Epistolary Constructions of Identity in Derrida's "Envois" and Coetzee's *Age of Iron*

Claire Milne Hogarth
Department of English
McGill University, Montreal

August 2001

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Epistolary Constructions of Identity in Derrida's "Envois" and Coetzee's *Age of Iron*

In this thesis, I argue that identity construction is a postal effect: it results from a transmission of some sort, received or sent. I examine three instances of postal effect. In a chapter on Jacques Derrida's "Envois," a collection of fragments presented as if transcribed from a one-way love letter correspondence, I explore the performative force of relayed address. Working from Derrida's account of the literary performative, I point out that the "Envois" letters are addressed to "you" in the singular, which implies an address reserved for a particular subject, but that the postal relay of the collection enacts a repetition of their address. For the reader of the book, this repetition has evocative force which I compare with the force of transference in the context of the psychoanalytic situation. In a second chapter on the "Envois" letters, I examine their haunting effect. The "Envois" letters have an I/we signature that intimates pluralities in the writing subject. I argue that this signature is the effect of a postal relay of another order: a phantom, which Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok define as a gap in the psychic topography of the subject caused by a secret unwittingly received along with a legacy. To a certain extent, the "Envois" letters are written by Plato's "in-voices." In a chapter on J. M. Coetzee's epistolary novel *Age of Iron*, I explore the gift effects of a posthumous letter. *Age of Iron* is an epistolary novel consisting exclusively of a single letter written by a dying South African woman, Mrs. Curren, to her daughter, a political objector who has emigrated to the United States. Writing her letter in the knowledge that her death is imminent, Mrs. Curren anticipates her daughter's mourning. Working with J. L. Austin's doctrine of illocutionary forces and Derrida's analysis of the gift event, I postulate two effects of Mrs. Curren's letter, one that annuls the gift in a circular return and another that surpasses this circuit with textual dissemination, which is yet another kind of postal relay with performative effect. Throughout the thesis, I examine postal effects in terms of their ethical, social, and political implications.

Contents

Illustration

Acknowledgments

I thank my thesis supervisors David Hensley and Karin Cope, whose knowledgeable guidance, patience, and enthusiasm made writing this thesis possible. I also thank Catherine Sandbach Dalström, Diane Elam, Danuta Fjellestad, Sven-Johan Spånberg, Sarah Westphal, Gary Wihl, and Ebba Witt-Brattström for their valuable comments on various versions of parts of this thesis; Dee Drake, and Flora MacLeod, Eva Radakovits for their patient proofreading; and Tomas Renström for his assistance with manuscript presentation.

The writing of this thesis was supported by the Nobel Library of the Swedish Academy, which generously provided me with a desk in its research room, and consecutive doctoral fellowships from Fonds pour la Formation de Chercheurs et l'Aide à la Recherche and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Introduction

"I" Writes "You"

In *How to Do Things with Words*, J. L. Austin distinguishes between the meaning of an utterance and its force with the terms locution and illocution. A locutionary act is an utterance that is precise in its meaning: it has sense and reference. An illocutionary act is an utterance that explicitly indicates its force or how it is "to be taken" in the context in which it is issued (73). It can indicate, for example, whether the force of a given utterance is constative or performative: that is, it can indicate whether it should be taken as an utterance that describes some state of affairs or that states some fact, or as an utterance that performs some action. In a development of this argument, Austin argues that all utterances have a locutionary and an illocutionary aspect and that critical focus on one or the other aspect explains a reader's choice between designating a given utterance as either constative or performative. Any speech act can be read as either kind of utterance. When we read a given utterance as a constative, we focus on precision in meaning, so we abstract from the illocutionary aspects of the utterance in order to concentrate on the locutionary (Austin 146). When we read an utterance as performative, we focus on the way in which it brings about an effect in the context in which it is issued, so "we attend as much as possible to the illocutionary force of the utterance, and abstract from the dimension of correspondence with facts" (Austin 146). In *Limited Inc*, Jacques Derrida argues that Austin's conception of performative force brings into focus a meaning of the word *communication* which is normally subordinated to the notion of communication as a transport of meaning: "that one can, for instance, *communicate a movement* or that a tremor [*ébranlement*], a shock, a displacement of force can be communicated—that is, propagated, transmitted" (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 1). Austin's theory of the performative designates, not "the transference or passage of a thought-content,"

> but, in some way, the communication of an original movement (to be defined within a *general theory of action*), an operation and the production of an effect. Communicating, in the case of the performative, if such a thing, in all rigor and in all purity, should exist [. . .] would be tantamount to communicating a force through the impetus [*impulsion*] of a mark. (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 13)

This thesis is a study of illocutionary force in epistolary writing. The interest of

applying this concept to epistolary writing is that a letter can be relayed from one context to another. The published correspondence is a collection of private letters that have been sent on to a reading public, and the epistolary novel is a collection of private letters that are presented as if they have undergone such postal relay. When we read the letters of either genre, we read writing that has been reserved for another. Working with Derrida's reading of performative theory in *Limited Inc*, I want to argue that the postal relay of letters reworks their locutionary aspect: their reference and sense. When letters are relayed from one context to another, they can signify and/or refer *otherwise*. The postal relay of letters in a published letter collection (fictional or actual) enacts a repetition of their address. This repetition is felt acutely when the force of the writing is performative, since performative force is registered in the context in which it is issued. I want to argue that when a performative is addressed to "you," it can effect or enact you—even in its relayed contexts. With its conspicuous repetition, the published letter collection (fictional or actual) demonstrates how literature not only affects its readers, but also effects and enacts their identity as reading subjects.

An analysis of the effects of postal relay can be applied to letters in the wide sense of the epistolary. A dream, for example, can be conceived of as a letter from the unconscious to the preconscious. The signatory of such a letter is not identical with its receiver (the unconscious is most near to us—it makes us most ourselves—but it is also most unknowable). Nor is the conscious subject who recalls the dream necessarily identical with its addressee. In a seminar on Sigmund Freud's "Papers on Technique," Jacques Lacan observes that an analysand's dream can address the analyst (240). The effect of such letters calls for a reexamination of a supposition that Maria Torok calls "the prejudice of the 'I,'" which "consists in hearing the first-person singular whenever somebody says 'I'" ("Story of Fear" 180). Together with Nicholas Abraham, Torok points out another possibility: "when people say 'I,' they might in fact be referring to something quite different from their own identity as recorded in their identification papers. Further, they might not even be referring to another person with whom they identify" (Torok, "Story of Fear" 179). In a series of essays published in a volume entitled *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis,* Abraham and Torok forward a theory of the transgenerational phantom, which they define as a gap in the

psychic topography of the subject caused by a secret unwittingly received along with a legacy. These psychoanalytic treatments of symbolic postal relay allow for an expansion of the thesis I forward above on the basis of the performative effect of relayed letters. Identity construction is a postal effect: it results from a transmission of some sort, received or sent.

This thesis offers readings of two epistolary works: Derrida's "Envois," a sequence of dated letter fragments that are presented as if they are transcriptions from a one-way love letter collection; and J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, an epistolary novel consisting exclusively of one long letter. I treat both these works as literary performatives, the category of utterance that Austin excludes from consideration in his theory of speech acts on the grounds that literary usage of the performative is "*parasitic* upon its normal use" (22). Working from Derrrida's reading of Austin's exclusion, I want to argue that, when applied to literature, Austin's theory of the performative offers an alternative to mimetic theories of literature that view language as a report or reflection of a reality conceived of as anterior. Performative analysis submits literature, not to an instance of truth, but to a consideration of effects.

I examine three instances of postal effect. My first chapter, entitled "The Force of a Summons: Postal Relay and Performativity in Derrida's 'Envois,'" treats the referential aberration of the repeated address. Working from Derrida's account of the literary performative, I argue that the "Envois" letters are addressed to "you" in the singular, which implies an address reserved for a particular subject, but that the postal relay of the collection enacts a repetition of their address. For the reader of the book, this repetition has evocative force. This chapter poses a specific question. What happens when a reader answers the summons of a relayed letter? An error? I compare this situation to the transference repetition as it occurs in the context of the psychoanalytic session. The address of the "Envois" letters is divided: it refers to "you" and you, the reader of the book. Drawing on Christopher Bollas's *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*, I argue that the reader who responds affirmatively to the divided address of the "Envois" letters responds with a reader's equivalent to countertransference, which can be described as a divided response. In a second chapter on the "Envois" letters, entitled "In-Voices in Derrida's'Envois':

Reading the Work of the Transgenerational Phantom," I examine the status of the "Envois" letters as transcriptions. This chapter can be described as a reading of the effect of postal repetition on meaning. In their transcribed context, the "Envois" letters signify otherwise. Their transcription from one context to another has revealed a haunting effect. The "Envois" letters have an I/we signature that intimates pluralities in the writing subject. Working from Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom, I argue that, to a certain extent, the "Envois" letters are written by their "in-voices." In my third chapter, entitled "Epistolary Gifts: The Love Letter in Coetzee's *Age of Iron,"* I explore the gift effects of a posthumous letter. *Age of Iron* is an epistolary novel consisting exclusively of a single letter written by an elderly South African woman, Mrs. Curren, to her daughter, a political objector who has emigrated to the United States. Writing her letter in the knowledge that her death is imminent, Mrs. Curren anticipates her daughter's mourning. Working with J. L. Austin's doctrine of illocutionary forces and Derrida's analysis of the gift event in *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, I postulate two effects of Mrs. Curren's letter, one that annuls the gift in a circular return and another that surpasses this circuit with textual dissemination, which is yet another kind of postal relay with performative effect. In a reading of Mrs. Curren's account of the rhythm of exchange afforded by the letter form, the telephone conversation, and the face-to-face dialogue, I argue that Mrs. Curren's long letter draws out the suspension of address inherent to epistolary writing.

These readings call for an epistolary adaptation of the topography metaphor by which Freud accounts for the existence of the unconscious. Freud conceived of the psyche as a topography of which only a part is available to the conscious subject, who is nevertheless affected by transactions conducted throughout.[1] He identifies two topographies: one that distinguishes between the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious; and another that distinguishes between the three agencies of the id, ego, and super-ego. Abraham and Torok use both metaphorical accounts of psychic functioning in their theories of the crypt and the transgenerational phantom, which they define as disruptions in the psychic topography of the subject. Thus, Abraham and Torok's theories develop Freud's account of internal dialogue as an effect of the social structuring of psyche. The topography metaphor can be applied to a reading of the literary performative, which is, on Austin's account, also a social space. I use this metaphor to

describe a work of literature as a conceptual space that one can enter into or view from a distance. This space is social even when it presents itself as private, in which case the social circle is simply tighter. It is marked by conventions that encourage or discourage negotiation by strangers. In my readings of the "Envois" letters and *Age of Iron*, I use this metaphor when referring to the generic features of the published correspondence and the epistolary novel, particularly those features that conventionally mark the borders of the work. In the "Envois" letters, the opening letter and the letter printed on the back-jacket cover of the book are situated on these borders. These letters are marked by dates, signatures and addresses, which I treat as topographical features that simplify and complicate cartography. In *Age of Iron*, the limits of the book very nearly match those of the single letter of which the novel consists: very nearly, but not perfectly. The novel concludes with a pair of dates that do not refer to the period of time during which the letter was written. I view this pair of dates as a topographical feature that indicates the link between the performative action of the letter to the performative action of the book.

Notes

1. See J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis's *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (449). See J. Hillis Miller's *Topographies* for a discussion of the significance of the term *topography* in Derrida's writing.

Chapter 1

The Force of a Summons: Postal Relay and Performativity in Derrida's "Envois"

Printed on the back-jacket cover of Jacques Derrida's *Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* is a letter addressed to the reader of the book. By its tone, this letter is recognizably a letter in the "Envois" collection, the one-way published correspondence that takes up the first half of *The Post Card.* Its signatory describes the front and back covers of the book as the *recto* and *verso* of the postcard reproduced as the book's cover illustration: a reproduction of a medieval frontispiece (see figure). The signatory of the letter printed on the back-jacket cover (J. D., initials that can stand for Jacques Derrida) draws our attention to the story this card seems to tell. The scene depicts two figures with the names "Socrates" and "plato" inscribed above their heads: "look, a proposition is made to you, S and p, Socrates and plato. For once the former seems to write, and with his other hand he is even scratching. But what is Plato doing with his outstretched finger in his back?" (Derrida, *Post Card* back-jacket cover). The signatory describes the contents of the book (and not just this letter printed on its back-jacket cover) as writing "on" this card: the "thick support of the card" is "a book light and heavy" (Derrida, *Post Card* back-jacket cover). What is more, this writing on the postcard presents the reader with another interpretative problem:

> What does a post card want to say to you [*toi*]? On what conditions is it possible? Its destination traverses you, you no longer know who you are. At the very instant when from its address it interpellates, you, uniquely you, instead of reaching you it divides you or sets you aside, occasionally overlooks you. And you love and you do not love, it makes of you what you wish, it takes you, it leaves you, it gives you. (Derrida, *Post Card* back-jacket cover)

I contend that the "Envois" letters can be read in two ways and that this is not a contradiction. On the one hand, *The Post Card* is, as its subtitle straightforwardly puts it, *"From Socrates to Freud and Beyond."* Following the psychoanalytic theories of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, I argue in the next chapter that these designations are the effect of a transgenerational phantom that Derrida has received along with an inheritance from Plato. To a certain extent, the "Envois" letters are written *by* their "in-voices." This is not quite the same thing as "writing in voices," a device of fiction,

authorized by poetic license. I maintain that in-voices are most intriguing when heard in autobiographic writing. On the other hand, the "Envois" letters are also an intimate address, delivered to the readers of the book. They are, in other words, an apostrophe: a rhetorical trope by which a speaker performs a digression from a discourse. The apostrophe especially designates the gesture of turning aside, as from an audience, to speak to an absent addressee. In this chapter, I explore the ethical implications of this apostrophe for the reader of the book, arguing that the postal relay of the collection enacts a repetition of their address. I argue that the relayed love address can have the force of a summons for its receiver. My interest is in discovering the circumstances in which a reader could say "yes" to this summons—despite the very apparent mistake.

Although I separate out the two aspects of the "Envois" letters by writing about them in two chapters, these readings are, in fact, not entirely separable. The one implies the other—just a response implies an address signed by another. These two chapters therefore can be read as the two sides of a single argument. Put together, they constitute the only attempt in "Envois" criticism to date to read both "sides" of the postcard that Derrida sends us with *The Post Card.* In them, I argue that identity, as regards both readers and writers, is an epistolary effect: it results from a transmission of some sort, received or sent.

A note about where I stand in each of these readings is appropriate at this juncture. The next chapter is an "interpretation" in the psychoanalytic sense. It can be taken as the critical equivalent to a case history in which I position Derrida as the analysand and myself as the analyst. However, the burden of interpretation in this case is not entirely on my side. Abraham and Torok specify that in the analysis of the transgenerational phantom, the analysand and the analyst work together in a kind of investigative partnership. The "Envois" letters can be read as a self-analysis and a detective story that requires only some investigative assistance from its reader. In this chapter, the subject "in analysis" is the reader of the book: myself in other words. This reading has to come first, for its objective is to explore the conditions for responsible reading, which I argue are comparable to what one might term the ethical premise of psychoanalysis, the ground rule from which its analytical method proceeds: that the analyst listens to the idiomatic singularity of the discourse of the other and respects its

difference.

1. The Topography of the Published Correspondence, Or Inside and Outside of the Literary Performative

In "'This Strange Institution Called Literature': An Interview With Jacques Derrida," Derek Attridge asks Derrida to elaborate on his expressed desire to write a book "even less categorizable by generic conventions than *Glas* and *The Post Card*" (73). "If you were to succeed in this aim," Attridge asks, "what would be the relation of the text you wrote to existing traditions and institutions? Would it not only be neither philosophy nor literature, but not even a mutual contamination of philosophy and literature? Who would be able to read it?" ("'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 73). My reading of the "Envois" letters takes its point of departure from the two negotiations identified by Attridge's question: the relations of the collection to epistolary tradition on the one hand and to their reading on the other.

Presented as the transcribed remainders of a one-way love letter collection and largely taken up with a reading of a postcard reproduction depicting Socrates and Plato, the "Envois" letters may be best described as autobiographical philosophy, an unusual genre, arguably even an unprecedented one.[1] In "'This Strange Institution Called Literature,'" Derrida's word for the unprecedented work is "inaugural." A work is inaugural when it is so singular that only *it* can teach its readers the conditions of its reading. Readers of the inaugural work have to be invented by the work. "Invented," Derrida explains, "which is to say both found by chance and produced by research" (qtd. in Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 74). The inaugural work "produces its reader, a reader who doesn't yet exist, whose competence cannot be identified, a reader who would be 'formed, ' 'trained, ' instructed, constructed, even engendered, let's say *invented* by the work": "It teaches him or her, *if s/he is willing*, to countersign" (Derrida, qtd. in Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 74). This, he says, is the space in which *The Post Card* is involved.[2] In this reading, I argue that the "Envois" letters invite their reader to countersign, if he or she is willing, by way of a performative signature that requires a certain commitment in order to be read.

The first part of Attridge's question refers to a discussion earlier on in the

interview about the relation of the inaugural work to its tradition. Attridge asks for Derrida's response to the traditional claims of literary criticism: that the business of literary criticism is to highlight the uniqueness of the text it comments on. Derrida's answer is that singularity and generality co-imply one another. On the one hand, a work "takes place just once," which is to say that it is always singular, always a unique "institution," and "Attention to history, context, and genre is necessitated, not contradicted by this singularity [. . .]" (Derrida, qtd. in Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 67). On the other hand,

> while there is always *singularization*, absolute singularity is never given as a fact [. . .]. An absolute, absolutely pure singularity, if there were one, would not even show up, or at least would not be available for reading. To become readable, it has to be *divided*, to *participate* and *belong*. Then it is divided and takes *its part* in the genre, the type, the context, meaning, the conceptual generality of meaning, etc. (Derrida, qtd. in Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 68)

In other words, the marks that make the work singular are themselves repetitions. They are therefore not only marks, but also "re-marks," cited marks, marks that indicate belonging. The uniqueness of the work "is this coming about of a singular relation between the unique and its repetition, its iterability" (Derrida, qtd. in Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 68). Derrida maintains that "There would be no reading of the work—nor any writing to start with—without this iterability" (qtd. in Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 68). I take this last statement as my point of departure for my reading of the "Envois" letters. Their generic re-marks from the epistolary tradition are one of the ways in which they teach us the conditions for their reading.

I want to begin with an examination of the re-marks of the letter that opens the collection, a letter that serves as a kind of preface for the rest of the collection. This letter's prefatory function is in itself a generic re-mark from and on the epistolary tradition, for the preface to a published correspondence or to an epistolary novel is the traditional site for announcing the postal relay of the collection. (The preface to the published correspondence informs us that we are about to read letters that have been

reserved for another and that these letters have been collected and sent on to the reading public. The fiction of the epistolary novel consists in the implication that the letter collection it sends has undergone postal relay.) This is not to say that the business of the "Envois" letters is to affirm the conventions they inherit from epistolary tradition. Quite to the contrary, the "Envois" letters refer to that tradition in a manner which requires that we reconsider its implicit contentions about the identities involved in the letter collection: sender, receiver, addressee, and signatory. The reader will have to put these received notions into question if he or she is to read beyond the first of the "Envois" letters. Nevertheless, the opening letter's generic re-marks provide a point of contact from which reading can begin.

