

Philosophy as Autobiography: The Confessions of Jacques Derrida



Joseph G. Kronick

Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

I. Premises and Promises

Is deconstruction the confessions of Jacques Derrida? According to Nietzsche, the great philosopher is never impersonal; his work bears witness to who he is. If we wish to explain how a philosopher's metaphysical claims came about, writes Nietzsche, "It is always well (and wise) to ask first: at what morality does all this (does *he*) aim? Accordingly, I do not believe that a 'drive to knowledge' is the father of philosophy."¹ Let us follow Nietzsche's suggestion and ask, at what morality does deconstruction (does Derrida) aim? The answer might be found in the paradox of the *yes*, a response to the one to come, a ghost or specter that solicits his reply. The spectral logic of the reply dictates that a pledge is given to "what remains to come," an absolute singularity that cannot be taken up by any general law.² Derrida's work begins, he says, in responding to some request, invitation, demand, or signature, and so receives its determination from "*some others* who have no identity in this cultural scene."³ The spectral logic of the pledge dictates that it respond here and now, without delay and *without presence*, to a singularity. What results, itself a singularity if it is to be true to its pledge, can be called "confession" or "autobiography,"

insofar as it is an enigmatic name for a singular body of writing. The confession of Jacques Derrida is not the laying bare of his soul nor the recapitulation of the inner life but is a response, a pledge or promise, to make truth, which, if it means anything, is a testimony to what is at once singular and universal. The autobiographical experience of writing carries one beyond the identifiable boundaries of philosophy, literature, confessions, and subjectivity but without abandoning them altogether. This is why it is a pledge; it engages new bodies of writing that resist “*ontological, transcendental, or philosophical comprehension*[.] Without being foreign to philosophy, this attempt was neither philosophical nor solely theoretical or critical; it *promised* (it was this very promise itself). . . . ‘Autobiography’ is certainly just an old name for designating one of the bodies thereby pledged.”⁴ A writing that dispenses with its originary inscription is an autobiography without an *autos*, but it is, perhaps, a writing *of* the autos, in the double genitive Derrida is so fond of employing. “Autobiography” refers not only to a body of writing but to a practice that, while aligned with the Derridean notion of writing, embraces the ethical imperative of the promise or pledge that precedes the self.

The sense of autobiography employed here needs to be set against that which promises the constitution of the subject as self-present being. As the specular gathering of being, autobiography accounts not only for ontological identity but provides a model for understanding itself. James Olney has argued that *bios* can be understood as something other than the life lived and recounted in the written text: “We can understand it as consciousness, pure and simple, consciousness referring to no objects outside itself, to no events, and to no other lives.”⁵ Olney argues for an ontological understanding of autobiography “as participation in an absolute existence far transcending the shifting, changing unrealities of mundane life.” Olney’s explicitly Platonic definition of life as *ta onta*, the present being of things that are, distinguishes autobiography from biography and historical writing and establishes it as the genre of genres: free from its attachment to memoir, self-referentiality, and even biographical content, autobiography is defined as repetition, “the formal device of ‘recapitulation and recall.’”⁶ Repetition transforms the “was” of the past into the “sum of things that are now existing or that are now being.” Olney’s use of the Platonic term “participation” is not fortuitous; it reminds us that the examined life is the life that participates in what “is,” being. Through the medium of consciousness, the individual gathers the Heraclitian flow of time into the

Parmenidean world of being.⁷ Any text would be an autobiography to the extent that, as a formal unity constituted by repetition, it participates in the absolute realm of being. This definition turns all writing into autobiography insofar as autobiography aims to transform the course of life into an eternal present, that is, fix becoming as being or posit life as truth.

This desire, however, must always confront what limits it, time and the self, the very matter of autobiography. Autobiography, as Olney's recent book, *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing*, demonstrates, is motivated by the passion for the self to remember itself, a passion that drives narrative only for it to realize it is defeated in and by narrative.⁸ Although Derrida admits to responding to the lure of speculative totality, his autobiography is a kind of shattering of the mirror in order to face the other to whom he is responsible. In its traditional sense, autobiography aims to make transparent to the writing self the life of the historical self. In its purest form, it would be, as Olney suggests, atemporal consciousness, the consciousness of consciousness. As such, it would take form for its content. When consciousness, rather than memory, becomes the life and the true object of narrative, we have "*l'autobiographie pure*."⁹ Should such a fusion of writing and being occur, if the life were identical with the writing, then how would we tell them apart? They would be indiscernible, which is an end to which many an author has aspired. Yet such a desire would not result in a Nietzschean repetition, for it finds its end in the one. Eternal recurrence means that the singularity of the life must admit, from the start, to repetition. Singularity only becomes discernible in the response, the affirmative "yes" to what resists ontology and totalization; it consists in not gathering itself up. "Autobiography" is the name Derrida gives for this response or pledge to what remains outside, an other that makes deconstruction, and other bodies of writing, possible. In this fashion, we can speak of autobiography as a body of writing and as an event or engagement wherein the self, which does not exist, "is *given* by writing."¹⁰

II. Transference: "There is always someone else"

Derrida's subjects are indeed given to him by the occasions that call forth his responses, whether it be a conference on a special topic, a tribute to a colleague, a memorial to a dead friend, or an interpretation of a philosophical text.¹¹ Moreover, the subject, "Jacques Derrida," is given in these responses where he is always "himself" and someone

else (Nietzsche, Rousseau, Plato, Heidegger, Levinas, *et al.*). When an interviewer remarks that all his texts are “indexed to important references: Husserl, Plato, Heidegger, Hegel, Rousseau, Jabès, Celan,” Derrida replies, “There is always someone else, you know. The most private autobiography comes to terms with great transferential figures, who are *themselves* and themselves *plus* someone else (for example, Plato, Socrates, and a few others in *The Post Card*, Genet, Hegel, Saint Augustine, and many others in *Glas* or *Circumfession*, and so forth).”¹²

In naming Plato and others “transferential figures” Derrida suggests that the great texts of philosophy are structured like Freud’s transference neurosis, wherein the patient displaces onto the physician feelings connected to someone in the analysand’s past. The doctor tries to get the patient to re-experience the forgotten memory distorted in the transference. Transference, however, is not merely a barrier to understanding; as resistance to therapy, it is the key to the analytic process, which involves the substitutions of interpretations for fictions. The strength of the transference, therefore, is not measured by what is repressed but by the resistance to the analyst’s interpretation, whose authority is being questioned.¹³ Derrida, however, does not suggest a strictly Freudian scheme but explains, “In order to speak of even the most intimate thing, for example one’s ‘own’ circumcision, one does better to be aware that an exegesis is in process, that you carry the detour, the contour, and the memory inscribed in the culture of your body, for example.”¹⁴ The body, not just the subject, is the site of transference.

