And, indeed, it is this change which generates increased violence: it is precisely because these enunciations can take on instant and significant importance that oppressive states want to target intellectuals.<sup>82</sup> As Derrida puts it in the interview, 'ce n'est pas par hasard, qu'on a peur de leur parole' (1994: 12:19). One of the reasons then for the *Parlement's* focus on persecuted intellectuals is particularly a response to these changes in the space and time of the intellectual, and the resulting threat of violence that emerges.

### Section Three: Derrida & Bourdieu

With Derrida's conception of *télétechnologies*, rhythm and the intellectual more clearly outlined, we can now turn to the concepts of *artefactualité* and *actuvirtualité*. These are two important concepts that Derrida coins to understand the media. Both are discussed in *Échographies de la télévision* (1996) and have helped establish this text as a touchstone in Derrida's understanding of media. However, from the outset, I wish to stress that we should precede cautiously with this reference. There are two reasons for this. The first, as we have

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<sup>81</sup> Indeed, while the 'écrivain' in the title does suggest the literary, this is partially a pragmatic decision, especially given Salman Rushdie was the first president; it also points to a desire to keep this reference to literature, even if the main mode of intellectual enunciation is no longer engaged literature. In the same interview, this reference to literature is an important one for Derrida defining it as "La littérature est un test, un lieu d'épreuve pour une démocratie" (1994: 12:15).

<sup>82</sup> It is worth emphasizing that there were deliberate and targeted assassinations of intellectuals during the 1990s civil war, for example, Tahar Djaout. In many ways, the working definition of intellectual that the *Parlement* seems to operate under is partially influenced by these persecutions. For an account of this, see Mouffouk, *Être journaliste en Algérie: 1988 – 1995* (1996).

already begun to see, there is a rich genealogy of Derrida's thinking around the media, which is not fully captured by *Échographies* and which the latter can tend to eclipse. The second is the relationship between Bernard Stiegler and Jacques Derrida. *Échographies* represents mainly a series of interviews between Stiegler and Derrida; this has given the impression that Stiegler is something of a successor to Derrida, precisely around technics.<sup>83</sup> In this section, however, I want to demonstrate that it is precisely Pierre Bourdieu who represents the main interlocutor with Derrida around the media, and that this underpins Derrida's conception of *artefactualité* and indeed their shared engagement in the *Parlement*.

The term *artefactualité* is a combination of *artefact* and *actualité*. The former refers to something which is produced or artificial, as in the English "artefact". *Actualité*, however, is somewhat more difficult to translate. It can be broadly understood as that which is 'current' or 'present' and carries with it a connotation of news media (*les actualités* can be translated as 'current affairs'). It should be stressed that 'actuality' and reality are not identical, as the former focuses on what is felt as pertinent and current. For Derrida, it is the construction of what is felt as "actual" through media, which needs to be analysed:

Le premier trait, c'est que l'actualité, précisément, est *faite* [...] Elle n'est pas donnée mais activement produite, criblée, investie, performativement interprétée par nombre de dispositifs *factices* ou *artificiels*, hiérarchisant et sélectifs, toujours au service de forces et d'intérêts que les "sujets" et les agents [...] ne perçoivent jamais assez. (1996, 11)

What is *actual*, then, is not something which is naturally given, but rather something which is made and produced. Through a series of processes and systems, it is filtered, interpreted and presented in a variety of ways, all of which create 'l'effet d'actualité' (1996: 13). Through this, the media has the capacity to render things 'actual'. This is not just a question of artificially placing something on the agenda or inflating its importance, rather it is about potentially determining our very interpretation of an event. Or even what we see or do not see as an event. As an example of this, Derrida describes the national and ethnocentric focus on the media, privileging that which is national or Western above other events elsewhere. He points to the 'indéracinable privilège du national, du régional, du provincial – ou de l'Occidental – qui surdétermine toutes les autres hiérarchies' (1996, 12). How we judge what is worthy of

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<sup>83</sup> An impression taken up most notably by Richard Beardsworth in *Derrida & The Political* (1996).

discussion and what is regarded as a “significant” political event is filtered and hierarchised by the media. It is this filtering that Derrida understands as *artefactualité*.

An important point about this process is precisely that it seeks to deny that such mediation is taking place. As Derrida says when discussing television as a media: ‘La télévision, c’est toujours une protestation contre la télévision ; la télévision prétend s’effacer, elle fait tout pour nier ou dénier la télévision : elle-même’ (2004a: 38). The experience of ‘live’ broadcasting is designed precisely to give the impression that such broadcasting is without intervention or decision: it simply shows the event directly. As Derrida insists: ‘Ce qui est “transmis” “en direct” sur une chaîne de télévision est produit avant d’être transmis : l’“image” n’est pas une reproduction fidèle et intégrale de ce qu’elle est censée reproduire (1996, 49). Through this, we see that though this *artefactualité* may have always been in some sense a part of all media in general, it is the possibilities that emerge with *télétechnologies* that really give this an important political effect. It is this effect which needs to be accounted for.

Importantly, and this is the final characteristic of *artefactualité*, such a political effect is far from random or equally distributed. This framing, hierarchisation and production serves either the state or else financial interests and powers: ‘ces artifices sont contrôlés simultanément ou alternativement par des instances privées ou par des instances d’État’ (1996: 52). Though, for Derrida, the influence of the market on media seems to far outweigh that of the state: ‘ce que nous ne pouvons pas faire aujourd’hui, c’est délimiter le marché. Nous savons que, mises en concurrence avec des chaînes ou des radios privées, les institutions publiques doivent conquérir le marché ...’ (1996: 52). It is the market which dictates the terms of engagement in the public space, so that state media are obliged to simply follow these rules. And, indeed, this is not purely a national question, but also a global one, as the market is a major factor ‘au cœur de l’actualité dite ‘mondialisé’ quant à la circulation des marchandises télévisuelles d’un pays à l’autre, d’un État-nation à l’autre, d’une zone culturelle et politique ... (1996: 53). The influence of the market in this respect is not simply limited to influencing broadcast media then, but also determining of the world and the relations between different parts of it. Derrida’s aim here is not to resist the market in favour of the state, but in both cases to resist the hegemonic powers that we have outlined already above, or what he labels ‘*homohégémonique*’ (1996: 57). For Derrida, the solution here is not a rejection of the market, or some form of return to state-control; instead, it is about re-thinking our relation to the market. It is about supporting ‘la plus grande ouverture possible de l’espace public sans qu’il soit dominé, je ne dirais pas par le marché, mais par une certaine détermination mercantiliste du

marché' (1996: 57). Derrida maintains then that *artefactualité* is a product of interested forces, but again this is not a question of rejecting the media outright, but working to reform them in different ways.

What is important is that Derrida is developing these ideas around the same time that he begins to engage with the *Parlement international*, and importantly begins to collaborate with Pierre Bourdieu. Indeed, I want to introduce Bourdieu here, both to emphasise the proximity of their positions in the case of the intellectual and *artefactualité*, but also as we will see as a way of demonstrating some of the differences around the way they depict media. Before doing so, it is worth noting that one of the reasons that both Bourdieu and Derrida are so interested in media in this period is a thoroughly domestic question. In 1984, the Mitterrand government created the first private channels, and in 1986, the Chirac government sold TF1, the first national television channel (Marlière 2001: 205). This meant that throughout the 1980s, enabled by both left- and right-wing governments, a good deal of French audio-visual media became privatised. If the relationship between media, capitalism and the public space becomes an important theme in both Bourdieu and Derrida at this time, this is, of course, largely a response to such a political context. What is really remarkable is just how similar their responses to this context are. The two most important sources for this are Bourdieu's 'Postscriptum' to *Les Règles de l'art* (1992) and *Sur la télévision* (1996).

As we have seen, Derrida is keen to dismiss suggestions that intellectuals have been silent. For him, such a silence is instead a resistance against rhythms of discourse which prevent intellectuals from fully participating in the public space. Bourdieu's position on the intellectual is quite close to this. In fact, it is worth stressing this intellectual dimension, particularly because as Hesmondhalgh (2006: 211) stresses 'the publication of Bourdieu's work on television and journalism was greeted by many Anglo-American media researchers with profound disappointment'. This disappointment, I wish to suggest, occurs around the figure of the intellectual. Or, more precisely, what media researchers are missing is that Bourdieu's work is less interested in offering an account of the media in general, and much more focused on understanding the relationship between the intellectual and the media.

This is something which is particularly apparent in the postscript to *Les Règles de l'art*. There, Bourdieu puts forward 'une prise de position' for 'une action collective des intellectuels', (1992: 545) or for what he labels an '*Internationale des intellectuels*' (1992: 553). Bourdieu maintains that this is necessary for defending the autonomy of the intellectual

field from the ‘interprénétration de plus en plus grande entre le monde de l’art et le monde de l’argent’ (1992: 545). This is precisely the mercantilist influence that both he and Derrida rally against.<sup>84</sup> For Bourdieu, the intellectual is ‘un être paradoxal’ (1992: 546), precisely because he operates between two different dimensions:

L’intellectuel est un personnage bidimensionnel qui n’existe et ne subsiste comme tel que si (et seulement si) il est investi d’une autorité spécifique, conférée par un monde intellectuel autonome [...] dont il respecte les lois spécifiques, et si (et seulement si) il engage cette autorité spécifique dans des luttes politiques. (1992: 547)

The intellectual, therefore, receives authority from an independent intellectual world (which Bourdieu mainly associates with the university) and employs this publicly. For Bourdieu, the problem, however is that the ‘philosophes journalistes’, borrowing a term from Wittgenstein, or what he even more colourfully labels ‘des maîtres à penser sans pensée’, do not respect this autonomy (1992: 545, 555). Lacking, for a variety of reasons, the capacity to receive this authority from the autonomous academic space, they instead seek to undermine that space in the media. This is at the service of the market and results in them simply parroting common-sense opinions. While Bourdieu is interested in the production of all artistic products and the artistic field generally, as the above suggests, he clearly privileges the academic field within this. His solution is to call together a collective of intellectuals, on an international basis, who can challenge this: ‘comme un pouvoir international de critique et de surveillance’ (1992: 558). What is important here, and what Bourdieu stresses to avoid this misunderstanding, is that this is not a call for an ivory tower intellectuals, something which Philippe Marlière misunderstands (2001: 207). Rather, instead, it is about bringing intellectuals together in order to defend “Reason” and ‘leurs intérêts propres’ (1992: 558). This involves resisting the figure of a public-intellectual-without-intellect, but also encouraging intellectuals to ‘lutter au moins pour s’assurer le pouvoir sur les instruments de production et de consécration culturelles et à entrer dans le siècle pour y affirmer les valeurs associées à leur autonomie’ (1992: 558). Both Bourdieu and Derrida, therefore, share an analysis of the relationship between the intellectual and the market, and the need for action to be taken on an international level to negotiate this.

In *Sur la télévision*, we see a large focus on the influence of the market on the field of media. This is Bourdieu’s continuous focus and underlies his whole argument here: the

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<sup>84</sup> It is worth adding also that Derrida and Bourdieu both share and draw on the same historical references and narrative of the French intellectual: Voltaire, Zola, Sartre, etc.



influence of the market, in a variety of ways, is disrupting the autonomous fields of journalism, the media and other areas. He speaks of this, like Derrida, as ‘une formidable censure’ (1996: 13). It is not simply that Bourdieu and Derrida share a concern about market-influences, but they also share a diagnosis of its effects: homogenisation. Rather than promoting diversity, competition between media organisations tends towards ‘l’uniformité’ (1996: 87). Bourdieu discusses this at length, and like Derrida, also stresses that the implications of this are not reserved to private media alone, but also impact publicly funded media (1996: 14). Though Bourdieu and Derrida appear to speak about these using different terms occasionally, in particular Bourdieu employs his field theory vocabulary and focus on autonomy, whereas Derrida employs a phenomenological lexicon, their analysis remains highly aligned. And, indeed, Bourdieu also describes characteristics of the media which neatly map onto Derrida’s conception of artefactuality. In particular, he speaks about the ‘l’effet de réel’, which seeks to give the impression of direct and unmediated access to reality in the media (1996: 20). Bourdieu focuses on the ‘faits divers’ which he sees as a key function of the news: that is a construction of ‘actuality’ to distract from the underlying reality. Bourdieu emphasises that this is a form of ‘depoliticisation’ of the media, and he makes this concern more explicit than Derrida. As he states (1996: 21), ‘le fait de rapporter, *to record*, en *reporter*, implique toujours une construction sociale de la réalité capable d’exercer des effets sociaux de mobilisation (ou démobilitation)’. Like Derrida, Bourdieu also stresses the technical constraints imposed by the media on intellectuals, and in particular focuses on the temporal restrictions, where interviews do not grant speakers enough time, ‘la limitation du temps impose au discours des contraintes telles qu’il est peu probable que quelque chose puisse se dire’ (1996: 13) While both Derrida and Bourdieu analyse on their own terms, we can see their conclusions and their views of the effects are particularly close.

What we see here then is that both Bourdieu and Derrida share close theoretical positions on the media. This is true in three ways: the position of the intellectual; the impact of the market; and, the way that the media constructs *actualité*. This shared position is what underpins their collaborative effort in the *Parlement international des écrivains*. Thus when they appear on radio on *France Culture* in 1993 discussing the need to change the public space, which Bourdieu maintains is simply ‘l’écume des journaux’, we can see that this is based not a compromise in either of their positions, but a product of similar philosophical positions on the media. Both believe that the norms of discussion within the media need to change drastically, and that this involves reforming the relationship between the intellectual and the

public space (1993: 36:30). As we will see in the final section, though they share a very close diagnosis of the public space, demonstrated by *artefactualité*, they approach this in slightly different ways. Once again, this will be a question of *exappropriating institutions*.

#### **Section Four: Actuvirtualité**

Before turning to these differences then, it is worth highlighting how surprising such a collaboration between Derrida and Bourdieu might have appeared at the time. After all, the *Parlement* takes place only a few years after their quite public disagreement over the legacy of Heidegger in *Libération*: a correspondence that Bourdieu put an end to ‘par souci d’amitié’ (1988: 36). Few people who read their exchange would believe that in a handful of years, the pair would be working together in both the *Comité international de soutien aux intellectuels algériens (C.I.S.I.A)* and the *Parlement*. There is more than just this public dispute, however. In *La Distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (1979), Bourdieu critiques Derrida for remaining within ‘le jeu philosophique’, and engaging in a purely abstract and formal reading, which leads his reading to mirror ‘certains des presupposes cachés de la philosophie kantienne du jugement de gout, (et) reste soumise aux censures de la lecture pure’ (1979: 578/80). This means that Derrida treats Kant, and his own text, as having ‘le statut d’objet *inconditionné*, affranchi des déterminants sociaux’ (1979: 583). And, in the preface to the *Du droit à la philosophie* (1990a: 72,103), Derrida effectively responds, arguing for the need to keep Kant as a necessary reference, for exactly the same reason that Bourdieu must refer to Kant in his own text. Loseberg (1997: 421) has argued convincingly that, despite appearances, both Bourdieu and Derrida maintain remarkably close readings of Kant. However, it is worth looking closely at where Derrida views the disagreement with Bourdieu in his preface. For Derrida, Bourdieu’s work involves an ‘objectivation complète’, where all aspects which the object of study could not objectify (their own practice, socio-institutional connection, desire for symbolic power, and so on) can become objectified (1990a: 105). And, in spite of Bourdieu’s often explicit distance from Kant, this is based on a fundamentally Kantian view of truth as objectivity (1990a: 104). For Derrida, however, truth cannot simply be reduced to objectivity, insofar as this “complete objectification” can often produce ‘un *supplément d’objectivation*’, which exceeds truth itself and ‘qui n’appartient plus à l’ordre de l’objectivité, ni davantage, donc, à celui de la subjectivité, et laisse place à une question sur la “vérité” de l’objectivité’ (1990a: 107). It is not necessary to go into all the implications of this argument; however, what is important for our interests here is precisely the limits of objectification. This also returns us to the question of critique or ‘plus-que-critique’: the former being based on an

external ground from which objectification can take place. Whereas the ‘plus-que-critique’ of deconstruction addresses this “supplement of objectification”, which undermines this stable ground. In their shared positions on *artefactualité*, both Derrida and Bourdieu engage in this type of objectification: seeking to determine and study the way in which *actualité* is formed: in this case, we see an agreement on critique. Bourdieu has little to say, however, on the ways our very concept of *actualité* may have become disrupted through such changes. It is here that this difference around objectification separates their interpretation of the media and moves Derrida into the ‘plus-que-critique’. For Derrida, alongside *artefactualité*, there is accordingly also another concept which needs attention: *actuvirtualité*.

*Actuvirtualité* is a trait of something which ‘arrive aujourd’hui à l’actualité’ (1996: 14). For Derrida, it is the emergence of a whole series of technical capacities which change the meaning and pertinence of the virtual: ‘image virtuelle, espace virtuel et donc événement virtuel’ (1996: 14). The emergence of these techniques changes the very meaning of the concept of the virtual to ‘la réalité actuelle’, and this ties into a set of other philosophical oppositions: ‘la puissance et l’acte, la *dynamis* et l’*energeia*, la potentialité d’une matière et la forme définissante d’un *telos*’ (1996: 14). The opposition between what is virtual and what is real breaks down, or is beginning to break down, according to Derrida’s analysis and this carries implications for these other oppositions that relate to it. Importantly, this includes the experience and idea of an event itself: ‘Cette virtualité s’imprime à même la structure de l’événement produit, elle affecte le temps comme l’espace de l’image, du discours, de l’“information”, bref tout ce qui nous rapporte à ladite actualité, à la réalité implacable de son présent supposé’ (1996: 14). Here, we see that it is both a question of temporality, but also a question of the space of the image and information. Everything that connects us to what is present or actual is affected by this form of virtuality. Without taking account, therefore, of this ‘temps virtuel’ it is no longer possible today to ‘penser son temps’ (1996: 14). *Actuvirtuality*, therefore, is a term for describing this virtual phenomenon and a way of analysing the implications of this. Unfortunately, however, Derrida does not expand more fully here, and we need to reconstruct the full meaning of this term through a careful consideration of his other terms.

To understand this then it is necessary for us to consider what Derrida has stated about virtuality and the role it plays within his other works. To do this, we will look to *Politiques de l’amitié* (1994c). While this text does not engage directly with *actuvirtualité* or indeed the question of the media, its discussion of the virtual allows us to fully grasp the importance which

this play within Derrida's work and ultimately within his conception of *actuvirtualité*. Through a reading of Nietzsche, Derrida develops a conception of the perhaps, the *peut-être*, which become vital for understanding his approach here. In particular, it is essential to understand the importance of this perhaps and its link to the virtual. The modality of the perhaps is a virtual one. Derrida describes 'L'espace et le temps virtuels du "peut-être" seraient *en train* ...', but then urgently re-corrects this 'en train' (1994c: 93). It is not simply that the time and space of the perhaps are virtual, but they are also not even taking place. For them to be taking place would be to offer them a presence that would be too 'rassurante et encore trop effective' (Ibid.). Instead, this virtual time and space is imminent: 'ils seraient tout près d'y parvenir et cette imminence suffirait à leur victoire' (Ibid.). And it is this imminence which renders them possible, but according to a particular type of virtuality, which will never leave them, 'même après leur effectuation' (Ibid.:94). The scale at which this virtuality progresses cannot be understated: 'La modalité du possible, l'insatiable *peut-être* détruirait tout, implacablement, par une sorte d'auto-immunité, dont ne serait exempte aucune région de l'être, de la *physis* ou de l'histoire' (Ibid.). This *perhaps* then, in its manner of rendering the world virtual, impacts everything.

As we have seen, through *artefactualité* media has an important affect on our experience of temporality and this is something at play within *actuvirtualité* also. Even though Derrida does not explicitly discuss the media here, even in *Politiques de l'amitié* his discussion of the virtual focuses on the disruption of what is understood as 'actual': 'Alors nous imaginerions un temps, ce temps-ci, [...] mais nous hésiterions à dire "ce temps-ci", doutant de sa présence, ici maintenant, et de sa singularité indivisible' (Ibid.). While Derrida does not use the term 'actualité' here, we can see that the same question is at stake; our relation to the present moment. Derrida stresses that we want to reappropriate this, to defeat even this virtualisation, to establish 'un temps qui serait le nôtre, et seulement le nôtre : le *contemporain*' (Ibid.). But for Derrida, the power of this virtuality is such that we dare not even offer this 'time' a name: 'Mais nous n'oserions pas lui donner de nom. De peur de virtualiser encore. Et nos désirs et nos événements' (Ibid.). The effects of this virtuality, therefore, are such that our whole experience of the present *as present* is disrupted. This makes it impossible to set apart or declare a certain moment as distinct, as uninhabited by other potential moments, even those which have not taken place. What is important then in Derrida's concept of the *actuvirtual* is that this experience of time is enacted through the media and a product of the development of these *télétechnologies*.

Once again, it is not simply the temporal that is at stake here. Rather, the *actuvirtual* has radical implications for our experience of space and the political concepts that have been based around our previous relationship to space. As Philip Armstrong (2007) has argued convincingly, the political implications of Derrida's thinking on media emerge in part from the disruption of these concepts. And Derrida stresses, for instance in relation to citizenship:

La question de la démocratie [...] n'est peut-être plus liée à celle de la citoyenneté, si du moins la politique se définit par la citoyenneté, et si la citoyenneté se définit comme elle l'a fait jusqu'ici par l'inscription en un lieu, dans un territoire ou dans une nation [...] le lien entre le politique et le local, le *topolitique* est *disloqué* en quelque sorte. (1996: 68)

In our discussion of *télétechnologies*, we saw that one of the intersections of rhythm and space was the ability for capital to establish itself anywhere at any time. This made the question of capital more difficult to locate and address. Here, we see another one: the link between the state and citizenship is such that the concept of citizenship is disrupted. The disruption of such a fundamental political concept thus changes our very understanding of how politics itself can be understood.