What are the re-marks by which we recognize that the "Envois" letters could be the remainders of a private correspondence? The letters are dated and presented in a chronological or historical order. They make autobiographical references, in an erratic fashion, which occasionally allow us to identify Derrida as their signatory by situating the person who speaks in places and at times that were very likely his. I suspect (although I have not done this research) that one could match these references to public or somewhat less than public knowledge of the details of Derrida's life. I suspect it is true, for example, as the signatory writes in a letter dated 6 June 1977, that Cynthia (Chase)—who, the signatory observes, is working on eighteenth-century correspondence—and Jonathan (Culler) knew about the postcard depicting Socrates and Plato and let him discover it in the Bodleian gift shop while taking him on a tour of Oxford the previous day. This anecdote is presumably verifiable autobiography. What makes the "Envois" collection a *private* correspondence, however, is more than its autobiographical references or its historical presentation. The letters are addressed to a singular addressee, and singularity implies privacy, at least initially: that is, before the collection is forwarded to the public. Throughout the collection, the signatory claims that "you [*tu*] are my unique, my only destination." And also throughout the collection, but particularly when the signatory embarks on a protracted campaign to convince his addressee of the propriety of publishing his letters, he refers to the prospective readers of the book as "they," a pronoun that puts readers "in general" in the third party position.

The letter that opens the collection is particularly important to the status of the "Envois" letters as published yet private writing. This letter has a preface-like hindsight apropos of all the letters that follow it: it postdates the last letter in the collection by one week. In it, "Jacques Derrida" announces that he is publishing a collection of letters, and, at its conclusion, he signs that announcement. Moreover and perhaps most importantly, this letter begins with a discussion of the two ways in which "you" may read: "You [*vous*] might read these *envois* as the preface to a book that I have not written"; and "You might consider them, if you really wish to, as the remainders of a recently destroyed correspondence" (Derrida, *Post Card* 3). At present, my interest is not what these sentences say (or how they say it: their illocutionary force can be taken in two ways) but rather their presentation of the addressee. In contrast to all the letters that follow, this first one begins with an address (or a reference?) to the receivers of the collection, readers "in general" (*us* in other words). In the French edition, this difference is signalled by a number distinction in the personal pronouns: the first letter is addressed to *vous* as well as *tu* while all the other "Envois" letters are addressed almost exclusively to *tu*. *Tu* and *vous*—the singular and plural, or intimate and formal, second-person pronouns—signal the difference between private and public address.

Everything we think we know about the efficacy of letters in a published correspondence is put into operation and then put into question by the differences between this first "Envois" letter and all the others in the collection. These differences distinguish between a signatory, who writes letters addressed to a unique addressee, and a sender who, in an ancillary move, relays the collection to a public forum. This is a postal maneuver with which the student of literature is familiar and therefore comfortable—despite its complexity. It is, for example, the framing device of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa, Or the History of a Young Lady* (1747-48), an epistolary novel and one of the founding novels in the tradition of English realist fiction. The letters that constitute the story in *Clarissa* are signed by and addressed to characters, writers, and readers on the story's "inside." However, the novel's preface is written by an editor, a fictional character, but nevertheless one who presents himself as the sender of the collection. This editor positions himself outside the "history," as he calls the collected correspondence (Richardson 35). He addresses a public readership, readers who are also

"outside of" the history and for whom, he says, the collection serves as a warning. So the editor's announcement that he is relaying this collection of letters serves a pedagogical purpose: it shows the effects of persuasive writing. Lovelace's seduction of Clarissa in particular indicates the extent of its power. The editor's presentation of his reasons for relaying the collection implies that the persuasive power of the letter terminates with its arrival at an "inside" destination: the name indicated by the letter's inside address or, in the case of internally relayed letters, some other name indicated elsewhere inside the collection. When a letter travels beyond these singular ends, its power is only exemplary.

In "Envois," the preface-like hindsight of the opening letter suggests that it is written at a remove from the collection it introduces, and because its first sentences use *vous* while all the other letters use *tu* almost exclusively, the difference between the opening letter and all the other letters in the collection implies a topographical distinction between a public outside and a private inside. Toward the end of the opening letter, the signatory affirms that such distinctions are operative in the "Envois" letters when he says that the signers of the "Envois" letters are not to be confused with their senders, nor are their addressees to be confused with their receivers. However, in the same instructions, he also warns that "the signers and the addressees are not always visibly and necessarily identical from one *envoi* to the other [. . .]" (Derrida, *Post Card* 5). "This is a disagreeable feeling," the signatory concedes and asks that his readers forgive him: "To tell the truth, it is not only disagreeable, it places you [*vous*] in relation, without discretion, to tragedy. It forbids that you regulate distances, keeping them or losing them" (Derrida, *Post Card* 5).

Before the reader can understand how these shifting identities will keep us from regulating distances, he or she needs to know what work this regulation would have done had he or she been able to keep it. What does the efficacy of an act of speech have to do with the identity its receivers? I want to argue that this question has to do with the context of reference.

This is not to say that a letter is inefficacious when its receiver is other than its addressee. In *Clarissa*, much of the story's plot turns on the arrival of letters at unintended destinations. Letters are copied, quoted, shared, and stolen, and we can see that these instances of postal relay internal to the story have an effect by the other letters

that they generate. So a letter may address (affect, involve, concern nearly) an unintended reader if he or she figures in the context of the collection, even if only in a cameo appearance. I am arguing that the exemplarity of the letters of a published correspondence is established by a staging of a contextual limit: a published correspondence is a delimited space of representation for an audience. The purpose the editor's letter-like preface in *Clarissa* is to tell the readers of the book who they are (and who they are not) in terms of this frame: they are the audience to the story told by the collection (not its participants). The readers of the collection should therefore understand that they are to witness (and not to feel too nearly) the power of its letters from a third-party position.

So a letter is exemplary when its references are limited to a singular field of applicability. The question one needs to ask in order to read the "Envois" letters is how this singular field comes about. What gives it stability? Singularity of field (context, circumstances) is the condition by which Austin distinguishes between "normal" and "parasitic" uses of language in *How to Do Things with Words*, the published notes from a lecture series in which Austin presented his theory of speech acts to a North American audience. I want to compare the topography Austin sets up when he states his reasons for excluding the literary performative from consideration in his study to the topography set up by the published correspondence.

Austin opens *How to Do Things with Words* by distinguishing the performative utterance from the constative, which he defines as the utterance as it is traditionally conceived. A constative utterance is a true or false statement. It can, for example, describe some state of affairs or state of some fact. The issuing of a performance utterance, however, *is* the doing of an action. A performative can, for example, effect a transaction: the uttering of words can launch a ship or a marriage. Such utterances are neither true nor false. Austin maintains that a performative can only be evaluated in terms of its success or failure as an action. In a doctrine entitled "the doctrine of all *the things that can be and go wrong* on the occasion of such utterances, the doctrine of *Infelicities*," Austin details some of the conditions that are "necessary for the smooth or 'happy' functioning of the performative" (14). The first category of rules that Austin details in this doctrine concerns the speech act's invocation of a conventional procedure; the second concerns the

correct and complete execution of that procedure; and the third concerns the serious intention of the persons involved in it. Where a conventional procedure is "designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings," those persons must actually have those thoughts or feelings and must "intend so to conduct themselves" (Austin 15). In "ordinary" circumstances, a performative that fulfils these conditions will be felicitous. It will take effect. The problem with the literary performative is that it is issued in circumstances that are not ordinary:

> a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance—a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not seriously, but in many ways *parasitic* upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language. All of these we are *excluding* from consideration. Our performatives, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances. (Austin 22)

In this passage, Austin gives two reasons why the literary performative is parasitic on normal use. The literary performative is issued by speakers other than its author, and it is witnessed by an audience that does not participate in its procedure. Austin's examples of parasitic use—performatives uttered on stage, in a poem, or in soliloquy—indicate that his objection is to performatives which are viewed by an audience from a contextual outside. Such performatives have force. They are, as Austin puts it in the passage cited above, "intelligibly" performative. But they are used "not seriously" because their speakers do not seek to produce effects on its audience—the audience to literariness, that is, as opposed to the speech act's participants, who are inside the frame. As he puts it later on in the lecture series, the nonseriousness of the literary performative inhibits the speech act's progression from illocution to perlocution: the progression from the issuing of a speech act that indicates how it is to be taken—for example, as a performative or a constative—to a consequential utterance that follows upon the achievement of that act. With the literary performative, "The normal conditions of reference may be suspended, or no attempt made at a standard perlocutionary act, no

attempt to make you do anything, as when Walt Whitman does not seriously incite the eagle of liberty to soar" (Austin 104). In other words, the literary performative is not serious because it is viewed by an audience that witnesses rather than registers its effect, and it is produced by an author who is aware of this difference. This is a precise account of exemplarity writing. *Exemplary writing has force, but only in a limited context.* Austin implies that limited performative force is the definitive characteristic of all literary language.

Austin's configuration of the players inside and outside the performative field is comparable to the topographical arrangement of the writers and readers of the published correspondence and the epistolary novel, where signatories and addressees are located on the inside, and senders and receivers are located on the outside. Since the published correspondence and epistolary novel stage their own frame, these genres are overt literary performatives. One could even say that the published correspondence and epistolary novel are exemplary genres of exemplarity.

Later on in his lecture series, Austin develops his argument about the importance of the relation of the performative utterance to its originator in epistolary terms. He maintains that the performative speech act must refer to its origin in order to be felicitous. This can be done by the pronoun *I* or the performer's proper name in the explicit performative or by some contextual equivalent in the implicit performative. In verbal utterances, the reference to an origin is established by the performer being the person who is doing the uttering; in written utterances, it can be achieved by the performer appending his signature. This "has to be done," says Austin in a parenthetical aside, "because, of course, written utterances are not tethered to their origin in the way spoken ones are" (60-61). In other words, the written performative travels away from its point of origin. If the originator's signature is not appended, this travel detracts from the efficacy of the speech act. Austin's list of the markers that identify the originator of a performative utterance—the first-person personal pronoun, the presence of the speaker, or an appended signature—indicates a concern with accountability in performative action. For Austin, discourse that travels without a determinable signature is incompatible with the possibility of doing things responsibly with words.

In *Limited Inc*, Derrida argues that intention, for Austin, functions as the

organizing center of the performative. It anchors the performative to an "exhaustively determined context, of a free consciousness present to the totality of the operation, and of absolutely meaningful speech [*vouloir-dire*] master of itself [. . .]" (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 15). On the basis of the necessity of this anchor, Austin deems the literary performative infelicitous and excludes it from consideration:

> Austin's procedure is rather remarkable and typical of that philosophical tradition with which he would like to have so few ties. It consists in recognizing that the possibility of the negative (in this case, the infelicities) is in fact a structural possibility, that failure is an essential risk of the operations under consideration; then, in a move which is almost *immediately simultaneous*, in the name of a kind of ideal regulation, it excludes that risk as accidental, exterior, one which teaches us nothing about the linguistic phenomenon being considered. (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 15)

With the allusion to the distance that Austin wants to take from a certain philosophical tradition, Derrida refers to Austin's charge that "philosophers" (by whom Austin means logical positivists) have for too long neglected the study of illocutionary forces by treating all linguistic problems as problems of locutionary—that is, semantic or referential—usage. Because these philosophers focus on precision in language, they read all utterances as constatives: that is, they assume that "the business of a 'statement' is to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact,' which it must do either truly or falsely" (Austin 1). Because philosophers overlook the illocutionary force of such utterances (which may be performative instead of constative, or performative as well as constative), their account of the operation of utterances amounts to the "descriptive fallacy" (Austin 3). Speech act theory, however, considers not only "the proposition involved (whatever that is) as has been done traditionally," but also "the total situation in which the utterance is issued—the total speech act [. . .]" (Austin 52). Because speech act theory considers the total speech act, it can attend to its illocutionary force, whatever that may be. Specifically, speech act theory can attend to illocutionary force of a performative utterance, since that force of a performative is registered in its context.

Derrida maintains that Austin's conception of performative force brings into

focus a meaning of the word *communication* which is normally subordinated to the notion of communication as a transport of meaning. However, "even a provisional recourse to ordinary language and to the equivocations of natural language instructs us that one can, for instance, *communicate a movement* or that a tremor [*ébranlement*], a shock, a displacement of force can be communicated—that is, propagated, transmitted" (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 1). This sense of *communication* is what Austin's theory of the performative designates: not "the transference or passage of a thought-content,"

> but, in some way, the communication of an original movement (to be defined within a *general theory of action*), an operation and the production of an effect. Communicating, in the case of the performative, if such a thing, in all rigor and in all purity, should exist (for the moment, I am working within that hypothesis and at that stage of the analysis) would be tantamount to communicating a force through the impetus [*impulsion*] of a mark. (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 13)

The problem with Austin's requirement that intention function as the organizing center of the context of speech is that it transmutes the communication of force enacted by the performative into that of the communication of a thought-content.

Derrida begins his defense of the literary performative by identifying Austin's definition of the conventional. Austin considers "the conventionality constituting the *circumstance* of the utterance [*énoncé*], its contextual surroundings" (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 15). That is to say, a conventional procedure is established by practice, which is why the incorrect practice of a convention renders a speech act infelicitous. In other words, *convention,* in Austin's study, can be read as a synonym of *custom.* Austin states that "infelicity is an ill to which *all* acts are heir which have the general character of ritual or ceremonial, all *conventional* acts [. . .]" (18-19). In his comment on this definition, Derrida observes that while Austin acknowledges that *all* conventional acts are exposed to failure, he appears to consider only one kind of conventionality among others. Austin does not consider

> a certain conventionality intrinsic to what constitutes the speech act [*locution*] itself, all that might be summarized rapidly under the problematical rubric of "the arbitrary nature of the sign," which extends,

> aggravates, and radicalizes the difficulty. "Ritual" is not a possible occurrence [*éventualité*], but rather, *as* iterability, a structural characteristic of every mark. (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 15)

Derrida is referring to the conventional relation of signifier and signified in Ferdinand de Saussure's account of the linguistic sign. His point is that iterability can revise this relation. When repeated in other contexts, a signifier can refer conventionally or *un*conventionally to *other* signifieds. (In a development of this argument, which I will examine shortly, Derrida points out that the relation of a sign or a mark to a referent is also conventional. When a sign or a mark is repeated in other contexts, it can refer to other referents.) So Austin's study includes of one kind iterability, the speech act's invocation of a conventional procedure; and it excludes another, the structural iterability that constitutes the structure of every sign or "mark." What is more, argues Derrida in a continuation of the passage cited above, even though Austin recognizes that "the value or risk of exposure to infelicity" can affect all conventional acts, Austin does not examine what it means to posit infelicity as the essential predicate of performative action (*Limited Inc* 15):

> Austin does not ponder the consequences issuing from the fact that a possibility—a possible risk—is *always* possible, and it is in some sense a necessary possibility. Nor whether—once such a necessary possibility of infelicity is recognized—infelicity still constitutes an accident. What is a success when the possibility of infelicity [*échec*] continues to constitute its structure? (*Limited Inc* 15)

Without the value or the risk of infelicity, there would be no successful performative. Infelicity is therefore not merely a *possible* risk: it is a *necessary* risk. On what grounds, then, can infelicity be termed a failure? Is not infelicity, rather, an alternative success? For example, a mistake can speak of—not the intention of the speaker—but an effect of the unconscious. Psychoanalysis terms the slip a success: in its drive to achieve recognition, an unconscious desire circumnavigates censorship. As Jacques Lacan puts it, "Our abortive actions are actions which succeed, those of our words which come to grief are words which own up" (265).

Derrida maintains that Austin imposes the same limits on his theory when he

excludes the literary performative from consideration: "what Austin excludes as anomaly, exception, 'non-serious,' *citation* (on stage, in a poem, or a soliloquy) is the determined modification of a general citationality—or rather, general iterability—without which there would not even be a 'successful' performative" (*Limited Inc* 17). Derrida's point is that to invoke a conventional procedure is to repeat or to cite it. So while Austin excludes the literary performative on the grounds that it cites "ordinary" circumstances, his theory of performativity proceeds from the premise that the procedure invoked by a speech act (in ordinary circumstances) is an iterable model. A little further, Derrida asks, "Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a 'coded' or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce [. . .] were not identifiable as *conforming* with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a 'citation'?" (*Limited Inc* 18). The performative, like any other mark, can be cited, and "in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. This does not imply that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchoring" (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 12).

In Austin's terminological scheme, the conventional relations of signifier to signified and of the sign to referent are accommodated in the category of locution (although not *as* conventions): those utterances that qualify as "full units of speech" (94). The locutionary act has sense and reference: its definitive characteristic is therefore precision in meaning. The locutionary act has force, but it does not state its force explicitly. Explicitness, in Austin's scheme, is the definitive quality of the illocutionary act, a development of the locutionary. Besides being precise in its meaning, an illocutionary act furthermore states its force explicitly by referring in some manner to the circumstances of the occasion on which it is issued.[3] The quality that distinguishes a performative act from a constative is that a performative act not only refers to its context (if it is explicit), but also transforms it. This, says Derrida, is the interest of Austin's discovery:

> As opposed to the classical assertion, to the constative utterance, the performative does not have its referent (but here that word is certainly no longer appropriate, and this precisely is the interest of the discovery)

> outside of itself or, in any event, before and in front of itself. It does not describe something that exists outside of language and prior to it. It produces or transforms a situation, it effects [. . .]. (*Limited Inc* 13)

When Derrida points out that a performative, like any other mark, can be cited, he makes the point that repetition reworks the performative on the register of locution: its sense and its reference. When a performative is cited, it can signify or refer otherwise.

In my reading of the performative force of the "Envois" letters, my interest is in their referential iterability, specifically the referential iterability of their address to "you." In the opening letter, the signatory warns that the identity of the addressee (and of the signatory) shifts in the "Envois" letters and that this shift alters your topographical relation to the work. You, the reader of the book, are not able to maintain a critical distance from these letters. I understand this shift as an effect of the repetition enacted by postal relay. The published correspondence relays letters from a private to a public context, and this relaying action enacts a repetition of their address. Thus, if the address of its letters has the status of a citation—if it refers to "you"—this citation still has efficacious force. In effect, the address of relayed letters refers to "you" and you. In *Limited Inc*, Derrida argues that "Iteration alters, something new takes place" (40). In "Envois," this new event includes the creation of the reader as their addressee.

Another way of putting this argument is as follows. Following Emile Benveniste, Derrida presents the personal pronouns as temporary place-markers of identity—not as permanent anchors as Austin would like to have them.[4] Even if the personal pronoun *tu* refers to a determinable woman in a prior context (in *La Carte Postale*, the French declensions indicate a woman[5]), that sign was cut loose from its referent when the letters were forwarded to a public context. The postal relay of the "Envois" letters renders the entire collection an open letter in which the personal pronoun *you* can refer to you, the reader of the book.[6] In the several pieces published in *The Post Card*, Derrida calls this citational effect the "divisibility" of the letter. The following formulation is from "Le facteur de la vérité," the book's second long essay:

> The divisibility of the letter [. . .] is what chances and sets off course, without guarantee of return, the remaining [*restance*] of anything whatsoever: a letter does *not always* arrive at its destination, and from the

> moment that this possibility belongs to its structure one can say that it never truly arrives, that when it does arrive its capacity not to arrive torments it with an internal drifting. (489)[7]

A letter "does *not always* arrive at its destination": that is to say, it may arrive *elsewhere* or not arrive at all (as when an undelivered letter remains at "the dead letter office"). Even when a letter does arrive at a designated destination, it can arrive as less or—as psychoanalytic attention to the slip, the joke, and the negative indicates—as *more* than its writer intends. I develop this point in my next chapter, in which I discuss the reinscription of meaning that transcribed writing makes available to the unconscious. This reading of the "Envois" letters can be described as a discussion of the effects of their semantic iterability. Thus, the repetition alters the conventional designations of both components of the locutionary aspect of the "Envois" letters: their reference *and* their sense.