For Samuel Weber, Freud’s theory of transference resembles literary criticism. What takes place in interpretation is not the uncovering of meaning but the imposition of meanings at the expense of other meanings. At issue is not the meaning of works or how meaning takes place, “but the very process of ‘taking place’ itself; that is, of *taking place* away from other place-holders. The real object of interpretation would be the place itself, as site of division and conflict, and this would determine its practice as negotiation and as strategy.”¹⁵ Freud’s transference gives a model for how interpretation is forced to construe a self-identical subject to fixate the volatile primary processes of the unconscious. Derrida suggests something quite different: transference accounts for the presence of the other even where it is unnamed. Rather than construe a self-identical subject, transference is an expropriating of the self before it can sign itself. In responding to some request or provocation to write, Derrida refers to the need for “an invention that defies both a given program, a system

of expectations, and finally surprises me myself—surprises me by suddenly becoming for me imperious, imperative, inflexible even, like a very tough law. The more singular the form, approaching what is called no doubt inappropriately ‘fiction’ or ‘autobiography,’ as in *Glas*, *The Post Card*, or *Circumfession*, the more this compulsion surprises me.”¹⁶ Writing begins in an “*external* provocation” and results in a counter-institution, but these books do not merely impose themselves as authoritative but stage their own history or writing. This staging or, to return to our opening premises, this engagement is the work of transference. Autobiography is put into motion by this trace of the other. Before “I am,” the other is there. The *Übertragung* (transference and translation) occurs not only between text and interpreter but belongs to the text/figure; Plato is always more than himself—he is Socrates as well. Derrida is also such a transferential figure—Rousseau, Plato, Augustine, are just some of the voices traversing him. Autobiography, for Derrida, is the compulsion to respond to an other, dead or alive, who provokes in him something singular, a text of his own whose otherness surprises him because it cannot be foreseen from the texts it repeats but does not leave unchanged.

III. The Passion for Origins

Governed by the spectral law that constitutes the event as a repetition and a first time, autobiography is a temporalizing of the instant. Derrida’s autobiography is his ongoing response to Nietzsche’s demon who says, ““This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it.””¹⁷ Nietzsche asks how would we respond? Would we embrace this news with joy or would we howl with terror? In either case, one cannot avoid the eternal recurrence of the same. The demon announces a doctrine that leaves no room for choice, and, nevertheless, he asks for a decision, which is appropriate for a doctrine of repetition and difference, for we are to repeat what has been, and each time we do so we are called upon to decide whether this repetition is something we will or something we regret. Nietzsche’s demon announces the spectral logic of interruption (of the instant, experience, the “I,” history, and so on). The instant, the experience of an *I* in an absolute present, would not be possible if it were not without the spectral shadow of repetition, of a simulacrum or double that haunts the exemplary, allowing it to be what it is, singular and

general. Derrida's "yes" to the demon's question attests to the temporalizing of the instant and the instance.

There are many texts by Derrida, besides *Specters of Marx*, that analyze this spectral logic wherein truth, testimony, self-representation, history, and so on, are attached to the simulacrum that haunts the original. Without this possibility of doubling or perversion, there can be no truth, history, testimony, or self-representation. An essay on Hannah Arendt, "History of the Lie: Prolegomena," poses the paradox that there can be no history, especially political history, without the possibility of lying; the alternative is determinism. History and, with it, freedom and action depend upon that which resists totalization, ontology, and phenomenology. Faced with the absolutism of principles and identity, we must bow down in worship as do the people, in Dostoevsky's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," before miracle, mystery, and authority. (Derrida, however, leaves room for miracle and mystery, and even, perhaps, authority, but it would be a passive authority, that which commands our responsibility without contravening our freedom not to respond.) In short, without the threat and chance of the lie, secrecy, the simulacrum, history and politics would be "the irresponsible action of a programmatic machine."¹⁸

The lie refers to the performative violence that attaches itself to truth and history. This does not mean Derrida endorses relativism—quite the contrary—he consistently warns against it and insists upon our obligation to truthfulness, but we would not have such a task of wresting truth from falsity were it not that truth remains bound to its spectral relationship with the lie. The co-implication of truth and falsity does not mean that truth receives its identity from its opposite but that truth, like testimony, is a performative act, and once we take the performative into account, we must recognize that it "imprints its irreducibly historical dimension on both veracity and lie."¹⁹ This implies not only that lies have a history—which is something other than presenting as history what is a demonstrable falsehood, as David Irving does—but so does truth, which is why it is contested and contestable. In short, without the possibility of the lie, truth would not be possible, or as St. Augustine says and Derrida frequently repeats, there would be no truth *to be made*. And what is it to make truth but to appeal to what is miraculous, what must be accepted on the basis of testimony beyond any proof?²⁰

Which is why philosophy is autobiography, not, contrary to what Nietzsche wrote in the "History of an Error [*Geschichte eines Irrthums*],"

because the philosopher presents a private vision as universal truth, such as, “I, Plato, *am* the truth,”²¹ but because philosophy as self-accounting, “makes” truth: there is a performative dimension to the recovery from self-alienation and the return to the one, who can be addressed as “I.” Autobiography does not consist in making known what is true—it is not, in other words, a biographical or historical document as is a memoir—but it promises to make truth, which means that, as an autobiographer, I testify, at this moment, to my secret, what has been reserved for me and I alone am in a position to tell.²² And because I alone can attest to the truth, autobiography shares with philosophy the problem of self-accounting.