And, indeed, this is a point that Derrida returns to frequently: the link between *actuvirtualité* and what he labels 'deterritorialisation'. It is not simply that these *télétechnologies* disrupt the public/private distinction, as we have seen, but rather they also disrupt our experience of space and the reality of it. While we may tend to associate ideas of 'deterritorialisation' with other philosophers, especially Deleuze and Guattari, it is also something which Derrida ties in explicitly to his discussion of the virtual. In a 2004 discussion with Régis Debray on French television, Derrida proposes that:

C'est que sans doute la politique telle qu'elle a existé jusqu'ici touche à sa fin d'une certaine manière. Et moi je crois à la nécessité de repenser le politique [...] C'est-à-dire à partir de la déterritorialisation, n'est-ce pas ? Avant, le politique – depuis la pensée Grecque de la démocratie, etc. – le politique était inscrit, enraciné, dans un territoire. Maintenant, à cause des puissants moyens justement médiologique, le politique n'est plus lié, ou comme il a été auparavant en tout cas à la territorialité. (2004: 00:46)

Here, Derrida is employing Debray's term *médiologie* to highlight the effects of the media and new technologies. It is precisely through this *actuvirtualité* that they deterritorialise and

this affects our traditional understanding of the political. No longer determined by territory, or determined differently at least, this has substantial effects on our experience of space. And, indeed, this is something that Derrida also suggests in *Échographies* :

Peut-être le politique doit-il se déterritorialiser, sans doute le fait-il aussi ; peut-être faut-il même penser la démocratie au-delà de ces “frontières” du politique. Cet impératif [...] nous est imposé concrètement, d’une façon urgente, tous les jours, par la technique : à la fois comme une menace et comme une chance. [...] Dès que j’allume la télévision [...] la question [...] de la déterritorialisation fait irruption. (1996: 76/77)

We can see here that the *actuvirtual* has fundamental implications for our experience and thinking of space. This changes the political concepts which have relied on stable conceptions of both time and space. The *actuvirtual*, therefore, is not some purely abstract consideration, but something of real, concrete importance. Equally, Derrida does not take this *actuvirtualité* to be exclusively negative: it is both a threat and an opportunity. This threat and opportunity, however, is not something that we can simply reject. We have no choice in the “irruption” of these *télétechnologies*, instead we need to address the implication of this “irruption” for our politics.

### **Section Five: Exappropriation and Time**

*Actuvirtualité* does not simply have implications for the temporal/spatial and the political. It also has important implications for how we understand Derrida’s philosophy. There are two that I want to draw particular attention to: the first is Derrida’s relationship to technology; the second, how this offers us a better understanding of *exappropriation*.

There have been a number of strong charges against Derrida and his relation to technology, or more broadly the concept of technics. A number of critics, particularly those who wish to propose a Stieglerian understanding of technics, have criticised Derrida’s account of ‘originary technicity’ for still carrying with it a form of ‘idealism’. In general, the argument is that Derrida does not offer a full account of technicity or that he has moved away from his previously accurate accounts in his early work. Richard Beardsworth, for instance, in the excellent *Derrida & The Political* (1996: 153–55) speculates that Derrida’s account can ‘appear too philosophical’, lodged too much in the quasi-transcendental of the promise, and eclipsing the more *promisingly* technical early accounts, such as *De la grammatologie* (1967a). Most recently, Arthur Bradley (2011: 117/8) has made a similar argument, insisting that

Derrida's position is not '*technical all the way down*' (2011: 15). A common trend in these accounts, which often resort to the same claim -- that there remains an overly 'idealised' or abstract dimension of Derrida's philosophy -- is to rely on purely abstract philosophical sources, and thus avoid taking any account of Derrida's concrete and thorough engagement with *télétechnologies*. As we have seen, this has a significant place in his account of the media and politics more generally. Derrida's thinking of *artefactual* and *actuvirtual*, for instance, takes account of the new ways in which technological changes are impacting our very conception and experience of politics itself. In this sense then Derrida's account is indeed an account of the importance of technics.

Richard Beardsworth's text is worth focusing on here precisely because it offers an otherwise excellent account of Derrida's work. *Derrida & The Political* offers a convincing reading of Derrida's work, demonstrating the political and philosophical implications of the irreducibility of the aporia of time and law. Alongside this, however, Beardsworth also proposes a subtle argument, throughout the book, that Bernard Stiegler makes up for much of Derrida's blind spot on technology; however, nowhere does Beardsworth take account of the ways in which Derrida thinks through the media.<sup>85</sup> This leads Beardsworth to claim:

By returning logic to the aporia of time which this logic first disavows to constitute itself as such, does not Derrida run the risk of leaving the historico-material determinations of time too 'undetermined', and, in so doing, of leaving these very relations between time and matter too undeveloped for *their invention* to take form? Now, without the very development of these relations, it could be argued that the political domain will collapse. (1996: 96)

Importantly, it is here, midway through the book, that we see Stiegler referenced for the first time, in a footnote. Moreover, as we can see from our analysis of media, this is an entirely inaccurate depiction of Derrida and technology. Derrida's use of the figure of rhythm was designed precisely to think through the determined forms which constituted our experience of time. As we saw with *actuvirtualité*, this was not simply within the media, but also impacted our sense of time more generally. And this is all determined by the emergence of concrete

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<sup>85</sup> In Beardsworth's defence, his text was published in 1996, and so some of the texts I have been referring to may have been completed while this was in press or after publication (such as *Échographies* (1996)). However, many of these texts like *L'Autre cap* (1991a) were available, as of course was the active role that Derrida was playing in the *Parlement* and his public statements on that.

changes in technology and the creation of new *télétechnologies*. Importantly, particularly in the context of Beardsworth's argument, rather than this "collapsing" the political domain, Derrida views the way these *télétechnologies* operate, both in their rhythm and 'homo-hegemonising' effects, as both determining of the political and very much, therefore, a political question.

However, it is worth noting that this is not the first time that these critiques of Derrida and technology have emerged, and this brings us to the second issue here: *exappropriation*. In an important essay by Dominique Janicaud, first given at a conference in 1977, we see perhaps the earliest criticism of Derrida around technology; significantly, Janicaud also ties this to the importance of appropriation/expropriation in Derrida.<sup>86</sup> Or, rather, Janicaud misses out part of this, arguing that deconstruction is exclusively '*a will to disappropriate*' (1978: 74).<sup>87</sup> He criticizes Derrida on two grounds: one that he does not offer an account of appropriation, and second that he does not link such account to changes in technology. What we have seen thus far in the thesis is that the whole point of *exappropriation* is that appropriation and this act of disappropriation, in Derrida's terms expropriation, are linked. Though Janicaud only takes into account the expropriating part of this dynamic, the essay is important because it is one of the first to frame it in these terms.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, it is also of interest because it links this to technology. In an effort to defend Heidegger, Janicaud maintains that one of the reasons Derrida does not take adequate account of appropriation is because of a lack of thinking of technology: 'This implicit denial is, in my view, an unjustified presupposition which is perhaps linked with the lack of a meditation on modern technology and of the possible relationship between the essence of technology and the will to disappropriate' (1978: 75). What our discussion of *actuvirtualité* suggests is that, in spite of what Janicaud claims, Derrida is very interested in analyzing modern technology, and indeed his reflections on the media over a number of decades are designed precisely to think through these implications. What *actuvirtualité* also suggests is that this is linked to the movement of *exappropriation*. Janicaud does not take account of this double movement, considering only one side.

Moreover, in the previous section, we have just seen the degree of importance that Derrida allocates to changes in technology. This is seen as both disrupting our concepts and

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<sup>86</sup> In this context, it is worth noting that the second essay of *Voyous* is dedicated to Dominique Janicaud.

<sup>87</sup> Here, I take the terms 'disappropriate' and 'expropriate' to be synonymous.

<sup>88</sup> Without entering into the question of whether such *exappropriation* and interest in technology were there in the 1970s, we can at least acknowledge that such themes were far less explicit than they become in Derrida's later work.



their relations to each other, so that core political concepts, such as citizenship are disrupted. Derrida offers significant space: ‘La question de la démocratie [...] n’est peut-être plus liée à celle de la citoyenneté’ (1996: 68). For Derrida, this is a direct result of changes in technology and the *exappropriating* effects of these changes. And, indeed, as we have seen above and will see in the next two chapters, technology is a major factor in deterritorialization, which Derrida takes to be a major contemporary political issue. For the moment, however, we can understand the importance Derrida attributes to these technologies, by considering the link he makes to deconstruction itself:

Ce qui produit le développement accéléré des télétechnologies, du cyberspace, de la nouvelle topologie du “virtuel”, c’est une *déconstruction* pratique des concepts traditionnels (1996: 45)

The radical change to our traditional concepts, particularly political concepts, is partially a result of these *télétechnologies*. This is what Derrida labels *actuvirtualité*: these changes deconstruct these traditional concepts themselves. It is the *exappropriation* of *télétechnologies* which deconstructs our conception and experience of politics, time, space and all the concepts relying on these. Indeed, this also recalls to us the de-limitation that we saw at work in Chapter 1; Derrida identifies this as a fundamental part of deconstruction, and these *télétechnologies* can be said to have analogous effect. Uprooting, through “force de rupture”, these concepts from their original context. Thus, the movement beyond critique, the *plus-que-critique*, is not necessarily the conscious decision of an individual; rather, it can occur any time iteration takes place, and the *actuvirtualité* of *télétechnologies* represents one such instance of that.

### **Section Six: Public Space and Reason**

However, simply because these changes take place independently of thought, does not mean that there is no place for thinking in the *plus-que-critique*. Instead, this calls for a thinking that tries to take account of these changes and this once again returns us to the role of institutions. In this respect, interestingly, we can find one more revealing difference between Bourdieu and Derrida: autonomy. This is a significant difference, as we will see, because it allows us to see the importance Derrida places on the public space as an institution. As we have seen in our account of Bourdieu, his major aim is to establish, or in his view re-establish, the autonomy of the intellectual field. Both he and Derrida agree that this has been seriously compromised by the influence of capital and the market. And we also see that the vocabulary of ‘autonomy’ is not completely foreign to Derrida. For instance, in his 1994 address to the *Parlement*, Derrida

calls for a form of ‘autonomie’ (1994e: 12). Or, equally, in *L’Université sans condition*, there is a call for a type of unconditional freedom and sovereignty: ‘la revendication de l’université à l’indépendance, c’est-à-dire à une certaine forme très particulière de souveraineté’ (2001b: 20).<sup>89</sup> Each time, however, that Derrida makes an appeal to some form of autonomous intellectual space, it is always conditioned by a reference to the outside of that space, and particularly the public space.

An illustrative example of this comes from Derrida’s support for the ‘Pétition contre la guerre à l’intelligence’. Organised by and published in ‘Les Inrockuptibles’, the French cultural magazine, it attacked the Chirac government’s attitude towards intellectuals, their material conditions and particularly the prime minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin. Published on the 18 February 2004, and having received 100,000 signatures, the petition denounced the budget cuts and precarity that were being imposed by the government: ‘Une politique d’appauvrissement et de précarisation de tous les espaces considérés comme improductifs à court terme, inutile ou dissidents, de tout le travail invisible de l’intelligence’(Bourmeau 2009: para. 8).<sup>90</sup> This included lack of university funding and employment, increase in administrative work and cases for the judiciary, limitations in capacities of healthcare professionals to operate, funding to the arts and also publication houses. For Derrida and others this amounted to an unprecedented form of ‘anti-intellectualism’: ‘Tous ces secteurs de savoir, de la recherche, de la pensée, du lien social, producteurs de connaissance et de débat public font aujourd’hui l’objet d’attaques massives, révélatrices d’un nouvel anti-intellectualisme d’État’ (Ibid.: para. 7). Moreover, it is not simply that these cuts attack certain groups of intellectuals, but rather for Derrida, the implications are for society as a whole: ‘Ensuite, parce qu’au-delà de nos métiers, de nos savoirs, de nos pratiques, c’est au lien social qu’on s’en prend, reléguant davantage encore dans les marges les chômeurs, les précaires, et les pauvres’ (Ibid.: para. 10). The more deprived of intellectual space the public is, in Derrida’s view, the less capable it is of paying attention to those on the margins. This ‘war against intelligence’, therefore, impacts on all of society, attacking the ‘lien social’ itself, and serving to marginalise even further the poor. Indeed, though Derrida did not write the petition himself, he was an avid and public defender of the petition in the media. On France Culture, the day that that the petition was published, Derrida defended it wholeheartedly: ‘Je souscris dès le départ sans réserve’(2004: 12 :31). Given what

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<sup>89</sup> Chapter six will consider this question of sovereignty more thoroughly.

<sup>90</sup> There is no copy of this petition in the University Library nor an original online source for the petition; however, since 2009, it has been posted on the *Mediapart* website (Bourmeau 2009).

we have seen so far in this chapter, we can understand that this support is far from accidental to his philosophy and thinking on media, but instead a product of decades of reflection on the need to both restructure the public space and respond to the changes in the media itself.

Moreover, Derrida ties these political questions directly to some of the core questions of his own philosophy. In Chapter 2, we have already referenced *démocratie à venir*, and, in the context of the media, this is also tied to *les lumières à venir*.<sup>91</sup> This reference to the Enlightenment is one we see continuously in Derrida's work on media and is tied to his focus on the public space. For instance, in *L'Autre cap*, Derrida claims:

Car il s'agit bien de l'avenir de la démocratie. La dimension de l'espace "public" accède sans doute à sa modernité philosophique avec les Lumières, les Révolutions française ou américaine ou des discours comme ceux de Kant qui lie l'*Aufklärung* – le progrès des Lumières et du jour – à la liberté de faire un usage *public* de la raison dans tous les domaines. (1991b: 113)

Here, we see quite clearly that this is about the 'avenir' of democracy, and that such a future takes the Enlightenment as an important reference point: or specifically the capacity to use reason in any domain in the public space. However, as we might expect, this is not about returning us to the eighteenth-century, but rather also about taking into account the ways reason itself may have changed: 'Dans cette modernité post-révolutionnaire, la mutation techno-économique des médias marque une autre scansion' (1991b: 113). We see here then that Derrida's interest in the changes brought about by *télétechnologies* represents a way of thinking through the different forms in which access to this reason and our capacity to use this reason publicly have changed. It is an effort to take account of the public use of reason, while also paying attention to the *homohégémonique* media. And yet again, rhythm is employed to understand this:

It is once again a question of the Enlightenment, that is, of access to Reason in a certain public space, though this time in conditions that technoscience and economic or telemedia globalization have thoroughly transformed: in time and *as space*, in rhythms and proportions. If intellectuals, writers, scholars, professors, artists, and journalists do

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<sup>91</sup> There are multiple other references to the Enlightenment and public space in Derrida's work. For instance, in *L'Université sans condition*, Derrida maintains that it is the reference to the public space which links the Humanities to the Enlightenment: 'cette référence à l'espace public restera le lien de filiation des nouvelles Humanités à l'époque de Lumières' (2001b: 16).

not, before all else, stand up together against such violence, their abdication will be at once irresponsible and suicidal. (2003: 125)

The use of reason in the public space, then, is not immediately or natural given; rather, it occurs in specific conditions, and rhythm is one important way that Derrida thinks through this. Here, building on Chapter 2, we can see that Derrida's engagement with *Anspruch* and the ways of responding to the call of reason, was not simply relevant for the university. Not only is this reference to reason one which Derrida continues to pursue, but we can also see that his focus on the way reason was instituted in the university, allows him also to pay attention to the way it is instituted, determined and limited within the public space.

In fact, this is not the only link between Derrida's work on education institutions and his engagement in the media. Both share an important reference to pedagogy and education. Derrida speaks frequently of the need to establish a critical culture: 'il "faudrait" une culture critique, une sorte d'éducation' (1996: 12). This type of education returns us to what we saw in Chapter 2, whereby education was seen as having a vital role in democratisation. What is clear here is that this focus on pedagogy represents a central part of Derrida's thinking around the public sphere and developing a critical culture within it. What's more, Derrida is quite explicit about the role of education here. To avoid the problem of either favouring the free market or state-control, he stresses the need to change 'le champ de réception et la nature de la demande', this requires education:

Cela passe par une transformation générale de la société civile, de l'État, et par exemple, au croisement des deux, par une transformation correspondante de l'École. C'est très difficile, à peine imaginable. (1996: 55)

We can see here therefore, even though school is offered as an example, that it plays an essential role in determining a demand a culture of reception which would resist the negative homogenising effects that we have seen above. Furthermore, we see this move repeated in discussing the example of the cinema, where Derrida stresses that such a 'combat' is not won by 'des décisions législatives', but instead through:

Des programmes ouverts d'éducation, de formation à l'usage de cette technologie, de ces moyens techniques. Il faudrait faire tout ce qui est possible pour que, citoyens ou non, les utilisateurs de ces instruments techniques puissent d'eux-mêmes participer à la production et à la sélection des programmes en question. (1996: 64)

For Derrida, this critical culture is about changing the public from passive to active in relation to media; so that they are no longer simply consumers, but rather also producers. One of the core dimensions of this is to give them access to the new technical capacities and for them to fully understand them. For Derrida, ‘le développement de cette critique est en cours’ and this is occurring outside of education, but also within ‘une éducation nationale’ (1996: 71). This “critical culture” then is one way of responding to these changes in *télétechnologies* and of defending the intellectual space of the media.

Bourdieu places the emphasis on the autonomy of those using reason in the public space; while Derrida wants to respect this position, he also wants to expand the use of reason beyond that of intellectuals, to include the public in general. Derrida’s solution to the influence of the market on the public space is not to withdraw, but rather to develop this “critical culture” so that the public can resist these market forces themselves. If we ask, what motivates this difference, we can see once again that *exappropriating institutions* comes to the fore. Recall from Chapter 2, that we saw that these had three important characteristics: self-reflexive, anti-hegemonic, and international. In the effects of *télétechnologies*, Derrida already sees that media is becoming more and more international; however, with this, as we have seen, comes an increased centralisation of media and capital, and this includes a “homo-hégémonisation”. Though the “public” may not be seen as an institution as such, Derrida’s interest is really about the institutions of the public space, and he takes the participants in this to be a major part of that. In this respect, Derrida’s emphasis on ‘une culture critique’, allows both for the potential of continuous self-reflexivity, because those using the technology will have the potential to produce and participate in programmes themselves; but also presenting a resistance to the hegemonic effects of *télétechnologies*. For Derrida, it is through educated, active and engaged users of these different media that will allow the public space to take on a similar structure to *exappropriating institutions*.

This is far from an overstatement. Indeed, as in Chapter 2, we also see a reference to democratisation through the media. These technical changes represents ‘une chance de démocratisation’ (1999b: 45). They offer new ways of reforming society, nationally and internationally, and of changing the way we think about the world. This also returns us to Chapter 3, and the link in the *Parlement* between a new international law and the reform of the public space. As we have already seen ‘Les devoirs de notre “communauté”’ sets out the importance of invention in relation to hospitality. What is important for our interests here is

that such invention also is linked to the media. In this case, it is about using the opportunities it presents:

Le meilleur, ce sont les voies par lesquelles *nous* pourrions infiltrer ces systèmes de communication, les soustraire à leur plus forte pente et les gagner, autant que possible, à notre cause. Non pas en vue de quelque autonomie absolue [...] mais en infléchissant des processus d'émancipation à la fois déterminés et interminables. (1994e: 12)

These changes in technology are both a threat to democracy, in their *homohégémonique* mode, but also a chance for emancipation. It is a case then not of rejecting them outright, but rather finding ways to work them and to benefit from the new possibilities they present. Yet again this is tied into 'des Lumières de demain, de la démocratie à venir' (Ibid.). Moreover, the way that Derrida engages with the media here is based around an aporia, and it is one which ties this media to a new international law: 'Cette aporie est aussi une chance, elle nous donne à penser un nouvel espace public et un nouveau droit international' (Ibid.). In the next two chapters, we will consider this new international law and its implications. What we see here, however, is the importance of a change in the public space to achieve this. It is only through taking account of these modes of rhythm, the technological changes, and finding ways to bring forward their emancipatory potential that such a re-thinking of the international order can take place.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion then we can see that broadcast media is an important institution for Derrida. Through his thinking of *télétechnologies*, we can draw out the explicit political connections between developments in media and our changing conceptions of time and space. Equally, as we have seen, this changes the way we understand Derrida's relationship to technology: rather than avoiding thinking through technology, Derrida's philosophy quite literally thinks *through* technology. It involves a careful awareness of the ways in which the disruption of our traditional concepts in deconstruction is not an active effort, but rather a response to concrete changes, which include the technological. Finally, we also see that this is connected to a thinking of a public space as an *exappropriating institution*, one which enables and requires active consumers and producers of media.

## Chapter Five: Europe and the International

Avant, le politique, depuis la pensée Grecque, de la démocratie, etc., le politique était inscrit, enraciné, dans un territoire. Maintenant, à cause des puissants moyens justement médiologiques, le politique n'est plus lié, ou comme il a été auparavant en tout cas, à la territorialité. Et par conséquent l'Europe pour moi n'est pas située simplement dans les frontières territoriales. Cette idée de l'Europe dont je rêve qui transformerait le concept du politique, continue justement des mutations, disons, médiologique, technoscientifique, dont nous avons parlés. (2004: 00:46)

This epigraph captures many of the important issues that have already been discussed so far in this thesis, and which will take on even greater significance in these final two chapters: deterritorialisation, democracy, media, politics and, above all else for the purposes of this chapter, the idea of Europe.<sup>92</sup> Coming from a discussion on French television in 2004 between Régis Debray and Derrida, it demonstrates the importance of Europe within Derrida's philosophy – a reference, as many have pointed out (e.g. Redfield (2007: 377/8)), which has been present since Derrida's earliest work on Husserl. As we will see, this reference to Europe in Derrida does not simply occupy a significant philosophical position in his work, but also one of immense political import. That said, attributing such a position to Europe may well cause some unease; and after nearly forty years of postcolonial studies, such a move should be rightly greeted with scepticism. While Derrida's engagement with the idea of Europe often sought to bring out the problematic nature of such a privileging, we might well ask if a Eurocentric inheritance still operates within his work. While not dismissing the legitimacy of such concerns, in what follows I will argue that this is to misunderstand Derrida's work on Europe. I will argue that if we pay careful attention to Derrida's use of the name, and particularly the way in which he puts it in relation to other concepts, what Derrida is proposing is a thinking of universality which avoids the traps of Eurocentrism.