In insisting that a letter does *not always* arrive at its destination, Derrida's point is twofold. On the one hand, without the possibility of deviation and remaining, there would be no delivery of letters: the arrival of the letter is predicated on the risk of nonarrival. On the other hand, the divisibility of the letter is what allows it to be read—by *anyone* who receives it: the addressee to whom the letter is dedicated or anyone else who intercepts its trajectory.[8]

Since the exemplarity of the published correspondence depends upon the representation of a frame, I propose to look for such a device at the conclusion of the letter that opens the "Envois" collection, a place where one would normally expect to find a distinction between the collection's outside and inside. The last line of the opening letter reads as follows:

> Accustomed as you [*vous*] are to the movement of the posts and to the psychoanalytic movement, to everything that they authorize as concerns falsehoods, fictions, pseudonyms, homonyms, or anonyms, you will not be reassured, nor will anything be the least bit attenuated, softened, familiarized, by the fact that I assume without detour the responsibility for these *envois*, for what remains, or no longer remains, of them, and that in

> order to make peace within you I am signing them here in my proper name, Jacques Derrida.[I]
>
> 7 September 1979
>
> (Derrida, *Post Card* 5-6; Derrida's footnote)

And the footnote reads as follows:

> I. I regret that you [*tu*] do not very much trust my signature, on the pretext that we might be several. This is true, but I am not saying so in order to make myself more important by means of some supplementary authority. And even less in order to disquiet, I know what this costs. You are right, doubtless we are several, and I am not as alone as I sometimes say I am when the complaint escapes from me, or when I still put everything into seducing you. (Derrida, *Post Card* 6)

The final sentence reads like an acknowledgment. It describes one of the actions that a signature conventionally performs: to take responsibility for something. But does it accomplish the act of signing? The name "Jacques Derrida" is typewritten rather than handwritten, and it figures in a sentence that is part of the text it would sign. These unconventionalities immediately raise the question of whether "Jacques Derrida" really is a signature or whether it is just a description of a signature—in other words, a constative—a possibility which contradicts the performative character of the sentence in which it appears: "I am signing [. . .] in my proper name, Jacques Derrida." In the place where one would normally expect to find a signature, two lines down and flush against the right-hand margin, there is a date: "7 September 1979." Is this date just the name of the day which happened to be significant only for this particular epistolary history and therefore, for its readers, insignificant? Or is it, as its placement suggests, a signature of sorts, one of the moves that psychoanalysis "authorizes": a falsehood, a fiction, a pseudonym, a homonym, or an anonym? Sigmund Freud's account of the function of day residues as transcribed material in dream scripts prepares us to look for idiomatic messages—signatures of a kind—in precisely such insignificant marks.[9] As transcribed remainders from a private correspondence, the "Envois" letters may be open to this kind of reinvestment of meaning. I return to the effect of the signatory's transcription of his own writing in my second chapter on the "Envois" letters. For now I just want to

observe that the date of a letter could be termed an archetypical day residue. Moreover, this particular day residue may be invested with a signature function.

As to the framing device of the published correspondence, the shift from public to private address in the "Envois" letters could be said to occur at this date. These letters have been sent and resent; the opening letter of the "Envois" collection puts a date on the "re." Hence its preface-like hindsight: the opening letter may be presented first, but it comes after. However, what about the footnote that appears at the bottom of the page? A footnote is a digression from, but still a part of the text that it supplements. In the footnote to the concluding sentence of the opening letter, the signatory turns away from the readers of the book in order to address you (*tu*) in the singular. In other words, he apostrophizes—as he does in all the other "Envois" letters. Earlier in the opening letter, the signatory describes his tone of familiarity in the letters by demonstrating this trope. He challenges the reader to account for his allegiance to his principle for selecting passages to transcribe to the manuscript he is preparing for publication:

> it is up to all of you to tell me why.
>
> Up to you [*toi*] first: I await only one response and it falls to you.
>
> Thus I apostrophize. This too is a genre one can afford oneself, the apostrophe. A genre and a tone. The word—apostrophizes—speaks of the words addressed to the singular one, a live interpellation (the man of discourse or writing interrupts the continuous development of the sequence, abruptly turns toward someone, that is, something, addresses himself to you), but the word also speaks of the address to be detoured. (Derrida, *Post Card* 4)

The footnote to the concluding sentence of the opening letter marks the beginning of the apostrophe that the signatory maintains throughout the collection. So is the footnote inside the opening letter or, as its shift to singular address indicates, is it inside the private correspondence? In the footnote, the signatory begins an apostrophe that extends into the collection and thus across the dividing line between the public opening letter and the private correspondence it introduces. If the date of the opening letter marks the time of the collection's postal relay, the apostrophe in the footnote forms an internal pocket that is larger than the whole that would contain it, an effect which Derrida

elsewhere calls an "invagination of borders."[10] While this complication makes it impossible to locate a simple border between the private and the public, it does not distract from the importance of the differences between the opening letter and all the others in the collection. For there are two number shifts complicating this border. In the concluding sentence of the opening letter, the addressee is plural and the signatory is singular. I select from the opening letter's concluding sentence, cited above: "you [*vous*] will be not be [. . .] familiarized [in other words, *vous* will not become *tu*] [. . .] by the fact that [. . .] I am signing [. . .]." This number arrangement is reversed in the footnote: "you [*tu*] do not very much trust my signature, on the pretext that we might be several. This is true [. . .]." Taken together, the last sentence of the opening letter and its footnote indicate that the singular and plural pronoun positions, in regard to both writers and readers, co-imply one another in "Envois." *Nous* emerges out of *je,* and *tu* emerges out of *vous*. My thesis in both my chapters on the "Envois" letters is that we are so familiar with such co-implications that we hardly see them. Both entail the singularity "shared" that Derrida describes in "'This Strange Institution Called Literature,'" the paradox of iterability without which there would be neither writing nor reading. In "Envois," both co-implications extend over the frame of the collection: the inside-outside distinction on which the exemplarity of the published correspondence is predicated.

First, the emergence of *nous* out of *je*. In the footnote to the opening letter, the signatory claims that he is not pointing out the pluralities in his signature "in order to make myself more important by means of some supplementary authority" (Derrida, *Post Card* 6). The letter printed on the back-jacket cover of *The Post Card* supports this claim, for it is remarkable for what it replaces. The back-jacket cover is normally a promotional space reserved for writing about (not by) the author and presented as if it were written by other readers: the writers of jacket-cover synopses, who do not generally give their names or affiliations; and/or reviewers, who generally do. In either case, the location of this writing on the back-jacket cover lends authority to the voices that speak there, if only the authority of those-who-have-gone-before. In the case of lines cited from a review, the authority of the praise is supplemented by the appended name of the reviewer and/or the name of his or her institutional affiliation. The letter printed on the

back-jacket cover of *The Post Card* is signed by "J.D.," initials which may refer to the "Jacques Derrida" signature of the opening letter. By replacing conventional back-jacket cover writing with his own, "J.D." foregoes such supplemental authority. I/we letters of the usual jacket-cover kind are not what he sends us in *The Post Card.* His break from jacket-cover conventions points out to the readers that we are not so unfamiliar as we might think we are with writing presented by I/we.

In regard to the topography of published correspondence, I might add that the letter printed on the back-jacket cover is not a reproduction from the collection: its date indicates that it is the last letter in the "Envois" sequence: "the last in [the] history," as its signatory puts it (Derrida, *Post Card* back-jacket cover). This letter is addressed to a singular addressee even though it is clearly directed to the reader of the book. Again, this address shows up better in French: the English reader needs to check the back-jacket cover of the French original in order to confirm the address to *tu*. Nevertheless, the tone of familiar address is discernible in the English translation. In fact, this tone is what makes the back-jacket cover letter recognizable as jacket-cover material. As would a jacket-cover synopsis, this letter introduces the reader to the terrain of the writing inside the book. The back-jacket cover is generally one of the first places the reader looks when deciding whether or not to read a book: it is a kind of informal preface. As is appropriate for a preface, the letter printed on the back-jacket cover of *The Post Card* postdates the opening letter by some forty days. This means that the date and the position of this letter displace the opening letter's function as the outer edge of the collection, and its address to *tu* displaces the delineating priority of the opening letter's address to *vous.*

The conclusion of the opening letter stages another kind I/we signature. The signatory admits that "we are several, and I am not as alone as I sometimes say I am when the complaint escapes from me, or when I still put everything into seducing you" (Derrida, *Post Card* 6). How are we to understand the implications of this claim? The I/we signature of the opening letter poses the possibility of pluralities in the writing subject.[11] I take my cue from the signatory's explanation of his choice of title for the publication. "I would entitle the preface *envois*, in the plural," he writes in a later letter, "but I will regret *invoice*, because of the voice that can be heard in it, if one wishes, and that can be transcribed *en-voie* ["in progress" or "in transit"]. And especially, of course,

because in English the *envoi* named *invoice* is reserved for bills, *factures*" (Derrida, *Post Card* 235). All of these homonyms—including the regretted one, "invoice"—can also be heard in the word *envois*. So the title "Envois" can be heard to speak about transmission and debt and, perhaps, the transmission of a debt, and the English reader still hears a "voice" in the invoice named *envoi*. But what does one do with the signatory's final choice: the plural word, *envois*? Are the letters written "in voices"? The problem posed by the implication that there are pluralities in the writing subject could be rephrased as follows: are there many signatories in the "Envois" letters or one signatory in whose writing voices can be heard? The distinction is a fine one and, perhaps, not very important. The choice between these interpretative options depends on how one defines a citation. Either the "Envois" letters are a work of fiction written "in voices," or they are (possibly) autobiographical writing composed of masqueraded or unconscious citations. In my next chapter, I will explore the second interpretative option. What writing does *not* carry intimations of inherited voices?

Second, the emergence of *tu* out of *vous*. The difficulty posed by this co-implication is that it can be recognized only once one realizes that one is listening to an apostrophe. Despite the signatory's demonstrations in the opening letter, the reader of the English translation may have difficulties in recognizing this trope as he or she reads through the collection. For, in English, the word *you* is ambiguous when it comes to number. In order to hear the tone of familiar address (and therein the co-implication of the singular and the general in the second-person pronoun) one first has to have seen the difference between the signatory's address to *tu* as opposed to *vous*, a difference that shows up clearly in French. Later on in the collection, the signatory comments on this ambiguity in an aside calculated for English readers: "before all else I am seeking to produce effects (*sur toi, on you*. What do they do here in order to avoid the plural? Their grammar is very bizarre. I would not have been able to love you in English, you are untranslatable. [. . .])" (Derrida, *Post Card* 113). Indeed, as my citation from the English translation demonstrates, there *is* no way to avoid the plural possibilities of the pronoun *you*. Alan Bass, the English translator of *The Post Card*, translates *vous* by "all of you" wherever English syntax allows (as in the apostrophe demonstration cited above), and he

marks the signatory's shift to singular address by adding the French pronoun *tu* in parentheses.[12] However, such interventions on the part of a translator are helpful only when number contrasts in the second person occur in close proximity to one another, and this happens only in the opening letter. All the other letters in the collection are almost uniformly addressed to "you," a pronoun that does not support singular address over any extended stretch of writing. But the signatory continues. In English, " I would have had recourse, more than ever, to anachronistic procedures, even more retro, I would have made you theatrical, divine. Do you think it would have changed something, you, *toi*, this singular in disuse?" (Derrida, *Post Card* 113). In French, the word *devine* can be read as the imperative form of the verb *guess* as well as the feminine form of the adjective *devine*. In English, the signatory would have made you guess even more—that is, he would make you even more a soothsayer (*une devineresse*)—when it comes to the problem of the English pronoun *you*.

If this *mise en abyme* on the pluralizing effects of the English *you* draws attention to the interpretative problems that the "Envois" letters pose for readers of the English translation, it also gives instructions on how to deal with these problems. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines *divination* as "the action or practice of divining; the foretelling of future events or discovery of what is hidden or obscure by supernatural or magical means." Thus, an act of divination can be compared with an act invocation, the citational activity of a speech act to which Austin ascribes performativity. An invocation, according *The Oxford English Dictionary*, is the action or the act of calling upon or to: a supplication. In the ecclesiastical sense, the word *invocation* denotes a "form of prayer, as part of a public service. Also, the name or appellation used in invoking a divinity, etc." In yet another sense of the word, *invocation* designates the "action or an act or conjuring or summoning a devil or spirit by incantation; or an incantation or magical formula used for this or a similar purpose; a charm, spell." The senses of the verb *to invoke* include to call on in prayer or as a witness; to summon by charms or incantation; to conjure; to call to a person to come to do something. I want to argue that the "Envois" letters invoke their reader—they summon *tu* to emerge out of *vous*—and that they do so by way of a performative operation. The seductive force of the "Envois" letters communicates—that is, propagates or transmits—the movement of a summons: its tremor, shock, or

displacement. What is seduction if not the communication of a force?[13]

In what follows, I want to examine the various ways in which the reader of the "Envois" letters can respond to this force. What are the perlocutionary or, as Austin would put it, the "consequential" effects of the relayed summons? What responses or sequels does it produce?

Austin's presentation of the difference between the constative and performative utterance types implies a temporal contrast. The constative refers back to some anterior reality whereas the performative effects and so transforms the circumstances in which it is issued. Derrida argues that what is new about the performative is the ontological status of the referent: "As opposed to the classical assertion, to the constative utterance, the performative does not have its referent (but here that word is certainly no longer appropriate, and this precisely is the interest of the discovery) outside of itself or, in any event, before and in front of itself" (*Limited Inc* 13). When Derrida says that the term "referent" is not appropriate to performative analysis, he is talking about the traditional notion of the referent: the referent according to the constative ontology. However, in *The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with J. L. Austin, Or Seduction in Two Languages*, Shoshana Felman argues that this is how neither psychoanalysis nor performative analysis conceives of the referent: "neither for psychoanalysis nor performative analysis is language a *statement* of the real, a simple reflection of the referent or its mimetic representation. Quite to the contrary, the referent is itself produced by language as its own *effect*" (76-77).

The reader of the "Envois" letters can question the precision of their reference by pointing (with justification) to their abundant autobiographical references, and reject their address on the basis of this problem. Alternatively, he or she can affirm their address to "you"—even while acknowledging the referential aberration staged by this pronoun. The reader's choice between these responses depends upon a prior decision. He or she must have already decided which comes first, the referent or its grammatical sign. In epistolary terms, the question runs as follows: which comes first, the letter or its addressee?

Of course, for the reader, he or she comes first. Thus, the receiver of the "Envois" letters may say "It's not me." In effect, this reader would be saying, "It's not

true. If the word *you* refers to me, it does so falsely. I am obviously not the addressee of the 'Envois' letters and their signatory's beloved." This denial designates the illocutionary force of the letters as constative. The letters "describe" an anterior reality, the personal life of the autobiographer, in which the reader of the book does not figure. They may have done so truly in their originary, private context, but do so falsely now that they have been relayed to the public.

I would say that the dissenting reader of the "Envois" letters reads poorly because he or she reads so much *less* than is on offer in this work. The reader who says "Not me" to the "Envois" letters exhibits the critical equivalent to the shortcoming with which Austin charges his "philosophers": the descriptive fallacy. In literary criticism, the descriptive fallacy takes the form of the assumption that literature has a mimetic function in relation to life, which it can represent either truly or falsely.[14]

The seductive force of the "Envois" letters is felicitous only for the reader who wants to be seduced. What would be the response of the reader of the "Envois" letters who felt otherwise? He or she would put down the book, and, with that gesture, one of the necessary conditions for the felicitous achievement of illocutionary act would be destroyed: the recipient's recognition of its force. Austin specifies this condition in a comment on his doctrine of illocutionary forces: "Unless a certain effect is achieved, the illocutionary act will not have been happily, successfully performed. [. . .] Generally the effect amounts to bringing about the understanding of the meaning and of the force of the locution. So the performance of an illocutionary act involves the *securing of uptake*" (116-17). Uptake cannot be secured if the reader refuses to read. When an act of seduction is enacted in a very long and very complex performative—a performative which makes demands on its reader, which requires commitment in order to read—its effect is not achieved without the reader's consent.

In noting that the achievement of the illocutionary act depends upon the securing of uptake in its receivers, Austin distinguishes between the attempt and the achievement of the illocutionary act. This distinction is emphasized by the written performative. The achievement of the written performative is dependent on its reading. In French, the verb *arriver* means "to happen" as well as "to reach a destination." The signatory of the letter printed on the back-jacket cover of *The Post Card* describes the collection as "'fortune-

telling book'" that "like a soothsayer [. . .] watches over and speculates on that-which-must-happen, on what it indeed might mean *to happen, to arrive, to have to happen* or *arrive, to let* or *to make happen* or *arrive, to destine, to address, to send, to legate, to inherit*, etc.[. . .]." The double meaning of *arriver* indicates the gambit of the "Envois" letters from the signatory's point of view: that these letters may not arrive at their destination, that they may not "happen," in which case they remain, figuratively if not literarily speaking, "dead letters." The "Envois" letters are engaged in prediction and speculation about their own destiny (including their destiny as a translation from the French, where the homonymic association of "to arrive" with "to happen" will not be in operation).

The seductive force of the "Envois" letters is felicitous only for the reader who recognizes their force and responds to it affirmatively—even as he or she *also* recognizes the divided quality of their address. In the next part of this chapter, I argue that the problem posed by the divided address also describes a problem posed by a precise situation within the context of the psychoanalytic session: the way in which an analyst receives an analysand's transference repetition. In the recent literature of the object-relational school of psychoanalysis, this response is treated under the heading of "countertransference." In postal terms, transference can be described as an act that both does and does not "want" to be received by a reader: its address is divided; countertransference can be described as a divided response to such missives.

2. Countersigning "Envois"

In *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan, Derrida*, John Forrester argues that Freud conceived of transference as a letter that the analysand sends the analyst, a letter which is destined for another (235). Freud discovered transference in his supervision of Josef Breuer's analysis of Anna O. Freud decided that the patient's desire to be kissed by him was a repetition from her analysis with the *other* analyst. In effect, "Freud said: 'This question, this letter is not addressed to me, it is addressed to another'" (Forrester, *Seductions of Psychoanalysis* 235). So he readdressed the letter and, in so doing, defined the activity of the analyst as postal. The task of the analyst is first of all to recognize that transference *is* a transference (otherwise the analysis fails), and then to

return it, if not to the scene from which it originated, to its sender. The analyst returns the transference to the analysand in a form that can be worked through rather than acted out. Forrester points out that this conception of the analyst's function is not very far away from the Lacanian conception of the analyst's position as the subject presumed to know: "According to this conception, it would be quite fair to describe the desire to be an analyst as the desire to be *le facteur de la vérité*. As Derrida and any analyst (any?) would agree, the analyst not only passes the letter on, he also adds his mark, the postmark, the mark of *après coup*" (236).[15]

Like the analyst in a love transference situation, the reader of the "Envois" letters is the recipient of an intimate address reserved for another (there is even talk of kisses in the "Envois" letters). The reader of the "Envois" letters is therefore presented with the same problem as is the analyst in the transference situation. What is he or she to do with these misaddressed letters? Receive them or pass them on?

In *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*, Christopher Bollas explores the ethical implications of this problem under the rubric of countertransference. Bollas defines the analyst's responsibility in terms of his or her capacity to receive and to register the analysand's transferences. By establishing a "countertransference readiness," the analyst creates "an internal space for the reception of the patient's transference [. . .]." (202). Bollas maintains that this state allows for "a more complete and articulate expression of the patient's transference speech" than "some ideal notion of absolute mental neutrality or scientific detachment" (202). By permitting himself or herself to be manipulated by the transference into an object identity, the analyst becomes "part of a process that facilitates the eventual cohesion of the analysand's sense of self [. . .]" (Bollas 203). Thus, the analyst evolves a "generative split" in the analytic ego: "I am receptive to varying degrees of 'madness' in myself occasioned by life in the patient's environment. In another area of myself, however, I am constantly there as the analyst, observing, assessing and holding that part of me that is necessarily ill" (204). As a consequence of the generative split, the analyst can report to the patient observations about the free association process occurring between the two parts of his or her own ego and, in this manner, "link the patient with something that he has lost in himself [. . .]" (205). However, in order to avoid an interference that is traumatizing for the analysand, it

is important that the analyst reports his or her countertransference experience as an idea emerging form the analyst's subjectivity, rather than from his authority" (205). Following D. W. Winnicott, Bollas suggests that the analyst put forward his or her thoughts as "subjective objects" rather than as "official psychoanalytic decodings of the person's unconscious life. The effect of this attitude is crucial, as his interpretations were meant to be played with—kicked around, mulled over, torn to pieces—rather than regarded as the official version of the truth" (Bollas 206).