Rodolphe Gasché has suggested that Derrida’s interest in autobiography may stem from “his ongoing debate with the classical problem of philosophical accounting,” the providing of grounds for what is asserted.²³ Gasché demonstrates that Derrida’s inscription, a putting in relation, is a form of accounting because it brings “the origin of a priori principles in relation to what exceeds them.” The origin is accountable to what cannot be accounted for, the infrastructures.²⁴ One of the great claims of philosophy is to account for origins, its own and others’. Derrida does not denounce this claim to totalizing thought. Indeed, he has been rather forthright about his passion—he has given various answers to the question of what drives him, including love of literature, ruins, justice, the other—and has given a name for it: “‘Autobiography’ is perhaps the least inadequate name, because it remains for me the most enigmatic, the most open, even today.”²⁵ Speaking of his adolescent identification with the “Gidian theme of Proteus,” he explains, “this was above all the desire to inscribe merely a memory or two. I say ‘only,’ though I already felt it as an impossible and endless task. Deep down, there was something like a lyrical movement toward confidences or confessions. Still today there remains in me an obsessive desire to save in uninterrupted inscription, in the form of memory, what happens—or *fails to happen*. What I should be tempted to denounce as a lure—i.e., totalization or gathering up—isn’t this what keeps me going?”²⁶ The passion to inscribe “in the form of memory” is a passion for writing, not only in the colloquial sense but in the special sense Derrida gives it as well, as the general system of referral and iterability.

In “Ellipsis,” one of two essays on Edmond Jabès in *Writing and Difference*, he attributes the desire for the origin to writing, and the desire to write to the origin: “Writing, passion of the origin, must also be understood through the subjective genitive. It is the origin itself

which is impassioned, passive, and past, in that it is written.”²⁷ The attraction to the origin lies in the belief that passion can be appeased by the return of what originally impassioned it. But this circle does not close; the origin is elliptical; it must originally repeat itself, divide and share itself, in order to relate to something else, to be an origin. The origin is passion because it receives its determination from something else; in order to be an origin, to be the source of what is, of meaning, it must begin by dividing and supplementing itself.

Jean-Luc Nancy, in a commentary on “Ellipsis,” notes that “writing is said to be the ‘*passion de l’origine*,’ ‘passion of and for the origin.’ This passion does not arise at the origin, it is the origin itself. The origin is passion, and therein resides meaning, ‘all meaning’; this is what makes sense, ‘*tout le sens*.’ All meaning is always passion. . . . In meaning, it is not that something *has* meaning (the world, existence, or Derrida’s discourse); it is that meaning apprehends itself as and in making sense.” Derrida’s desire to inscribe what happens or fails to happen is a passion for the origin as *différance*, where the meanings are. As Nancy argues, the possibility of meaning rests upon repetition: in order for meaning “to be or make sense,” it has to open “in itself the possibility of relating to itself in the ‘referral to another.’ . . . Such is the passion.”²⁸ The passion for gathering up is born of the elliptical sense of the origin as *différance*. (French uses one word “*ellipse*,” where the English requires two, “ellipse” and “ellipsis.” “*Ellipse*” is derived from the Greek *elleipsis*, “to come short,” and as a geometrical term, it refers to a cone cut obliquely by a plane. Its other meaning is the same as the English “ellipsis,” to leave something out.) Therefore, “the adolescent dream of keeping a trace of all the voices which were traversing me—or were *almost doing so*” recalls the origin that is not identical with itself, an ellipse, in other words. The passion of meaning is dedicated to this impossible origin. It would not be a response to what has come before but a pledge to something to come, to that which presents itself where the origin withdraws. Writing means to pledge oneself to some other, to say “*yes*” to a meaning to come. This is the experience of singularity, his and others’, which means that singularity must divide itself, “share itself out and so compromise itself, *promise to compromise itself*.”²⁹

The deconstructive text would be a transferential work that consists in its resistance, in its not collecting itself in a signature but always signing itself “+R,”³⁰ as itself and something, someone, else, “new bodies of writing, pledges of other signatures, new bodies in which neither philosophy, nor literature, nor perhaps knowledge in general

would resemble their image or their history.” This new body of writing goes by the old name “autobiography,” but it is a strange autobiography that denies the autos: “the self does not exist. . . . It is *given* by writing, by the other: *born* . . . by being given, delivered, offered, and betrayed all at once. And this *truth* is an affair of love and the police, of pleasure and the law—all at once. The event is at once grave and microscopic. It is the whole enigma of a truth *to be made*. Saint Augustine speaks often of ‘making the truth’ in a confession. . . . [T]his truth rebels against philosophical truth—a truth of adequation or revelation.”³¹ This truth to be made is the singular truth of testimony, for in testifying I appeal to something beyond any proof. The act of testifying, even when it is to something ordinary, is always unique and instantaneous and, nevertheless, repeatable if it is to be shared, like the signature that seals the testimony.