This chapter begins with a survey of Derrida's status in postcolonial studies. I will argue that Derrida has something to offer postcolonialism, and this becomes apparent through a proper genealogy of the relationship between deconstruction and decolonisation. I argue that Derrida sees decolonisation as subject to the same critique/*plus-que-critique* problematic that we have seen. In the case of critique, I look at Derrida's philosophical and historical critiques

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<sup>92</sup> Derrida uses the term *médiologique* here to refer to the idea of *médiologie* coined by Régis Debray. In this context, it is worth noting that Debray himself led the committee for the États-Généraux about the relationship between media and education.

of Eurocentrism, in a similar fashion to Chapter 3. I also demonstrate that Derrida is engaging not just with an abstract idea of Europe, but with the European Union itself and that he positions Europe as an unconditional, which asserts practical pressure on this institution. We also see the *plus-que-critique* dimension in Europe, whereby Europe is seen as key to inventing a new international law. I argue that this is essential for understanding a new figure of Europe that Derrida wants to create, and that an understanding of this dimension is often absent in the reception of Derrida. Ultimately, it is through Europe that Derrida thinks through the problematics of universality and a new international politics which would be resolutely non-Eurocentric.

### **Section One: Decolonial Derrida**

Before addressing the position of Europe within this international order, it is worthwhile considering the relationship between postcolonialism and Derrida's philosophy more generally. This has a complex history, not least because the emergence of postcolonial studies in the Anglophone world was partially enabled by the integration of the work of Derrida and others within the academy.<sup>93</sup> Unsurprisingly then, this had generated a wide variety of views: ranging from Robert C. Young's argument (2000) that Derrida was effectively a postcolonial critic *avant la lettre*, whose early critique of ethnocentrism lays the foundation of postcolonial studies today; to Walter D. Mignolo's position that Derrida's insistence on a 'universal perspective' ends in 'blindness to colonial difference' (2000: 83). The two most convincing recent texts on Derrida's relationship to postcolonialism and Eurocentrism are Michael Syrotinski's *Deconstruction and the Postcolonial: At the Limits of Theory* (2007) and Jane Hiddleston's *Poststructuralism and Postcoloniality: the Anxiety of Theory* (2010). Both offer nuanced positions about Derrida's philosophy and its relationship to core issues within postcolonialism. Syrotinski argues convincingly against Young's position, proposing that such an 'isomorphism' between deconstruction and anti-colonial activity betrays something of the complexity of both. Moreover, this risks deploying a thoroughly anti-Derridean grand narrative (2007: 13). Instead, the value of Derrida's philosophy for postcolonialism is not in its analysis of empirical violence, but its continuous exposure of an arche-violence, which founds a 'sort of vigilance that is essential if we are to keep open the possibility of radical politics at all' (2007: 23). Hiddleston concurs a great deal with Syrotinski but wants to add that Derrida 'sketches a mode of philosophical writing informative for subsequent experimenters with

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<sup>93</sup> For a discussion of this, see the introduction to Michael Syrotinski's *Deconstruction and the Postcolonial: At the Limits of Theory* (2007)



postcolonial theory' (2010: 23).<sup>94</sup> For Hiddleston, 'Derrida's self-contradictory and multi-layered writing exposes the paradoxes associated with theorizing postcolonialism' (2010: 46). In this view, deconstruction's contribution to postcolonial theory is to demonstrate the contradictions and paradoxes involved in thinking about colonisation in general. While Hiddleston is undoubtedly correct that Derrida draws our attention to the aporetics at work here, as we will see, he also does much more than this. This is particularly clear from his work on a new international law and its relation to Europe, which we will come to later in this chapter.

One route that can help refine Hiddleston and Syrotinski's positions is by looking more closely at the genealogy of Derrida's relationship to postcolonialism. While both are happy to take Robert C. Young as a starting point, and thus Derrida's early critique of ethnocentrism, there is another important reference to decolonisation, which is often overlooked. In the same year as the publication of one of the foundational texts of postcolonial studies, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Derrida gave a talk in Benin entitled 'La crise de l'enseignement philosophique'. This was at a conference bringing together French- and English-speaking African philosophers. Though given in December 1978, it would not be published until it was collected in *Du droit à la philosophie* (1990a). Though the text is mainly focused on the activities of *GREPH*, Derrida does address the relationship between deconstruction and decolonisation. Importantly, he does so in a way that predicts and pre-empts much of the critical discussion outlined above. Derrida asks a question about the concept of decolonisation: 'Si le concept de décolonisation et d'abord de colonisation pouvait avoir un sens radical, que devrait-il ici s'ensuivre ?' (1990a: 160). Derrida is thus posing one of the fundamental questions of postcolonial studies: what are decolonisation and colonisation and what are the limitations that have been placed on these concepts? In a later section, we will think through the addition of colonialism here, which has important implications, but for the moment it is important to follow Derrida's reasoning here. In posing this question, Derrida is suggesting that decolonisation must invent a 'nouveau rapport au philosophique' (1990a: 160). For it to be truly radical, such a decolonisation has to avoid 'l'auto-répétition de la philosophie occidentale' (1990a: 160). With this, Derrida includes 'ses valeurs de propriété et de réappropriation' (1990a: 160). Such a position pre-empts the challenge of critics such as

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<sup>94</sup> Hiddleston is somewhat unfair to Syrotinski in suggesting that he focuses exclusively on this arche-violence. Indeed, the second half of his book can be read as a careful illustration of the ways in which Derrida and other philosophers influence these postcolonial 'experimenters'. See, for instance, his reading of Mbembe, and particularly the reference to Derrida's *Force de loi*, in chapter 6, pp. 98-116.

Haddour (2000: 158) who would suggest that deconstruction neglects the necessity of these values. Derrida in fact acknowledges that ‘ses valeurs [of property and réappropriation] [...] ont pu parfois imposer leur nécessité stratégique aux mouvements de libération et de décolonisation’ (1990a: 160). Thus, Derrida acknowledges the strategic considerations that might impose themselves in certain contexts; in fact, as we have seen throughout this thesis, Derrida does not just take such strategic issues into account, but regularly employs them in his own political interventions. Such a move, therefore, is entirely consistent with the approach that we have seen previously.

Not only does Derrida pre-empt the above discussion, but he also brings forward some of the central issues that will later be discussed by Young, Syrotinski and Hiddleston. Young emphasises the Algerian colonial and postcolonial context of Derrida’s biography, but Derrida partially predicts this argument by stressing his own Algerian heritage: ‘.. comme cette sorte d’Africain déraciné que je suis, né à Alger dans un milieu dont il sera toujours difficile de dire s’il était colonisant ou colonisé’ (1990a: 160). Furthermore, a major reference for both Syrotinski and Hiddleston is *Le Monolinguisme de l’autre* (1996), suggesting that it is only at this late stage that Derrida begins to consider his own Algerian identity and postcolonialism; however, what the 1978 essay suggests is that this is far from the case. Indeed, though we might suggest that it is still germane, the problematic is also tied to monolingualism: ‘Tout monolinguisme et tout monologisme restaure (sic) la maîtrise ou la magistralité’ (1990a: 163). For Derrida, it is only ‘en traitant autrement chaque langue’ that we can challenge ‘l’unité de la langue’, which hides that ‘il y a chaque fois *des* langues dans la langue’ (1990a: 163). This focus on the disruption of a unified and sovereign language is brought out by both critics in their reading of *Le Monolinguisme de l’autre*, but importantly it is already at work nearly 20 years earlier and explicitly within a colonial frame.

One point that Hiddleston in particular exposes is what she labels Derrida’s ‘quasi-universalism’ (2010: 46). Hiddleston does this through a careful reading of *Le Monolinguisme de l’autre*, pointing to the shifting ways that Derrida appeals to the singular and the universal. Hiddleston’s reading demonstrates the importance of this text for understanding Derrida’s relationship to postcolonialism. However, what ‘La crise de l’enseignement philosophique’ suggests is that this argument is already quite explicit in relation to decolonisation and Derrida’s philosophy and that we need not wait for the 1996 publication. Derrida stresses that the concepts of ‘proper’ and ‘appropriation’ are the basis for the opposition between the

importation and non-importation of culture, and the basis on which we can reject something as colonised and something else as non-colonised or authentic:

D'où l'extraordinaire difficulté – théorique et pratico-politique : comment faire plus et autre chose que renverser et (donc) réapproprier ? Cette difficulté – plus que critique – est commune et aux mouvements de déconstruction et aux mouvements de décolonisation. Car je crois [...] qu'entre l'effectivité de l'époque déconstructrice et l'effectivité des décolonisations, la concaténation historique est nécessaire, irréductible, de part en part signifiante. (1990a: 160/1)

In this passage, then we see the linkage of deconstruction and decolonisation orbiting precisely a thinking of alternative forms of appropriation. This is both a deeply theoretical question, but also a 'pratico-politique' one, because it is about the ways that states can free themselves from these intellectual models: 'la décolonisation ne peut être effective ni sur le simple mode de la réappropriation ni sur le simple mode de l'opposition ou du renversement' (1990a: 161). As the language here suggests, and as we will see, this is once again an issue of a thinking of appropriation that does not divide into appropriation/expropriation, or, in other words, *exappropriation*.

We will return to this point more substantially in the later sections. However, before doing so, I wish to focus on a different part of this paragraph, namely the phrase: *plus-que-critique*. Through the *plus-que-critique*, Derrida identifies the shared difficulty of deconstruction and decolonisation – not as a critical task, but one which requires a going beyond of critique. It returns us, once more, to the double movement and the two types of responses that we have seen at work throughout. Understanding Derrida's relationship to Europe and the 'quasi-universalism' proposed by Hiddleston, therefore, requires a careful working through of this double movement in the context of Europe.

## **Section Two: Eurocentric Critique**

Beginning with *critique*, we can see that Derrida often brings out the Eurocentric perspective of the phenomenological tradition he works in. In the case of the relationship between Eurocentrism and philosophy, Derrida engages with Kant's account of the Greco-Roman origins of philosophy. In *Du droit à la philosophie du point de vue cosmopolitique* (1997d), Derrida foregrounds the Eurocentric nature of Kant's depiction of cosmopolitanism. His reading of Kant's *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* (1784), focuses on the way Kant separates philosophy from fiction, and particularly how 'le seul moyen

d'opposer la raison philosophique au roman ou à la fiction extravagante, c'est, du moins aux yeux de Kant, de se fier à l'histoire européenne de la raison et d'abord à l'histoire gréco-romaine de l'histoire' (1997d: 23). For Kant, it is the Greco-Roman history which offers us the possibility of a universal history; in this text, they serve as 'le signe, l'indice et donc le fil conducteur permettant de penser qu'une histoire est possible, qui rassemblerait tout ce qui touche à l'universalité du genre humain' (1997d: 28).<sup>95</sup> Derrida's reading of Kant, therefore, is explicitly designed to expose the problem of thinking about universality through a European lens. Indeed, Derrida does not limit himself to Kant, but stresses that this Eurocentric teleology occurs in other major philosophers, but also as the axiomatic of many international institutions:

On le retrouve intact, interchangeable à travers des variations aussi graves que celles qui peuvent distinguer Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Valéry. On le retrouve aussi à l'état pratique, et parfois à travers la dénégation, dans nombre de discours politico-institutionnels, européens ou mondiaux. (1997d: 29/30)

We will come to the links with these other philosophers shortly, but it is worth noting the way in which Derrida's reading is not limited to the philosophical. For him, the Eurocentrism of philosophy spreads well beyond the academic into global political institutions, and this adds to the political and practical urgency of critiquing the philosophical. Moreover, this overlooks what Derrida sees as the reality of philosophy. The unified root that Kant and these other narratives project simply neglects the truth of what Greco-Roman philosophy always was: 'bâtarde, hybride, greffée, multilinéaire, polyglotte et il nous faut ajuster notre pratique de l'histoire de la philosophie, à cette réalité qui fut aussi une chance et qui reste plus que jamais une chance' (1997d: 33). Thus, Derrida's engagement with Kant here is quite deliberately designed to bring forward and challenge the Eurocentric foundation of his work.

Such a focus on critique is not limited to Kant, of course. Indeed, as Redhill (2007: 377/8) has observed, Derrida has been focusing on Europe since his very earliest work on Husserl, bringing forward the way that Europe is taken there as the 'bon exemple' (Husserl and

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<sup>95</sup> For more on the complicated relation between Kant and postcolonial criticism, especially the relationship between his philosophy and theories of race, see: Robert Bernasconi, 'Who Invented the Concept of Race' in *Race* (2001) and also Eze Emmanuel Chukwudi, 'The Color of Reason: The Idea of "Race" in Kant's Anthropology' in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (1997).

Derrida 1962: 121).<sup>96</sup> In *L'Autre Cap* (1991a), Derrida exposes the philosophy and discourse of modernity that is shared by the philosophers mentioned above:

L'idée d'une pointe avancée de l'exemplarité est l'idée de l'idée européenne, son *eidōs*, à la fois comme *arkhè* – idée de commencement mais aussi de commandement (le cap comme la tête, lieu de mémoire capitalisante et de décision, encore le capitaine) – et comme *telos* – idée de la fin, d'une limite qui accomplit ou met un terme, au bout de l'achèvement, au but de l'aboutissement. (1991a: 29)

Europe is thus aligned with this advanced point, one which is both a beginning and an end – both leading the way and marking the limit. It is this 'archéo-téléologique' discourse which unites Valéry, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Kant and others (1991a: 30): in their various depictions of Europe, they all share this same underlying belief about Europe. Disclosing a Eurocentric discourse of modernity is not the only aim of *L'Autre Cap*, but it is an important one. Indeed, Derrida makes a similar point in '(D'où vient l'Europe' (1993a), where he points out that not simply is this 'cercle sémantico-arché-téléologique' incorrect, it is also in a very particular sense irresponsible: 'Au fond, s'il y avait une telle histoire [...] il n'y aurait pas d'histoire, ni d'événement, ni de responsabilité, il n'y aurait pas de décision à prendre, ni d'à-venir. Ni rien d'autre.' (1993a: 34).<sup>97</sup> What we can see here, then, is not only does Derrida position such a critique as a central part of his reading of the European heritage, but he also ties it closely to the fundamental terms and questions which position his own work and philosophy.

In Chapter 3, when discussing hospitality, we saw historical critique as an important part of his approach. And, likewise, we see this at work here. In the context of hospitality, the aim was to expose different articulations of the unconditional, but also the ways in which certain articulations of the unconditional still harboured conditioned, or even intolerant, concepts of the unconditional. We saw this to be particularly true in relation to patriarchy, but also that Derrida engaged with sources from outside the European canon, such as Judaism and Islam, to offer alternative perspectives on the unconditional. This commitment to historical

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<sup>96</sup> This raises the relationship between Europe and the example in Derrida's work. As Hobson has shown, the question of the 'example' is at work in Derrida's style and linguistic choices (2004: 384). Similarly, Hiddleston (2010: 42) show how the example is a core question in thinking about Derrida's relationship to the postcolonial. While there is not the space to enter into these discussions here, it is worth stressing the importance of this for his work, and the question of eurocentrism within it. See: Hobson, 'L'exemplarité de Derrida', in *L'Herne: Derrida* (2004), Simon Glendinning, "'Europe, for Example'" (2011), and Redfield, 'Derrida, Europe, Today', (2007).

<sup>97</sup> This text will be addressed more thoroughly in section four.

critique is, therefore, a part of Derrida's philosophical method, and a fundamental movement in thinking through the ways in which we inherent received conceptions, such as unconditional hospitality and Europe.

### **Section Three: An Unconditional European Union**

This historical approach is not the only way in which Derrida's position on Europe shares similarities with his thinking of the unconditional. As discussed in Chapter 3, the unconditional was inaccessible for two reasons: it had a partially regulative function, like the Kantian regulative idea; and it partially mandated an invention that made it go beyond these horizons. Following our discussion in the last chapter, we can re-label these as the two movements of deconstruction: critique and *plus-que-critique*. We have already seen one dimension of critique above, but in Chapter 3 we also saw that this unconditional regulative function had important political effects. It allowed the unconditional to put pressure on the present and justified resistance to any determined law, particularly in Derrida's argument for civil disobedience. Though Derrida never specifically uses the term 'unconditional' with regards to Europe, his use of 'Europe' regularly involves an appeal to the *mémoire* and *promesse* of Europe. This appeal follows a similar structure to his justification for civil disobedience, *au nom d'une loi plus élevée*. Importantly, this is not designed to present Europe as something pure and transcendent, but rather to take political action and to influence present European politics, particularly in resistance to a contemporary American hegemony.

We might have already guessed that Derrida would take such a route from his phrasing in our epigraph, where he describes Europe, as 'cette idée de l'Europe dont je rêve'. Already, Europe is something of a dreamy idea here. However, if we turn to *L'Autre Cap*, Derrida goes further and presents Europe as an incommensurable duty:

Alors le *devoir* de répondre à l'appel de la mémoire européenne, de rappeler ce qui s'est promis sous le nom de l'Europe, de ré-identifier Europe, c'est un *devoir* sans commune mesure avec ce qu'on entend généralement sous ce nom mais dont on pourrait montrer que tout autre devoir peut-être le suppose en silence. (1991a: 75)

Here, again, we see the importance of *mémoire-promesse* that we explored in detail in Chapter 1: and though Derrida does not use the term 'unconditional' here to describe Europe, we can see that the call that comes from such a heritage has an incommensurable nature. This leads to a whole series of contradictory demands all required by this same "duty/debt", this 'double devoir' (1991a: 78). This includes: welcoming and integrating the foreigner, but also accepting

their alterity; respecting difference and singularity, but also universality and majority; respecting reason and its history, but also accepting that it is not limited to this (1991a: 75/77). These are only some of the list and Derrida insists that more could easily be added. For our discussion, one in particular is worth pausing on: this *devoir* founds the responsibility both to ‘cultiver la vertu de cette *critique, de l’idée critique, de la tradition critique, mais aussi de la soumettre, au-delà de la critique et de la question, à une généalogie déconstructrice*’ (1991a: 76). In this sense, then, Derrida positions the responsibility of Europe as that which founds the very philosophical moves that he himself is making.

Derrida thus brings out the most unconditional and hyperbolic demands of Europe and proposes that these can be found in a *mémoire européenne*. This has a pragmatic aim: to place pressure on what is happening within Europe itself. In this context, it worth noting that *L’Autre Cap*, though originally presented at a conference, was published first in Bourdieu’s *Liber, Revue européenne des livres* in October 1990. Importantly, this was not an obscure journal, but inserted in a whole series of major European newspapers: France’s *Le Monde*, German’s *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Spain’s *El País*, and Italy’s *L’Indice*. As such, it needs to be seen at least in part as an effort to intervene in debates about Europe and on a European level. In Chapter 3, we already noted that Derrida made reference to the Schengen area in his hospitality seminars, in particular the hardening of external European borders – an important context for understanding his engagement with hospitality. In this context, then, we should see the presentation of Europe as a hyperbolic responsibility as exactly an unreachable ideal or goal. Indeed, the title itself captures much of the thrust of the argument of the text: both that Europe needs to take a new direction, *another ‘cap’*, one that resists capital itself, and also that it must open itself out to the other side of its geography.

What is important about this approach is that such an unconditional demand is not apolitical, but deeply interconnected to the contemporary politics from which it emerges. This is true, as I have suggested, of Derrida’s interest in Europe and its borders, but it is also true of Europe’s relation to the United States of America. Or, rather, a certain type of American politics. In this context, we can see Derrida consistently makes an appeal to either the history or the potential of Europe, often to oppose it to American foreign policy.

For instance, in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (2003: 116/7), Derrida refers to the Enlightenment and Europe.<sup>98</sup> There, Derrida maintains that there are ‘absolutely original marks’ in the ‘European political space’, and these offer a new way of relating to religious doctrine: ‘the experience Europe inaugurated at the time of the Enlightenment (*Lumières, Aufklärung, Illuminismo*) in the relationship between the political and the theological’. He acknowledges that this experience remains ‘uneven, unfulfilled, relative and complex’, but that this represents a possibility. Significantly, this possibility is presented in opposition to a particular American politics:

For such a philosophical “deconstruction” would have to operate not against something we would call the “United States” but against what today constitutes a certain American hegemony, one that actually dominates or marginalizes something in the U.S.’s own history, something that is also related to that strange “Europe” of the more or less incomplete Enlightenment I was talking about. (2003: 117)

In this approach, the resources of European history are being used precisely to create distance between a current American politics and the potential of what Europe could be. This is based not on Europe reaching a previous height, but rather about this unreachable promise that Derrida identifies as having its birth in the Enlightenment. Moreover, in a posthumously published interview with the Algerian philosopher Mustapha Cherif, published as *L’Islam et l’occident* (Cherif 2006), Derrida makes a similar point.<sup>99</sup> Arguing that the contemporary moment means that ‘le clivage entre une certaine Amérique [...] et une virtualité de politique européenne est de plus en plus possible’. (2006: 98). This is once again about Europe assuming ‘nouvelles responsabilités’, and such responsibilities are based partially on what Derrida takes to be an Enlightenment distinction between the theological and the political (2006: 98, 103). This reference, then, to what is promised in this *mémoire* is not seeking to glorify a European past, but rather an effort to change European institutions in the present, and particularly to encourage them to resist American power.