This postal activity on the part of the analyst is not merely a deflecting "Not me" gesture as Forrester presents Freud's gesture. On Bollas's account of countertransference, the analyst says "Not me" *and* "It's me" to the analysand's transference: countertransference is divided response to a divided address. I want to argue that the reader who responds to the relayed address of the "Envois" letters performs the critical equivalent to countertransference. If you recognize and register the seductive force of the "Envois" letters, you countertransfer their transference. You say, "It's I" and "not I" simultaneously and without contradiction.

The reader's response to relayed letters is a topic of discussion in Derrida's "Telepathy," a short piece originally published in his book *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre.* "Telepathy" is presented as a sequence of letters that accidentally fell out of the "Envois" collection. In the first letter in this sequence, the signatory poses the following question. What is going on when a published letter "provokes events" in "the absence or rather the indeterminacy of some addressee which it nevertheless apostrophises" (Derrida, "Telepathy" 4)? The signatory specifies that he is not talking of the events that follow upon the publication of just any writing:

> Think rather of a series of which the addressee would form part, he or she if you wish, you for example, unknown at that time to the one who writes; and from that moment the one who writes is not yet completely an addressor, nor completely himself. The addressee, he or she, would let her/himself be produced by the letter, from [*depuis*] its programme, and, he or she, the addressor as well. (Derrida, "Telepathy" 4-5)

How can an addressee (and an addresser) "let" himself or herself be produced by the letter? The "Telepathy" signatory specifies that the situation of which he is talking is

not the same as when a reader responds to the author of a book as if he or she were its signatory:

> I am not putting forward the hypothesis of a letter which would be the external occasion, in some sense, of an encounter between two identifiable subjects—and who would already be determined. No, but of a letter which after the event seems to have been launched towards some unknown addressee at the moment of its writing, an addressee unknown to himself or herself if one can say that, and who is determined, as you very well know how to be, on receipt of the letter [. . .]. (Derrida, "Telepathy" 5)

I view the letter's production of its addressee and addresser in terms of the object identity created by an analysand's transference onto the analyst. According to Bollas, this object identity is determined upon the analyst's receipt of the transference. Inasmuch as analyst receives and registers the analysand's unconscious expressions, "the other source of the analysand's free association is the psychoanalyst's countertransference, so much so that in order to find the patient we must look for him within ourselves" (Bollas 201). So there is a sense in which transference, conceived of as a letter, "produces" its addresser as well.

In neither the psychoanalytic nor in the epistolary sense are these productions teleological events. If the addressee and addresser do not exist before the letter, this does not simply mean that the contrary proposition is true: that the letter exists before its addressee and addresser. Because the letter undergoes a postal delay—the time it takes to arrive at a destination, any destination—the letter does not "happen" until it arrives. The "Telepathy" signatory hypothesizes the addressee's response to the arrival of the letter in similar terms:

> So then, you identify yourself and you commit your life to the program of the letter, or rather of a postcard, of a letter which is open, divisible, at once transparent and encrypted. [. . .] So you say: it is I, uniquely I who am able to receive this letter, not that it has been reserved for me, on the contrary, but I receive as a present the chance to which this card delivers itself. It falls to me [*Elle m'échoit*]. And I choose that it should choose me

> by chance, I wish to cross its path, I want to be there, I can and I want—its path or its transfer. (Derrida, "Telepathy" 5-6)

For neither psychoanalysis nor for literary analysis is such a response, one that can be given in an offhand or glib manner. On the contrary, it requires commitment, and the recognition that it has consequences for the address. The "Telepathy" signatory calls the affirmative response "a gentle and terrible decision"(6). It marks the beginning of an exploration of meaning:

> You say "me" the unique addressee and everything starts between us. Starting out from nothing, from no history, the postcard saying not a single word which holds [*qui tienne*]. Saying, or after the event predicting "me," you don't have any illusion about the divisibility of the destination, you don't even inspect it, you let it float [. . .], you are there to receive the division, you gather it together without reducing it, without harming it, you let it live and everything starts between us, from you, and what you there give by receiving. (Derrida, "Telepathy" 6)

You say "It's I" even when you know that the contrary is also true. Responding affirmatively to a divided address entails taking some risk. However, as Derek Attridge puts it in the context of another discussion, "responsibility, for Derrida, is not something we simply take: we find ourselves summoned, confronted by an undecidability which is also always an opportunity and a demand, a chance and a risk" ("Singularities, Responsibilities" 118).

Bollas describes the experience of listening to the analysand's speech as one of being drawn into an "environmental idiom" (202). Within the context of this environment, the analyst "is invited to fulfil differing and changing object representations [. . .]" (Bollas 202). In moments of clarity, the analyst is able to interpret these invitations, but such moments are rare:

> For a very long period of time, and perhaps it never ends, we are being taken into the patient's environmental idiom, and for considerable stretches of time we do not know who we are, what function we are meant to fulfil, or our fate as this object. Neither do we always know

> whether what we might call our existence is due to that which is projected into us or whether we are having our own idiomatic responses to life within the patient's environment. This inevitable, ever-present, and necessary uncertainty about why we feel as we do gives to our private ongoing consideration of the countertransference a certain humility and responsibility. (202-03)

Bollas defines the analyst's responsibility as "the capacity to bear and value this necessary uncertainty" (203): "It enhances our ability to become lost inside the patient's evolving environment, enabling the patient to manipulate us through transference usage into the object identity" (203). In the direct countertransference, the analyst presents material discovered in his or her reading of the dialogue taking place within as subjective observations—subjective because the analyst's reading of his own receptive space is necessarily informed by his own idiom.

In "'This Strange Institution Called Literature,'" Derrida describes the experience of reading a work of literature in comparable terms: "There is as it were a duel of singularities, a duel of writing and reading, in the course of which a countersignature comes both to confirm, repeat and respect the signature of the other, of the 'original' work, and to *lead it off* elsewhere, so running the risk of *betraying* it, having to betray it in a certain way so as to respect it, through the invention of another signature just as singular" (qtd. in Attridge 69). Here Derrida uses the word *signature* in the sense of a signatory performance: the characteristic quality of a work that renders it recognizable for its reader. He defines reading as a countersigning activity that repeats and so confirms and respects the singularity of this performance. However, inasmuch as a reading is also informed by its reader's singularity, it necessarily betrays the literary work by altering the signature it would repeat. As for Bollas, reading, for Derrida, is at once a repetition and a modification of the other's idiom.

In the continuation of this argument, Derrida maintains that signature and countersignature are predicated on division. The singularity of a reading is an effect of a paradox of iterability: it is informed by the reader's experience of other works. The uniqueness of a given reading arises from its singularization of those experiences. Somewhat earlier in the interview, Derrida argues that "There would be no reading of the

work—nor any writing to start with—without this iterability" (68). "Singularity 'shared'" in this manner pertains to both writing and reading (Derrida, qtd. in Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 69). Thus, Derrida notes, the word *duel* does not sufficiently describe the experience of reading a work of literature: "this experience always implies more than two signatures. No reading (and writing is also already a countersigning reading, looking at what happens from the work's side) would be, how can I put it, 'new,' 'inaugural,' 'performative,' without this multiplicity or proliferation of countersignatures" (Derrida, qtd. in Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 69). If signature and countersignature are predicated on division, they are analogous to transference and countertransference in the psychoanalytic situation.

The experience of reading the "Envois" letters is thus akin to the analyst's experience of listening to the analysand on Bollas's account. As you read the "Envois" letters, you are drawn into their environmental idiom. In the course of your reading, you become familiarized. Part of *vous* becomes *tu*.

I argue above that the iterability of the address is what allows the performative to function in new contexts: the pronoun *you* refers to more than one subject. The status of the "Envois" letters as transcriptions from a prior context renders the entire collection an open letter which allows the personal pronoun *you* to refer to you, the reader of the book, and thereby countersign. Would anything have been different if Derrida had used proper names? In what follows, I want to examine what one can expect from a proper name in the first place. How does it compare with the pronouns which can represent it: the pronoun *you*, for example?

In "My Chances/*Mes Chances*: A Rendezvous with Some Epicurean Stereophonies," Derrida argues that Freud's texts, "when they deal with the question of chance, always revolve around the proper name, the number, and the letter" (15). What these marks have in common is their "insignificance in marking" and their "re-markable insignificance" (Derrida, "My Chances" 15). They demonstrate "that a mark in itself is not necessarily linked, even in the form of the reference [*renvoi*], to a meaning or to a thing" (Derrida, "My Chances" 15). The proper name "does not name by means of a concept" (Derrida, "My Chances" 15). It does not signify any meaning. Nor does it refer

to any given person except in a specific context. Even if the proper name can also function as a common noun (Derrida's example is *Pierre*, a homonym in French for *pierre* 'stone') these two "normal" functions of the mark have no contact with one another. As a proper name, *Pierre* "stands for only one person each time, and the multiplicity of Pierres in the world bears no relation to the multiplicity of stones [*pierres*] that form a class and possess enough common traits to establish a conceptual significance or a semantic generality" (Derrida, "My Chances" 15). The same insignificance pertains to the relation between the number 7, to take an example relevant to "Envois," and things that can be found in groups of seven, or the letters *s* and *p* and the words which these letters can be said to abbreviate: *S*ocrates and *P*lato; *s*ubject and *p*redicate; *p*os*t*. These are marks that refer without signifying and that refer only in a given context, which means that when the context changes, so will the reference.

Derrida's interest in the proper name, the graphic letter, and the number is that their re-markable insignificance renders the paradox of iterability acute. His point is that the same iterability applies to all marks. In order to be recognizable, the mark must be iterable, and this iterability is what enables the same mark to function otherwise, to signify and/or to refer otherwise, from one context to another.

Insofar as the personal pronoun is a stand-in for a proper name, both *tu* and *vous* are characterized by the proper name's re-markable insignificance.

The signatory of the "Envois" letters does not use proper names to identity either himself or his addressee. He does, however, give the dates of his letters. I noted above that the date "7 September 1979" occupies the position of the signature in the opening letter. In his translator's glossary to *The Post Card*, Bass points out that the figure 7 is involved in a word play that runs throughout the collection (xiv). In one of the early letters, the signatory claims that "I accept [*J'accepte*], this will be my signature henceforth [. . .]" (Derrida, *Post Card* 26). *J'accepte* can be heard as a near homonym of *Jacques sept,* a play on Derrida's first name and on the seven letters in both *Jacques* and *Derrida* respectively. The "Envois" signatory says that he can see the figure 7 "radiate over our anniversaries, our great events, the great encounters. A written 7" [*7 écrit*] [. . .]" (Derrida, *Post Card* 169). Bass points out that *7 écrit,* a homophone of *c'est écrit* 'it

is written,' is also translatable as "seven writes." On two different occasions, the "Envois" signatory remarks that the name *Socrate* has seven letters (in the French). The postcard that the signatory discovers at the Bodleian at Oxford depicts Socrates writing. In my next chapter, I argue that Socrates speaks in the "Envois" letters or, at least, his is one of its several voices. In the context of the present discussion, it is sufficient to note that *J'accepte* and the 7 homophones indicate a masked name or several names, names advanced by pseudonyms. But how can one say that they sign? And why dissimulate? Why, indeed, use homonyms?

One could object that the homophonic signature does not compare with the handwritten signature because of the uniqueness of the handwriting. One could argue, for example, that the handwritten signature is authentic because it is repeated with slight (and only slight) variation. But so too is the figure 7 in "Envois," except that where the variance of the handwritten signature is registered in the shape of the repeated names, the variance between one homophonic signature and the next is registered in all the different words in which it can be heard. The handwritten signature is structured by *différance* (Derrida's amalgam of *difference* and *delay*) and the homophonic signature only more acutely so. Derrida makes this point in *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation.* The interest of the homophonic signature is that it takes place posthumously: it "becomes effective—performed and performing—not at the moment it apparently takes place, but only later, when ears will have managed to receive the message" (Derrida, *Ear of the Other* 50). Because its postal delay is conspicuous, the homophonic signature underscores something which pertains to all writing: "A text is signed only much later by the other. And this testamentary structure doesn't befall a text as if by accident, but constructs it. This is how a text always comes about" (Derrida, *Ear of the Other* 51).

A text is signed only after a delay and by another. In other words, literary meaning is an effect of *différance*. Derrida's allusion to the testamentary structure of the text in the passage cited above underscores the ethical weight of the situation. Literary meaning takes place in the context of a certain procedural agreement between writers and readers, even if the agreement in question is only—but this is no small thing—a willingness to listen. Psychoanalysis is explicitly predicated on such an arrangement, and

literary criticism, and indeed reading in general, is only more implicitly so.

What procedural agreement do the 7 signatures underwrite? What does *j'accepte* accept? *J'accepte* appears in a claim that is repeatedly asserted, in various forms, throughout the collection: "J'accepte ta détermination" 'I accept your determination.' (Sometimes the signatory makes this vow only to retract it: "You decide, both on the moment and the rest. I will understand and approve. *J'accepte*. No, no, this 'determination' is unacceptable for me, inadmissible, unjustifiable [. . .]" (Derrida, *Post Card* 40). What is it that the signatory is attempting to accept? Your determination *of* something—of "Envois," for instance, as either philosophy or literature—or is he attempting to accept the way in which you determine yourself in relation to this writing? Your resolution of this interpretative problem depends upon the way in which you conceive of your topographical situation vis-à-vis the letters. On the one hand, if you decide that "your determination" refers to some unstated direct object, you read the "Envois" letters as coded by secrecy. This sentence makes a private reference to some object, the designation of which has been cut from the published collection. You, the reader of the book, stand at a critical distance from this private discourse. On the other hand, if you decide that "your determination" is the complete object of the verb, you read the sentence self-evidently. The signatory is attempting to accept the determination of "you": that is, your own determination; the way you determine yourself (as *tu* or *vous).* No matter what you decide, you countersign by designating your distance vis-à-vis the letters. And either way, the pronoun you choose functions like a proper name: it refers but does not signify in any predetermined way and can therefore refer *otherwise* in other contexts.[16]

The same citation of the plural in the singular holds for the determinations *performative* and *constative.* Take, for example, the propositions of Derrida's opening letter, which I cite here for the second time, this time with an ear to their illocutionary force: "You might read these *envois* as the preface to a book that I have not written"; and "You might consider them, if you really wish to, as the remainders of a recently destroyed correspondence" (Derrida, *Post Card* 3). Are these sentences performatives or constatives? Are they directives or hypotheses about the two ways in which you might read? If you decide that they are performatives—in other words, if you decide that their

unstated but operative grammar is "I suggest that you read these *envois* as either philosophy or literature"—then you also decide that Derrida speaks, in this letter at least, from somewhere outside the private frame of the collection. However, if you hear these sentences as constatives, as descriptions rather than actions, then you hear the word *you* as referring to (without addressing) the general reader, while Derrida remains on the collection's inside. In other words, you hear Derrida wondering what his addressee will do with "these *envois,*" that is, including this first one. The tension between these illocutionary possibilities implies that the "Envois" letters will put into question not only the distinction between philosophy and literature, but also the possibility of establishing a causal relation between a text and its reading. The "Envois" lettres present interpretative choices to its readers (philosophy or literature?); they also foresees readers who will designate the collection as one or the other kind of writing. Which is cause and which is effect? This question is undecidable because the illocutionary possibilities of the opening propositions locate the reader on both sides of the letter's frame of reference: you, the general reader, read the letter collection from an ontological outside and in the course of that reading decide how the text will be designated; and you are foreseen by the text, predicted like a character with a proper name (*tu* or *vous*). Which comes first? Does the reader's hindsight determine the text or does the text's foresight determine the reader? Each scenario points to the other and the other points back, and so on in a circular proceeding which renders an either-or decision between the two impossible. To assign a teleology to the reading process is inevitably to begin such a strange loop.[17]

Derrida is working with a narrow range of variants: a referential aberration merely. However, since these variants bear not only upon your recognition of the work's signature, but also upon the way in which you countersign that signature, they have important consequences for the way in which you understand your topographical access to the work. Your decision to read a line from "Envois," even a line written as simply as some of the examples given above, as either constative or performative has to do with the way in which you configure the inside and outside of the work: the way in which you realize, in both senses of the word, your temporal and spatial situation in relation to the writing. These topographical decisions have ontological as well as ethical implications: ontological insofar as they require you consider the time of your own being as a reading

subject (a conception that furthermore bears upon the way in which you conceive of the construction of your identity as a reading subject; ethical insofar as they require you to think of how, as this situated reading subject, you effect literary meaning. What is more, your topographical situation vis-à-vis the writing alters as you read. The "Envois" letters are disconcerting because they reinterpret their reader in different and sometimes even contradictory ways.The "Envois" letters change every time you read them, and they change you every time you read. This loss of control over distance is the experience described by the signatory of the letter printed on the back-jacket cover of *The Post Card* in the passage I cited at the beginning of this chapter. The destination of the postcard (or *The Post Card*) "traverses you, you no longer know who you are. At the very instant when from its address it interpellates, you, uniquely you, instead of reaching you it divides you or sets you aside, occasionally overlooks you. And you love and you do not love, it makes of you what you wish, it takes you, it leaves you, it gives you" (Derrida, *Post Card* back-jacket cover).

The "Envois" letters fall to me, for example, but they also proceed beyond me. In other words, my interception of the "Envois" letters, my decision to become *tu* (sometimes), does not foreclose the possibility that others, both before and behind me, will do or have done likewise. This brings me in line with the "J.D." of the letter printed on the back-jacket cover of *The Post Card*, who speculates on the chances of the "Envois" letters arriving, although, in my case, the question is whether it *also* arrives *elsewhere*. As one who writes on the "Envois" letters and who therefore participates in their continuing postal relay, I am concerned with its arrival. The possibility that others will occupy or have already countersigned as *tu* indicates the same kind of citation of the plural in the singular that is staged in the signature of the opening letter. Yet each and every reader will countersign the "Envois" letters somewhat differently. The public reading of "Envois," just as much as its writing, is predicated on the possibility of "singularity 'shared.'"

Notes

1. The "Envois" letters are unlike anything else that Derrida has written, which may account for the slow critical response to this work. To date, "Envois" is the least

commented on of any of Derrida's major works. Those who write on *The Post Card* usually focus on the other parts of the book and make at best only cursory references to "Envois." Notable exceptions are Shari Benstock, who explores the relation between genre and gender in "Envois"; Hariette Davidson, who explores the relation between citation and situation in the construction of the subject in a reading that compares "Envois" to Adrienne Rich's "Notes Toward a Politics of Location"; Diane Elam, who argues that, in postmodernism, theoretical writing can be seductive and fiction can be theoretical in a reading that juxtaposes "Envois" to Kathy Acker's novel *In Memoriam to Identity*; Cyraina E. Johnson, who places "Envois" in the tradition of the eighteenth-century epistolary novel with specific reference to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*; Mark Nunes, who examines the status of romantic love in "Envois" and Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments,* arguing that both Derrida and Barthes imply that the language of metaphysics and the language of love are in some regard equivalent; Gregory Ulmer, who argues that "Envois" is Derrida's response to the question of the future of the humanities in the era of new media; and David Wills, who discusses the postcard genre with reference to Derrida's debate with Jacques Lacan about the destination of the letter in Edgar Allan Poe's "Purloined Letter." I refer to some of these readings in more detail where appropriate.