IV. Circumcision: The Trauma of Singularity

Derrida’s figure for this signature is circumcision, the ritual in which the foreskin of the Jewish male is cut off eight days after his birth. To circumcise also means to cut short, limit, or to cut around, *ellipse*. The motifs of the date, singularity, repeatability, wound, mark, and cut all belong to this ritual act. Wherever there is a signature/circumcision, there is “the trace of an incision which is *at once* unique and iterable, cryptic and readable.”³² This absolute act—one can only be circumcised once—is a sign (of being a Jew and of the covenant with God); it is datable, the eighth day following birth, which can always mark an anniversary; it is a ritual and, as such, belongs to repetition; and it is consigned to forgetfulness, being no more within reach of memory than one’s own birth. In the Algerian community of Jews, it was not even called such but “baptism,” and so this ritual that separates Jew from Christian was covered over and assimilated to Christianity.³³ In an essay that situates Derrida’s Judaism in relation to Christianity, Jill Robbins distinguishes the desire for the self, an “I” that will be whole and complete, from a desire that circumvents such totalization. “For Derrida,” she writes, “the experience of Judaism is circumcision,” which, as the mark of the covenant, “is precisely that, a mark,” and as such, inseparable from Derrida’s notion of the mark, trace, and writing.³⁴

Circumcision serves as the trope for a philosophical discourse that remains open to what Derrida refers to as the wound or the trauma of singularity. He calls for a philosophical discourse that holds up to this

trauma, lets itself be interrupted by it but not destroyed by it.³⁵ It would repeat it—keep it alive without being totally annihilated by it—which is to say it transfers the trauma to other texts, locating in them their singularity. This is his repetition compulsion. It is a gathering that does not assemble itself or the truth; it keeps the circle open. As Derrida's comment on autobiography quoted above reveals, the lure of gathering means that the relation to himself "originates" in circumcision, the carnal mark that recalls him to "a network of other marks, at once endowed with and deprived of singularity. . . . It is tied to both the differential marks and the destination of language: the inaccessibility of the other returns there in the same repetition."³⁶ In his *Circumfession*, Derrida is not trying to recall the forgotten experience of circumcision, however, because the here-now of the incision tells of a singularity that effaces itself insofar as it announces his origin as a Jew and the Jewish covenant with God. It is a mark of the eternal recurrence of the same. It is singular and iterable. Circumcision is a "writing" that destines him, but as a singular wound that he carries on his body, like a memory, it is the sign that he is unaccountable for his origin, for his destination, a priori. He is therefore destined to repeat rather than remember the past, and as we know from Freud, repetition is implicated within transference. Derrida keeps alive this trauma and confirms his singularity by returning to the transference figures of philosophy and recalling their singularity. This is the morality at which he aims—to do justice to the singular. Instead of the recovery of the self from self-alienation, which is what collecting or gathering promises, transference exposes the body to the other; the traces left in the flesh, as it were, give over our own "self" to the other. Circumcision is the elliptical sign of *différance* between self and other, the mark that the self falls short of self-identity. As the mark of singularity, circumcision is "the moment of the signature (the other's as well as one's own) by which one lets oneself be inscribed in a community or in an ineffaceable alliance."³⁷ Derrida's work does not gather itself—consists in not gathering itself—in a signature. And in this consists its singularity—it is recognizable by the other because it does not reappropriate itself. Ellipsis.

This elliptical sense of gathering can be contrasted with Heidegger's sense of *Versammlung* (gathering), which embodies his attempt "to think after the manner of the *logos*."³⁸ Gathering, Derrida says, is always a matter "of indivisible individuality or of being always already with oneself, from the origin or at the finish line of some *Bestimmung* ["destination," "determination"]."³⁹ For Heidegger, the end of phi-

osophy is determined as the gathering of its utmost possibility of the thinking of Being. Gathering recalls what has been given to be thought, but it is not simply oriented toward the past but is a keeping and collecting, and therefore, a bringing to an end. It is a keeping and assembling of differences in the one. Yet *Versammlung* does not exclude difference. Recalling that the logic of difference dictates that it be “always-already-there,” Derrida notes its resemblance to the hedgehog of the Grimms’ tale “The Hedgehog and the Hare.” Whenever the hare thinks it has beaten the hedgehog, the latter pops up to say, “I am here already.” “*Versammlung* doesn’t win out”; there pops up the hedgehog, the aleatory factor, to interrupt it.⁴⁰ The hedgehog is a figure for writing as ellipsis; it would not be a gathering but a letting come.⁴¹

V. Philosophical Confessions

The elliptical appeals to Robert Smith, the author of *Derrida and Autobiography*, a straightforward title for an oddly circuitous work. Although he does not explicitly address self-accounting, his book is an extended study of “writing’s otherness to the cohesion of the (philosophical founding) system” that depends upon “the identification of the origin with its end.”⁴² Autobiography serves Smith as the genre/trope—a single name is inadequate to define it—that ruins reason’s work, the linking of the singular with the transcendental. In short, “autobiography” is what makes any self-accounting, the very aim of autobiography, impossible. Reflection requires the nonreflective tain; the *autos* is backed by an other it cannot assimilate or resolve but which it, nevertheless, requires to constitute the story of its constitution. The autobiographical effect brings about self-identity at the expense of “total rational purity”—the fold of reflection cannot be assimilated or taken up, sublated, by reason. Philosophical thinking, according to Smith, demands the elimination of the contingent both from “the field of phenomena which it brings under conceptual organization” and from itself. The combined effect of these “two modalities,” Smith claims, is “autobiographical.” Self-identity is established at the cost of including “a tautologous or rhetorical methodologic fold into philosophy that is both necessary and anathema to its self-definition.”⁴³

The flaw in Smith’s analysis lies in its picture of philosophy as being blinded by its drive for rational unity. Philosophy, according to Smith, would establish its identity on the basis of self-reflection, which

introduces what cannot be assimilated. This picture, however, underplays the extent to which the philosophical problem of self-accounting draws the other into itself. This is what Dieter Henrich has called “Fichte’s original insight” in an essay by that name. “If the I is self-consciousness and self-consciousness is the recognition that ‘I am I,’ what is the I that reflects upon itself in the recognition ‘I am I?’ It cannot be self-consciousness because this occurs as a result of reflection.”⁴⁴ The problem of reflexivity suggests that autobiography, far from being philosophy’s other, has always been a part of it insofar as philosophy is perennially in search for its ultimate foundation. Smith speaks of the deconstruction of philosophical reflection as autobiography because the failure of reflection invariably adheres to autobiographical acts, yet the very problematic he identifies as autobiography has been exposed by philosophy to adhere to every act of reflection. After all, were autobiography the work of a self-present consciousness, a being for whom the self and the life were one, there would be no need to write.