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<sup>98</sup> As stated in Chapter 3, this is unavailable in the Cambridge library system and so I have cited it throughout the thesis in English.

<sup>99</sup> This is something of an odd text, as Derrida is given block citations, but this is often framed with a narrative based on Cherif’s experience of the public discussion. Derrida, therefore, is not presented as one of the authors, even though he provides a good deal of the text. To avoid confusion, when citing here, I will only be citing the block quotations from Derrida, and not the descriptions or positions of Cherif.



To offer one final example of this move, and one which is, in fact, referenced in *L'islam et l'occident*, we can turn to Derrida's brief collaboration with Jürgen Habermas in response to the Iraq War. A few weeks after Derrida's interview with Cherif, on the 31st of May 2003, Habermas and Derrida co-signed a piece entitled 'Europe: plaidoyer pour une politique extérieure commune', which was published both in *Libération* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Derrida and Habermas 2003: 44).<sup>100</sup> There, they argue for the need to create a common European foreign policy, particularly to resist against American unilateralism. Before looking closely at this piece, it is worth stressing how brief a collaboration this was. Indeed, in a small addendum published alongside the article, Derrida emphasises that he did not write the article himself, but stresses this was only due to personal circumstances and that he 'partage pour l'essentiel, les prémisses et les perspectives' (2003b: 44). In this sense then, though Derrida had little part in the wording of the piece, he was still in agreement with the positions taken there.

In the final section of this chapter, we will come to the issue of this European foreign policy found in the title; however, for the moment, the subtitle here is of equal interest: 'Les manifestations du 15 février 2003 contre la guerre d'Irak ont dessiné un nouvel espace public européen' (Derrida and Habermas 2003: 44). It is important to note that these protests took place more than three months after Habermas and Derrida are writing. This is not, therefore, an impulsive reaction to a contemporary event, but rather a reflective response. Yet again, we see the motivation is to oppose a particular American politics: 'Il faut que l'Europe jette son poids dans la balance, au niveau international et dans le cadre des Nations unies, et qu'elle fasse pièce à l'unilatéralisme hégémonique des États-Unis' (Ibid. 45). However, for such a move to take place, this must be based on the support of European citizens, 'Une politique capable [...] ne peut reposer que sur les motivations et les convictions des citoyens eux-mêmes' (Ibid.). Such convictions need to be based around a particular identity. Habermas and Derrida are not suggesting that such an identity pre-exists, but rather than it can be formed: 'une identité européenne, née sous les lumières de l'espace public, aurait depuis toujours quelque chose de construit' (Ibid.: 46). What is significant here is the way such an identity will be, at least in part, constructed. We see, once again, that it is based around a conception of *mémoire* that places a hyperbolic demand on present politics. Habermas and Derrida offer some 'candidates-vedettes' for such an identity. Though each of these is specific, we find in each case that there

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<sup>100</sup> The proximity of their positions, at least on some core points, was well illustrated in their responses to September 11<sup>th</sup>, published in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Habermas and others 2003).

is a reference beyond Europe to ‘l’espérance kantienne en une politique intérieure mondiale’ (Ibid.). This is true with regards to what both see as a particular relation between the theological and the political, but also for the past experience of European nations of state-violence, which carries within it a support for restrictions on state-sovereignty and the need to ‘développer des formes nouvelles de coopération supranationale’ (Ibid.). Moreover, this is also the case for the experience of totalitarianism and the Shoah, which has allowed for ‘les principes moraux de la politique’ to be ‘remis en mémoire’. And they maintain that this has a concrete effect with regards to the European Union’s rejection of the death penalty (Ibid.).<sup>101</sup> Though these are only some of the examples, we can see that Habermas and Derrida are not offering a reason as to why such an identity *should* exist, but instead why and how it *could* exist. Indeed, this follows this same hyperbolic focus on the promise that is contained within the memory of Europe.

The presentation of Europe, then, as an incommensurable obligation can take on a Eurocentric appearance; however, in this sense it is only Eurocentric insofar as Derrida is seeking to intervene specifically in the politics of countries and institutions located in the continent of Europe. As with one dimension of unconditional hospitality, this offers a direction or *telos* from which pressure can be applied to contemporary politics. Derrida appeals to this history of Europe precisely to criticise policy and actions that fall below what such a history promises. Importantly, though, this is not the only way that Derrida uses the name Europe, nor is it the only way that this name can have important political effects.

#### **Section Four: Beyond the Universal**

What we have shown then is that Derrida’s engagement with Europe involves both a careful reading of the narratives through which we have inherited a conception of Europe, and an effort to place Europe as an unconditional duty and responsibility. The latter, like unconditional hospitality, has a concrete aim: to influence action in the present, particularly European institutions. Both of these activities represent the dimension of *critique* that we saw in previous chapters. Moreover, as in previous chapters, Derrida insists on a necessary invention with regards to Europe, or that which is *plus-que-critique*.

In *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (2003: 116), Derrida speaks about the need for a ‘new figure of Europe’, emphasising once again the need to create something beyond our determined

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<sup>101</sup> It is worth noting, of course, that it is far from accidental that these are some of the core concerns of Derrida’s later work: sovereignty, the theologico-political, and the death penalty.

idea of Europe. Similarly in *L'Autre Cap* we see a return to the distinction between *répondre à* and *répondre de*, that we saw in Chapter 2. There, Derrida insists that:

Répondre fidèlement *de* cette mémoire et donc répondre rigoureusement à cette double injonction, cela devra-t-il consister à répéter ou à rompre, à continuer où à s'opposer ? Ou bien à tenter d'*inventer un autre geste*, une longue geste [*sic*] en vérité qui suppose la mémoire précisément pour assigner l'identité depuis l'altérité, depuis l'autre cap et l'autre du cap, depuis un tout autre bord ? (1991a: 33)

We see then to take responsibility for, to respond in this other way to this *mémoire* is neither to repeat nor oppose, but instead to invent. Such invention, as we have seen previously, is the moment that is beyond critique: this invention is not the opposite of *mémoire*, but instead relies upon that which is promised within such a history, to call into question determined values and concepts, in order to re-invent them in line with this promise.

Before entering into how this invention relates to Europe, it is worth considering one of the most significant recent interpretations of Europe in Derrida's work. Rodolphe Gasché's, *Europe, or the Infinite Task* (2009) offers a close analysis of phenomenological thinkers of Europe, namely Husserl, Heidegger, Patočka and, finally, Derrida. Of particular importance, especially for our argument, is the important link that Gasché draws between universality and Europe. Indeed, as I will argue, in focusing on universality, Gasché brings forward one of the most important aspects of Derrida's conception of Europe. However, despite this, Gasché often misses out on what is particular about Derrida's depiction of this universality. This means that what is unique about Derrida's position on Europe also tends to escape him. To make this argument, I will build on two important responses to Gasché's work. The first is that of Samuel Weber, who though supportive of Gasché's work, poses some probing questions about the way that Europe and the self are connected: 'What of the "own" in this project of "de-Europeanization? More fundamentally, what of the "self" in the notion of "uprooting oneself" that it reflects and consummates?' (2009: 73/4). As we will see, it is exactly this formation of the "self", which marks a difference between Derrida and Gasché in their reading of universality. The second is that of Simon Glendinning, who carefully takes apart Gasché's argument, demonstrating that there is still a residual and highly problematic link between Europe and Greece that Gasché refuses to surrender; as Glendinning puts it, 'his viewpoint remains stubbornly Greek' (2014: 32). Moreover, Glendinning rightly argues that in such a move Gasché neglects the movement "beyond" Europe, at exactly the moment when 'a certain

“beyond” of every thematizable understanding of Europe’s identity is also what we need to save’ (2014: 45). Both Weber and Glendinning offer serious and accurate criticisms of Gasché’s work. I want to build on these and argue that both these objections emerge from a lack of consideration by Gasché of the relationship between *exappropriation* and universality. As I will argue, when this is taken into account, we come to see the limitations of Gasché’s universality in comparison with Derrida’s interpretation of this concept.

We are perhaps given the clearest indication of where Gasché goes wrong in the final paragraphs of the epilogue. There are two notable moments: the first refers to his representation of the paleonymic strategy and Europe; and, the second is an important reference to an ‘iconoclastic’ Derridean position on Europe, the importance of which (precisely because of his position on the paleonym) he neglects.

Beginning with the paleonym then, this strategy has represented one of the main early ways of describing Derrida’s approach. In particular, it is a justification for the use of “old names” for concepts and their conceptual network that are in the process of transformation, or deconstruction. Gasché rightly observes that Derrida repeatedly refers to Europe as a “paleonym”. Gasché brings the paleonym into consideration right at the end, having somewhat struggled to justify what is unique and specific about the name Europe and why we should keep using it. Importantly, though, Gasché’s depiction of the paleonymic strategy is only partial (2009, 344/5): quoting *Positions* (Derrida and others 1972: 95/6), he defines a paleonym as that which ‘refuse d’être en dernière analyse commandée par un horizon téléo-eschatologique’, and which is kept strategically in order to ‘amorcer un concept nouveau’.<sup>102</sup> However, as Gasché rightly points out, this old name is also only used so that at a certain point a new name of Europe can emerge. We will come to this point shortly. Before doing so though, it is worth pausing on what is missing from Gasché’s depiction of the paleonym. First, Gasché never considers why exactly Derrida has used the term paleonym for Europe. In *Positions*, the first move of this strategy involves:

On procède : 1. au prélèvement d’un trait prédicatif réduit, tenu en réserve, limité dans une structure conceptuelle donnée (limité pour des motivations et des rapports de force à analyser), *nommé X* ; (1972: 96)

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<sup>102</sup> These are cited in English in Gasché’s text.

Here, then, that which is selected as the name is a predicate or trait which has been reserved or limited; importantly, such limitation is not accidental, but rather a result of power and force. As Derrida says in ‘signature, événement, contexte’, ‘une opposition de concepts métaphysiques [...] n’est jamais le vis-à-vis de deux termes, mais une hiérarchie et l’ordre d’une subordination’ (1972b: 392). Terms are never on an equal footing, but rather operate in a network where one is subordinated: deconstruction privileges this subordinated term, seeking to bring out the characteristics that have been limited by this subordination. At multiple points, Derrida insists that his philosophy takes place in this ‘espace dissymétrique et hiérarchisant, traversé par des forces’ (1972a: 11). And, in case there is any doubt that these forces are more than symbolic, but real questions of power, Derrida insists in ‘signature, événement, contexte’, that it is also ‘un champ de forces non-discursives’ (1972b: 392). In this sense, then we might ask both Gasché and Derrida how ‘Europe’ is a good candidate for such a procedure? After all, whatever position we want to take on Eurocentrism/anti-Eurocentrism, Europe can hardly be taken to be the subordinated term. Derrida, as we will see, has a convincing response to this, but Gasché does not. Indeed, presenting Europe as a paleonym, or particularly its universality as that which has been as subordinated or limited in some way seems to make little sense in a book focused on the importance of this universality for phenomenologists dating back to Husserl. Though Gasché wants to use the paleonym to help with the vexed problem of keeping the name of Europe, any thorough consideration of it just brings this problem of the privilege of such a term into even sharper relief. What is said of Gasché here, one could object, may well be said of Derrida too. When we look closer at *exappropriation*, I will argue that this is not the case and that Derrida changes the emphasis of paleonymics in a way that Gasché neglects; however, for the moment, let us just note the partial account that Gasché offers us here.

Alongside the use of the paleonym here, there is a second concern, emerging once again in Gasché’s epilogue. Gasché points out that the paleonym only exists as a provisional structure to allow some day for a new name to emerge, and points to a text where he thinks Derrida suggests just that: ‘D’où vient l’Europe’ (1993a). This was a talk given at the *Penser l’Europe à ses frontières* conference in November 1992, organised by Jean-Luc Nancy, Daniel Payot, Denis Guénoun, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe.<sup>103</sup> Gasché reads this moment as a step beyond the paleonymic, placing a great deal of weight on Derrida’s claim that ‘il faut devenir un peu iconoclaste à l’égard des discours européens sur l’Europe aujourd’hui. Iconoclaste à l’égard

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<sup>103</sup> Some of the participants included: Étienne Balibar, Bernhard Waldenfels, Václav Bělohradský, Giorgio Agamben, Paul Virilio, and Fethi Benslama.

des noms de l'Europe, au nom de l'Europe' (1993a: 35). For Gasché, such an iconoclastic approach is a 'breaking with the venerable images or names of Europe' (2009: 345). Although Gasché is partially right to focus on Derrida's iconoclastic approach, he is wrong to suggest that this involves a breaking away from the name of Europe. Indeed, if we look closely at the parts of the text that Gasché fails to mention, and which ultimately move against his own argument, this becomes apparent.

In '(D')où vient l'Europe', Derrida begins explicitly with a focus on the 'name' of Europe and how Europe appears to embody a particular relationship to the name. Derrida starts from the position that 'un nom, surtout un propre, se porte: par et vers quelqu'un ou quelque chose' (1993a: 20). And he plays on this conception of 'porter' to help explain this. Derrida privileges three terms in this respect: *rappporter*, *exporter*, *déporter*. Though these all place somewhat different emphasis on certain aspects, they share a common movement of relation or 'le mouvement de la référence' (1993a: 21). *Rappporter* refers to the way that Europe relates to itself; *exporter*, the way in which it relates to that outside itself; and, *déporter*, the violent relation and projection outside of oneself. These are all important in constituting the meaning of the name of Europe; however, the best way to enter this comes from the focus on *exporter*. Derrida asks, 'Pourquoi l'Europe a-t-elle été d'abord une exportation?' (1993a: 21). Here, Derrida takes *exportation* to be a defining movement of Europe; indeed, it is the origin of Europe, as a relation outside of itself and effort to export itself beyond its singular context. Europe then begins as an exportation, as a movement outside of itself, and Derrida bases his whole interpretation of Europe in this text on such a premise.

This has implications for the relationship between Europe and colonisation. Acknowledging the difficulty of what he is about to say, Derrida proposes that Europe is the colonial idea itself: 'Et je voudrais à ce sujet risquer cet aphorisme peut-être insoutenable que l'Europe, c'est d'abord l'idée coloniale' (1993a: 22). That Europe is a colonial idea will not be shocking to many a postcolonial critic; however, by "colonial" here, Derrida has a very specific idea in mind, which is what makes such a claim 'insoutenable'. Derrida goes further proposing not simply that 'l'idée de la colonisation comme telle est une idée européenne', but that it is 'peut-être l'Europe même' (1993a: 22). There is not then something simply European about colonisation, in Derrida's view, but colonisation is Europe itself. This colonisation, however, is not a simple one, but rather limitless: 'cette colonisation intégrale et sans bord aura commencé par l'Europe' (1993a: 22). And it is this reasoning which leads Derrida to claim that Europe, as the colonial idea, becomes a colony of itself:

L'Europe est peut-être depuis toujours une colonie, un ensemble colonial, un processus colonisateur multiple et hétérogène [...] Mais alors si l'Europe est une idée coloniale et si cela a commencé par un dedans qui n'était encore le dedans de rien, il faut dire que l'Europe est, aura été et sera une colonie de l'Europe. (1993a: 22)

Europe itself is a colony of Europe. Importantly, this is not something new, but something that has been at work within Europe from the outset: beginning 'par un dedans qui n'était encore le dedans de rien'. Europe is a diverse and heterogeneous colonial process. Colonisation here then is not the movement of a specific culture outside of itself, but that which constitutes Europe itself. There is no prior "essence" or identity of Europe outside of this. Derrida acknowledges 'l'absurdité de cette expression', but insists it is this type of colonisation which defines Europe and which makes the name of Europe important. It is this originary exportation which both makes Europe what it is and determines Europe as a colony of itself.

In the context of a book that takes aim at postcolonialism's supposed inherent anti-Eurocentrism, it is particularly significant that Gasché omits the link that Derrida makes between Europe and colonisation. This is not simply, of course, a reference to the European colonial empire (though it is also that); but rather it is about re-thinking Europe according to a new conception of colonisation itself. Though we may take this as iconoclastic in one sense, it is not remotely iconoclastic with regards to Derrida's previous conception of Europe. This is clear if we return to Derrida's 1978 essay on the link between deconstruction and decolonisation, where he poses a central question: 'Si le concept de décolonisation et d'abord de colonisation pouvait avoir un sens radical, que devrait-il ici s'ensuivre ?' (1990a: 160). Though we did not address it above, we can now see how strange an addition the word 'colonisation' is here. However, in the context of his definition of Europe as colonisation and exportation, we can see why this is included. In Derrida's reading of the name of Europe then, we can see echoes of this desire to think the radical colonisation and decolonisation that he described in 1978.

That Gasché omits this link to colonisation is not simply relevant for his dismissal of postcolonialism's position on Europe. Rather, it also has implications for his reading of Europe throughout. Indeed, if we turn to his reading of *L'Autre Cap*, we can see that this at play here already. There, Derrida proposes an axiom: '*le propre d'une culture, c'est de n'être pas identique à elle-même*' (1991a: 16). Derrida is not claiming that cultures cannot have identities, but that such identity is based on a fundamental non-identity: 'de ne pouvoir prendre la forme

du sujet que dans la non-identité à soi ou, si vous préférez, la différence *avec soi*' (1991a: 16). Gasché proposes that this identity is fundamentally Greek. Though he tries to present Greek identity as an 'intrinsic non-identity' (2009: 295), he still often ends up reifying this Greek relationship to Europe in a significant way, speaking for instance of universality's Greek and 'European birth certificate' (2009: 36, 342). Here, we can see the justification of Glendinning's critique of Gasché's Greek bias. Yet this also links into Weber's focus on the "self", whereby Gasché is not adequately accounting for the formation of this self. For Gasché, the European identity is relational, insofar as it is constructed in opposition to the non-European. This relationality, however, is between two separate entities. However, Derrida's point with this axiom is not simply that these two oppositions define each other, but rather that there is no cemented or original root that can be relied on as stable at any point. In this sense then, Gasché's appeal to Greece seeks to cement and stabilise the *mémoire* of Europe well beyond what Derrida would and could allow.

It is not simply that Gasché has an underlying preference for the Greeks, which we might, presumably, be able to correct; but, rather, that such a preference is based on two substantial differences between his conception of universality and that of Derrida's. The first is that Derrida does not detach this universality from its potential for violence. As we see above, Derrida insists that this movement is tied to colonisation and moments of *déporter* or *exporter*. While Derrida may be seeking radical meanings for these, he is also referring to their violent manifestations. Gasché (2009: 333, 346) briefly mentions this once at the end of his epilogue, and once in the final chapter, both times with regards to the reference to Auschwitz in '(D')où vient l'Europe'. However, in spite of these references, Gasché engages nowhere with the deeper point that Derrida is making: that the very movement of universalisation risks such violence. Similarly, in 'La mondialisation, la paix et la cosmopolitique', Derrida insists that this is tied to violence:

Sans jamais céder au relativisme empiriste, il s'agirait de rendre compte de ce qui, dans cette généalogie, disons pour faire vite, européenne, s'emporte, s'excède en s'exportant (même si cette exportation a pu et peut comporter encore une violence infinie, qu'on appelle cela de mots plus ou moins usés, l'impérialisme, le colonialisme, les néo-colonialismes, les néo-impérialismes ou des modes plus raffinés, plus retours, plus virtuels de domination moins identifiables désormais sous des noms d'États-nations ou d'ensemble États-nationaux). (Derrida 2000: para. 9)



What is important about Derrida's conception of universality here, therefore, is that its relation to the other is not necessarily a positive one; rather, it always risks a violent relation to the other, and Gasché does not ever properly account for this. Indeed, given that Gasché seeks to, in some sense, redeem a conception of universality (if not the name Europe itself), it is significant, if not glaring, that he does not account for the way in which such European exportation has and can still 'comporter encore une violence infinie'.

Gasché's defence of this position is, in fact, to deny that the meaning of European universality is tied to violence. Instead, this is just an abuse of the "proper" Greek idea: 'universality, understood as the domination of the particular by the universal, has very little resemblance to the concept of universality that, from its inception in Greece, has dominated most of the Western philosophical tradition' (2009: 340). For Gasché, such a universality inherently implies a relation to otherness, because of its insistence on 'critical self-justification' (2009: 340). This, however, leads to a second difference with Derrida. For Derrida, the relation to the other in universality occurs through *exappropriation*. We have seen the importance of this term multiple times, but here it refers precisely to this radical movement beyond itself. While at times Gasché's depiction seems to capture 'a movement of separation and tearing (oneself) away in which everything proper has always already been left behind' (2009: 11), he frequently lapses from this: as we have seen in his discussion of cultural identity in relation to Greece. Above all else, Gasché ignores that the relationship to otherness is established not prior to this movement of *exportation*, but in this movement itself. And, as we will see, this is why Derrida wants to dismiss anti-Eurocentrism as much as Eurocentrism, as neither take account of this. For Gasché, however, it is about recovering the 'propre' meaning of universality, and consequentially (Greek) Europe.