2. For other comments by Derrida on "Envois," see his answers to various questions published in the conference proceedings of *Affranchissement du transfert et de la lettre: colloque autour de La Carte postale de Jacques Derrida, 4 et 5 avril 1981* (47-48, 75-82) and a reference to his debate with Jacques Lacan on the question of the letter and destination in a chapter entitled "For the Love of Lacan" in his recent book *Resistances of Psychoanalysis* (62). Works by Derrida that implicitly refer to "Envois" and that are useful background reading include "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)," "Sending: On Representation" (entitled "Envoi" in the French original), and "Telepathy."

3. Austin's locution-illocution distinction does not imply that the locutionary speech act lacks illocutionary force. The difference between locutionary and illocutionary acts is that

whereas the illocutionary act states its force explicitly, the locutionary act simply employs it. I develop this point in chapter 3.

4. See Benveniste's chapter "The Nature of Pronouns" in *Problems in General Linguistics* (217-22). I owe this observation to Elam, who points out the allusion to Benveniste in her reading of the "Envois" letters in *Romancing the Postmodern.*

5. The gender of the addressee of the "Envois" letters has generated some critical comment. In a critical rebuke, Alicia Borinsky argues that the signatory, whom she identifies as a "J.D." (that is, Jacques Derrida), "obliterates" the female addressee who has generated his passion and thus relegates woman to her traditional role of silent muse (253-54). In a more complex argument, Shari Benstock argues that "J.D." writes under "the intimidation" of an absentee feminine beloved, who construes his subjectivity as both male and female (122). Benstock's reading is inspired by Derrida's account of the citational relationship between genders and genres in "The Law of Genre." She argues that, while Derrida's essay "demonstrates the impossibility of *not* mixing genres, of not investigating the proximity of genre to gender, 'Envois' inscribes the effects of this proximity" (Benstock 91). The male signatory and the female addressee who dictates his letters to him "form a couple, a man and wife, whose union traces certain effects through the writing" (Benstock 91). Thus, far from supporting the "phallogocentric law of genre" by which a male subject "writes" the identity of the female subject he desires, the "Envois" letters subvert that law (Benstock 109). My reading makes no such attempt to identify the gender of either the signatory or the addressee beyond observing that the signatory of the "Envois" letters is associated with Jacques Derrida, which is not the same as arguing that the signatory is identical with him. I develop this point in chapter 2, when I argue that the "Envois" letters are written to a certain extent by their "in-voices." In this chapter, my point is that the repetition of address in the "Envois" letters opens up the possibility for a responsible response on the part of the reader, who could be *any* reader, male or female. Elam takes a similar position in her reading, arguing that Derrida's encounter with the system of sending in "Envois" insistently raises an indeterminate question of gender (150).

6. This argument marks the difference between my account of performativity in the "Envois" letters and Davidson's. I argue that the performative force of the "Envois" letters is enacted by their postal relay. In her reading, Davidson argues that the performativity of the letters is enacted by their articulation of the signatory's "I" (243). This means that, for Davidson, the performativity of the "Envois" letters is not played out in their reading.

7. With the phrase "the divisibility of the letter," Derrida refers to the necessity of postal goings astray or "destinerrance" as he sometimes puts it. The specific reference here is to Jacques Lacan's reading of Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Purloined Letter." In his seminar on this story, Lacan presents a theory of interconnected subject positions that are determined by the itinerary of a stolen letter, which, after it makes the rounds of several characters, returns to its proper place. For some of the essays involved in this debate, see *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading.* For Derrida's own account of his so-called debate with Lacan, see Derrida's recent book *Resistances of Psychoanalysis.* Derrida cites from the "Envois" letters in a chapter entitled "For the Love of Lacan," in which he identifies the question of letter and destination as "what separates me perhaps most closely from [*d'avec*] Lacan" (62).

8. One could argue that the postal relay of performative address is facilitated in the "Envois" letters because this epistolary work is a one-way correspondence. In Austin's terms, the speaker of the literary performative is represented in the "Envois" letters, but their participating receiver is not. The "Envois" letters are quite simply addressed to "you." Since this receiver is not shown "on stage" (Austin uses theater metaphors when describing the literary performative), the address of the performative can proceed into the audience. However, the repetition of address is an effect of every epistolary work and even of writing in general. This is the effect which the "editor" of Richardson's *Clarissa* attempts to forestall by drawing the reader's attention to the limited context of the letter collection. He implies that the efficacy of the letters should not be felt by readers to exceed that context. However, contemporary response to an early version of the first

volume indicated that Lovelace's appeal exceeded this boundary. Richardson's correspondent and friend, Lady Bradslaigh, wanted him to give the story a happy ending by letting Clarissa and Lovelace resolve their differences and marry, a response that flatly opposes Richardson's moral position, which he later announced in the preface through the fiction of the editor: "it is one of the principal views of the publication: to caution [. . .] children against preferring a man of pleasure to a man of probity, upon that dangerous but too commonly received notion, *that a reformed rake makes the best husband*" (36). Richardson response to Lady Bradslaigh's suggestion was to make Lovelace's character more explicitly devious.

9. In *The Interpretation of Dreams,* Freud accounts for the presence of day residues woven into the texture of dreams by arguing that they serve as points of attachment for unconscious ideas. Day residues and other kinds of recent impressions, often of the most trivial kind, are preferred by the unconscious because of their freedom from censorship (Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* 601-03). I return to this definition of transference as transcription in chapter 2.

10. See Derrida "The Law of Genre" (220). For a reading of the interclosed endings of *The Post Card,* see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's article "Love Me, Love My Ombre, Elle." Spivak's aim is to locate the "place of 'woman' in the development of Derrida's own vocabulary: the possibility, for instance, that the structural project of this book can itself be called *invagination*" (21).

11. The possibility of pluralities in the writing subject creates certain difficulties for the reader who wants to identify a subject accountable for the seductive force of the "Envois" letters. But what agency does the force of a performative denote? Austin's account of the speech act's invocation of a conventional procedure indicates that the performative force of a speech act is not attributable to the subject who issues it. Judith Butler emphasizes this point in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative.* She cites a passage from Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals* on the topic of accountability: "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming: 'the doer' is

merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything" (qtd. in Butler 45). Nietzsche claims that "certain forms of morality require a subject and institute a subject as the consequence of that requirement" (Butler 45). Doing, particularly when construed as wrongdoing (Butler argues that it is generally so construed), "is retroactively fictionalized (*hinzugedichtet*) as the intentional effect of a 'subject'" (Butler 45): "A being is hurt, and the vocabulary that emerges to moralize that pain is one which isolates a subject as the intentional originator of an injurious deed [. . .]" (Butler 45). The positing of being behind doing is a means (Butler says that it is the ideological means adopted by the courts) of assigning blame and accountability. Thus, "For Nietzsche, the subject appears only as a consequence of a demand for accountability [. . .]" (Butler 46).

In the opening "Envois" letter, "Jacques Derrida" signs the collection. He assumes "responsibility [. . .] in order to make peace within you" (Derrida, *Post Card* 6). In other words, he apologizes, and he does so in a letter that is presented first but dated after all the others. Derrida retroactively declares himself the doer of the deed: it was he who relayed the collection after having transcribed the passages that we receive in *The Post Card* from a prior and private context. So the subject denoted by the signature "Jacques Derrida" may well be fictionalized in Nietzsche's sense.

12. The square brackets added to the apostrophe demonstration cited above are Bass's. All the other insertions identifying the personal pronouns in the passages I cite are mine.

13. In her reading of the "Envois," Elam argues that to think about theory in terms of seduction is "to return ideology to its status as a kind of persuasion, as a *rhetorical* activity" (146). Thinking about theory in terms of seduction "allows us a certain suspicion of the pretension of theory to survey objects from an indifferent point of view" (Elam 147). Seduction "does not imply the simple statement of a truth: there is always some rhetorical, persuasive play" (Elam 146). In the second half of this chapter, I show how the "Envois" letters enact a specific if unrestricted seduction of their reader. I am indebted to Elam for my general approach to the operation of seduction in theoretical writing.

14. Borinsky is one such reader. When Borinsky argues the "Envois" signatory obliterates the female addressee who has generated his passion and thus relegates woman to her traditional role of silent muse, she reads the "Envois" letters as a constative that the signatory has manipulated. She implies the traditional role of the silent muse is a false description of the female addressee and that this addressee would have corrected this representation of herself had her letters not be excluded from the collection.

15. *Le facteur de la vérité* can be translated by "The postman of truth" as well as "The factor of truth." Forrester is referring to the second long essay of *The Post Card,* entitled "Le facteur de la vérité" in which Derrida reads Lacan's seminar on Poe's "Purloined Letter."

16. In her reading of Gertrude Stein's account of her "marriage proposal" to Alice B. Toklas in "Didn't Nelly and Lilly Love You," Karin Cope gives a similar reading of Stein's simple, declarative sentence, "I place you":

> a pronoun is only ever a delegate, a relay station. When anyone says "I" that I is always multiplied, functioning as both temporary place-holder and citation. When I say "I," I am citing or borrowing "I." It stands for me, I say it, "I," here, but if you say it, then it will stand for you. And if either of us reads someone else's I, say Stein's, then we read the "I" in three coincident ways: first, as Stein's authorial or narratorial "voice"; secondly, as a citation which she makes of the pronoun "I" in order to narrate; and thirdly, as a possible point of identification or reappropriation for you or me, the readers. When I cite Stein's "I," I discuss it as a linguistic object and an authorial voice; I also borrow it and write through it, I speak Stein's "I" (which was already borrowed), as mine. And the same goes for you, as well as the pronoun "you," which "I" invoke and place in order to "place you." (129-30)

Like Elam, Cope is referring to Emile Benveniste's chapter "The Nature of Pronouns" in his *Problems in General Linguistics.*

17. In *The Cosmic Web: Scientific Models and Literary Strategies in the 20th Century*, Katherine Hayles gives Douglas Hofstadter's definition of the strange loop as follows : "a loop of reasoning which cannot be solved because to accept either statement as true is to begin a loop which circles around to say that the same statement must be false" (34).

More precisely, however, the propositions of the opening letter are even more subtle than the strange loop, a figure which requires two propositions which stand in dialectical opposition to one another even as its circular reference renders both statements invalid. The illocutionary indeterminacy of Derrida's opening "instructions" pertains to each sentence individually. Together, they stage an irresolution of classificatory choices (philosophy/literature, either/or). Individually, each sentence stages a citational haunting whereby the plural appears in the singular designation.

Chapter 2

In-Voices in Derrida's "Envois": Reading the Work of the Transgenerational Phantom

In the previous chapter, I examined the divided address of the "Envois" letters, arguing that it has the force of a summons for the reader of the book. This chapter examines an interpretative problem associated with the other personal pronoun reference emphasized by the letter form: the identity of the "I" who signs. The letter that opens the "Envois" collection is signed by "I/we." "Jacques Derrida" admits that "we are several, and I am not as alone as I sometimes say I am when the complaint escapes from me, or when I still put everything into seducing you" (Derrida, *Post Card* 6). How is one to understand this announcement? Taking my cue from the signatory's reflections on the homophonic possibilities of the work's title, I suggested that the "Envois" letters may be written in-voices. I want to begin this chapter by reformulating that suggestion in the following hypothesis: not only are the "Envois" letters are written in-voices; but they are also, to certain extent, written *by* their in-voices. This chapter is an attempt to account for what such writing might mean for autobiography. Readers are generally prepared to encounter a multiplicity of voices in fiction. However, the "Envois" letters are presented as the remainders of a private correspondence, in other words, as autobiography, even if their capacity to function as autobiography—their capacity to represent a life, Derrida's life perhaps—has been ruined, as an architectural structure can be ruined, by the signatory's editing. When autobiography is written by its in-voices, the writing subject is not self-possessed.

One way to account for pluralities in the writing subject is by elaborating on Derrida's description of the relation of the inaugural work to its tradition in "'This Strange Institution Called Literature,'" which was key to the practical problem I discussed in my first chapter on the "Envois" letters about how one even begins to read such a highly singularized work. Let me review that description in brief. On the one hand, a work "takes place only once," which is to say that it is always singular, always a unique "institution" (Derrida, qtd. in Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 67). On the other hand, "while there is always *singularization*, absolute singularity is never given as a fact. [. . .] An absolute, absolutely pure singularity, if there were one, would not even show up, or at least would not be available for reading. To become readable, it has to be *divided*, to *participate* and *belong*. Then it is divided and

takes *its part* in the genre, the type, the context, meaning, the conceptual generality of meaning, etc." (Derrida, qtd. in Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 68). The uniqueness of the work is therefore the "coming about of a singular relation between the unique and its repetition, its iterability" (Derrida, qtd. in Attridge, "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" 68). I want to apply what Derrida says here about the relation of the work to its tradition to the identity of the writing subject who receives a legacy. One of these inheritances is the language with which the subject writes. The language one uses in order to express oneself singularly is repeated from an inheritance. Moreover, this repetition pertains not only to language itself, but also to everything that can be expressed with language: prejudices, conventions, ideology, etc. In-voices can be understood as masqueraded citations, conscious or unconscious. They can be citations from others—as when, in speaking to your child, you hear your mother's voice in your own (a common in-voice experience)—or citations from the Other: the unconscious. They can also be citations (conscious or unconscious) from legacies, familial or cultural. None of this means that the language of the subject is *simply* a repetition. On the contrary, in-voices make the language of the writing subject unique, and this uniqueness is further singularized by what that subject does and says with what he or she cites. Another way of putting this would be to say that the subject is the sum of all his or her inheritances, and the subject's conscious or unconscious configuration of that sum will be different—unique—every time.

Every work of literature intimates inherited voices in its own singular fashion, and every work of literature is indebted to those inheritances. However, some in-voices speak with a peculiar strangeness. Sometimes, inherited voices haunt, which is a difference that may be best described as tonal. A tonal difference distinguishes the "Envois" letters from all the other pieces of *The Post Card* (which can also be read as autobiography).[1] The in-voices of the "Envois" letters have a peculiar insistence. In a collection of essays published in *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok account for tonal heterogeneity in the discourse of a subject in their theory of the transgenerational phantom, which they explain as the subject's objectification of a secret unwittingly inherited from a previous generation, which has to do with lost love. In short, the phantom is the transgenerational effect of

ancestral melancholia.

Since Abraham and Torok conceive of the phantom effect as a sequel to an ancestral secret that plays itself out in the succeeding generations, an analysis of the phantom effect in a subject's discourse has to reconstruct the ancestral secret to which that discourse refers. I preface my analysis of the phantom effect manifested in the "Envois" letters with a summary of Abraham and Torok's theory, which I lay out in the order of its development. I start with Abraham and Torok's reading of Freud's account of melancholia.[2]

1. Ancestral Melancholia

In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud defines melancholia as an illness of mourning. Its symptoms are comparable to those of mourning in most regards. In both cases, "the reaction to the loss of the loved person, contains the same feeling of pain, loss of interest in the outside world—in so far as it does not recall the dead one—loss of capacity to adopt any new object of love, which would mean a replacing of the one mourned, the same turning from every active effort that is not connected with thought of the dead" (Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" 165). In the case of profound mourning, "It is easy to see that this inhibition and circumscription in the ego is the expression of an exclusive devotion to its mourning, which leaves nothing over for other purposes or other interests. It is really only because we know so well how to explain it that this attitude does not seem to us pathological" (Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" 165). In melancholia, however, the loss suffered by the subject may not be apparent to the observer or even, for that matter, to the subject. Freud speculates that the loss suffered by the melancholiac is likely to be "ideal": "The object has not perhaps actually died, but has become lost as an object of love (*e.g.* the case of a deserted bride)" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 166). Alternatively, the subject "knows whom he has lost but not *what* it is he has lost in them" (Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" 166). Aside from such initially puzzling complications, the signs of melancholia are the same as in mourning and therefore can be fully accounted for by the absorbing work of mourning—with one significant exception: "the melancholiac displays something else which is lacking in grief—an extraordinary fall in his self-esteem, an impoverishment of

his ego on a grand scale" (Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" 167). Where the subject in mourning finds the world "poor and empty" because he or she can find the lost object nowhere in it, "in melancholia it is the ego itself" that is lacking (Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" 167). Working from the observation that many of the subject's harshest self-reproaches "are hardly applicable to the patient himself, but that with insignificant modifications they do fit someone else, some person whom the patient loves, has loved or ought to love," Freud argues that the melancholic's loss of self-esteem results from a corresponding loss in ego ("Mourning and Melancholia" 169). Part of the ego has been transformed by an identification with the lost object. The criticizing faculty of the ego reproaches that part of itself that has been transformed by the identification. Freud reconstructs melancholic identification as follows:

> the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, so that the latter could henceforth be criticized by a special mental faculty like an object, like the forsaken object. In this way the loss of the object became transformed into a loss in the ego, and the conflict between the ego and the loved person is transformed into a cleavage between the criticizing faculty of the ego and the ego as altered by the identification. ("Mourning and Melancholia" 170)

In "'The Lost Object—Me': Notes on Endocryptic Identification," Abraham and Torok cite Freud's formula of melancholia, which shows "the ego in the guise of the object'" (qtd. in Abraham and Torok, "'The Lost Object—Me'" 141). The identification performed by the melancholiac results in a split in the ego, which subsequently behaves as if it were inhabited by two parties: the ego and its reconstructed "object." Abraham and Torok complement Freud's formula with its opposite: "*the 'object,' in its turn, carries the ego as its mask* [. . .]" ("'The Lost Object—Me'" 141). This second identification is not a simple translation of identity: it "concerns not so much the object who may no longer exist, but essentially the 'mourning' that this 'object' might allegedly carry out because of having lost the subject [. . .]" (Abraham and Torok, "'The Lost Object—Me'" 141). Twice disguised, the "object" appears to miss the subject painfully, even in the face of the subject's criticisms. Whereas the first identification sought to retain the object by reproducing the subject's conflict with the lost loved

one—an effect it achieved by locating the two personalities at different sites of the ego in a topological *status quo*—the second identification attests to a painful reality, forever denied: "the 'gaping wound' of the topography" (Abraham and Torok, "'The Lost Object—Me'" 142). Thus, the second identification is the "covert" one, "a crypto-fantasy that, being untellable, cannot be shown in the light of day" (Abraham and Torok, "'The Lost Object—Me'" 141). Abraham and Torok call this identification "endocryptic": "Clearly, an identifying empathy of this type could not say its name, let alone divulge its aim. Accordingly, it hides behind a mask [. . .]" ("'The Lost Object—Me'" 141-42). In "Illness of Mourning and the Fantasy of the Exquisite Corpse," Torok calls it "an eminently illegal act" (114). It must hide from view along with the desire of mourning that it masks: "it must hide even from the ego. Secrecy is imperative for survival" (Torok, "Illness of Mourning" 114).