St. Augustine knew this, and this left him pondering why he should confess if God already knows everything he has to say. Augustine’s confession is an effort to make the soul, singular and unique, present to himself (and itself), as well as to his readers. To attain this self-presence is to know the God who makes the inner self possible.⁴⁵ Confession, as Smith says, “testifies to the autobiographical, the contingent, the irregular, the unusual, the singular.”⁴⁶ Yet in putting all the weight upon the disruptive force of the autobiographical, he turns philosophy into a monument to reason, a caricature of metaphysics.

The alliance of philosophy with autobiography is not that of the host and parasite but of the fiction that attaches itself to truth, whether philosophical or autobiographical, which occurs whenever one testifies or swears to truth. Confession, like autobiography, promises to make truth, but to do so, it must be haunted by literature, the possibility of fiction. As with testimony, there is no confession “that does not structurally imply in itself the possibility of fiction, simulacra, dissimulation, lie, and perjury.”⁴⁷ But if God knows everything, why confess? To make truth. Confession is not made to provide God with information or with a biography, but it is an act that, insofar as it is haunted by literature, makes truth. As Derrida says of testimony, to make confession swears one to secrecy, to swear that at the instant I confess, something remains secret within me, even when I make public, which is why no one can confess in my place. There is,

says Derrida, an alliance between the secret and instant in testimony, which I think applies to confession as well.⁴⁸ They are both exemplary acts that are singular and universal. As unique and irreplaceable, they take place in an instant that is temporalized to the extent that it must structurally admit the possibility of iterability, if they are to be meaningful.

Confession requires faith; it is the condition of autobiography that it can be written only by the self, the *autos*, who alone has access to the interiority that it experiences. This “I” or self takes shape, for Augustine, only in the search for God: “What then am I, my God? What is my nature? It is characterized by diversity, by life of many forms, utterly immeasurable.”⁴⁹ When consciousness becomes the apprehension of self in an “I” rather than a “he,” that is, when the self is no longer discovered in the world of actions, in the *polis*, and comes to reside in the secrecy of the inner life, then the self, in distinction from the public person, is subject to contingency.⁵⁰ Augustine tells us as much, but as Brian Stock remarks, it is not “the doctrine that the inner self is veiled, mysterious, or inaccessible” that makes the *Confessions* unique; it is the intersubjectivity wherein the self, which depends on language for expression, “is definable through a community of speakers.”⁵¹ Consequently, the speechless infant is without memory and thus without “recollection of sinfulness.” With speech, the child enters into ethical bonds of communication and self-consciousness.⁵² But with the passage to self-consciousness that comes with speech, “a sense of dislocation occurs that is expressed inwardly and subjectively.”⁵³

This dislocation initiates in the *Confessions* the possibility of communication, interpretation, self-interpretation, and consciousness of sin, time, and eternity. Whereas Augustine, Stock argues, granted only a limited role to psychological intentions, the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, with the increased attention given to questions of reading and writing, “saw the emergence of the modern view that human thinking is chiefly characterized by intentionality.”⁵⁴ Stock traces a transformation from literary representations of the self that serve as spiritual exercises for the reader as much as for the writer, if not more so, to “the first-person meditation by the self-conscious reader or writer.”⁵⁵ He implies that with the rise of independent literary techniques and the demise of the “charismatic” authority of the biographical subject, the capacity to portray inwardness is lost. This would mean, I take it, that inwardness is no longer rendered, as in Augustine, by the placing of the understanding of self in God and

thereby limiting the representational capacity of words. The paradox is that once inwardness is characterized by “forces within the individual alone,”⁵⁶ writing gains independence from oral and devotional traditions at the expense of the authority of the self. Stock concludes, “The historical move from charismatic non-writing into routinely understood literary genres has the long-term effect of depriving the autobiographical mode of its ability to characterize this inwardness without play, irony, theatrics, or philosophical ambiguity. As the ancient theory of *imitatio* deteriorates, writing turns out to be a mirror image of nothing more substantial than itself.” With the greater sophistication of literary techniques comes a destabilizing of the self; which, Stock suggests, is a by-product of nominalism and the “detaching of linguistic intentions from their realist underpinnings.”⁵⁷

The decline of realism coincides with the nominalists’ rejection of the doctrine of extramental universals. Once the ontological underpinnings of *imitatio* are lost, then the self is no longer an individual by virtue of a God who guarantees his reality, but, if I can be allowed this leap of centuries to Fichte, the self is the self-positing I who, we can now say, *is* as he *writes*. (This leap is not so great if we acknowledge that the nominalist God has His being in the omnipotence of pure will; then we can see Fichte’s self-positing ego as a repetition in the finite mind of God’s infinite “I am.”⁵⁸) The emergence of autobiography from the tradition of *imitatio* is reinforced by philosophy’s self-reflexive turn when it parts ways with theology.

Whereas Augustine’s inner self is given him by God, we find in later writers that “[t]he self no longer resonates with its own inwardness but with the inner meaning of the texts read, written, and mentally recreated.”⁵⁹ The inner self is no longer conceived, after the manner of Augustine, as a reflection of God’s image, but now emerges in the dialogue with other texts to be represented through literary tropes and schemes. For Augustine’s audience, reading the *Confessions* required that they reflect on their own lives with the view of the creation of the self, but the decline of *imitatio* leaves the self with nothing more to reflect on than its insubstantial image in writing and reading.⁶⁰ Derrida’s autobiographical desire to gather up the memories and to keep a trace of the voices traversing him reflects the dependence of selfhood on writing. Yet we cannot limit his notion of writing to graphic notation of speech, nor can we leave in place the scheme that makes imitation dependent upon the priority of the imitated. Writing is “older” than speech, which is to say, it speaks to the conditions of possibility for the transcendental and ontological, as

well as the conditions of their impossibility. Derrida's writing derives self-presence from repetition, which means that there is no ideality that is not already breached by death or the structural possibility of absence:

To think of presence as the ultimate form of transcendental life is to open myself to the knowledge that in my absence, beyond my empirical existence, before my birth and after my death, *the present is*. . . . The relationship with *my death* (my disappearance in general) thus lurks in this determination of being as presence, ideality, the absolute possibility of repetition. The possibility of the sign [whose identity must be ideal for it to be reproducible and recognizable] is this relationship with death. . . . If the possibility of my disappearance in general must somehow be experienced in order for a relationship with presence in general to be instituted, we can no longer say that the experience of the possibility of my absolute disappearance (my death) affects me, occurs to an I am, and modifies a subject.⁶¹

The determination of Being as presence means that I can "imagine an absolute overthrow of the *content* of every possible experience" without it affecting ideality or the universal form of presence. If the *I am* can be "experienced only as the *I am present*," which presupposes a relationship with presence in general, then we can only say that the experience of my possible death does not affect me insofar as I am a *res cogitans*, but that insofar as I constitute myself as a thinking subject, an *I am*, I affect myself with death. Repeatability, the reproduction of the self-same identity, the truth of the *eidos*, would not be possible if self-sameness were not already breached by death. "The appearing of the *I* to itself in the *I am* is thus originally a relation with its own disappearance. Therefore, *I am* originally means *I am mortal*."⁶² Derrida is not referring to my empirical death but to the structural possibility of my absence as the condition for auto-affection, self-presence as "hearing oneself speak."

This affirms "a hetero-affection in the system of auto-affection and of the living present of consciousness."⁶³ As the gathering or unifying of oneself in consciousness, autobiography, contrary to Smith's conception of it, seeks to exclude the aleatory: chance events are subsumed in the totalizing perspective of self-present consciousness. James Olney's analysis of memory and narrative in the *Confessions* is a subtle exploration of the paradoxical attempt to say in narrative that which is beyond time and language. The living-presence of consciousness is achieved through memory, but in Book X of the *Confessions*, Augustine attempts to confess not what he has been, which is

properly the task of narrative and the product of memory, but what he *is*: “I confess to you who I now am, not what I once was[.]”⁶⁴ To make the mind present to itself, “Augustine simultaneously seeks to know the God who is the embracement of his inner self.” His attempt to confess what he is requires that the narrative fold “back upon itself and inside out to encompass memory, its very begetter, within the narrative frame. This, as Augustine comes to realize, is like the mind trying to know itself, which, in turn, may be, although Augustine certainly does not say this, rather like the eye trying to see itself.”⁶⁵ The narrative, if it is to succeed, must ultimately be that of its failure to know what is beyond the powers of narrative and mind. Olney’s analysis of the successful failure of Augustine’s narrative suggests that the *Confessions* avoids enfolding God within the self by its recognition of the alterity of God, which is why it succeeds.

Jill Robbins, on the other hand, says that it appears that Augustine’s concept of God “is not sufficiently other [because] God gets folded into the specular self-understanding of the subject.”⁶⁶ She goes on to point out that the elements of negative theology and neoplatonism allow for a degree of otherness, yet alterity may be found, as Derrida’s reading of Augustine implies, in the performative dimension of confession, which, besides the act of confessing itself, includes prayers, lamentations, and tears (Augustine, like Rousseau, Nietzsche, and Derrida, is forever breaking into tears).⁶⁷ It is not knowledge that self-portrait and confession produce; rather, they *make* truth. Augustine opens himself to God’s love only to the extent he is blinded by his tears. Augustine must not only fail to *say* the ineffable if he is to succeed in confessing to God, but he must also be somewhat blind if he is to draw his self-portrait.

In *Memoirs of the Blind*, Derrida suggests that the self-portrait is linked to auto-affection. Anything can be a self-portrait as long as it is called such, even if what is depicted is not a portrait but “anything that happens to me, anything by which I can be affected or let myself be affected.”⁶⁸ Auto-portraiture involves a “reflection of the fold. A silent auto-affection, a return to oneself, a sort of soul-searching or self-relation without sight or contact.”⁶⁹ Blindness, tears, memory serve as figures for the fold or return in auto-affection. If the self-portrait were to be absolute, it would be a work without relation to anything but consciousness, a work free from representation, hence the need of the fold or re-mark. The Mallarméan figure of the fold is a “differential-supplementary structure” of repetition that accounts for reflexivity but “is not a form of reflexivity.”⁷⁰ The fold is already a

re-fold or re-mark; the possibility of reference depends upon this doubling and temporization, without which there could be no reference to an other, and all self-reference would be unnecessary because there would be no need for recourse to signification in absolute presence. The fold is the condition for self-reflexive totality and its impossibility. As an excess that belongs to any semic entity, the fold folds back, creasing the blank or virgin sheet, to use Mallarmé's metaphors for asemic presence. There will be no Blank, no "theology of the Text" or, I might add, no illusion of pure transcendental consciousness, without the fold, the structural supplement that makes such functions possible.⁷¹ In the case of self-portraiture, the fold signifies the differential trait that prevents finite consciousness from closing in upon itself. Therefore, one must say of any self-portrait, "if there were such a thing . . . , 'if there remained anything of it.' It is like a ruin that does not come *after* the work but remains produced, *already from the origin*, by the advent and structure of the work. In the beginning, at the origin, there was ruin."⁷² This is the ineluctable fate of the self-portrait: the ruin that awaits all self-portraiture, that befalls it, will have preceded its coming to be, its advent. The ruin is past; it is there ahead of the portrait. In other words, self-portraiture is possible because of resistance to what it would see. A self-portrait must always be a little blind or else there would be no possibility of the reference to the self.