### **Section Five: Exappropriation**

Indeed, if we recall from the first section, it is this question of the *plus-que-critique* which links deconstruction to decolonisation. To quote the 1978 text again:

D'où l'extraordinaire difficulté – théorique et pratico-politique : comment faire plus et autre chose que renverser et (donc) réapproprier ? Cette difficulté – plus que critique – est commune et aux mouvements de déconstruction et aux mouvements de décolonisation. (1990a: 160)

Deconstruction and decolonisation share this same problem: how to remove oneself from the problematic of appropriation/reappropriation. What is important for our interests here is not

simply that this marks the point of intersection between Derrida's philosophy and postcolonialism, but that we will also see it return in his explicit position on Eurocentrism. As we have already seen from Derrida's critique of Eurocentric philosophy, Derrida can hardly be said to be a fan of Eurocentrism; however, he also maintains that anti-Eurocentrism is not a viable path either. In *Du droit à la philosophie du point de vue cosmopolitique* (1997d), Derrida insists that his critique of the Greco-Roman origin story of philosophy is not simply designed to reject this outright, rather it is instead about 'à la fois *prendre en compte et dé-limiter* l'assignation de la philosophie à son origine ou à sa mémoire gréco-européenne' (1997d: 30). It is worth stressing that the text itself is devoted to the question of thinking through a universal right to philosophy, and thus the question of universality is present from the outset. As we have seen, Derrida's critique exposes the privilege and myopia that comes with thinking of philosophy as a uniquely Greco-Roman European enterprise; however, he also does not wish to reject this history completely. For him, the point is to change this problematic. It is not a choice between one or the other:

Mais d'essayer de déplacer le schéma fondamental de cette problématique en se portant au-delà de la vieille, fatigante, usée, usante opposition entre l'Eurocentrisme et l'anti-Eurocentrisme. (1997d: 31)

As his choice of language here suggests, this is not an opposition that Derrida is keen to support. It is once again not about raising up this Greco-Roman philosophy so that philosophy simply becomes a quest for some origin, which even forms of postcolonial thought can adopt, and which Derrida describes as the 'mode classique de l'appropriation – qui consiste à faire sien ce qui est à l'autre (ici à intérioriser la mémoire occidentale de la philosophie et à l'assimiler dans sa propre langue)' (1997d: 32). Nor, is it about alienating oneself completely from European philosophy: 'ni à l'invention de nouveaux modes de pensée qui, étrangers à toute appropriation, n'auraient plus aucun rapport à ce qu'on croit reconnaître sous le nom de philosophie' (1997d: 32). For Derrida, it is about finding another approach to this problem, one which can avoid falling too far on either side.

In this context, it is worth stressing that Derrida's point is not that anti-Eurocentrism is bad in general. He has, after all, spent quite a bit of time exposing philosophical Eurocentrism, as well as Eurocentrist ethnography (Young 2000). It is rather that he proposes convincingly that such an opposition is itself colonial. He insists that 'en philosophie comme ailleurs, l'eurocentrisme *et* l'anti-eurocentrisme sont des symptômes de la culture missionnaire

et coloniale' (1997d: 33/4).<sup>104</sup> At least one form of opposition to Eurocentrism, therefore, in fact re-installs a colonial setup. Importantly, Derrida does not take himself to be proposing some form of prophetic “new take” on postcolonial philosophy. In fact, he proposes that he is just describing what is happening right now:

Ce qui arrive aujourd’hui, et je crois depuis longtemps, ce sont des formations philosophiques qui ne se laissent pas enfermer dans cette dialectique au fond culturelle, coloniale ou néo-coloniale, de l’appropriation et de l’aliénation. (1997d: 32)

Derrida is simply trying to shift the terms of our discussion of postcolonialism – so that we can better take account of what he sees as philosophy today, philosophy which escapes the dialectic of appropriation/alienation that he outlined above. Importantly, Derrida has a name for such an escape and it is *exappropriation*:

Il y a d’autres voies pour la philosophie que celles de l’appropriation comme expropriation (perdre sa mémoire en assimilant la mémoire de l’autre, l’une s’opposant à l’autre, comme si une *ex-appropriation* n’était pas possible, la seule chance possible). (1997d: 32)

Here, then, we see that it is this thinking of *exappropriation* that Derrida wants to propose as a way of shifting this problematic. Importantly, this is not a stage of critique, but rather the *plus-que-critique* moment of Derrida’s philosophy.

Moreover, this is a point that Derrida makes elsewhere and here he uses an important term for this invention: universalisation. In another talk, given also at UNESCO, he describes the need to engage in this double strategy of *critique* and *plus-que-critique*. In this double movement, we must ‘d’une part analyser rigoureusement et sans complaisance tous les traits généalogiques qui reconduisent le concept de monde, les axiomes géopolitiques, et les présupposés du droit international’ (Derrida 2000: para. 10). These are in fact ‘européenne, abrahamique et de façon prédominant chrétienne’ (Ibid). This is the *critique* we have seen in section two. However, at the same time, Derrida insists on the need to resist an anti-Eurocentrism, and for a very specific reason:

D’autre part, ne jamais renoncer, par relativisme culturel ou par critique facile de l’Eurocentrisme, à l’exigence universelle, universalisante, à l’exigence proprement

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<sup>104</sup> Derrida mentions that what he says about philosophy can apply also to law and democracy (1997d: 33).

révolutionnaire qui tend irrésistiblement à déraciner, à déterritorialiser, à déshistoriciser cette filiation. (Ibid.)

The *plus-que-critique* moment that Derrida identifies then, and that which an insular or naïve rejection of Eurocentrism would deny, is this movement towards the universal: specifically a demand, which he understands as revolutionary and which is a resource for uprooting and deterritorialising. This is of such importance to Derrida, because it is precisely that which allows invention and deconstruction itself: ‘Donc de ne pas renoncer à retrouver, à inventer, cette fois inventer au sens où inventer, c’est découvrir ce qui se trouve déjà là en puissance, à savoir, dans cette filiation-même, le principe de son excès, de sa sortie hors de soi, de son auto-déconstruction’ (Ibid.). What Derrida wants to achieve by using the name of Europe is precisely this figure of excess, this universalisation. An anti-Eurocentrism which would simply replicate the practices of appropriation that we have seen in Eurocentrism would miss out on this very “chance” of deconstruction. As we will see, in the next chapter, this is not just a philosophical question for Derrida, but this focus on universalisation is also tied closely to a thinking of a new international law and international institutions.

Finally, this *exappropriation* also has implications for the paleonymic strategy that we saw used by Gasché earlier. We have already seen that this presented a problem for justifying the use of the name of Europe precisely because this strategy was based on supporting the subordinated term or predicate. However, though Derrida does refer to ‘Europe’ as a paleonym, he does so in a somewhat different way than in the 1970s accounts that Gasché draws on.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, the justifications there for the use of an old name were mainly negative: the old-name needed to be kept to allow for an intervention into the present conceptual structure, to offer a new name would be to risk unwittingly replicating the hierarchies that we were seeking to challenge. However, what *exappropriation* suggests here is that while there is still a commitment to keeping the old-name, the reasons for this are far more positive: there is something within the name which makes this *exappropriation* possible. In the case of Europe, it is precisely this colonisation and exportation that Derrida described above. As Gasché misses

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<sup>105</sup> Though perhaps the most schematic, there is a suggestive passage in ‘signature, événement, contexte’ which perhaps predicts this approach, where Derrida focuses on the ‘reste’, the residue or remainder, which resists logocentrism : ‘Ce sont ces prédicats [...] greffée sur un “nouveau” concept d’écriture qui correspond aussi à ce qui a toujours *résisté* à l’ancienne organisation des foires, qui a toujours constitué le *reste*, irréductible à la force dominante qui organisait la hiérarchie’ (1972b: 393).

out on this, he is not capable of fully appreciating the implications this has for Derrida's use of the paleonym or, moreover, the implications this has for Derrida's thinking of universality.

### **Section Six: Invention & Intervention**

There remains one final important point in relation to this universality and Derrida's use of the name Europe. Indeed, it is a point that is neglected as much by Gasché, as by those postcolonial critics that we saw in section one: Derrida's thinking of Europe is part of his thinking of international law.

It is not simply that Derrida wants to effect positive change within the European Union, through presenting the name of Europe as an unconditional demand. More than that, he wants to re-think the meaning of Europe from this self-excess of universality that we have seen. It is this universality which offers a ground for a re-thinking of international law. Looking at 'D'où vient l'Europe', for instance, we see that a re-thinking of the name of Europe has to be tied to a thinking of:

Et de ce qu'il faudrait faire pour inventer un nouveau droit international qui, sans s'en tenir au concept actuel, c'est-à-dire européen, de sa constitution même, de l'État et sa souveraineté, permette de transformer le droit d'ingérence, le droit d'interposition, et le concept d'"humanitaire" qui le règle en le limitant actuellement, tout cela pour permettre de transformer la scène européenne et mondiale. (1993a: 36)

A re-thinking of the name of Europe then is tied to a re-thinking of core concepts for international law, including: the right to intervention within a sovereign state, humanitarianism, and sovereignty itself. Derrida also ties this to the need to speak and think about other concrete issues, such as 'la guerre du Golfe, de la guerre du GATT, des médias, de l'éducation', but the reference to international law remains a continuous reference.

Indeed, though this will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter, it is exactly this link to international law which allows Derrida to position Europe as central to a re-thinking of military enforcement of UN resolutions. This is a point that he makes multiple times. So, in his final interview for *Le Monde* in October 2004, he claims:<sup>106</sup>

Quand je dis l'Europe, c'est ça : une Europe altermondialiste, transformant le concept et les pratiques de la souveraineté et du droit international. Et disposant d'une véritable

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<sup>106</sup> This was eventually published as *Apprendre à vivre enfin* (2005)

force armée, indépendante de l'OTAN et des USA, une puissance militaire qui, ni offensive, ni défensive, ni préventive, interviendrait sans tarder au service des résolutions enfin respectées d'une nouvelle ONU (par exemple, de toute urgence, en Israël, mais aussi ailleurs). (2004c: vi)

Equally, in his 2004 talk entitled 'Une Europe de l'espoir', published in *Le Monde diplomatique*, we see the importance of an armed Europe repeated.<sup>107</sup> Derrida insists that Europe's military role will also be tied to its ability to enforce resolutions of a reformed UN:

Nous devons lutter, donc, pour ce que l'Europe garde d'irremplaçable dans le monde à venir, pour qu'elle devienne plus qu'un marché ou une monnaie unique, plus qu'un conglomérat néo-nationaliste, plus qu'une nouvelle force armée, bien que, sur ce point, je sois tenté de penser qu'elle a besoin d'une puissance militaire et d'une politique extérieure capable de soutenir une ONU transformée, avec son siège en Europe, et ayant les moyens de mettre en œuvre ses résolutions sans s'en remettre aux intérêts ou à l'opportunisme unilatéral de la puissance techno-économico-militaire des Etats-Unis. (2004b: 3)

It is important to take this into account. Although Gasché maintains Derrida's interest in Europe comes from the need to respond to the inheritance of Europe, this is only partially true. Derrida's interest in Europe comes also from a changing international order, and a need to think through international institutions and laws to match this. Europe, with its link to a particular type of universality, allows this. Though Hiddleston might suggest that Derrida is only an inspiration for postcolonial thinkers, but offers little in terms of postcolonial criticism as such, we can see that for Derrida such an international law is, though not exclusively, part of a decolonising process: one which will radically transform the very concept of nation and sovereignty, but also the relations between these entities.

Finally, it is worth returning to the quotation with which this chapter began, as it can help us see how this transformation in international law is tied directly to the changes in *télétechnologies* that we saw in the last chapter. In the last chapter, we saw that *actuvirtualité* was changing the experience of space and time, leading to a type of deterritorialisation. It is

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<sup>107</sup> For a close analysis of this talk, see Michael Naas, 'A Last Call for Europe', in *Derrida from now on* (2008)

here that Europe becomes important. In this interview with Régis Debray from 2004, Derrida claims:

Avant, le politique, depuis la pensée Grecque, de la démocratie, etc., le politique était inscrit, enraciné, dans un territoire. Maintenant, à cause des puissants moyens justement médiologiques, le politique n'est plus lié, ou comme il a été auparavant en tout cas, à la territorialité. Et par conséquent l'Europe pour moi n'est pas située simplement dans les frontières territoriales. Cette idée de l'Europe dont je rêve qui transformerait le concept du politique, continue justement des mutations, disons, médiologique, technoscientifique, dont nous avons parlés. ('L'angoisse Du Futur' 2004: 00:46)

Europe is no longer simply contained within its territories, but rather represents a figure for thinking through the *exappropriating* experience of *télétechnologies*. The idea of Europe that Derrida proposes here is precisely this universality, or radical colonisation, that we have witnessed above. Furthermore, this takes on even more importance, in a context where *télétechnologies* and deterritorialisation are drastically changing the relation between states. The name of "Europe" then becomes a way of thinking about universality and, thus, a ground for global political community and international institutions. Importantly, though Gasché acknowledges that Europe can be elsewhere, this does not seem to account for the degree to which Europe is dislocated from its geography: 'Et moi je crois à la nécessité de repenser le politique et que l'Europe est mieux placée, ou tout ce qui peut être Européen ailleurs (aux États-Unis, au Moyen-Orient, ou en Chine)' (2004, 00:46). Crucially, it is not that Europe is absolutely essential for this thought, but rather that Europe is best placed for thinking this: precisely because it is explicitly exposed to this same experience of *exappropriation*. Indeed, this is a point repeated elsewhere. In *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, Derrida places quotation marks around 'Europe', 'because they (philosophers of the future) might be "European," "in Europe," without living in the territory of a nationstate in Europe, finding themselves in fact very far away, distance and territory no longer having the significance they once did' (2003: 116). And, indeed, it is precisely in this experience of *actuvirtualité* and this disruption of territory where Europe departs from the Greek influence that Gasché holds to:

Mais la culture grecque a associé, dès le départ, le concept de démocratie à des concepts dont aujourd'hui la démocratie à venir tente de se libérer : le concept d'autochtonie, c'est-à-dire la naissance sur le sol, de l'appartenance par la naissance, le concept de territoire, le concept même d'État. (Derrida in Cherif 2006: 71)

We will consider the relationship between territory and international law more substantially in the next chapter; but it is worth stressing here that it is precisely these changes which Derrida describes under the heading of *exappropriation*. It is only in re-thinking these traditional Greek concepts, and particularly their relationship to territory, citizenship and a whole series of other concepts that we can fully understand the new international law that Derrida wants to link to Europe.

Though Gasché gets the *critique* part of the double movement correct – that is the appeal to the *mémoire* and *promesse* of Europe which we have seen discussed above – he overlooks exactly the way that Derrida uses the name of Europe to represent this radical departure from Greece. It is not an issue of returning to a Greek concept of “universality”, but rather inventing a new international law by putting into question the whole problematic of concepts that we have inherited. Europe is a name for that, precisely because it has always moved outside and beyond itself, through this radical “colonisation” and “exportation” that we have seen. It is this which represents the most complex articulation of the ‘quasi-universalism’ Hiddleston suggests. Moreover, and fundamentally, it is this universalising movement in the name “Europe”, which allows for a movement beyond Eurocentrism or anti-Eurocentrism and holds open the possibility of thinking a new international law.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion then, Derrida’s use of Europe follows a similar pattern that we have seen for other key terms. He is committed to a historical critique of Eurocentrism, while also holding up the promise of Europe as an important way of achieving action in contemporary politics, and, particularly in the context of the Bush administration, proposing a Europe against an American unilateralism. This is not the only proposal that Derrida makes for Europe, however. Derrida also positions Europe as part of a new thinking of international law. Such a thinking involves a careful consideration of universality. Derrida carefully avoids a conception of universality that might cradle any form of Eurocentrism; and, as we have seen contra Gasché, presents Europe as part of a fundamental movement of universalisation, exportation and colonisation. It is this very *exappropriation* in Europe which makes the name of Europe so useful in thinking through these new changes to the concepts and systems that structure our international order. The next chapter will build on this question of universality, looking carefully at its implications for international law and institutions.



## Chapter Six: International Invention

In the previous chapters, we have seen with particular force the ways in which Derrida understands the political. Due to changes in technology, the previous relationship between the concepts that helped us understand the political and their relation to space, time and the virtual has changed. This is a product of the *actuvirtualité* that we discussed in Chapter 4: in other words, it can be understood as *exappropriation* at work. However, this is not something that should necessarily be welcomed completely. Derrida's work often links such changes as both a chance and a threat: 'Menace et promesse à la fois, menace et chance à ne pas manquer' (2003a: 23). And this is certainly true in this case. Such changes may be taking place independently from any act of thought, but that this does not mean that there is not an important place for thought within these changes.

One of the clearest ways to frame Derrida's work in this area is by reference to one of his final works, *Voyous: deux essais sur la raison* (2003a). This is an important and complex work, but its major target in both essays is a particular type of thinking or logic: that is the logic of *might is right*, 'la raison du plus fort' (2003a: 9). Derrida's engagement with reason and sovereignty throughout this work is an effort to challenge this, and think a way outside of such logic, towards what he labels 'une force faible' (2003a: 13). Furthermore, Derrida's interest in this problematic is not limited to this one text. As many have pointed out (e.g. (Patton 2017; Leitch 2007)), sovereignty represents one of the major questions for Derrida in his later work; such a critique of *la raison du plus fort* is closely tied to Derrida's thinking on sovereignty. In fact, though Derrida believes nation-state sovereignty is deconstructing itself, this does not necessarily mean an end to this principle of *might is right*, but rather its emergence in a whole series of other institutions and areas that need to be critiqued and challenged.

From the outset, it is worth pointing out that this interest in sovereignty and the logic of *la raison du plus fort* is not something altogether new in Derrida's work. Though there is no denying that Derrida's analysis was highly informed by geopolitical events, including the second Iraq War and the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> (Weber 2008: 106), it is important to also see these as part of a line of thinking about sovereignty in different forms which predates such events. Indeed, in a sense, we can see that Derrida's thinking of hospitality and *villes refuges* was designed precisely to develop a counter-logic to such a thinking of sovereignty within the nation-state; and his thinking of media is an effort to undercut a developing *homo-hégémonie* that risks dominating national and international public space. While these contexts come to

represent American unilateralism as an increasingly urgent reference point, they also help support Derrida's previous claims about the way sovereignty and *la raison du plus fort* itself operate. These events, therefore, help add greater urgency to the need to re-think the logic of sovereignty, but, as we will see, do not necessarily reveal this logic to Derrida for the first time. Importantly, they require a re-thinking of international institutions and the way power is distributed and structured on an international level.

This chapter begins with Derrida's account of globalisation, where we see a critique of the concept of 'monde' and the need to re-think the international order. We see here once again the importance of historical critique for Derrida. Derrida proposes an alternative to this in *altermondialisme*, which represents one way of re-thinking new divisions of international sovereignty. I return once again to the question of deterritorialization, arguing that the concepts of war, peace, and terrorism have begun to break down, in Derrida's view, because of this deterritorialization. I argue that his work is an effort to take account of this, but also through his positions on the reform of the United Nations an effort to re-invent new international democratic institutions. I then turn to normative questions in Derrida's work, arguing that Derrida's preference for democracy is another example of *exappropriating institutions* and that this represents an important and neglected normative dimension of his philosophy.

### **Section One: Globalisation**

One important context for Derrida's thinking about *la raison du plus fort* and the international is globalisation. However, before we even start to unpack this concept, we immediately encounter a problem of terminology; instead of talking about 'globalisation', as such, Derrida instead speaks about '*mondialisation*'. In a talk given at UNESCO in 2000, he outlines his reasons for this:

Si je tiens à le distinguer des concepts de globalisation ou de Globalisierung [...] c'est que le concept de monde fait signe vers une histoire, il garde une mémoire qui le distingue de celle du globe, de l'univers, de la Terre, du cosmos même [...] Car le monde désigne d'abord, et tend à rester, dans une tradition abrahamique (judéo-christiano-islamique mais à prédominance chrétienne) un certain espace-temps, une certaine histoire orientée de la fraternité humaine [...] des frères, des semblables, des prochains en tant que créatures et fils de Dieu. (2000: para. 8)

If Derrida insists on the term 'monde', it is precisely in order to bring forward one of the problems of globalisation. A problem which is not immediately obvious in the term 'globe':

that is a focus on similarity, or rather a conception of political community, which centres around those who are similar.<sup>108</sup> This is something which is attested to in the genealogy of the word, but also in its philosophical and theological underpinning. Derrida focuses specifically on St Paul, who proposed a form of cosmopolitanism based on a ‘communauté fraternelle des humains, des semblables’ (Ibid.). *Mondialisation*, therefore, suggests a conception of political community but one which is based on identity and similarity. It is this focus on the ‘semblable’, at the expense of our relation to the other, which Derrida sees as defining the present process of *mondialisation*. His use of the term ‘*mondialisation*’ is designed specifically to bring out this feature of globalisation. Victor Li partially captures this in an article on Derrida’s *mondialisation*, when he refers to this as enabling a ‘deconstructive genealogical examination of globalisation’ (2007: 147). However, Li also seems to suggest that for Derrida globalisation and *mondialisation* are somewhat oppositional, the latter lacking globalisation’s ‘logic of completeness’ (2007: 142). However, Derrida’s use of *mondialisation* is not designed to replace or be seen as a positive alternative to globalisation, but rather to shed light on this theological heritage common to both but elided in the term ‘globe’. As we will see, Derrida has a preferred term and initiative to challenge both of these, but it is not *mondialisation*.

Derrida also often employs the term *mondialatinisation* to describe a similar effect of global, political community being based around the figure of the brother; however, in this case, it is also the Christian brother. Derrida is referring particularly to the importance of Christianity in shaping our concept of the world, but also as Michael Naas (2012: 58) points out ‘the language in which Christianity spread, namely, Latin, or today Anglo-American’.<sup>109</sup> This focus on the Latin and Christian roots serves a double function. The first, as we have seen above, is a diagnosis of current forms that globalisation has taken. Derrida maintains that there is an important dimension to the return of religion, specifically Christian religion, with globalisation. For him, the very meaning of what a religion is today is determined by its Anglo-American, Latin and Christian version: ‘la mondialisation télévisuelle de la religion soit en même temps une “mondialatinisation” du concept même de religion’ (Derrida and others 2004b: 37). As we will see later, this is not just true for the way it determines the ‘semblable’ as brother, but also its determination of forgiveness and crimes against humanity. In a similar manner, the second function of the term is designed to emphasise that the model of universalisation or

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<sup>108</sup> As we have seen previously, since at least *Politiques de l’amitié* (1994d)

<sup>109</sup> For more on the shift from Latin to Anglo-American see Naas, *Miracle and Machine* (2012) and Derrida, *Foi et savoir* (2001: 47).