In "Mourning *or* Melancholia: Incorporation *versus* Introjection," Abraham and Torok present a theory of two modes of basic psychic action, which they develop from Freud's account of the similarities and differences between mourning and melancholia. They point out that the internalization of the lost object by identification in melancholia has a counterpart in normal mourning on Freud's account. The subject in mourning performs an internalization of the lost object as well, but this internalization is only temporary. Freud views this strategy as necessary to the work of mourning: through the medium of a hallucinatory wish-psychosis, the subject maintains the lost object within the mind during the time it takes to rearrange his or her libidinal investments. When the work of mourning is completed, the subject is free to invest in new libido-positions. Abraham and Torok contrast this mode of internalization with the mode of internalization involved in melancholia and postulate the performance of a distinct psychic action in either case. They call the internalization of the lost object that Freud views as a necessary maneuver in the work of mourning an example of "introjection" (literally "casting inside").[3] The growing, active psyche is in a constant state of acquisition; it constantly introjects absent objects by transforming them into words that can replace the presence of those objects. In the work of mourning, the subject introjects the lost object as, precisely, "lost": that is, the subject translates the pain of that loss into words, which can then be shared with others who have necessarily had to make similar

translations insofar as they also have language.[4] In other words, the work of mourning is an extreme case of the subject's capacity to cope with absences of any kind by taking recourse to language.[5] The identifying action that Freud postulates in melancholia is characteristic of the opposite psychic mode: "incorporation," a term Abraham and Torok borrow from Freud's account of melancholic identification. Following Freud, they define incorporation as an internalization of a correlative to the lost object by which the subject refuses to mourn. What incorporation specifically refuses, Abraham and Torok argue, is the introjection of loss: "Incorporation is the refusal to reclaim as our own the part of ourselves that we placed in what we lost; incorporation is the refusal to acknowledge the full import of the loss, a loss that, if recognized as such, would effectively transform us" ("Mourning *or* Melancholia" 127). A correlative of the lost object is internalized, but in a manner that "exempts the subject from the painful process of reorganization" (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning *or* Melancholia" 127). Incorporation is a fantasy that "merely simulates profound psychic transformation through magic; it does so by implementing literally something that has only figurative meaning. In order not to have to 'swallow' a loss, we fantasize swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost, as if it were some kind of thing" (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning *or* Melancholia" 126). Thus, while introjection can be described as "metaphorization" of experience in language, specifically the experience of absent objects, the "magic" of incorporation can be described as "*demetaphorization* (taking literally what is meant figuratively)" (Abraham and Torok 126). Abraham and Torok argue that this procedure is related to another: "*objectivation* (pretending that the suffering is not an injury to the subject but instead a loss sustained by the love object)" (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning *or* Melancholia" 126-7). This second procedure is a consequence of the secrecy necessitated by the subject's refusal to mourn. What is "swallowed" in the literal implementation of incorporation is not only the loss to which the subject cannot admit, but also everything that the subject associates with the trauma that led to that loss: "The words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed—everything will be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss. Swallowed and preserved" (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning *or* Melancholia" 130). With this complex of denied, demetaphorized, and internalized

material, the subject constructs a crypt within the ego:

> Reconstituted from the memories of words, scenes, and affects, the objectal correlative of the loss is buried alive in the crypt as a full-fledged person, complete with its own topography. The crypt also includes the actual or supposed traumas that made introjection impracticable. A whole world of unconscious fantasy is created, one that leads its own separate and concealed existence. (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning *or* Melancholia" 130)

However,

> the fantasy of incorporation is deluded as regards its effectiveness. Clearly, incorporation is nothing more than a reassuring fantasy for the ego. The psychic reality is radically different. The unspeakable words and sentences, linked as they are to memories of great libidinal and narcissistic value, cannot accept their exclusion. From their hideaway in the imaginary crypt—into which fantasy had thrust them to hibernate lifeless, anesthetized, and designified—the unspeakable words never cease their subversive action. (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning *or* Melancholia" 132)

The covert language of the crypt is not only expressible in the discourse of the subject, but it is also inheritable: it can be passed on to a subsequent generation. What is inherited is a gap in the speech of the parent that the child objectifies as a phantom. Just as the stranger walled up in the crypt prevented the parent from introjecting a loss, it also obstructs the child's introjections. However, as Derrida points out in his preface to Abraham and Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, the phantom "is not an effect of a repression 'belonging' to the subject [. . .] he is rather 'proper' to a parental unconscious. *Coming back to haunt* [*la revenance*] is not the return of the repressed" ("*Fors*" 119). In "Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology," Abraham specifies that the phantom "works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject's own mental topography" (173). The phantom's ventriloquy makes it difficult to discern the difference between "*the stranger incorporated* through suggestion and *the dead returning to haunt*": both act as "foreign

bodies" (Abraham, "Notes on the Phantom" 174). However, there is a difference in the way in which a subject suffering from one or the other condition responds to analysis. While the incorporated stranger may recede before appropriate forms of classical analysis, the phantom remains beyond the reach of classical analysis:

> The phantom will vanish only when its radically heterogeneous nature with respect to the subject is recognized, a subject to whom it at no time has any direct reference. In no way can the subject relate to the phantom as his or her own repressed experience, not even as an experience by incorporation. *The phantom which returns to haunt bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other.* (Abraham, "Notes on the Phantom" 174-75)

Derrida puts the similarity and difference between the stranger in the crypt and the transgenerational phantom as follows:

> What is in question in both is a secret, a tomb, and a burial, but the crypt from which the ghost *comes back* belongs to someone else. One could call this *heterocryptography*. This heterocryptography calls for a completely different way of listening from that appropriate to cryptic incorporation in the Self, even if it is *also* opposed to introjection [. . .]. The heterocryptic "ventriloquist" speaks from a topography foreign to the subject. (*"Fors"* 119)

For the analysis of a phantom, Abraham suggests that analyst and analysand work together in an investigative partnership which takes as its point of departure that "the construction arrived at in this way bears no direct relation to the patient's own topography but concerns someone else's" (Abraham, "Notes on the Phantom" 174).

Abraham and Torok define introjection as the psychic action by which the subject produces symbols: "language acts and makes up for absence by representing, by *giving figurative shape* to presence [. . .]" (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning *or* Melancholia" 128). These representations can be understood by others because every person endowed with language has taken the same recourse to figurative reconstruction for the same reason. Language "can only be *comprehended* or *shared* in a 'community

of empty mouths'" (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning *or* Melancholia" 128). This sharing is dramatized by the situation of subjects who write and read letters. Letter writing is a mode of introjection. The letter writer writes to the addressee because he or she is absent. The letter is a substitute for the presence of the loved object.[6] The process of substitution is reversed in the reading of the letter. For the letter writer writes *to the letter* or, more precisely, to the "other" in the letter that replaces the absent other. If the addressee is to receive this address, he or she has to substitute himself or herself for this "other." This is one way of describing what happens when we receive the letter collection published in *The Post Card.* The "Envois" letters are the product of the signatory's introjection of his addressee, and the representation that results from that introjection is what allows his address to that "other" to be received by the readers of the book, who have to put themselves in the place of the "other" in order to read. It makes no difference that these receivers are other than the absent love object that inspired the signatory's introjection in the first place, because the reading of the letter, by any recipient, requires the same act of self-substitution.

The opposite psychic action, incorporation, and its transgenerational sequel, the phantom, also make contributions to letters—contributions which Abraham and Torok would describe as subversive action. The subject's incorporation of a lost other fails to prevent the contents of the crypt from making themselves felt in the subject's writing, which is why the effects of the crypt and the phantom can be read by the analyst (or the letter reader). Even if the "absent object" intimated by crypt and phantom effects is not the same as letter's introjected addressee, the subversive action of incorporated material can take advantage of this opportunity for covert expression. Where introjection in letters represents the other as "other," incorporation performs a literal reproduction of the other disguised in the self. The phantom is a disguised other that has undergone postal relay. This is why the effects of incorporation and its transgenerational sequel can be felt as in-voices. What is at stake in the reading of encrypted or haunted letters is the identity of the phantom voice that writes. "Someone is writing letters," as Abraham and Torok would say. The question is who?

How does one discern the difference between the letter produced by introjection and a letter produced by incorporation or its transgenerational sequel? Abraham and

Torok's answer is tone, although they do not use that exact word. They argue that crypt effects and phantom effects "haunt." The difference between an effect of introjection and an effect of incorporation is that the voice of a phantom is utterly gratuitous in relation to the subject.

The next section of this chapter is mostly detective work. I reconstruct the incorporation that led to the transmission of a phantom. As is appropriate with "what happened" and "who did it" investigations, I examine what could be termed the plot of the "Envois" letters: the signatory's investigation into a peculiar scene of writing, which begins with his discovery of a postcard in the gift shop of Bodleian Library, a reproduction of Matthew Paris's medieval frontispiece showing Socrates writing in front of Plato (see figure). I argue that this discovery initiates an investigation into a transgenerational haunting (the plot of the "Envois" letters is the disclosure of another plot) from which the signatory of the "Envois" letters is not exempt. It has to do with an inheritance that he has received from Platonic philosophy. I argue that this haunting functions like an address, as the subtitle of *The Post Card* intimates, *From Socrates to Freud and Beyond.*

Fig. 1. Plato and Socrates, the frontispiece of *Prognostica Socratis basilei*, a fortune-telling book. English, thirteenth century, the work of Matthew Paris. MS. Ashmole 304, fol. 31v. Reprinted by permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

2. The Misadventures of Plato's "Socrates" Signature

In "Notes on the Phantom," Abraham observes that it is possible to extend the idea of the phantom into the social realm. Within families, the secret that the child intuits in the parent and receives as a gap can, in its turn, be passed on to yet another generation. Although the effect of a familial phantom can persist over generations, it is reasonable to assume that its effect "progressively fades during its transmission from one generation of the next and that, finally, it disappears" (Abraham, "Notes on the Phantom" 176).

> Yet, this is not at all the case when shared or complementary phantoms find a way of being established as social practices along the lines of *staged words* [. . .]. We must not lose sight of the fact that to stage a word [. . .] constitutes an attempt at exorcism, an attempt, that is, to relieve the unconscious by placing the effects of the phantom in the social realm. (Abraham, "Notes on the Phantom" 176)

Staged words—words in art, literature, philosophy, any public performance—transfer the phantom to a social sphere that is greater in number than a family, and whose members recognize its force because they are themselves the recipients of similar phantoms. There is a theory of aesthetics in this claim. The appeal, for the audience, of any given performance of staged words is determined by its recognition of "shared or complementary phantoms."

The "Envois" letters certainly qualify as staged words. Their fragmented paragraphs draw attention to the fact that the writing is the product of a transcription. Toward the end of the collection, we learn that the fragmentation is deliberate. The signatory informs his addressee that he is going to publish his letters and that he has decided upon a cut-and-paste editing procedure: he will deliver only fragments. Like Socrates as depicted in the Oxford card, who writes with one hand and scratches with the other, the "Envois" signatory is engaged in two-handed editorial work. He cuts passages from his own letters and transcribes them into the manuscript he is preparing for publication. He claims that the effect of this transcription will be to frustrate the efforts of any reader who seeks to locate either the signatory or his addressee in an autobiographical context. He will leave "all kinds of references, names of persons and of

places, authentifiable dates, identifiable events," but the reader who attaches importance to these references, as if the meaning of his writing could be explained by his life, will find himself or herself transferred by a "switch point" that derails everything (Derrida, *Post Card* 177). This derailing will not always happen—"that would be too convenient," writes the signatory—"but occasionally and according to a rule that I will not ever give, even were I to know it one day" (Derrida, *Post Card* 177). Such talk is what makes the "Envois" letters disconcerting. The signatory refers to the future state of his writing as a published correspondence while declaring that his cut and paste editing will exclude the general reader from the letters' private context. Moreover, the gaps of the writing published in *The Post Card* indicate that the signatory-cum-sender has followed through on his promises. Something has been done to the "Envois" letters, which raises the question of whether the reader has to undo that "something" in order to access their meaning.

The reader has been told not to do something. The signatory has issued a warning. In effect, he says, "Don't take the autobiographical route. There is nothing there to find." He denies the possibility. I want to argue that this denial has the effect of a smoke screen. It covers the fact that the reader has indeed been presented with a choice: to read autobiographically—that is, psychoanalytically—or not. The reader who listens with a psychoanalytic ear would be intrigued by the denial. Could this negative in fact be a positive? What has he got to hide? Following Abraham and Torok, the reader could observe that the attempt to control the reader's interpretative decisions is highly uncharacteristic of Derrida. Derrida would forward a double possibility, seemingly contradictory but in the final analysis supplementary. I argue the psychoanalytic position via Abraham and Torok. *Somebody* is denying that the autobiographical reading will lead anywhere. Who is denying the value of whose autobiography?

Despite the uncharacteristic tone, there is a sense in which the signatory's denial is in fact good advice. There is a good theoretical reason why Derrida—Derrida the philosopher, the autobiographic Derrida—would claim that the reader who attempts to restore the "Envois" letters to their autobiographical context (that is, Derrida's autobiographic context) will be frustrated, a reason which is recognizably Derridian. The signatory's term "switch point" cites the railroad metaphor by which Freud explains the

function of ambiguity in dreams:

> ambiguous words (or, as we may call them, "switch-words") act like points at a junction. If the points are switched across from the position in which they appear to lie in the dream, then we find ourselves upon another set of rails; and along this second track run the thoughts which we are in search of and which still lie concealed behind the dream. (*Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* 57)

Freud's concern in dream interpretation is discovering what the unconscious sends the consciousness. With "Envois," Derrida extends the scope of Freud's analysis. The propensity of language to cross over to "another set of rails" is triggered whenever discourse travels—no matter how great (or short) the distance covered.

Neither the signatory's talk of editing nor the fragmented condition of his letters prevents us from believing that the writing in The "Envois" letters has an editorial history. On the contrary, both attest to that history. They do, however, discourage us from attempting to reconstruct that history on the assumption that such work will give us access to an intention that would determine the meaning of the writing. To do so would be to assume that the allegedly autobiographic context of the letters includes the full presence of the writer to what he has written: his conscious awareness of what he means to say.

This is Plato's position in the *Phaedrus.* The moral value of spoken discourse is that its context includes the *psyche* of the speaker—that is, his "intelligence"—which knows what speech wants to say.[7] Socrates maintains that written discourse is immoral because it "drifts all over the place" (Plato, *Phaedrus* 521). It can be repeated in a context in which the mind that produced it is not in attendance. This is not quite the same as objecting to writing because it can be cited. Immediately after accusing writing of drift, Socrates defends the memorized speech on the grounds that it proceeds from writing "in the soul," which is the equivalent to saying that spoken discourse cites a spiritual document (Plato, *Phaedrus* 521). Thus, the contrast, for Plato, is between internal and external writing, which differ from one another only insofar as the latter is detachable from its origin. The object of Plato's diatribe is therefore more precise than he lets Socrates admit. It is not precisely that writing only repeats itself unintelligently (his other

charge against writing) since the memorized speech is also a repetition.[8] Plato does not attack writing in general, but writing which moves beyond the reach of the *psyche*'s counsel. He objects, in other words, to discourse that travels. As Socrates says to Phaedrus,

> once a thing is put in writing, the composition, whatever it may be, drifts all over the place, getting into the hands not only of those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it; it doesn't know how to address the right people, and not address the wrong. And when it is ill-treated and unfairly abused it always needs its parent to come to its help, being unable to defend or help itself. (Plato, *Phaedrus* 521)

Socrates's reference to the audience of written discourse indicates the extent of the powers that Plato attributes to self-presence. The context of spoken discourse, the domain that the self-present *psyche* oversees, comprehends the reception of speech as well as its inception and therefore precludes any possibility of accident of interpretation. Not only does the self-present *psyche* know what speech wants to say, it also insures that the audience of speech does likewise. In Socrates's words, knowledge that is written in the soul "can defend itself, and knows to whom it should speak and to whom it should say nothing" (Plato, *Phaedrus* 521). The memorized speech can guarantee the communication of philosophy because the *psyche* that attends it is capable of ascertaining the conditions conducive to delivery. The moral value of the *psyche* is thus its discerning capacity: its power to determine that discourse arrives at a designated destination—and at no place other than that destination.

The irony is that this is exactly what has happened—both to the Dialogues, by virtue of the simple fact they have been "put in writing" (by Plato) and to Plato's attribution of the Dialogues to Socrates. Both have drifted "all over the place." They have addressed themselves indiscriminately and consequently have been read, interpreted, and changed. Matthew Paris, a medieval recipient, has made Socrates write in front of Plato in a frontispiece to his book on fortune-telling. To make matters worse, the Bodleian Library, a modern institution, has reproduced Paris's frontispiece as a postcard available to the general public, a very large number of unintended recipients, some of whom—Derrida, for instance—are most definitely of the "wrong" kind.

What Paris's frontispiece and its postcard reproduction reproduce is not anything that Plato says in the Dialogues, but the scene of their writing. The mirrored play of hands indicates that Socrates and Plato are in the process of writing. But is Plato dictating to Socrates, his secretary, or is he tracing the words Socrates is writing? This problem confronts anyone who writes on the Dialogues. When you cite the Dialogues, which of the two do you identify as the one who "says" what you cite? The one name will always imply the other.

For Paris, this co-implication was so forceful that he got the names wrong. Or did he? "Did he get it wrong or what, this Matthew Paris," asks the "Envois" signatory in an earlier letter: "get the names as well as the hats wrong, putting Socrates' hat on Plato's head and vice versa?" (Derrida, *Post Card* 13). The one supports the name of the other above his head. Is this not a faithful reproduction of Plato's characteristic gesture, a gesture that is tantamount to a signature? Plato shows Socrates: this is how one recognizes that Plato is writing. Reproduced by Paris, however, Plato's signature shows up as more than a simple gesture. Pointing out that the name "Socrates" is spelt with a capital letter and "plato" is not, the "Envois" signatory says that Paris presents "the proper name as art of the umbrella. There is some gag in this picture. Silent movie, they have exchanged umbrellas, the secretary has taken the boss's, the bigger one [. . .]. And there follows a very full-length plot" (Derrida, *Post Card* 13).

I want to argue that Paris reproduces Plato's signature, but as *more* than Plato would have wanted. In other words, Paris stages Plato's *vouloir-dire* in the psychoanalytic sense: the "desire" of the subject that is forbidden to his or her mode of discourse, but which can nevertheless be heard by the psychoanalyst in the "speech" that the subject unconsciously emits. This is a connecting point with performative analysis, except that the speech that the psychoanalyst listens for is quite the opposite of an intentional communication. To cite one of Jacques Lacan's seminar titles in his seminar series on Freud's papers on technique, the "Truth emerges from the mistake" (261). Like the writer who operates under the restrictions of censorship—who says "what cannot or must not be said by means of a certain disorder, certain ruptures, certain intentional discordances"—the desire of the subject can circumnavigate repressions (Lacan 245): "the slips, the holes, the disputes, the repetitions of the subject also express, but here

spontaneously, innocently, the manner in which his discourse is organized" (Lacan 245). Thus, while Austin conceives of speech as a species of action, intentionally performed, Lacan reverses this formulation in his account of conscious speech: "In so far as the point for the subject is to gain recognition, an act is speech" (246). In analysis, "truth emerges in the most clearcut representative of the mistake—the slip, the action which one, improperly, calls *manquée* [missed, failed, abortive]. Our abortive actions are actions which succeed, those of our words which come to grief are words which own up" (Lacan 265).

Since Lacan defines unconscious speech as an action and an action that "wants" to be recognized, one should be able to argue that the act of signing one's writing in a characteristic way can also be recognized as speech. Plato's signature in the Dialogues "wants" to say something, something that Paris repeats in his frontispiece as a truth-revealing mistake. Two subjects in different historical periods; one desire, acted upon the first time covertly and the second time unwittingly—this is the situation outlined by Abraham and Torok in their theories of the psychic crypt and transgenerational haunting.