VI. Autobiathanatography

Like self-portraiture, the writing of writing cannot be thematic, that is, made the object of judgment. Yet it can be repeated, if not to the letter, at least metonymically without its being reduced to the other. This would be what Derrida calls the sacrificial event, the representation of the impossibility of the transcendental condition, that is, of the impossibility of writing as such, the writing of writing.⁷³ This is the secret of autobiography: my death makes possible the writing of the life of the self without touching upon the self. The invisible or transcendental condition of the possibility of the writing of the self, the writing of writing, cannot be taken as a theme or made an object of writing. It could only become the theme in the sacrificial event, the death of the other, which can never be a substitute for my own death. Whenever the writer imagines or seeks to represent his posthumous existence or his death, he represents the figure of the autobiographer, who must assume his death as that which gives the life meaning.

This is to represent that which cannot be made the theme of autobiography, its transcendental condition of specular representation. Every time “I” begin to write (the life of) my self, death interposes. Every autobiography is an allegory of the writer’s death, an *autobiothanatography*.

Derrida’s “adolescent dream of keeping a trace of all the voices which were traversing [him]—or were *almost doing so*” is a desire to countersign, to say “yes” to the other, all the others, that have become sedimented in the name. Death always attaches itself to the signature; the singular affirmation of the self cannot be his if it does not “first” testify to the other, the memory of the other. It is this alliance made in memory of memory that promises a future: “Already installed in the narcissistic structure [of a subjectivity closed in upon itself], the other so marks the self of the relationship to self, so conditions it that the being ‘in us’ of bereaved memory becomes the *coming* of the other, a coming of the other. And even, however terrifying this thought may be, the first coming of the other. . . . Funerary speech and writing do not follow upon death; they work upon life in what we call autobiography.”⁷⁴ Autobiography is an alliance with the other. The unique event one would keep alive must already involve a relation to death, an other that is at work at the “origin.” This is its passion. For the *autos* to be itself, it cannot come back to itself but must come back to the other—ellipsis.⁷⁵ The dead, therefore, do not return to live in us, but “return to the name but not to the living, in the name of the living as a name of the dead.”⁷⁶ The signature is already an *autobiothanatological* narrative of the infinite return of an other already in advance of the one who signs.

Derrida’s “*autobiothanatography*” is not a work of anamnesis, of recalling the events of his life—he resists the lure of the return—but an attempt “to reactivate in a sort of memory without representation” the “real” event in such a way that it does not circumscribe him, produce self-identity, but remains open, a wound, a trace of the other.⁷⁷ To write—to leave a trace that is destined to divide itself, leave the present of its originary inscription, and produce unforeseen possibilities—this is Derrida’s “autobiographical passion,” a passion to leave behind the origin, what is passive and past, to inscribe what is lost at the limit of language, the foreign voices traversing him. Hence, the “mournful lyricism to reserve, perhaps encode, in short to render both *accessible and inaccessible*” the signature of “Jacques Derrida.”⁷⁸ The signature sacrifices itself: the “here, now” of the performative event must already be marked by an iterability without which it could

not come into its own, be the mark of a singularity, but which, at the same time, opens it to the impurity of circulation. This is not cause for regret. The signature, the singular event, if absolutely singular, could not belong to language; therefore, it must share itself and divide itself. As the sign of presence, the testimony to my existence, the signature is the mark of the infinity of my finitude. I sign myself *there*, but the there is not situated “here” or “there” but is a pledge to what is to come by coming back. The signature is an engagement with the other, which makes it a strange autobiography, one haunted by the spectral logic of a truth still to be made.

Louisiana State University

NOTES

- 1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 203.
- 2 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 30.
- 3 Jacques Derrida, “‘A Madness’ Must Watch Over Thinking,” in *Points . . . Interviews, 1974–1994*. Ed. Elisabeth Weber. Trans. Peggy Kamuf and others (New York: Routledge, 1995), 339–64; see pp. 352–53 for citation.
- 4 Derrida, “Madness,” 347. Philippe Lejeune has defined autobiography as a contract between reader and text in *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1975), but this is done in order to close off autobiography from genres that resemble it, such as the novel and biography, not to open up bodies of writing, as does Derrida’s promise or pledge.
- 5 James Olney, “Some Versions of Memory/Some Versions of Bios: The Ontology of Autobiography,” in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 239.
- 6 Olney, “Some Versions of Memory,” 252.
- 7 Olney, “Some Versions of Memory,” 240, 241.
- 8 James Olney, *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), see esp. 405–13.
- 9 Olney, “Some Versions of Memory,” 252, 254. Also see his discussion of Samuel Beckett’s *The Unnameable* in *Memory and Narrative*, 24.
- 10 Derrida, “Madness,” 347.
- 11 *Jacques Derrida*, by Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), includes a brief chronology listing important conferences where he has spoken (pp. 325–36). The tributes to friends and colleagues are too numerous to mention and so are the memorials to the dead, which include books on Emmanuel Levinas and Paul de Man, essays on Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Eugenio Donato, Joseph Riddel, and others. Then there are the papers on invited topics; of interest to autobiography are *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), a volume in the Parti-pris series from the Louvre, and *Monolinguisism of the*

- Other, or The Prosthesis of the Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), an oral version of which was given at a conference entitled "Echoes from Elsewhere"/"Renvois d'ailleurs," held at Louisiana State University. To do a full accounting of the occasions of all these publications would involve a complete bibliography.
- 12 Derrida, "Madness," 353.
 - 13 See Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), 12–13.
 - 14 Derrida, "Madness," 353.
 - 15 Samuel Weber, *Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan's Dislocation of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Michael Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 179.
 - 16 Derrida, "Madness," 352.
 - 17 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), section 341.
 - 18 Jacques Derrida, "History of the Lie: Prolegomena," trans. Peggy Kamuf, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, vol. 19, no. 2 / vol. 20, no. 1 (1997), 151.
 - 19 Derrida, "History of the Lie: Prolegomena," 143.
 - 20 See Jacques Derrida, *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*, published with Maurice Blanchot, *The Instant of My Death*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 75: "any testimony testifies in essence to the miraculous and the extraordinary from the moment it must, by definition, appeal to an act of faith beyond any proof."
 - 21 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (1968; rpr. New York: Penguin, 1990), 50. Derrida points out that the lie is traditionally distinguished from error, ignorance, and faulty reasoning because a lie involves deception of another but not of oneself. It is presumed the liar knows the truth. See "History of the Lie," 147.
 - 22 See Derrida, *Demeure*, 29–30, 42–43.
 - 23 Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 331, n. 18, 142–43.
 - 24 Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, 161–62.
 - 25 Derek Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature': An Interview with Jacques Derrida," in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), 33–75; see p. 34 for citation.
 - 26 Derrida, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature,'" 34.
 - 27 Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 295–96.
 - 28 Jean-Luc Nancy, "Elliptical Sense," trans. Peter Connor, *Research in Phenomenology*, 18 (1988): 177.
 - 29 Derrida, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature,'" 69.
 - 30 "+R (Into the Bargain)" is the title of Derrida's essay on Valerio Adami in *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 149–82. The essay deals with the themes of excess, representation, signatures, and drawing. The "+R" effect refers to Adami's use of elements, words and images, that appear to be mimetic and semantic but which exceed what they would represent or introduce something entirely new (see 173–75).
 - 31 Derrida, "Madness," 347.