“worldwideization” that is employed has Christian filiations; specifically, that it is based on a Christian concept of the universal. Other religions may have conceptions of universality, but the Christian concept ‘domine actuellement et la philosophie et le droit international’ (2004b: 43). This returns us to our discussion in the last chapter and suggests once again that Derrida’s thinking of the universal is designed to resist a type of eurocentrism, rather than support it.

An important point that is worth stressing here is that while Derrida is keen to bring out the genealogical dimensions of the figure of the “brother” and its relation to the concept of “world”, this is not detached from the role of *télétechnologies*. We have already seen in detail the *homo-hégémonique* risk that Derrida attributes to these in Chapter 4. We see that the “world” and “brother” take part in this logic too. Globalisation calls for ‘une vigilance sans défaut’ precisely because it presents an image of an opening that homogenises and makes equal; however, this homogenisation ‘dissimule souvent des inégalités et hégémonies (ce que j’appelle des homo-hégémonisations) anciennes et nouvelles qu’il nous faut apprendre à déceler dans leur traits nouveaux : et à combattre’ (Derrida 2000: para. 6). Indeed, Li (2007: 141) is right to point out that the term ‘globalisation’ itself is a symbol of the homo-homogenous nature of the English language as the lingua franca; however, Li makes no comment on the connection between technology and globalisation. Fred Evans (2015) does comment on the role of technology in making globalisation possible; however, he does not factor in the homogenising power that Derrida associates with these *télétechnologies* and so does not fully understand their operation. As we saw in the fourth chapter, Derrida is deeply concerned about the effects of increased homogenisation of particular modes of expression and intelligibility at the expense of others. Importantly, we see then that Derrida offers a concrete explanation for how these effects occur: the homogenisation of globalisation, and its concept of “world” are projected and spread via these *télétechnologies*.

For Derrida, much of this problem is captured by the figure of the “brother” and the idea of fraternity. His first comprehensive account of this critique can be found in *Politiques de l’amitié* (1994d). The guiding question of Derrida’s analysis in that text is: ‘Quelle est la portée politique ce de mot *choisi*, parmi d’autres possibles, même et surtout si ce choix n’est pas délibéré?’ (1994d: 339). Derrida’s aim is not to dismiss the figure of the brother outright as Rancière (2009: 279/80) argues, but to demonstrate the cost of prioritising such a figure. Of course, we might respond by suggesting that the “brother” is an outdated model for political community, and that other figures and models have emerged to challenge this: perhaps the most prominent of these would be human rights. And, indeed, Derrida addresses this question. The

link between globalization and the concept of “Man” is one which Derrida makes quite explicit in *L’Université sans condition* (2001b). There, Derrida states: ‘Le réseau conceptuel de l’homme, du propre de l’homme, du droit de l’homme, du crime contre l’humanité de l’homme, nous savons qu’il organise une telle mondialisation’ (2001b: 13). It is in this organisation of globalisation that the question of international institutions and law enters. Derrida explains that the ‘Rights of Man’ and ‘l’institution du concept juridique de “Crime contre l’humanité” (1945) forment l’horizon de la mondialisation et du droit international qui est censé veiller sur elle’ (2001b: 12). It is through the figure of Man that the question of globalisation is thus linked to that of international law itself: it is this figure which sets both the direction and the limitations of international law. And this is what leads Derrida to claim that ‘cette mondialisation veut donc être une humanisation’ (2001b: 13). By this, Derrida means that the figure of Man comes to dominate both globalisation itself and the international law which seeks to offer some order and regulation of this process.

To better unpack this, it is worth turning to some of the specific international institutions or practices that Derrida refers to – beginning with the question of humanitarianism and human rights. In the case of humanitarianism, Derrida is keen to stress that he is not against the practice or role of non-governmental organisations engaging in humanitarian work. As he states on France Culture in 1992, it is not that he is against the term ‘humanitaire’, but rather his concern is that it is too ‘étroite’, to the point that this limits its capacity for intervention and the type of intervention that can possibly emerge from this (Derrida 1992: 20 :30). This recalls the discussion of the right to intervene in relation to hospitality in Chapter 3, and indeed pushes the argument further by emphasising that humanitarianism is tied up within a whole other series of related concepts around globalisation. Indeed, Derrida makes somewhat similar comments about human rights elsewhere, where he stresses: ‘We must (*il faut*) more than ever stand on the side of human rights. *We need (il faut) human rights.* (2003: 132). However, Derrida’s aim is to remove the historical and determined restrictions of the idea and to take ‘this historicity and this perfectibility into account in an affirmative way’; importantly, this implies at least the possibility of questioning the very fundamental values of human rights, including that of humanity itself (2003: 132/3). For Derrida, it is a question of interrogating the relationship between this determined conception of ‘humanitaire’ and ‘ce processus d’humanisation fraternisante’ that he sees as part of globalisation (1994d: 303). Such a process would precisely privilege the brother, that is to say the ‘semblable’. Indeed, Derrida’s concern is both to think the ways that humanitarianism remains caught within previous structures, which requires ‘un

autre politique de l'humanitaire, voire un engagement humanitaire qui se tienne *effectivement* au-delà de l'intérêt des États-nations' (1997a: 176). He insists on trying to think through the implications of this politics, precisely to resist these statist influences; however, he also insists on the need for vigilance with regards to novel power structures that can be established by this focus on the human. In an article in the French newspaper, *L'Humanité*, he states: 'il faut rester vigilant devant l'instrumentalisation, devant les phénomènes d'hégémonie qui peuvent encore, sous le pavillon d'humanitaire, engager des manœuvres d'arrondissement de toutes sortes (politiques, gouvernementales, capitalistiques – internationaux ou états-nationales)' (2001e: 330/331). The effort to critique this notion of the sovereignty of man is precisely a form of vigilance, but also an effort to expand the definition of humanitarianism so as to make new forms of interventions and practices possible. More importantly, it is an effort to think the "human" as a figure outside of its determination as that which is similar, as the brother or the semblable.

In summary, then, this approach testifies yet again to the important role of conceptual and historical critique in Derrida's work. Derrida's critiques of the figures of the 'semblable' and the brother are designed to bring forward the limitations they place on our thinking of global political community: this is perhaps brought into sharpest relief by his position on human rights. The aim is not to dismiss these determinations, but rather through critique, bring forward the limitations that these place on our present institutions and practices.

## **Section Two: *Altermondialisme***

As have seen throughout this thesis, Derrida's work is not simply limited to critique, but is always accompanied by a moment of *plus-que-critique*. This involves putting into question the roots and foundations of any conceptual network, and importantly doing this through determined acts. In relation to globalisation, Derrida's aim is not simply to challenge the model of the "semblable", but also to create the space for another model to emerge. It is here that we see that Derrida's alternative to globalisation is not *mondialisation*, but rather *altermondialisme*.

This is a term that appears frequently in Derrida's later work. In fact, we have already come across it in the previous chapter, when in Derrida's final interview in *Le Monde*, he spoke of the link between *altermondialisme* and Europe: 'Quand je dis l'Europe, c'est ça : une Europe altermondialiste, transformant le concept et les pratiques de la souveraineté et du droit international' (2004c: vi). Indeed, it is important to understand that when Derrida is using the

term, it is not simply as an abstract word, but also as part of a social movement against globalisation. Though antecedents can be pointed to prior to 1999, the movement itself came to prominence in November 1999, during protests in Seattle against the World Trade Organisation, and it began to take on a more determined form in the first World Social Forum in 2001 in Brazil (Gheller 2012: 193).<sup>110</sup> Derrida made two important interventions in favour of the movement. The first relates to his support for a *BRussells Tribunal*, an initiative aimed at raising awareness around the politics behind the invasion of Iraq.<sup>111</sup> This took the form of an interview, published in English under the title, ‘For a Justice to Come’.<sup>112</sup> The initiative itself was based on the Russell Tribunal, which was first established by Bertrand Russell with Sartre and others, to investigate potential war crimes in Vietnam by the United States Army. This then established a tradition of other intellectual lead inquiries, such as around Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Derrida begins by acknowledging his support in principle for the project. Derrida stresses the need to ‘resuscitate the tradition of a Russell Tribunal’, as one of which seeks ‘to sharpen the vigilance of the citizens of the world’, rather than ‘reach a verdict resulting in actions’ (2004: 2). As a gesture of support for the initiative, Derrida links his conception of “messianicity without messianism” to the *altermondialiste* movement:

I would say that today, one of the incarnations, one of the implementations of this messianicity, of this messianism without religion, may be found in the alter-globalisation movements. Movements [...] that gather together the weak of the earth, all those who feel themselves crushed by the economic hegemonies, by the liberal market, by sovereignty, etc. (2004: 7)

Derrida understands *altermondialisme*, or given his use of the plural we might say *altermondialist* movements, to offer one determined version of *messianicité sans messianisme*. This is one of Derrida’s important late figures for the unconditional justice that we have seen at work throughout this thesis, and Derrida’s decision to link this to the *altermondialisme* is an important one. Derrida states quite clearly that ‘we must seek today, very cautiously, to give force and form to this messianicity, without giving in to the old concepts of politics’ (2004: 8). We have seen in Chapter 2 in particular, but throughout the thesis, the emphasis that Derrida

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<sup>110</sup> For a good overview of this movement, see Frantz Gheller, ‘L’altermondialisme et la revalorisation de la politique extra-parlementaire’ (2012).

<sup>111</sup> Derrida had been invited to participate at the tribunal but was unable to attend due to illness and this is stated explicitly in the introduction to the interview.

<sup>112</sup> There appears to be no French publication of this.

places on acts of invention for the movement beyond critique, and here Derrida is taking *altermondialisme* to be precisely such a determined effort.

Importantly, as the quotation above suggests, this determined effort is tied directly to a form of materialist politics. Derrida understands *altermondialisme* to be a movement which brings together those who suffer globally, in order to resist ‘all those organised hegemonies of the rich countries, the strong and powerful countries, of which Europe is a part’ (2004: 7). Indeed, in an interview on *France Inter* in 2004 Derrida is even more forthright in his support and in this materialist view. When asked if he considers himself to be an *altermondialist*, Derrida replied:

Absolument. [...] Vous savez que bien avant que le mot n’existe, j’ai publié dans *Spectres de Marx* des propositions qui allaient dans ce sens, c’est-à-dire une nouvelle Internationale à liant, au-delà même du cosmopolitisme, qui suppose toujours l’autorité de l’État et la citoyenneté, au-delà de la citoyenneté, au-delà du cosmopolitisme, une nouvelle Internationale qui rassemble tous ceux qui dans le monde sont opprimés, souffrent de cette globalisation néolibérale (disons, pour le dire vite) et qui ont des affinités entre eux. (Derrida and others 2004: 00:29)

Yet again, Derrida is direct and explicit in his support, and once again ties it to another concept that he has developed: a New International. As Derrida says, this was first proposed in *Spectres de Marx*, and here we see that Derrida does not only call for a movement beyond the state and citizenship, but does so precisely to help those oppressed materially by globalisation. Indeed, though some (Leitch 2007: 237/8) have labelled Derrida’s concept overly abstract, we can see that the ‘nouvelle Internationale’ proposed there is indeed quite close to the *altermondialiste* movements. There, Derrida proposes ten brief characteristics that would define such a New International. These include resistance to unemployment, homelessness, economic wars, debt and the arms industry, among other points. However, the New International is not simply a way of critiquing these points, but rather it is also a way to experiment with new forms of solidarity: ‘C’est un lien d’affinité, de souffrance et d’espérance [...] C’est un lien intempestif et sans statut, sans titre et sans nom [...] sans parti, sans patrie, sans communauté nationale [...] sans co-citoyenneté, sans appartenance commune à une classe’ (1993b: 141/2). The New International then is a form of affinity, but without community or belonging. Derrida is trying to describe a link without any traditional model. While this can be seen as understandably abstract, it is this link to *altermondialisme*, which suggests that even though this is placed as a



form of unconditional link, this does not mean that Derrida does not demand that it becomes determined in some form.

This presentation of the New International can give the impression that Derrida supports *altermondialisme* because it is an unorganised movement, but this is far from the case. Instead, Derrida insists that it will need to take on a form:

Naturellement, il reste encore hétérogène, un peu chaotique, il n'a pas encore la forme, l'organisation, le discours qu'il devrait avoir, mais c'est en chemin, et en tout cas je crois que c'est la seule force décisive pour l'avenir, c'est la seule force qui fera plier, qui déjà contraint, les grandes organisations hégémoniques du monde [...] dont je crois qu'il sera décisif pour l'avenir. (2004: 7)

*Altermondialisme* then needs to take on an organised form, but this is one which Derrida sees as underway. Importantly, though, Derrida sees the movement as already having an impact, and he predicts an even greater one in the future: one which will play a role in re-inventing globalisation and international hegemony. Derrida's support for *altermondialisme*, in this sense, represents not simply a way of critiquing globalisation, therefore, but an effort to rethink the forms and institutions of the international.

### **Section Three: War and Deterritorialisation**

As we can see from the above, Derrida positions the international as an important political question in his work and his engagements. However, this interest has not gone unchallenged. Alongside his criticism of over-abstraction, Leitch (2007: 238) has objected to 'vertiginous Derridean utopian politics', which has 'destatification and internationalism' at its core. More substantially, Pheng Cheah has argued that Derrida neglects ever considering the nation: 'What puzzles me is Derrida's unconditional dismissal of nationalism in this picture of the world to come' (2009: 91). Both Cheah and Leitch thus rightly point to a privileging of the international in Derrida's work; however, both are quick to write this off in one way or another. As we will see below, and have already seen in previous chapters, this connection to the international is in fact something closely tied to Derrida's philosophy itself. This can be best explained by looking closely at two important international concepts and their relation to the nation-state: war and terrorism.

The concept of war is one which appears frequently within Derrida's thinking of sovereignty. We can find important references to war across many texts, such as his discussion

of nuclear war in ‘No apocalypse, not now: à toute vitesse, sept missives, sept missiles’ from 1984.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, in *Adieu* (1997a), we see Derrida focus on the distinction between peace and war in Kant and Levinas. Most notably, *Politiques de l’amitié* sets out many of the questions around war and the ‘brother’ through a significantly engagement with Carl Schmitt. Derrida’s teasing out of the relationship between the state and war does not end at *Politiques de l’amitié*, however. Though this sets the foundations, we can see this develop in other contexts; one important one being his debate with Jean Baudrillard before the beginning of the 2003 Iraq War, published under the title *Pourquoi la guerre aujourd’hui* (2015). There, Derrida proposes something close to Baudrillard and yet different. He particularly targets Baudrillard’s infamous position on the First Gulf War, ‘La guerre du Golfe n’a pas eu lieu’: ‘comme toujours je me sens à la fois très proche de Jean Baudrillard, et pourtant cette proximité n’est pas sans se laisser inquiéter par des questions difficiles’ (2015: 35).<sup>114</sup> Derrida acknowledges the proximity in terms of their thinking around virtuality, but the disagreement comes from the non-virtual dimensions that Derrida also wants to pay attention to.<sup>115</sup> As such, Derrida underlines that he could not subscribe to Baudrillard’s position: ‘Donc j’aurai toujours du mal à dire simplement que cette guerre n’a pas eu lieu’ (2015: 37). What he claims instead is that there has been a change in what war itself means:

Qu’elle n’ait pas eu lieu *comme* guerre, c’est autre chose. [...] Je crois en effet qu’en tant que guerre, ça n’a pas eu lieu ; quelque chose a eu lieu que l’on n’a plus le droit d’appeler guerre, tout comme ce qui aura lieu ou aurait lieu demain, en Irak, n’aura pas lieu comme guerre. (2015: 37/8)

Something will certainly happen, and Derrida wants to acknowledge the urgency of this, but also that such a thing cannot be subsumed under the concept “war”, because the conditions behind such a concept have changed drastically. The traditional concept of a war is based on determined declarations between states: ‘Là où une agression ne passe pas par une déclaration de guerre d’un État souverain à un État souverain, il n’y a pas de guerre’ (2015: 47). Indeed, in Derrida’s view, the proposed invasion of Iraq is a way of denying the reality of the nation-state which September 11<sup>th</sup> has revealed, and an effort by the American administration to identify a state to wage war against (2015: 47). For Derrida, this is a radical change and a product directly

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<sup>113</sup> Published in *Psyché* (1987b).

<sup>114</sup> See Baudrillard, *La Guerre du Golfe n’a pas eu lieu* (1991)

<sup>115</sup> In this context, he refers to petrol and death as that which resists such virtualization (2015: 42).

of the change in strength of actors and a decline in state-sovereignty. This means that ‘la guerre n’aura plus jamais lieu d’une certaine manière ; c’est fini, les guerres entre États’ (2015: 49).

This is not just a question of the changing status of war, but also the meaning of terrorism itself. This type of terrorism was linked to the state and focused on establishing a new state: ‘Ce terrorisme était toujours lié à la question de l’État’ (2015: 50). What Derrida sees in these new forms of terrorism is a disruption of this link: they are not seeking to establish a state, nor are they represented by a state. Derrida goes further into this in his interview on September 11<sup>th</sup>, published in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Habermas and others 2003). There, in detail, Derrida stresses the ambiguity surrounding this concept around a number of points: for instance, the role of state terrorism in colonial situations, such as the French in Algeria, but also terror and fear as authority in Hobbes and other thinkers (2003: 102/4). And he insists on the point that the labelling of ‘terrorist’ is partially a question of power and hegemony (2003: 105). Moreover, he claims that terrorism does not necessarily need to be a conscious act, and can involve ‘letting die [...] from hunger, AIDS, lack of medical treatment and so on’ and indeed such terrorism does not even need to be on the part of a ‘conscious subject’: insofar as ‘all situations of social or national structure oppression produce a terror that is not natural’ (2003: 108). Derrida is thus interested in engaging with the complexities of the distinction between terrorism and war. With technology, individual actors can act internationally, in ways which previously could only have been achieved by a state. Derrida offers cyberattacks as an example: ‘it is enough to infiltrate a strategically important computer system and introduce a virus or some other disruptive element to paralyze the economic, military, and political resources of an entire country or continent’ (2003: 101). Once again, we see here the importance of technology, but also the importance of deterritorialization for Derrida’s analysis of international politics.

Indeed, this question of deterritorialization returns us to some of the fundamental questions addressed in previous chapters. First, it recalls the epigraph of the last chapter, which stressed that traditional political concepts had lost their connection to territory: ‘Maintenant, à cause des puissants moyens justement médiologique, la politique n’est plus liée, ou comme il a été auparavant en tout cas, à la territorialité’ (2004 00:46). It is not then simply that the power of the nation-state is limited in a more global context, but that concepts like the nation-state and war were built upon a certain relation to territory. Such a relation is now far from certain, and this is precisely because of the uprooting that we saw in Chapter 4: ‘The relationship between earth, *terra*, territory, and terror has changed, and it is necessary to know that this is

because of knowledge, that is, because of technoscience. It is technoscience that blurs the distinction between war and terrorism' (2003: 101). It is deterritorialization which disrupts the traditional concepts on which the political is based, and the Iraq War and the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, therefore, represent a symptom of this more general problem for Derrida. Furthermore, this is something that has been at work in Derrida's philosophy since at least the early 1990s. His reading of Schmitt in *Politiques de l'amitié*, for instance, brought forward how 'l'autochtonisme tellurique est déjà une réponse réactive à une dé-localisation et à quelque télé-technologie' (1994d: 164). And he held a similar position on deterritorialization in *Échographies de la télévision*, where the inherited concepts of politics were 'contrôlé et limité par les frontières de l'État-nation, par une territorialisation', which was in the process of 'se déterritorialiser' (1996: 76). As we saw in Chapter 4, it is the effect of *actuvirtualité* found in *télétechnologies* that give this the greatest force. As Derrida states in a dialogue with Elisabeth Roudinesco:

Ce qu'on appelle le politique ne peut plus être lié, dans son concept même, comme il l'a toujours été, à une présupposition du lieu, du territoire – et de l'étatique. [...] Or c'est cela même qui se *disloque* aujourd'hui, et se délocalise, en raison notamment de la transformation techno-scientifique et techno-économique du champ mondial. (2001: 159/160)

In all these contexts, it is precisely the disruption of the relation to territory that challenges our concepts of the state, war, terrorism and citizenship.