It is no accident that the transgenerational haunting investigated in the "Envois" letters has to do with filiation and authority. In "Notes on the Phantom," the example Abraham chooses as an illustration of transgenerational haunting is a family romance, a genre of fantasy in which the subject invents a new family and, in order to achieve this, invents a romance in his or her family history.[9] For example, the child imagines himself to be born of noble parents instead of his real parents and/or that the mother was having secret love affairs which make either the subject or the subject's siblings, illegitimate. I want to argue that the family romance is the exemplary plot of transgenerational haunting. The transgenerational secret that persists over several generations would not be just any secret, but one that interests its legatees. And what better way to do this than to address their legitimacy?[10] The haunting that would most trouble the patriarchal family would have to do with the integrity of its line. The same goes for the traditions, disciplines, and movements that are structured on that model.[11]

Platonic philosophy, for example. In the tradition that Plato founded, the family romance takes place right at the start. More precisely, it is a fantasy about the start: Plato's fantasy about Socrates. Turning the focus of his investigation to the Letters of Plato, the

"Envois" signatory cites the following passage from Letter II to Dionysius, which begins, as one might expect of Plato, with an injunction that one should not write:

> Consider these facts and take care lest you sometime come to repent of having now unwisely published your views. It is a very great safeguard to learn by heart instead of writing [how many times have I told you!]. It is impossible for what is written not to be disclosed. That is the reason why I have never written anything about these things, and why there is not and will not be any written work of Plato's own. What are now called his are the work of a Socrates in the flower of his youth. Farewell and believe. Read this letter now at once many times and burn it. Enough on this matter . . . (sic; Derrida, qtd. in *Post Card* 58)

Plato would have us believe not only that Socrates is the lead speaker of the Dialogues, but also that Socrates is the one who caused or let the Dialogues be written without writing himself. There is no work of Plato's own because everything is inherited from Socrates. However, the "Envois" signatory points out, in order to receive his inheritance, Plato had to create Socrates, the lead speaker of the Dialogues. In other words, Plato had to father his own father, thereby becoming "his own grandfather and his own grandson" (Derrida, *Post Card* 47). And this despite the fact that there was hardly any connection between the two. As Plato explains in the Letter VII (note the number), he was engaged in a political career at the time of Socrates's death (in other words, Plato was in the government that ordered Socrates's execution). Plato describes Socrates as a "friend" and "associate" whom he had admired as a young man—not as his master (*Letters* 1574-75). The "Envois" signatory postulates that in all probability "they doubtless never exchanged a glance, I mean a real one [. . .]" (Derrida, *Post Card* 48). Plato's attribution of the Dialogues to Socrates can therefore be read as a ploy in a family romance, a fantasy motivated by Plato's need to affiliate himself with Socrates. Plato, who was *not* one of Socrates's disciples, nevertheless wants to be his legitimate heir. So he fathers his own father in order to inherit from himself. And then, the "Envois" signatory continues, Plato makes his grand move: "The presumptive heir, Plato, of whom it is said that he writes, has never written, he receives the inheritance but as the legitimate addressee he has dictated it, has had it written and has sent it to himself" (Derrida, *Post*

Card 52).[12] This is what Paris's frontispiece reproduces: Plato's family romance.

In "Family Romances," Freud observes that "a marked imaginative activity is one of the essential characteristics of neurotics and also of all comparatively highly gifted people," and an example of this imaginative activity is the daydream (238). At one point in childhood development, this imaginative activity takes over the topic of the family romance, which, in normal development, is employed by the child for the essential task of achieving liberation from his or her parents. The difference between the neurotic absorbed with a family romance and everyone else is that the neurotic has failed in this task. Hence the neurotic's continuing absorption in a family romance (which can be forgotten in adulthood, but which is nevertheless still active) is the sign of a stay in his or her development. If the daydreams of the neurotic caught up in a family romance are examined, "they are found to serve as the fulfilment of wishes and as a correction of actual life" (Freud, "Family Romances" 238). Freud maintains that such corrections have two principal aims: one erotic and one ambitious. The erotic aim is related to the Oedipus complex: that is, the need to get rid of one parent so that the child can have sole possession of the other.[13] The ambitious aim is that of getting free from the child's actual parents and of "replacing them by others, who, as a rule, are of higher social standing" (Freud, "Family Romances" 238-39). Analyzing the Oxford card, the "Envois" signatory forwards a hypothesis about Plato's dream:

> Plato's dream: to make Socrates write, and to make him write what he wants, his last command, *his will. To make* him write what he wants by letting (*lassen*) him write what he wants. Thereby becoming Socrates and his father, therefore his own grandfather [. . .], *and killing him.* He teaches him to write. [. . .] He teaches him to live. This is their contract. Socrates signs a contract or diplomatic document, the archive of diabolical duplicity. But equally constitutes Plato, who has already composed it, as secretary or minister, he the magister. And the one to the other they show themselves in public, they analyze each other uninterruptedly, *séance tenante*, in front of everyone, with tape recorder or secretary. (Derrida, *Post Card* 52-53)

Plato's fantasy is a homoerotic version of the Oedipus complex. He kills Socrates, his teacher, so that he can possess Socrates, his father or his lover, depending on whether

the aim of the family romance is ambitious or erotic (it could, of course, be both). Thus, Plato inherits from himself. Several letters later, the "Envois" signatory refers again to the passage in Letter II in which Plato attributes the Dialogues to Socrates: "p. writes in a letter (destined to be burned at his request) that it is S. who has written everything. Does he or does he not want this to be known?" (Derrida, *Post Card* 61). He tells at least Dionysius about Socrates, and since this is an open letter, he indicates his allegiances in front of a potentially limitless number of third parties. This family romance, right down to its possible self-consciousness as a performance for an audience, is replicated by the Oxford card: "*Plato* shows *Socrates* (shows to *Socrates* and to someone else that he is showing *Socrates*, perhaps), he indicates, with his finger, Socrates is in the course of writing" (Derrida, *Post Card* 61). In fact,

> Everything happens as if our 13th century *Fortune-telling book* (*Prognostica Socratis basilei*) had without seeing or without knowing it, but who knows (could Paris have read this Letter?), illustrated this incredible chicanery of filiation and authority, this family scene without a child in which the more or less adoptive, legitimate, bastard or natural son dictates to the father the testamentary writing which should have fallen to him. (Derrida, *Post Card* 61)

Freud would say that Plato's family romance has led to melancholia. Freudian hypothesis: Socrates, the father/lover, is "lost" to Plato because he did not return the appropriate sentiments (probably because they hardly knew each other). As a result of this injury, Plato's object-relation is undermined. Instead of withdrawing his investment and transferring it onto another object, the freed libido withdraws into Plato's ego, where it establishes an identification of the ego with the lost object.[14] Rejected by Socrates, Plato incorporates "Socrates" only to find part of himself criticizing his creation in a manner that reveals his ambiguous feelings. This internal criticism explains Plato's apparent loss of self-esteem, which he expresses as self-depreciation (refusing to sign his own work).[15]

Hypotheses modified by contributions from Abraham and Torok: "Socrates" has undergone a second identification, this time a covert one. He now takes on Plato's ambiguous feelings for the lost love object. Walled up inside of Plato's crypt, this endocryptic "Socrates" is sending love/hate letters to Plato which he encrypts in Plato's

discourse (the Dialogues). When Plato passes on the inheritance by going public with the Dialogues, the foreigner inhabiting his discourse becomes a phantom for whoever receives them in a legacy. His haunting of the Dialogues is so persistent that it is still going strong in thirteenth century, when Matthew Paris endeavors to reproduce the scene of their writing and paints an image in which Socrates is seated at the scribe's desk writing or editing, possibly encrypting or even erasing (observe Plato's critical expression), and in any case authorizing (observe Socrates's noble garb, his gander hat, his larger size, and his youthful bearing) some document while Plato stands at this back (poor, smaller, and older) directing his creation or, at least, trying to. This scene is the frontispiece of Paris's book on fortune-telling, which eventually comes to be housed in the Bodleian Library. In the twentieth century, the Bodleian reproduces the frontispiece as a postcard that can be purchased in the library's gift shop. There it waits to be discovered by someone (who is more or less Jacques Derrida) who writes about it in a private love-letter collection. The hypothesis pauses here, but this is not the end of the story.

Look at the "Envois" signatory's description of the moment he discovered the postcard:

> Have you seen this card, the image on the back [*dos*] of this card? I stumbled across it yesterday, in the Bodleian (the famous Oxford library), I'll tell you about it. I stopped dead, with a feeling of hallucination (is he crazy or what? he has the names mixed up!) and of revelation at the same time, an apocalyptic revelation: Socrates writing, writing in front of Plato, I always knew it, it had remained like the negative of a photograph to be developed for twenty-five centuries—in me of course. Sufficient to write it in broad daylight. The revelation is there, unless I can't yet decipher anything in this picture, which is what is most probable in effect. (Derrida, *Post Card* 9)

The discovery triggers a revelation. It allows a negative of a photograph to be developed, a negative that was already there is his mind, but which could not reveal its image until now.[16] Abraham and Torok would attribute the signatory's experience of this discovery of the Oxford card as a hallucination, a revelation, and then a recognition to the metapsychological character of the phantom staged by social practices: the haunting

quality of the Oxford card is the effect of staged words, the Dialogues of Plato. What the Oxford card depicts is a scene that is already circulating in society—more or less developed, developed in Paris's image perhaps by accident—and that has done so for twenty-five centuries. The "Envois" signatory only needs to see the secret repeated in the Oxford card in order to realize that he already "knew" it.

A quick examination of the dates of the first letters in the collection shows that the historical start of the collection (as opposed to the order in which the letters are presented) is the day on which the signatory discovers the Oxford card. "Did not everything between us begin with a reproduction?" asks the signatory immediately prior to describing his discovery of the Oxford card on the previous day (Derrida, *Post Card* 9). This letter is dated June 4, 1977. The letter collection begins with three letters dated June 3, 1977: the day before. The action of the "Envois" letters—including the performative action of their address (everything I take up in my first chapter on the "Envois" letters in other words)—begins with the signatory's discovery of the Oxford card, a library store "reproduction."

In the seventh letter of the "Envois" collection, or the sixth if one excludes the opening letter, the "Envois" signatory summarizes the problem staged by the Oxford card. "I have not yet recovered from this revelatory catastrophe" he writes, "Plato behind Socrates. Behind he has always been, as it is thought, but not like that. Me, I always knew it, and they did too, those two I mean. What a couple. *Socrates* turns his *back* to plato, who has made him write whatever he wanted while pretending to receive it from him" (Derrida, *Post Card* 12). Everything Plato wants or everything Socrates wants? The pronouns in this description are ambiguous in exactly the same way that the Oxford card is ambiguous (Is Plato dictating or tracing? Is Socrates author, editor, or scribe?). The next letter, the seventh or the eighth, dated on the same day, begins by repeating the problem, but this time as a complaint voiced in the first and second persons. "You give me words," writes the "Envois" signatory: "you deliver them, dispensed one by one, my own, while turning them toward yourself and addressing them to yourself—and I have never loved them so [. . .]" (Derrida, *Post Card* 12). So this, it would seem, is Socrates speaking, speaking as the signatory of the "Envois" letters. This is the letter in which the "Envois" signatory announces his postcard project. "Want to write a grand history," he

says, "a large encyclopedia of the post and of the cipher, but to write it ciphered still in order to dispatch it to you, taking all the precautions so that forever you are the only one to be able to decrypt it (to write it, then, and to sign) to recognize your name, the unique name I have given you, that you have let me give you [. . .]" (Derrida, *Post Card* 13). Is this not what the ghost of Socrates would want? To destine himself to Plato, this "friend" and "associate" who made his name by making "Socrates" say in writing that one should not write? "Socrates" wants to haunt Plato, and the state of Plato's signature—always saying "Socrates"—shows that he is achieving the desired effect.

"Socrates" speaks for the first time in the seventh/eighth letter of the "Envois" collection, citing an analysis of the Oxford card in the previous letter, the sixth/seventh. As Bass points out in his glossary to *The Post Card*, the figure 7 in the "Envois" collection is involved in the signatory's characteristic gesture, his "signatory" gesture: *J'accepte*. *J'accepte* is a near homonym of *Jacques sept*, which refers to the seven letters in *Derrida* and in *Socrate*, the French spelling of the name *Socrates*. In the "Envois" letters, "Socrates" is participating in "Derrida's" signature: hence the I/we (*je/nous*) signature staged in the opening letter. *Je/nous* is a homonym of *genoux* 'knees,' which, when translated into English, leads metonymically to *legs*, an abbreviation in French for legacy. "Socrates" is the phantom that Derrida received in a legacy from Plato. The following is the full passage in which the phrase *J'accepte* first appears. Hear it as "Socrates" trying to reassure a critical Plato:

> I accept [*J'accepte*], this will be my signature henceforth, but don't let it worry you, don't worry about anything. I will never seek you any harm, take this word at its most literal, it is my name, that *j'accepte*, and you will be able to count, to count on it as on the capital clarities, from you *I accept* everything. (Derrida, *Post Card* 26)

"Socrates" is speaking in the "Envois." Speaking to whom? To Plato, yes, but what if this is a transference as the trope of the apostrophe implies? In that case, Socrates is speaking to Plato via his analyst. Who would that be? The unnamed addressee of the "Envois" letters? The question may be more helpfully phrased as follows: who is the analyst from "Socrates's" point of view? In *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis*, Forrester argues that the analyst always functions as a stand-in for "Freud" or what that name

covers: the founding act of psychoanalysis which every analyst repeats, "namely the method by which it is ensured that the letter continues on its way [. . .]" (237). If "Socrates" speaks in the "Envois" letters, and if he speaks to his analyst (whoever that may be), then it is quite fair to say that his address is also to "Freud." "Socrates's" analyst stands behind this representation, behind "Freud." *The Post Card* is, as its subtitle straightforwardly announces, *"From Socrates to Freud and Beyond."*

Hypothesis resumed. "Socrates's" analyst is the literary analyst, the reader who receives the "Envois" letters in *The Post Card.* This analyst recognizes the "Envois" letters as the transferences that they really are, that is, as repetitions from some "other" scene: the scene depicted on the Oxford card, for example; or the autobiographical scene from which these fragments are believed to derive. By identifying this "other scene," the literary analyst situates himself or herself in the analytic scene: the scene of reading and of interpretation. This is the distinction that Forrester calls the founding act of psychoanalysis that every analyst repeats: "In order to be sure that this scene is the analytic scene, and not the other scene (the primal scene, the scene of 'true love' or hate), the analyst must ensure that it is a repetition—as we have seen, Freud states that '*Vor allem,* the begins the cure with a repetition.' The guarantee of this repetition, that this repetition *is* a repetition, is the legacy of Freud, the name of Freud" (Forrester 241). The literary analyst identifies the "Envois" letters as repetitions in an attempt to exorcize the phantom. However, if this phantom circulates in a cultural inheritance, can the literary analyst be sure that he or she is not already implicated in the scene depicted on the Oxford card?

Let me review the terms of Plato's creation. Plato incorporates "Socrates," his character. He makes Socrates write everything that he (Plato) wants. But is writing in fact what Socrates is doing at the scribe's desk? No, observes the "Envois" signatory, "nothing will ever prove, from looking at this card, that S. ever wrote a single word":

> At the very most, dipping his pen, or sensuously one of his fingers, [. . .] he prepares himself to write, he dreams of writing, what he is going to write if the other lets him or indeed gives him the order to do so; perhaps he has just written, and still remembers it. But it is certain that he is not writing presently, presently he is scratching. Up to the present: he does

> not write. You will say that "to write" is indeed to scratch, no, he is scratching in order to erase, perhaps the name of Plato (who has succeeded, moreover, by inventing Socrates for his own glory, in permitting himself to be somewhat eclipsed by his character), perhaps a dialogue of Plato's. Perhaps he is only correcting it, and the other, behind him, furious, is calling him back to order. Perhaps he is playing with the blank spaces, the indentations, the simulacra of punctuation in the other's text, in order to tease him, to make him mad with grief or with impotent desire. (Derrida, *Post Card* 48-49)

Socrates is not writing. Perhaps this is the problem. Plato wants to make Socrates write everything (so that he can receive it from him) in the same way that the analyst makes the analysand "say everything." "To turn one's back is the analytic position, no?" writes the "Envois" signatory in another letter (Derrida, *Post Card* 178). Socrates is in analysis with Plato who stands in for "Freud," but he subverts the analyst-analysand relation by secretly taking notes on his own therapy session. "Socrates" is going to publish his own case history, or emend the one that Plato wrote. Thus, he scratches: he suppresses parts of Plato's discourse, creating gaps. Then he relays the letters, forwarding the inheritance so that it can be repeated by Paris and the signatory of the "Envois" letters, who forwards the inheritance again. The reader of *The Post Card* intercepts the trajectory of "Socrates's" transference, thus occupying Plato's position. Who is to say that the reader/analyst will not forward the inheritance in his or her turn?

Consider this. Transcription and relay are the actions by which the "Envois" signatory performs a self-analysis of the in-voices that inhabit his own writing. These are also the actions that Socrates is performing in the Oxford card, which would seem to imply that the self-analysis in question is Socrates's own. The relation between the "Envois" letters and the postcard they would analyze is a *mise en abyme*: the "Envois" letters are written and/or edited on Socrates's desk in precisely the manner portrayed by the Oxford card. Where does this put the literary analyst? At Socrates's back, criticizing.

When Abraham states that it is possible to extend the idea of the phantom into the social realm, he implies that ghost effects can be felt in any sort of inheritance.

Disciplines, traditions, any inheritable body of thought can be haunted. Thus, ghost effects can travel from one work of philosophy, art, or literature to another—within a tradition and over the generations. He also claims that social practices stage words in an attempt to exorcize their phantoms. However, as Austin would point out, the fact that an attempt is made is no guarantee that it will be successful. The continuing repetition of this staging, generation after generation, would indicate the contrary. One could even go so far as to say the transmission of particular ghost effects constructs the character of a given tradition. What better way to identify a tradition than by what it says despite itself?

Derrida argues this point in "Du tout," an interview with René Major that concludes *The Post Card.* The inheritance in question is Freud's legacy to the institution of psychoanalysis. Derrida refers to what is often said of Freud, that the first analyst had no analyst, a hypothesis that Derrida considers disingenuous. So he reformulates the hypothesis: "Suppose now that this founder, this so-called institutor of the analytic movement, had need of a supplementary *tranche*" (Derrida, *Post Card* 519). Derrida is referring to the practice of analysts of doing another stretch of therapy, which Freud recommended analysts do periodically. Forrester points out that analysts often do a supplementary *tranche* with analysts of different allegiances, which means that "they go to analysts who, according to their own orthodoxies, are not analysts" (223).[17] The inner logic of the *tranche* is "recourse to the non-analytic as the necessary supplement to analysis" (Forrester 223). If Freud had need of a supplementary *tranche*, then the psychoanalytic movement, from its very beginning, would be marked by an "unanalyzed remainder." Derrida argues that this unanalyzed remainder would not mark off the limits of psychoanalysis as would a delineating border. Rather,

> This unanalyzed will be, will have been that upon which and around which the analytic movement will have been constructed and mobilized: everything will have been constructed and calculated so that this unanalyzed might be inherited, protected, transmitted intact, suitably bequeathed, consolidated, enkysted, encrypted. It is what gives its structure to the movement and to its architecture. (Derrida, *Post Card* 519-20)

Derrida's expression "unanalyzed remainder" in this passage is the equivalent to

Abraham's term "gap": the consequence of an inherited secret; internal foreign territory. What Derrida adds to Abraham's analysis in "Du tout" is that the gap or the "unanalyzed remainder" structures the discourse that contains it. The shape of the gap determines the way in which the discourse is constructed: its "architecture" as Derrida puts it in the passage cited above. It also determines the way that discourse is "mobilized" or transmitted in an inheritance.[18] Thus Abraham and Torok's analysis of the phantom is similar to the deconstructive method of recovering the excluded supplement that informs the text. This is the point at which psychoanalysis and deconstruction do the same work. Deconstruction can be described as the analysis of the unsaid and even of the unthought in cultural discourses: literature, philosophy, art, or any possible genre of the staged words that rehearse collective inheritances.