- 32 Derrida, *Shibboleth for Paul Celan*, trans. Joshua Wilner, in *Readings of Paul Celan*, ed. Aris Fioretos (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 52.
- 33 Derrida, *Circumfession*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington, in Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 72.
- 34 Jill Robbins, "Circumcising Confession: Derrida, Autobiography, Judaism," *Diacritics* 25 (Winter 1995): 36.
- 35 Derrida, "Passages—From Traumatism to Promise," in *Points*, 372–95; see p. 381 for citation.
- 36 Derrida, *Shibboleth*, 59.
- 37 Derrida, "Madness," 341.
- 38 Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 165.
- 39 Derrida, "Istrice 2: Ick bünn all hier," in *Points*, 300–326; see pp. 304, 305 for citations..
- 40 Derrida, "Istrice 2," 305.
- 41 Cf. Nancy, "Elliptical Sense": "this would be his passion: to eclipse thinking in writing. To no longer think, to come and to let come" (184).
- 42 Robert Smith, *Derrida and Autobiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 191.
- 43 Smith, *Derrida and Autobiography*, 18.
- 44 Dieter Henrich, "Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht," in *Subjektivität und Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1966), 194. Cited in Michael Allen Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 79.
- 45 James Olney, *Memory and Narration*, 17.
- 46 Smith, *Derrida and Autobiography*, 41.
- 47 Derrida, *Demeure*, 29.
- 48 Derrida, *Demeure*, 30.
- 49 St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), Book 10, Chapter 16, 194. Hereafter cited by book and chapter with page number of this translation to follow. Jean-Pierre Vernant writes, "The search for God and the search for the self are two dimensions of the same solitary ordeal." See "The Individual within the City-State," trans. James Lawlor, in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 332.
- 50 See Vernant, "The Individual within the City-State," 329.
- 51 Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 16.
- 52 Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 24.
- 53 Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 304, n. 33.
- 54 Brian Stock, "The Self and Literary Experience in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages," *New Literary History* 25 (1994), 842.
- 55 Stock, "The Self and Literary Experience," 848.
- 56 Stock, "The Self and Literary Experience," 847.
- 57 Stock, "The Self and Literary Experience," 849.
- 58 See Gillespie, *Nihilism Before Nietzsche* for his genealogy of nihilism tracing it back to Abelard, Ockham, and medieval nominalism. See esp. pp. 14–25. The allusion to Coleridge's definition of the secondary imagination is my addition.

- 59 Brian Stock, "Reading, Writing, and the Self: Petrarch and His Forerunners," *New Literary History*, 26 (1995): 727.
- 60 Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 215; and "The Self and Literary Experience," 849.
- 61 Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 54.
- 62 Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 54.
- 63 Jacques Derrida, *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 28.
- 64 Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.3, 180.
- 65 Olney, *Memory and Narrative*, 17.
- 66 Robbins, "Circumcising Confession," 28.
- 67 Robbins cites *Memoirs of the Blind*, 117–29, where Derrida, writing of all those weepers mentioned above, explains that when tears well up in the eyes, they "veil sight" but at the same moment "unveil what is proper to the eye . . . the *truth* of the eyes, whose ultimate destination they would thereby reveal: to have imploration rather than vision in sight, to address prayer, love, joy, or sadness rather than a look or gaze. Even before it illuminates, revelation is the moment of the 'tears of joy'" (*Memoirs*, 126). The blindness induced by tears is necessary to confession and all self-portraiture.
- 68 Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, 65.
- 69 Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, 12.
- 70 Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 270.
- 71 Derrida, *Dissemination*, 258–59.
- 72 Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, 65.
- 73 Derrida introduces the transcendental and the sacrificial as two logics, two paradoxes, of the origin of drawing. "The first would be the invisible condition of the possibility of drawing, drawing itself, the drawing of drawing. It would never be thematic. It could not be posited or taken as the representable *object* of a drawing. The second, then, the sacrificial event, that which comes to or meets the eyes, the narrative, spectacle, or representation of the blind, would, in becoming the *theme* of the first, reflect, so to speak, this impossibility. It would represent this unrepresentable. Between the two, in their fold, the one repeating the other without being reduced to it, the *event* can give rise to the speech of narrative, to myth, prophecy, or messianism, to the family romance or to the scene of everyday life, thus providing drawing with its thematic objects or spectacles" (*Memoirs of the Blind*, 41).
- 74 Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man* (rev. ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 22.
- 75 See Nancy, "Elliptical Sense": "Meaning is elliptical when it does not come back to itself: meaning which as meaning, does not link up with its own meaning or rejoin it by repeating itself, appealing again and again to its limit as to its essence and its truth—then coming back to itself as to this passion" (179).
- 76 Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, English edition ed. Christie McDonald, trans. Peggy Kamuf (1985; rpr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 9.
- 77 Derrida, "Madness," 340–41.
- 78 Derrida, "This Strange Institution Called Literature," 35.