Returning to Cheah's criticism, there are two important points to draw from this. The first relates to Cheah's presentation of Derrida's position generally. Cheah insists that Derrida does not consider the potential value of the nation in deconstruction, and that Derrida simply dismisses nationalism. We saw above that this was characterised as an 'unconditional dismissal', where 'Derrida never calculates with nationalism' (2009: 91). However, if we look more closely at the evidence that Cheah appeals to in reaching such a conclusion, we can see that this is inaccurate. Cheah refers us to *Voyous* (2003a: 204) and Derrida's critique of 'l'irrationalisme'. Derrida's point, however, was not to dismiss the nation entirely as a political unit, but rather to point out the anti-rational dimensions of particular types of nationalism: in particular any type of nationalism that would privilege blood or soil over 'l'universel' (2003a: 204). The same problem occurs in the citation from *Spectres de Marx*, where Cheah somewhat selectively quotes Derrida: 'Nationalism, he argues, is a deadly form

of thought that can “have no future” and can “promise nothing” (2009: 89). If we look at the full citation, however, we can see that, like in *Voyous*, Derrida is referring to specific nationalisms of blood and soil:

Comme ceux du sang, les nationalismes du sol ne sèment pas seulement la haine, ils ne commettent pas seulement le crime, ils n’ont aucun avenir, ils ne promettent rien. (1993b: 268/9)

This is not, then, a general dismissal of the nation, but instead a critique of a particular ideology surrounding nationalism. Cheah’s position (2009: 92) that Derrida ‘does not discriminate between different types of nationalism’ is false, precisely because Derrida is often quite clear about the nationalisms that he is targeting.<sup>116</sup>

In fact, aside from Cheah’s partial representation of Derrida’s position, the idea that Derrida is somewhat reticent with regards to the nation is false especially when we take into account (as Cheah does not) the many times he describes quite explicitly the need to negotiate with state sovereignty to resist some of the abusive forces of international sovereignty (especially international capitalism). To take one example, in his interview with Elisabeth Roudinesco, Derrida states: ‘Dans certaines situations, l’État, sous sa forme actuelle, peut résister à certaines forces que je considère comme plus menaçantes. Ce que j’appelle ici “responsabilité”, c’est ce qui dicte la décision d’être ici *pour* l’État souverain, là *contre* lui’ (2001: 152). It is not that Derrida is incapable of calculating with the state, but rather he privileges the International for a different reason.

Such a privilege emerges not from personal preference or utopic idealism, but from the very basis of Derrida’s philosophy itself: the *exappropriation* of space. We have already summarised the importance of this above. However, it is important to note that Cheah pays little attention to this. Moreover, not only does Cheah not offer adequate attention to the *exappropriation* of space, but Cheah privileges the temporal over the spatial. Cheah begins his essay by focusing particularly on the role of temporality and particularly the role of time in radical finitude: ‘Throughout his corpus, Derrida was obsessed with the question of how it is that there is time’ (2009: 74). There is nothing said about space. This in spite of Derrida’s

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<sup>116</sup> That is not to dismiss Cheah’s other point that it would have been interesting to see Derrida engage with other forms of nationalism and thinkers of this, such as Frantz Fanon and other revolutionary nationalists (2009: 93); this is undoubtedly true, but does not justify Cheah’s claim that Derrida structurally and fundamentally simply cannot engage with these ‘other inscriptions of the unconditional in the postcolonial South’ (2009: 94).

insistence, as far back as ‘La différance’, that *espacement* involved both the ‘devenir-temps de l’espace et devenir-espace du temps’ (1972b: 8). In fact, this privileging of the temporal is something we see in other considerations of Derrida’s politics.<sup>117</sup> For instance, in Chapter 4, we have already seen the importance of the aporia of time for Richard Beardsworth.<sup>118</sup> Only focusing on one dimension, privileging the temporal over the spatial, will inherently offer a partial account. Such a partial account may not always be incorrect, but it will not fully be able to account for Derrida’s politics.

And this partial account becomes a problem precisely because it misses out on the importance of deterritorialization. In Chapter 4, it was seen as one of the major effects of *télétechnologies*, and as we saw in relation to Europe and above, it disrupts our traditional concepts of the political. The case of war and terrorism represent perhaps the most important case for this. Though there may well be personal reasons for Derrida’s preference for the international, this cannot simply be dismissed as such; Derrida’s interest in the international emerges from a process of deterritorialization that he sees as leading towards a type of “international”. This is the process of *exappropriation* that Derrida uses to represent deconstruction. Derrida’s insistence on an international law then is not at odds with his philosophy, or indeed representative of a latent dismissal of nationalism, but simply an effort to respond to how he views present changes in the world and the relationship between states.

#### **Section Four: Security Council & Institutions**

One of the most important and consistent positions that Derrida takes around international law is the need to reform the institutions which define it. Derrida pays particularly close attention to the United Nations, and especially the UN Security Council.<sup>119</sup> We have already seen this emerge as a significant theme in the final part of the last chapter. Recall that Derrida presents the figure of Europe as playing a core part in this reform:

Quand je dis l’Europe, c’est ça : une Europe altermondialiste, transformant le concept et les pratiques de la souveraineté et du droit international. Et disposant d’une véritable

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<sup>117</sup> Interestingly, Ian Maclachlan has recently made the inverse of this argument against Martin Hägglund, suggesting that Hägglund privileges the spatial over the temporal in his account of finitude. See Ian Maclachlan, ‘Derrida, Time and Infinite Finitude: Weakening Hägglund’s Negative’ (2018).

<sup>118</sup> Though it is often neglected that Beardsworth described deconstruction as an aporia of time and an aporia of law (such as by Bennington in his criticism of Beardsworth). However, what is important here is that the aporia of time privileges the temporal over the spatial.

<sup>119</sup> It is worth noting though that Derrida does often reference briefly the IMF, G8. For instance, see *Voyous* (2003a: 101)

force armée, indépendante de l'OTAN et des USA, une puissance militaire qui, ni offensive, ni défensive, ni préventive, interviendrait sans tarder au service des résolutions enfin respectées d'une nouvelle ONU (par exemple, de toute urgence, en Israël, mais aussi ailleurs). (2004c: vi)

From our discussion so far in this chapter, we can now see the weight behind Derrida's framing of Europe as 'altermondialiste', a Europe which seeks to transform the concept and practices of sovereignty. Our previous discussion of Europe is closely connected to all that Derrida says here about sovereignty and new international institutions. It is worth pausing, however, on the idea of a 'une nouvelle ONU': what does Derrida mean by this?

Derrida frequently and consistently calls for a complete rethinking of the United Nations and the logic that governs it. For instance, in the debate with Baudrillard that was outlined above, Derrida proposes that the crisis in international law that has emerged from American unilateralism in fact reflects something deeper about our international institutions. And this calls for 'une refonte':

Quant à ce droit international, ce qui à mon avis devra changer, ne pourra ne pas changer, c'est que dans la structure de ses concepts, dans sa constitution, dans sa charte, dans sa rhétorique, ce droit international a été dans une large mesure tributaire d'une histoire du droit européen, de ses concepts de souveraineté, d'Etat-nation, de guerre, de terrorisme, etc., et comme je l'ai suggéré tout à l'heure, ces concepts appelleront une refonte, et cette refonte est en cours. (Baudrillard and Derrida 2015: 58)

We can see, therefore, the close connection between deterritorialization, the state and terrorism and the need to rethink international law. What is important is the degree to which this is required: this is not a superficial change, but part of the very concepts, constitutions and charts that have established the United Nations itself. Derrida offers two reasons for such a re-thinking of the UN and the Security Council. The first is that the Security Council was historically constituted by the victors of the last war and the development of nuclear weapons, which made the Council the sovereign, in effect: 'c'est dire que ce Conseil de sécurité était en effet le souverain absolu dans la logique du droit international' (2015: 39). This has the effect of reinforcing state sovereignty over that of international law, precisely because the sovereign in this case represents the victors: 'The States are in effect represented as States in the United Nations and a fortiori in the Security Council, which gathers together the victors of the last war' (2004: 3). Historically, then, the Security Council carries the history of its own

constitution within it, which leads to a contradiction ‘between the respect for human rights in general, also part of the Charter, and the respect for the sovereignty of the nation-state’ (2004: 3). In *Voyous*, Derrida makes a similar point, but more explicitly links the United Nations to the logic of ‘la raison du plus fort’:

La raison du plus fort ne détermine pas seulement la politique effective de l’institution internationale ; elle aura d’abord déterminé l’architecture conceptuelle de la Charte même, la loi qui régit, dans ses principes fondamentaux et dans ses règles pratiques, le devenir de cette institution. (2003a: 143)

We see here then that Derrida’s interest in the United Nations and the Security Council is not simply a question of righting a historical anomaly, but rather about bringing out the way in which sovereignty and the *la raison du plus fort* are present not simply in the way it operates, but in the charter and ideas itself that have established the UN.

Significantly, Derrida’s aim is not to reject the Security Council, but rather to call for its reinvention: we see that Derrida’s thinking is not about some abstract idea of international law but involved in specific and concrete questions. In fact, it is remarkable the degree to which Derrida insists on the need to totally rethink the Security Council so that the UN can have a force independent of nation-state sovereignty. In the Baudrillard debate, for instance, it is ‘leur impuissance, l’incapacité où elles sont d’appliquer le droit qu’elles disent, en quelque sort, l’absence de force autonome au service de ces institutions internationales’ which is called into question by the invasion of Iraq (Baudrillard and Derrida 2015: 39/40). Or, addressing UNESCO, where Derrida imagines ‘un contrat mondial à venir’, a contract that will require that international institutions have an ‘autonomie de délibération, de décision et surtout de mise en œuvre militaire’ (Derrida 2000: para. 24). Or, similarly, as we have seen in the previous chapter, when Derrida proposes a European military force:

Je sois tenté de penser qu’elle a besoin d’une puissance militaire et d’une politique extérieure capable de soutenir une ONU transformée, avec son siège en Europe, et ayant les moyens de mettre en œuvre ses résolutions sans s’en remettre aux intérêts ou à l’opportunisme unilatéral de la puissance techno-économico-militaire des Etats-Unis. (2004b: 3)

For Derrida, then the reinvention of the Security Council is not a rejection of force, but instead a rethinking of where this force lies: such a force should not be dictated and determined by state sovereignty, but instead should belong independently to the United Nations. Such a new



force is essential not only to prevent *la raison du plus fort* of individual nations acting unilaterally, as in the case of the United States of America, but also to re-think the very ground of international law and its relation to state sovereignty.

What this focus on force implies is not that Derrida is against sovereignty, but that his aim is to re-think the way sovereignty operates in the international order. Indeed, Derrida is quite explicit about this in *Voyous*, where he describes going beyond state sovereignty, towards:

La création d'un espace juridico-politique international qui, sans abolir toute référence à la souveraineté, ne cesse d'innover, d'inventer de nouveaux partages et de nouvelles divisibilités de la souveraineté (je dis *inventer* car l'à-venir fait signe non seulement vers la venue de l'autre mais vers l'invention – non pas de l'événement – mais par l'événement). C'est dans ce sens que va le discours sur une nouvelle Internationale dans *Spectres de Marx* (1993). (2003a: 127)

Here, then, there is clearly no rejection of sovereignty or indeed force: rather, it is about thinking about the ways these are divided, while also inventing new ways of incorporating sovereignty within an international space. This is the moment of the *plus-que-critique*. However, Derrida stresses that such invention is not about creating the event, but rather that the event itself does the inventing. This may seem somewhat of an odd phrasing; however, it is entirely consistent with the thinking of invention we have seen so far. Both in the idea of “practical deconstructions” that we have seen in the relationship between *exappropriation* and *télétechnologies*, but also in the effort to invent a new experience of hospitality. Furthermore, Derrida links this back to *Spectres de Marx*. We already saw the importance of this reference in relation to *altermondialisme*, and we see that Derrida is also already thinking through the contradictions of the United Nations at that stage. Indeed, the tenth dimension of this New International is explicitly concerned with ‘l'état présent du droit international et de ses institutions’ (1993b: 138). Moreover, we see precisely the same criticisms emerge at this stage. First, the history of these institutions, including the UN, which are limited ‘d'une certaine culture historique’, with such a limitation occurring not just in practice, but dans ‘leurs normes, leur charte, la définition de leur mission’ (1993b: 138). And, secondly, and once again, we see Derrida's concern about the domination by specific states, due to a lack of military force: ‘l'inégalité des États devant la loi, l'hégémonie de certains États sur la puissance militaire au service du droit international’ (1993b: 139). Derrida's critique then of the United Nations, and

his call for a reformed military force cannot be removed from the New International, but instead find some of their earliest articulations there.

Yet again, we see that the *plus-que-critique* that Derrida proposes in *altermondialisme* is not something disconnected from institutions, but rather dependent on it. Inventing a new form of international order is not a question simply of ideas, but about creating determined institutions and determined sites for this to take place. As we will see, this is once more a question of *exappropriating institutions*.

### **Section Five: Democratic Institutions**

An important dimension of these institutions and the reforms that Derrida is proposing is that they are democratic. And this democratic dimension opens up the question as to how these institutions tie into one of the most significant of Derrida's later terms, *démocratie à venir*. We have already seen this discussed briefly in Chapter 2, in relation to democratisation, where I argued for a longstanding and explicit link in Derrida's work between democratisation and education. Yet Derrida's specific conception of democracy remains to be considered. If we try to look closely at what exactly democracy is for Derrida, however, we encounter something of a problem, as Derrida insists on an "unknowable" feature of democracy, highlighting: 'la vacance sémantique au coeur du concept' (2003a: 132). It is worth stressing that this is not the first time that we have seen Derrida focus on a lack of determined meaning. Derrida (2003a: 28) proposes that 'nous ne savons pas encore ce qu'aura voulu dire *démocratie*', but this should recall to us a series of other 'ne savons pas encore' that we have seen so far. For instance in Chapter 3, where we focused on one permutation of the phrase, 'nous ne savons pas encore ce que c'est l'hospitalité' (1998: 32). And, similarly, in relation to Europe: 'vous savez qu'on en sait rien, moins que jamais, et que sous le nom de l'Europe on ne peut rien entendre sur quoi on puisse s'entendre' (1993a: 26). As Glendinning has pointed out, this approach is not specific to Derrida, but a frequent move within phenomenology: 'Coming reflectively to terms with phenomena that are both (in some way) known and (in some other way) 'not exactly known' is precisely the form of clarification that phenomenologically inspired philosophy takes' (2014: 39). However, as we have seen in these other contexts, the 'pas encore' that Derrida is speaking of here is not one that will ever be reached: it is not that we will someday know what democracy (or hospitality or Europe) is, but rather that they offer themselves to be determined and invented in the moment of *plus-que-critique* that we have seen above.

This ‘vacance sémantique’ in democracy has not arisen by accident, of course. Instead, Derrida brings forward how this is the result of a structural, and unavoidable tension within democracy itself. This tension is presented sometimes in different ways, but ultimately it comes down to a conflict between singularity and majority. In *Politiques de l’amitié*, for instance, Derrida tends to present this tension as a problem of calculation and counting the singular: ‘Pas de démocratie sans respect de la singularité ou de l’altérité irréductible, mais pas de démocratie sans “communauté des amis” (*koina ta philōn*), sans calcul des majorités’ (1994d: 40). In *Voyous*, Derrida mainly presents this as a tension between equality and liberty, but it is also tied to the tension of counting (2003a: 75, 58). It is this inherent tension which means that democracy will never settle. There is no perfect balance that can be struck between these two poles, but only a continuous and never ending negotiation. This is an important structural part of democracy, and one which separates it for Derrida from other ways of organising political community.

The consequence of this tension is that democracy does not have a determined identity, or at least not one that is fully determined. And it is because of these two contradictory principles at its core, that democracy is so closely tied to critique:

La démocratie est le seul système, le seul paradigme constitutionnel dans lequel, en principe, on a ou on prend le droit de tout critiquer publiquement, y compris l’idée de la démocratie, son concept, son histoire et son nom. Y compris l’idée du paradigme constitutionnel et l’autorité absolue du droit. (2003a: 127)

Exactly because democracy cannot be determined, it needs to continuously try and determine itself: this means that all parts of democracy (its history, idea, name, etc.) are open to discussion and critique. Derrida’s point, consequentially, is not to bring out any one of these characteristics and critique it, but rather to demonstrate that democracy is the only system that allows for this inherently. Other political paradigms may include critique, but democracy is the only one whose very structure necessitates this. This is what Derrida means by *démocratie à venir*:

La démocratie est le seul “régime” qui, accueillant *par principe* son autocritique et reconnaissant sa perfectibilité indéfinie, se définit en *se promettant* – par et dans son historicité, par et selon son *à-venir* même. (2001: 209)

Democracy is unique because of its inherent and structural lack of meaning; this means that it is in continuous and uncertain discussion and conflict with itself about its own determination, and ultimately projects itself into the future – each determination always falling short and too

far on one side or the other. As many critics have noted (e.g. Naas (2008: 138), Haddad (2013: 57)), this is not exclusively a good thing. Derrida also points out that democracy is inherently ‘auto-immune’, because of this potential for critique. This critique is in no way guaranteed to lead to more democracy, and precisely because we have no complete idea of what democracy is, it is always possible that democracy can regress or destroy itself. Democracy provides no rule or template (that cannot itself be critiqued) which would allow us to judge automatically if a step is anti-democratic or pro-democratic. This is not just a matter of intention; rather each new determination of democracy always risks being anti-democratic (as well as a new chance for democracy).

This leads to an important question, which has remained at the fringes of our thesis so far: what are the normative dimensions of Derrida’s thought? This is a debate which has featured frequently around Derrida. As an example, let us consider an exchange on this between Martin Hägglund and Samir Haddad. While they hold very different positions on normativity and Derrida, I will argue that both miss the importance of these *exappropriating institutions*. This means that both have difficulty accounting for Derrida’s explicit position on the “openness” of democracy, and consequentially that they miss out on the importance of institutions within Derrida’s thinking of the international.

A major part of Martin Hägglund’s position in *Radical Atheism* is that there are no normative dimensions to Derrida’s thought. One of *Radical Atheism*’s greatest strengths is that it gets its “levels” right: Hägglund consistently and carefully brings forward how Derrida can be misread by missing out on the greater implications of the deeper structure, like the originary affirmation (or what he labels ‘radical finitude’). However, as we saw in Chapter 1, Hägglund, like many other commentators, does not pay adequate attention to the link between this and iteration. And it is this which causes him to completely neglect an important normative dimension around democracy and institutions. Hägglund’s repeated point is that ‘the unconditional “yes” is nothing in itself: it only marks the opening of an unpredictable future that one will have to negotiate, without any affirmative or negative response being given in advance’ (2008: 97). Derrida’s philosophy offers us no ethical direction, but instead simply demonstrates the necessary conditions of the ethical. For Hägglund, one of the consequences of auto-immunity is that everything is corruptible, and this means that Derrida cannot draw a distinction between democracy and other regimes based on his own terms, or in other words, ‘every desire is essentially corruptible and cannot be immune from becoming totalitarian’ (2008: 203). While *Radical Atheism* describes part of *exappropriation*, in the claim that ‘the

making of decisions must be reinvented from time to time’, it is wrong to suggest that this ‘*must* here is not normative; it does not designate how decisions *should* be made but how decisions *are* made, whatever you do’ (2008: 203). As we will see, however, it is precisely in *exappropriating institutions* that we see that there is a “must” at work. It is this “must” which explains Derrida’s preference for democracy.

Before considering Hägglund’s position further, it is worth turning to one argument already made against his position on normativity: Samir Haddad’s *Derrida and the Inheritance of Democracy*. Haddad argues that there is a normative dimension to Derrida, and this can be located in the what Haddad labels a strategy of ‘*surenchère*’, which is ‘a raising of the stakes, outbidding, or upping the ante’ (2013: 35). Haddad nicely brings out the way this strategy features in multiple contexts, and he ties it to his overall argument about the importance of inheritance to deconstruction, arguing that ‘this involves a raising of the stakes (*surenchère*) of the irresolvable tensions in a legacy, an exposure of its aporetic structure’ (2013: 67). On this reading, then, Derrida proposes a relentless strategy of hyperbolic reading, which pushes a concept beyond its previously determined limits. For Haddad, it is in this ‘*surenchère*’ that we can locate the normative part of Derrida’s work, and which for him Hägglund ultimately neglects. This *surenchère* inherently carries a performative dimension, which involves Derrida going beyond a descriptive analysis of democracy, to committing himself to it. Haddad rightly points to this as absent in Hägglund, and carefully ties this to the specific context of “democracy” as a term in a network of other terms. On his reading, the preference for “democracy” is a performative choice, in a specific linguistic and historical context that ‘unleashes a configuration of values shaped by a particular history’ (2013: 95).

While Haddad certainly is correct to bring out this normative dimension of Derrida, particularly in relation to inheritance, there are several problems with his account. First, though Haddad takes this *surenchère* as a repeated strategy, we are never given a comprehensive link between this and Derrida’s philosophy more generally. And, indeed, in a similar way, focusing on this performative dimension leaves Haddad open to the challenge that these choices are not grounded: Derrida’s philosophy may mandate that we make a choice, but it does not help us with making these choices, and his own particular choices (i.e. deciding to intervene in favour of democracy) carry no normative force. Indeed, this is Hägglund’s argument in his response to Haddad, stressing that the commitments Haddad describes ‘are based on reasons and

considerations that are not grounded in deconstruction' (Martin Hägglund 2009: 237).<sup>120</sup> The problem with the performative approach of the *surenchère* is precisely that it can be easily dismissed as anecdotal; to fully understand the normative dimensions in Derrida's choice of democracy, any justification for this preference must be tied to Derrida's philosophy more generally. It is here that the link between democracy and *exappropriating institutions* is important.

Importantly, both Hägglund and Haddad have real trouble accounting for Derrida's preference for democracy. At different stages, Derrida contrasts democracy to other systems, and this is done because democracy has a different relation to alterity:

Dans la "démocratie à venir", ce qui est important, ce n'est pas la "démocratie", c'est l'"à venir". [...] Cela veut dire la place ouverte pour que l'autre ou d'autres viennent. Les systèmes non démocratiques sont avant tout des systèmes qui *ferment, se ferment* à cette venue de l'autre, ce sont des systèmes d'homogénéisation de calculabilité intégrale.<sup>121</sup> (2011: 90/91)

The type of democracy that Derrida is proposing, therefore, is different to these other regimes because of its relation to openness: totalitarian regimes close themselves off and homogenise, whereas democracy does something different. However, both critics seem to want to dismiss this. In a footnote, Hägglund acknowledges that Derrida has made such statements, but quite remarkably seems satisfied to just take these as 'occasional inconsistencies' (2008: 232). In a similar way, Haddad maintains that Derrida is right to privilege democracy, but does so for the wrong reasons. In line with Hägglund, Haddad (2013: 70) argues that such a privileging 'is incorrect, for reasons that Derrida himself provides':

These analyses undermine the distinction Derrida makes between democracy and its others according to a simple opposition of openness or closure to the future. All regimes and political systems are necessarily open, and Derrida's own work shows how such clean lines of separation cannot be maintained. Derrida is thus wrong to claim that these other positions – those of totalitarianism and fundamentalism – have no future. (2013: 70)

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<sup>120</sup> Haddad attempts to respond to Hägglund in *Radical Atheism*, but his response does not provide any more convincing reasons that these would be "grounded" in deconstruction. See Haddad (2013: 95–99).

<sup>121</sup> This was first published in translation in *The Althusserian Legacy* (Kaplan and Springer 1993).

Like Hägglund, Haddad appeals to the more general structure of deconstruction to emphasise that a hard distinction between these regimes is untenable.<sup>122</sup> For both critics, auto-immunity means that all regimes are ‘necessarily open’, and so no ‘simple opposition of openness or closure’ can hold here. In Haddad’s view, Derrida is thus speaking about ‘an exposure to the future that applies to all political regimes’ (2013: 93). On this view, therefore, democracy cannot be as easily separated from these other regimes as Derrida would like to suggest. Though, they disagree about the normativity of Derrida’s work, both agree that Derrida’s own justification for privileging democracy is incorrect.

Rather than finding the fault with Derrida here, it seems to me that this fault lies with both Hägglund and Haddad. In a partial, though not necessarily trivial sense, they are correct: it is always possible for democracy to become totalitarian, and consequentially a simple opposition between totalitarianism and democracy does not hold. However, nowhere does Derrida propose such a simple opposition. Just because the “openness” of democracy always risks becoming “closed” does not mean that it is the same as totalitarianism, which is always “closed”. This can be carefully illustrated by asking what exactly these regimes are closed/open to. The answer is the other. Neither Haddad nor Hägglund, however, think about this other in terms of iteration. Haddad, in fact, describes this repeatedly as ‘openness or closure to the future’, without analysing what this really might mean.<sup>123</sup> If, as I argued in Chapter 1, and continued in Chapter 3, the conception of alterity that Derrida proposes is tied fundamentally to iteration, Derrida’s point here is simply that democracy is open to iteration in a way that other regimes are not. This is not to say that iteration can never take place under totalitarianism; rather, it is to say that democracy opens itself to all the consequences of this iteration. This is the logic of *exappropriation* that we have outlined continuously throughout this thesis.

Indeed, Derrida takes democracy as an *exappropriating institution*. If Derrida insists frequently on an inherent lack of meaning in democracy, it is precisely to bring out this *exappropriating* dimension. First, Derrida presents democracy as continuously self-reflexive.

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<sup>122</sup> In fact, both philosophers also agree that what is distinct about democracy is its relation to history. Haddad proposes that these other regimes lack ‘a deconstructive engagement with the past, where aporetic tensions are denied or covered over’ (2013: 71). Though there’s little space to elaborate on the similarity here, Hägglund makes a similar point (based on Derrida’s position on self-critique and democracy) in *Radical Atheism* (2008: 196).

<sup>123</sup> It is worth stressing that this is partially a problem of translation. For instance, quite unhelpfully, the English translation of *De quoi demain ...* (2001, 209) translates, ‘par et selon son à-venir même’, which we have just cited above, as ‘by and according to its very future-to-come’ (2004, 130). It is this direct equivalence between *à-venir* and the future which is also partially responsible for Haddad’s misreading here.

All the *exappropriating institutions* that we have seen in Derrida are precisely those which have an endless connection to de-limitation, which continuously reflect on their own foundation. The indeterminacy of democracy and its need to continuously determine itself, therefore, forms part of this same structure. Equally, democracy also carries the second feature of this *exappropriation*: a universal or international dimension. Derrida positions it as inherently universalizable. As with the other international institutions we have seen, like the *Collège international* and the *Parlement international*, Derrida favours systems that carry within them no inherent national limitation. And Derrida insists that democracy is the only regime that is potentially universalizable, which is to say that it has the potential to resist the national as a determining context. In *Politiques de l'amitié*, this is presented as 'le pouvoir d'universaliser, au-delà de l'État et de la nation, la prise en compte des singularités anonymes et irréductibles' (1994d: 129). It is its inherent uncertainty about the right type of counting, which means that democracy always has the potential to count those singularities outside of the national boundary. And within *Voyous*, Derrida insists that democracy is the only way of organising political community which can avoid these original limitations by the state and be truly universalisable: 'C'est donc le seul qui soit universalisable, et de là viennent sa chance et sa fragilité' (2003a: 127). Derrida's interest in democracy than is not as a general ideal or idea in any sense, but rather this privileging is consistent with a strategy of *exappropriating institutions* that we have seen at work throughout the thesis.

There are three interconnected points to take from this. First, that this is a normative position. Derrida privileges particular institutional structures, in this case democracy, above others. This privilege is based not on a particular personal preference, or, even in a complex performative fashion, on a *surenchère*, but rather on the importance of iteration and de-limitation that we have seen in Chapter 1. Based on this, Derrida believes that institutions should be structured in a particular way and he pursues this strategy continuously. Neglecting this normative dimension, as Haddad and Hägglund do, is to miss the importance of institutions and interventions in Derrida's work.

The second point follows from this: Derrida's privileging of democracy is far from an anomaly. We have seen this approach appear in all his other institutional work in previous chapters. *Démocratie à venir*, therefore, is simply one instance of a more general approach that Derrida pursues in relation to media institutions, the *Collège international* and the *Parlement international*. In Chapter 2, I pointed to the fact that Derrida tied education to 'democratisation' far earlier than critics have accepted: this is not the only link to be made, however. The very



structure of *exappropriating institutions* is shared across these engagements and forms the main part of Derrida's approach within his interventions, be that on education, the media, international law or migration.

And, finally, this also returns us to the question of international institutions. We have seen above that Derrida proposes 'la création d'un espace juridico-politique international qui, sans abolir tout référence à la souveraineté, ne cesse d'innover, d'inventer de nouveaux partages et de nouvelles divisibilités de la souveraineté' (2003a: 127). If Derrida ties this new space to democracy, it is not simply because Derrida ties it to universalisation, as we have seen, but also because of this continuous invitation, 'ne cesse d'innover'.<sup>124</sup> This is an endless self-critique that we have seen as common to all these *exappropriating institutions*. In the movement to *plus-que-critique*, Derrida is not proposing the invention of a new and perfect regime, but rather he is insisting that this moment of invention must continue to re-divide, re-envisage and re-invent sovereignty itself. The inherent tension of democracy is a resource for this ceaseless invention. There is no point of equilibrium on which this sovereignty will ultimately settle; what Derrida proposes instead is an international democracy that continuously invents these divisions. Importantly, such invention once again does not take place in the abstract, but rather through *exappropriating institutions*.

### **Conclusion:**

Building on the fifth chapter, this chapter has argued that Derrida's interest in the international involves once again a critique of current structures (through *mondialisation*), as well as a commitment to inventing new international structures, demonstrated by his support for *altermondialisme*. Importantly, this takes place only through institutions. Derrida's engagement for a reformed United Nations represents one such example. Derrida supports a democratisation of the United Nations, and this leads us to see his position here as another instance of *exappropriating institutions*. His privileging of democracy is, therefore, neither new nor unique in his work, but a product of *exappropriating institutions* and part of a normative position that has been present throughout all his political interventions.

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<sup>124</sup> My emphasis

### **Conclusion: Model Politics**

In the introduction, we cited an important essay by Geoffrey Bennington. This essay concludes with the claim that Derrida's philosophy is not a model for politics:

This [deconstruction] does not provide a theoretical model for politics so much as it strives to keep open the event of alterity which alone makes politics possible and inevitable, but which political philosophy of all colours has always tried to close. (2000: 33)

This thesis has argued, on the contrary, that Derrida's philosophy can and does represent a model for politics. To describe this model, I have used the term *exappropriating institutions*. This articulated a fundamental part of his philosophical work, understood as *exappropriation*, and tied this to a specific institutional structure to which Derrida consistently return. Significantly, this is not just a potential model for politics that can be resurrected in Derrida's work, but rather it was the model of political engagement that Derrida himself pursued. It is only through considering his philosophical work alongside his public interventions that we can see this at work. Rather than privileging the philosophical over the political, or vice versa, our discussion has demonstrate that these two are in constant and essential dialogue in Derrida's work; if Derrida's work on institutions more generally has been neglected, it is a result of a lack of consideration of his political engagements and positions.

I have argued that this interest in institutions is far from anecdotal or simply strategic, but rather is a part of Derrida's philosophy. In Chapter 1, the importance of determination, effacement and iteration for Derrida's work was explored. Bringing out how this dynamic was at work even within the unconditional affirmation, this chapter argued that there was no naïve or simple openness to the other; but rather any relation to the other took place only through iteration and determination in another singular 'date'. In Chapter 2, I brought institutions into this dynamic, arguing that while institutions did not exhaust the forms that such determination could take, they were important in two ways: both as an instance of determination in their own right, but also as a moment that limited or restricted future iterations also. The prominent position of institutional questions in Derrida's philosophy and engagements, therefore, was at least partially a result of the importance of the dynamic of determination and iteration.

Moreover, this was not the only way that Derrida's political interventions connected to his philosophy. In Chapter 2, I articulated the 'double movement' in Derrida's work, arguing that while this had strategic implications, it also was tied directly to the model of iteration that

we had seen in Chapter 1. One response involved working within a determined system, while the other involved putting that system into question. In Chapter 2, this was discussed through the *répondre à/répondre de* distinction, but in later chapters, this became critique/*plus-que-critique*. Despite a reputation to the contrary, our discussion highlighted that Derrida relied frequently on critique, both in his media interventions and his philosophy in general. This was demonstrated in multiple contexts, including, for instance: his interest in the Kantian regulative idea; his argument for civil disobedience; and, his thinking through of media institutions and *artefactualité*. Though Derrida's analysis was always committed to a moment beyond this, he neither denigrated nor rejected the necessity of critique.

Indeed, a consistent point throughout each chapter, was that both parts of the double movement required determination. It was not simply that the critique response engaged with determined questions, while the *plus-que-critique* opened up these determined instances. The *plus-que-critique* was not simply about "opening up", but also about inventing new determinations. The *plus-que-critique*, therefore, was as institutionally involved as the *critique*; hence, Derrida continuously tied this type of response to institutions in his engagements. Furthermore, these two movements were not separable, but part of the same movement. The *plus-que-critique* was not a radical rupture with what had gone before, but rather only took place through articulating the previous structure differently. It was this iteration that carried with it the potential for invention.

It is here that the concept of *exappropriating institutions* became relevant. This was a common structure throughout Derrida's interventions – allowing for a maximum of iteration and de-limitation, while accepting necessary determination as an institution. Though articulated in various contexts, there were three important shared characteristics to these *exappropriating institutions*: first, they were relational to other institutions and often were designed to challenge a hegemonic consensus that emerged between these other institutions; second, they were international, both in spirit and in structure, resisting any national context that would restrict the de-limitation of iteration; third, they were deliberately self-reflexive, and involved a commitment to continuously questioning their status as an institution and particularly their own foundations.

Through this concept, we were able to see a common approach in Derrida's political engagements, over a long period of time and across diverse topics. We first saw this in relation to the *Collège international de philosophie*, and later in the *Parlement international des*

*écrivains*; equally, we saw in relation to media institutions, that Derrida emphasised the need for a “critical culture”, where consumers were also producers, thus challenging the *homohégémonique* effects of *télétechnologies*. In the final two chapters, we saw this international dimension come forward even further, with Derrida presenting the need for a new international order and for new divisions of sovereignty. Importantly, yet again, such changes could only take place through institutions. In Chapter 6, we were also able to place Derrida’s concept of *démocratie à venir* in the context of a longstanding discussion around institutions, and through *exappropriating institutions* offer a better justification for privileging democracy. Further, in the final chapter we engaged in one of the implicit concerns throughout this thesis: the normative dimensions of Derrida’s work. There, I argued that this preference for *exappropriating institutions* is a normative part of Derrida’s philosophy, and one which needs to be taken account of. In short, it is a model for politics.

This is not to say, however, that it is the *only* model for either politics or Derrida’s philosophy. To recall a point already made in our introduction, there is no singular and unified deconstruction: ‘il n’y a pas *la* déconstruction, il y a des mouvements singuliers, des styles plus ou moins idiomatiques, des stratégies, des effets de déconstruction hétérogènes d’un lieu à l’autre ...’ (1990a: 161). It would be wrong, therefore, to suggest that this model and institutional approach is the ultimate style, strategy, site or context of Derrida’s philosophy. Nor would it be correct to imply that because Derrida himself employed this model, that it can somehow finally unpack the political meaning of his work. This thesis does not argue that *exappropriating institutions* has a unique privilege above other models that might be found in his *oeuvre*, but it does argue that this is one such model and a context that is worthy of articulation.

There is no conclusion with *exappropriating institutions*. As we have seen, they are never settled, but endless and continuous acts of invention. Be it the de-limitation of iteration, or the inventions of new divisions of sovereignty, *exappropriating* captures the need to both determinate and de-limit. In this sense then, if Derrida’s *exappropriating institutions* are a model for politics, this model also *exappropriates* itself. It continues on, promising itself to new contexts, with its very foundations open to reinvention. Not limited simply to Derrida’s own approach, nor only to the contexts that he applied this within, such a model endlessly invents its repetition in another context, another day and another date, another time, another invention and another iteration – each one remaining to be determined.

## Appendix: Petitions & Letters signed by Derrida

This appendix contains a list of petitions and letters that Derrida signed during his lifetime. Though it has not been possible to integrate each of these fully into the thesis, these are offered here as a sample of the many different engagements and public positions that Derrida took throughout his career.

This is based on research at the Derrida archives at the *Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC)* in Caen, Normandy, at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* and at the *Institut national de l'audiovisuel*. The archives at *IMEC* provided much of the material for the appendix, with further material added through the archives of national newspapers. Shortly before the submission of this thesis, the *IMEC* catalogue became available online. This can provide further information on many of the petitions listed below, as well as catalogue numbers to access them in person.<sup>125</sup>

Compiling such a list presents multiple problems. As is true today, some petitions were not designed to be published in national media but delivered directly to different bodies or governments: this presents a problem in finding their sources. This appendix, therefore, cannot claim to be comprehensive; however, it does still offer a significant sample of the causes that Derrida supported.

### List of Petitions and Letters:

‘Appel pour un comité de soutien aux militants politiques noirs emprisonnés’, (1971)

Petition supporting imprisoned African-American activists and condemning actions of American government. Notable co-signatories: Jean Genet, Marguerite Duras, Maurice Blanchot, Roland Barthes, Julie Kristeva, Philippe Sollers.

Public letters and petitions signed as a member of ‘Le comité pour la sauvegarde de la culture juive en URSS’, (1981 – 1984)

Derrida appears to have been an active member of this committee, supporting multiple engagements.

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<sup>125</sup> See <<https://portail-collections.imec-archives.com/ark:/29414/a011433424761LQUFTQ>>, [accessed 1 October 2019].

Petitions signed with ‘Le Comité international pour le soutien des principes de la Charte 77 en Tchécoslovaquie’, (1981 – 1993)

The committee itself was founded on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1977. It is not clear if Derrida was involved with it from the outset, but he became an active member from 1981 onwards.

‘Appel pour le soutien aux universitaires tchécoslovaques’, (1982)

‘Appel contre l’élection de M. Pierre Boutang à la Sorbonne’, (1976)

Petition published in *Le Monde*, 15 June 1976. Boutang was a philosopher with extreme right-wing views who was appointed to take up the chair previously held by Emmanuel Levinas. Derrida later wrote an article defending this position, published in *Le Monde*, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1976 (1976: 9).

Multiple different petitions on the Israel/Palestine conflict (1988 – 2004)

Signed many petitions in support of peace agreements; the earliest, it appears, dating from 1988. These include: ‘Call for respect of rights of man in the occupied territories’, (1988); Appels pour sauvegardés les accords d’Oslo (1998); Donnez une chance à la paix entre Israéliens et Palestiniens, (2000); Appel pour la peuple palestinienne (2004).

‘Soutien à SOS Racisme’, (1988)

Signed a petition supporting the anti-racist organisation.

Petition supporting Sarah Kofman, (1988)

Untitled petition, responding to Kofman being declined a permanent university position. Derrida wrote an article in *Le Nouvel Observateur* defending this petition (1988b: 59)

‘Lettre ouverte à l’opinion publique internationale’, (1988)

Public letter, signed by Derrida, condemning the mass deportations of Armenians from Azerbaijan at the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh War.

‘89 pour l’égalité’, (1989)

Petition organised by SOS Racisme, in defence of *les sans-papiers*.

‘Soutien à Salman Rushdie’, (1989)

Signed a petition to defend Rushdie following the announcement of the *fatwa* against him. Rushdie would later become president of the *Parlement international des écrivains*.

‘L'Appel Du Comité Vel d'Hiv' 42’, (1992)

Petition signed by over 200 intellectuals, which called for the recognition of the participation of the French state in the Holocaust. Published in *Le Monde*, 17th of June 1992.

‘Pour repenser l'Université’, (1992)

Referenced in chapter two. Petition signed with others, including Bourdieu (Derrida and others 1992b: 24)

‘Appel à la vigilance’, (1993)

Petition against the resurgence of the far right in France and in Europe. Published in *Le Monde* (13 July 1993). Notable co-signatories include Bourdieu, Umberto Eco, Michel Deguy, Françoise Héritier, Paul Virilio, among others.

‘Pour Taslima Nasreen’, (1994)

Petition in support of the Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen, published in *L'Humanité* (26 July 1994).

‘Non-assistance à personne en danger’ (1994)

Article published in *Le Monde*, signed by Derrida, Bourdieu and Sami Nair, criticising the government's refugee policy. See chapter three (Bourdieu and others 1994)

‘Manifeste des 134’, (1994)

Signs a petition supporting the ‘Manifeste des 134’ in 1994. A petition by 134 Iranian writers and intellectuals supporting freedom of expression in Iran.

‘Pour le maintien du centre de recherches en études féminines de Paris VIII’, (1995)

This appears to have been a private letter, but one which was sent directly to the Minister of higher education (*Ministre de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche*) on the 20th March 1995. There, Derrida laid out quite strongly his support for the gender studies centre at Paris VIII.

Pour un débat sur le sort des étrangers (1995)

Published in *Libération* criticising the government's migration and refugee policy, especially in relation to Algeria. Discussed in chapter three. Signed by Derrida, Bourdieu and Natacha Lochak (Bourdieu and others 1995)

M. Pasqua, son conseiller et les étrangers (1995)

Published in *Le Monde*, criticising French government, especially Minister for the Interior, Charles Pasqua. Discussed in chapter three (Bourdieu and Derrida 1995).

'Droits devant !', (1995)

Petition supporting the right to housing.

'Déclaration d'Avignon', (1995)

Given at the fête d'Avignon in 1995, this was a public speech, particularly calling for peace in then Czechoslovakia.

'Pour une Algérie républicaine et démocratique', (1995)

Petition signed during the Algerian Civil War, supporting a democratic Algeria.

'Justice pour Brahim', (1995)

Death of Brahim Bouarram on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, between the second vote of the presidential election in 1995. Murdered by a far-right activist, who threw him into the river Seine, where he drowned. This was given as a public speech.

'Un dissident pour Président', (1995)

Petition supporting Lionel Jospin in the 1995 elections, as the socialist candidate. He would eventually lose to Jacques Chirac.

'Pour la revue grecque *Anti*', (1995)

Petition supporting a Greek journal.

'L'avenir des archives « Levinas »', (1996)



Petition about the future of the Levinas archives; published in *Le Monde*, 26 July 1996

‘Pour une reconnaissance légale du couple homosexuel’, (1996)

Published in *Le Monde* (1st March 1996), supporting marriage equality. Other signatories: Didier Eribon, Bourdieu, Michelle Perrot, Paul Veyne, Pierre Vidal Naquet

Various petitions signed both with *CISIA* and the *Parlement* (1996 – 1998)

Cited mainly in chapter three, most consistent other signatory was Pierre Bourdieu, including, ‘Appels contre les crimes racistes et pour la paix en Algérie’, (1997)

‘Pour la reconnaissance du massacre d’Algériens à Paris (17 Oct 1961)’, (1997)

Petition calling for the recognition of the violent oppression by French police of a protest in Paris of Algerians demonstrating for independence. Finally, recognised by President Hollande in 2012.

‘Manifeste pour la liberté’, (1998)

Petition following the assassination of journalist Norbert Zogno in Burkina Faso

‘Contre les procédures arbitraires du procureur Kenneth Starr’, (1998)

Starr lead the investigation into Bill Clinton from 1994. This included taping and requesting to tape private conversations, which Derrida and others objected to.

‘Tchéchénie: qu’on nous explique!’, (2002)

Criticism of Russia during the Second Chechen War. Published in *Le Monde*, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2002.

Multiple petitions against the Iraq war, (2002-2003)

As discussed in chapter five, multiple petitions were signed against the Iraq War, including ‘Pas en notre nom, Not in our name!’, (2002)

‘Pour protéger le statut d’intermittent du spectacle’, 2003

Petition against proposed changes to the status of artists working in cinema/theatre.

‘Mobilisation contre la vente Breton’, (2003)

Petition signed against the sale of the estate of André Breton

‘Contre la guerre à l’intelligence’, (2004)

Petition published in *Les Inrockuptibles* against Chirac government policy that targeted “non-productive” intellectual activity. Published 18 February 2004 (Bourmeau 2009)

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