I missed a step in my reconstruction of the transgenerational phantom at work in the "Envois" letters when I implied that one can account for the difference between the Letters and the Dialogues of Plato in terms of their illocutionary mode. That distinction, I implied, was the following. Plato says in the Letters what he is unable to say in the Dialogues because, in the Dialogues, he was busy doing it. In the Letters, he describes his attribution of the Dialogues to Socrates, the master dialectician who did not write. The constative mode of the Letters is what permits Plato to sign them in the normal way, by appending a signature as Austin says, and in that way tethering them to their origin. In the Dialogues, he has to resort to a signature performance, which would seem to classify them as literature on Austin's account. The problem with this distinction is that the Letters of Plato, the only writing in Plato's corpus signed in his name, are in fact *not* signed by Plato or, at least, not *entirely*. They are generally considered to be "more or less" apocryphal or "bastard, as is more often said in Greek" (Derrida, *Post Card* 83). On this point, the "Envois" signatory cites the "great prof's" of the nineteenth century who agree that the Letters had a multiplicity of authors or "more precisely that each letter or all the letters had several authors at once, several masked signers under a single name" (Derrida, *Post Card* 84). One of them maintains that the Letters are at best copies of Plato's "manner" and are therefore "useful sources for Plato's biography" only insofar as the quality of their editing indicates precise copying from some prior

document (qtd. in *Post Card* 88). Another claims that they "are not all *private* letters, some of them revealing the existence of an already well defined and rather widespread genre from the fourth century before Christ. They are rather 'open letters,' destined in part to the expressly designated personage, but above all to the great public. These missives were not to remain secret; they were written to be published" (qtd. in Derrida, *Post Card* 91).

Multiple signatories operating under the first-person pronoun, a letter collection that is possibly derived from biography, at least in part, and the trope of the apostrophe—the "Envois" reader recognizes each of these interpretative problems. Plato's apocryphal signature of the Letters seems to be an another "Envois" in-voice, although perhaps not of the phantom variety postulated by Abraham and Torok. "Plato's" in-voice is the more common, conscious or unconscious, masqueraded citation. This in-voice seems to be responsible for the letters' epistolary performance, even their signatory's concern with privacy. "Plato" opens Letter II with a warning to Dionysius that he will demonstrate "the first principle," but "in riddles, so that in case something happens to the tablet [. . .] he who reads may not understand" (1566). The "Envois" signatory cites (in the conventional manner) a passage from Letter III in which Plato says that he often has to write letters to people who ask for them, so Dionysius should know that he distinguishes his "serious" letters from those that are "less so" and that his symbol for the serious letters is a salutation to "God" as opposed "the gods" (qtd. in Derrida *Post Card* 136). This signalling recalls the "Envois" signatory's device for signalling his apostrophe. Plato uses salutations to singular and plural gods; the "Envois" signatory uses the singular and plural second-person pronouns, *tu* and *vous*. This similarity of these signalling devices and the concern for privacy that they both indicate explain why the signatory has to adhere to a "very strange principle of selection" when he transcribes passages from his own letters to the manuscript he is preparing for publication (Derrida, *Post Card* 3). He says it was his "due to give into it" (Derrida, *Post Card* 3). It was his due to "Plato," specified by in-voice.

The apocryphal status of the Letters of Plato indicates that the Oxford card is no fluke repetition of Plato's performance, but one occasion in a long tradition of repeating that performance. Whenever Plato's signature is received by its tradition, it is reproduced

as an "I/we." Along with the Dialogues, Plato forwarded a way of signing which was so charged for his heirs that it had to be worked out on the program of other missives: the Letters of Plato; Paris's frontispiece, which the Bodleian appropriately turned into a postcard; and the "Envois" letters, whose signatory forwards the inheritance (with annotations) in *The Post Card.*[19]

Do these reproductions render the signature invalid? In *Limited Inc,* Derrida points out that the signature which is never repeated would not be recognizable as one: "In order to function, that is, to be readable, a signature must have a repeatable, iterable, imitable form; it must be able to be detached from the present and singular intention of its production" (20). Plato gives a signature performance in the Dialogues. His signature detached itself from his intention already in that writing. Then, it travelled along with Plato's legacy.

In my first chapter on the "Envois" letters, I argued that their divided address made it possible for the reader to countersign. Now it appears that the numerical device used to create the divided address comes from the Letters of Plato, which are apocryphal, citations of Plato's manner. Does this derivation have any bearing on the ethical situation created by the letters' divided address? You decide to become the letters' intimate addressee. In terms of Abraham and Torok's theory of introjection, you substitute yourself for the other's introjection of your absence. "Plato's" authorship of the letters' epistolary performance should not make any difference for a reader who makes this decision. Both the signature and the countersignature are introjections and recreations of the absent other. The one introjection is responsible for the status of the other *as* other. This mutual introjection—substitution and creation through words—is where a responsible response can be made.

3. Transference, Transcription, and the Destination of Dreams

What are the fragments published in "Envois"? What does Derrida, together with his various phantoms, deliver to the readers of *The Post Card* with these letters? In order to take up these questions, one first has to ask how the "Envois" letters came to be, for their presentation as a fragmented text testifies to an editorial history. More than anything else about the "Envois" letters—what they say, how they say it—this

testimony is their most striking feature.

In the switch-point letter I cited earlier, the signatory declares that he will deliver us "only fragments circled with white" (Derrida, *Post Card* 177). This prepares us to regard the gaps that fragment the letters as sites of destruction. However, the gaps can also be understood as spacing that allows for "the emergence of the mark" (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 10). Without the spacing between words, there would be no words. I want to argue that the gaps that punctuate the "Envois" letters allow the postal history and technology of the writing to emerge. Such history and technology are just what the signatory of the opening letter says his book on "the *postes*" would have treated, the book that was impossible to write but for which the "Envois" letters nevertheless serve as a preface:

> It would have treated that which proceeds from the *postes*, *postes* of every genre, to psychoanalysis.
>
> Less in order to attempt a psychoanalysis of the postal effect than to start from a singular event, Freudian psychoanalysis, and to refer to a history and a technology of the *courrier*, to some general theory of the *envoi* and of everything which by means of some telecommunication allegedly *destines* itself. (Derrida, *Post Card* 3).

Instead of sending us "a history and a technology of the *courrier*" (one thinks of Richard A. Lanham's *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* and its classical and medieval precedents), the "Envois" signatory sends us fragments that show us that postal history and technology are "already there" in his writing. What is more, he states frankly that this is the aim of his editing. In the switch-point letter, he announces a principle of destruction, which is also a principle of selection:

> I am reflecting on a rather rigorous principle of destruction. What will we burn, what will we keep (in order to broil it still better)? The selection [*tri*], if it is possible, will in truth be postal. I would cut out, in order to deliver it, everything that derives from the Postal Principle, in some way, in the narrow or wide sense (this is the difficulty, of course), everything that might preface, propose itself for a treatise on the posts (from Socrates to Freud and beyond, a *ps*ychoanalysis *of* the *pos*ts, a

> *p*hilosophy *of* the *p*osts, the *of* signifying belonging or provenance, psychoanalysis or philosophy operating *since*, *on the basis of* the posts, I would almost say: on the basis of the nearest post office, etc.) And we burn the rest. (Derrida, *Post Card* 176)

The signatory underscores the letters *s* and *p* in this passage. As I noted in my first chapter, the graphic letter, for Derrida, is "re-markably insignificant" ("My Chances/*Mes Chances*" 15): like the number and the proper name, it refers without signifying and it refers only in a given context, which means that when the context changes, so will the reference. In the transcribed context of the "Envois" letters, the letters *s* and *p* abbreviate "Socrates" and "Plato," the names of the signatory's transgenerational phantoms, received along with an inheritance from Western metaphysics just as one can receive a crypted message along with an otherwise open letter. In other words, "Socrates" and "Plato" operate "*on the basis of* the posts" as the signatory puts it in the passage cited above. Along with the collection of transcribed letter fragments published in *The Post Card*, the signatory sends us his in-voices (for payment). In other words, he participates in the tradition of their postal relay.

(Aside on another "Envois" signature. In the opening letter, the "Envois" signatory says that the passages that have disappeared from his letters are indicated by a blank of 52 signs, "52 mute spaces" (Derrida, *Post Card* 5). Why 52? The signatory calls the 52 signs "a cipher" that he "had wanted to be symbolic and secret—in a word a clever cryptogram [. . .]" (Derrida, *Post Card* 5). In other words, he describes the 52 signs as the effect of a transgenerational phantom: as gaps that result from the inheritance of an ancestral secret. The number 52 can be read as a coded anagram: the five letters in the name *Plato* times two; that is, Plato's superego and that part of his ego that he translated into "Socrates," Plato's incorporated lost object.)

From this letter on, the signatory continually complains about his principle of selection—to cut out everything that derives from the Postal Principle—and his strange adherence to it. "When," he asks, "is it a question of all this directly, or 'literally'? And when by means of a detour, a figure or presupposition?" (Derrida, *Post Card* 177). In a letter dated some five months later, the problem comes down to grammar and vocabulary:

> Should I cauterize around the "destinal" prepositions, "to," "toward," "for," around the adverbs of place "here," "there," "far," near," etc.? around the verbs "to arrive" in all its senses, and "to pass," "to call," "to come," "to get to," "to expedite," to all the composites of *voie*, voyage, *voiture*, viability? It's endless, and I will never get there, the contamination is everywhere and we would never light the fire. Language poisons for us the most secret of our secrets [. . .]. (Derrida, *Post Card* 224)

Where is intention in this fragmented writing? Not in the letters as they were "originally" written. One could punctuate any writing by the signatory's criterion with the same results. But this simply means that postal history and technology are necessary for writing, which is precisely the point. Any writing so edited would do as the preface for the signatory's book because, as the signatory writes in an earlier letter, "there is no metapostal":

> this history of the posts, which I would like to write and to dedicate to you, cannot be a history of the posts: primarily because it concerns the very possibility of history, of all the concepts, too, of history, of tradition, of the transmission or interruptions, goings astray, etc. And then because such a "history of the posts" would be but a minuscule *envoi* in the network that it allegedly would analyze (there is no metapostal), only a card lost in a bag, that a strike, or even a sorting accident, can always delay indefinitely, lose without return. This is why I will not write it, but I dedicate to you what remains of this impossible project. (Derrida, *Post Card* 66-67)

More than that, the postal is not even limitable to language. In a reference to Martin Heidegger, the signatory notes that the postal can serve as metaphor of "the *envoi* of being" because

> as soon as there is, there is *différance* [. . .] and there is postal maneuvering, relays, delay, anticipation, destination, telecommunicating network, the possibility, and therefore the fatal necessity of going astray, etc. There is strophe (there is strophe in every sense, apostrophe and

> catastrophe, address in turning the address [always to you, my love] and my post card is strophes) [. . .] one can account for what essentially and decisively occurs, everywhere, and including language, thought, science, and everything that conditions them, when the postal structure shifts, *Satz* if you will, and posits or posts itself otherwise. (Derrida, *Post Card* 66)

The letter fragments published in *The Post Card* are strophes. Transcribed and relayed, they indicate "Socrates's" apostrophe, the phantom of Plato's catastrophe. Thus, the "Envois" collection "posits and posts itself otherwise" as the signatory puts it in the passage cited above. The "otherwise" is the difference between its former and current functioning: formerly, autobiography (perhaps); now fragments selected for their participation in the postal transactions their signatory would analyze. The signatory's necessary implication in these transactions is the reason why he had to abandon his book on the history and the technology of the posts.

Another account of what the "Envois" letters "are" could proceed from the following passage from Abraham's "The Shell and the Kernel: The Scope and Originality of Freudian Psychoanalysis," a review article of the first dictionary of psychoanalysis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* by J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis. I begin this argument with a citation of a passage from this essay without giving any further contextual information. Note how it can be read as a description of the letter fragments published in "Envois":

> From a purely semantic point of view, psychic representatives, like the symbols of poetry, are mysterious messages from one knows not what to one knows not whom; they reveal their allusiveness only in context; although the "to what" of the allusion must necessarily stop short of articulation. The philistine claims to translate and paraphrase the literary symbol and thereby abolishes it irretrievably. We have seen, on the contrary, how Freud's anasemic procedure *creates*, by virtue of the Somato-Psychic, the symbol of the messenger. Later on we shall understand how it serves to reveal the symbolic character of the message itself. By way of its semantic structure, the concept of the messenger is a

> symbol insofar as it alludes to the unknowable by means of an unknown while only the relation of the terms is given. (Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel" 86-87)

Abraham is referring to the "Psychical Representative" entry of *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, which explains Freud's varying definitions of instinct as either a somatic excitation or its representative in the unconscious. Laplanche and Pontalis propose the following clarification: "The relation between the somatic and psychic is conceived of neither as a parallelism nor as a relation of causality . . . It must be understood by a comparison with the relation existing between a delegate and a sender" (qtd. in Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel" 86). For Abraham, this notion of delegation and the symbol of the messenger it implies exemplifies the challenge of psychoanalytic thinking, for it refers to the relation between the self-reflexive subject and the nonpresence at the "kernel" of being, which effects all discourse. The psychoanalytic domain is "contained in a well-defined interval, the interval which extends between the 'I' and the 'Me,' between the subject and object of reflexivity" (Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel" 84). This space is "the very condition of reflexivity"(Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel" 84): it makes conscious experience and intentionality possible. Abraham asserts that this is why "psychoanalysis uses forms of speech in the therapeutic situation to achieve ever more self-awareness and self-affect, proving to the listener that the frontiers are dependent on a beyond that Freud named the *Kernel of Being*, Unconscious" ("The Shell and the Kernel" 84). Although this kernel is inaccessible and unknowable, the space of reflexivity is conditioned by its effects inasmuch as "the shell itself is marked by what it shelters; what it encloses is disclosed within it" (Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel" 80).

Abraham argues that Freud conceived of the subject as structured by a hierarchy of shell and kernel embeddings, each traversed by the appropriate messengers. Thus, in the somato-psychic relation to which Laplanche and Pontalis refer, the psyche is conceived of as an envelope and the somatic is conceived of as the protected kernel that sends its dispatches to the envelope (a reversal of the conventional notion of the relation of mind to body).[20] The mediating function that Laplanche and Pontalis attribute to instinctual representatives can be understood as "communication through interpreters"

which implies "merely difference of language, not of nature, between the two poles of the relation" (Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel" 86). Freud also conceives of the psyche as shell and kernel. The ego is the protective envelope of the unconscious: "Just as drives translate organic demands into the language of the Unconscious, so it utilizes the vehicle of affect or fantasy in order to move into the realm of the Conscious. Thus the appropriate emissaries enact a passage each time from a Kernel to its Periphery" ("The Shell and the Kernel" 91). In a further development of the symbol of the messenger, Abraham argues that "memory traces could have the same mediating mission as representations, affects, and fantasies. Memory traces are to be distinguished from the latter only by their orientation: their mission is centripetal while the others' is centrifugal" (Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel" 92). Within this complex communication system, emissaries are detained or let pass by censorship:

> we define the trace as the reception given by the unconscious Kernel to the emissaries of the Preconscious-Conscious system. Received on the surface of the Kernel, the trace can then be sent back to the Envelope in the form of representations or affects, or else be excluded from it by Censorship. Repressed, the trace continues nonetheless to act in relation to the unconscious Kernel, but henceforth obeys its laws exclusively—both to attract into its orbit the other traces that concern it and to erupt into Consciousness as the return of the repressed. (Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel" 92)

Abraham describes the domain of psychoanalysis as the space that separates the "I" from the "Me": the subject and object of reflexivity. I want to argue that the "Envois" letters can be read as messages traversing this space, composed by this "I" and addressed to this "Me." This space is a complex communication network, in which messages from beyond one or the other of its frontiers—Derrida's unconscious and preconscious—are received, *censored*, and relayed as fragments.[21] Their specific content is variable. The letters are composed of fantasies translating instinctual representations (the references to drives and everything associated with driving, including the fear of accidents), traces from Derrida's lived experience (the overt autobiographic references) that return to the preconscious as representations and affects (Derrida's professions of

love for his addressee), and repressed traces that have evaded censorship (Derrida's in-voices). The publication of the collected letters can be understood as one more nucleo-peripheral relay in this communication network.

Let me develop the implications of this interpretation with reference to Freud's account of the composition of a particular psychic "message." In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud describes the function of day residues in dream scripts in a way that supports Abraham's reading of the symbol of the messenger in psychoanalytic thinking. This discussion is pertinent to my reading of the "Envois" letters because this is where the word *transference* first appears in Freud's writing. *Transference,* in the developed sense of the term, refers to a situation in the context of the psychoanalytic situation in which the analysand directs to the analyst behavior that is in fact addressed to another. In my first chapter, I argued that transference is comparable to the trope of the apostrophe that characterizes the tone of intimate address in the "Envois" letters. This argument can be complemented by another. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud uses the word *transference* as a synonym of *transcription*, the editing procedure by which the "Envois" signatory prepares his manuscript for publication. In Freud's account of the function of day residues in dreams, he identifies transference as the means by which the unconscious achieves an effect in the preconscious: the unconscious wish inscribes its instinctual force onto the day residues (one genre of memory trace). This is necessary because "an unconscious idea is as such quite incapable of entering the preconscious and [. . .] can only exercise any effect there by establishing a connection with an idea which already belongs to the preconscious, by transferring its intensity onto it and by getting itself covered by it" (Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* 601). Day residues and other kinds of recent impressions, often of the most trivial kind, are preferred by the unconscious because of their freedom from censorship. They "satisfy the demand of the repressed for material that is still clear of associations [. . .]" (Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* 603). The nucleo-peripheral emissary here is the instinctual force of the repressed wish, which transfers itself onto the day residues it finds available in the preconscious and, in such manner, gets woven into the texture of the dream, fragments of which may be retained by the subject in a waking state.

Freud's account of the function of day residues in dreams involves an understanding of the dream script as a code that is peculiar to an individual subject. The dream script is the limit case in readability. It requires a commitment to something we do not understand in advance. But how do we know that something is there to be understood in the first place? Lacan poses this question in his reading of the two senses of the word *transference* in Freud's thinking. Freud's analysis of the transcribed force of day residues in dreams indicates that there is something else at stake than the transmission of a semantic content. Lacan argues that Freud's analysis of the day residue reveals the operation of unconscious desire and its demand for recognition: "Freud shows us how speech, that is the transmission of desire, can get itself recognized through anything, provided that this anything be organized in a symbolic system" (244). The demand for recognition makes speech recognizable *as* speech. Lacan insists that this demand "is there before anything lying behind" (240). As to what speech says, "What is says—is it true? is it not true? It is a mirage. It is this initial mirage which guarantees that you are in the domain of speech" (Lacan 240).

For Lacan, the significance of Freud's description has to do with the meaning of transference in the developed sense of the term, in the clinical sense, although Lacan does not make this connection explicit at this point in his argument. At this point, he merely observes that the dreams of the person in analysis tend to address the analyst. However, is this observation not, in fact, important? It means that dreams are not entirely private. They can address themselves to another recipient—outside of the mind of the dreamer. In other words, Lacan's reading of the two sense of the word *transference* in Freud's thinking—transference as repetition and transference as transcription—suggests a theory of the postal relay of dreams. (Is this a mistake? It sounds like something Derrida would suggest.)[22]

Let me review some of the implications of the above. Lacan appears to conceive of the destination of dreams as follows. Just as the transference that occurs in the clinical session is addressed, so too are the desires transcribed onto day residues in dreams, although the other, from the point of view of the unconscious, is one's own consciousness, however poor a reader it may be. Another way of formulating this point would be to build on Forrester's epistolary analogy of Freud's conception of

transference as a misdirected letter. Freud conceived of the dream as a letter from the unconscious to the conscious. The sender of such letters is not identical with its receiver: the unconscious is most near to us (it makes us most ourselves), but it is also most unknowable. What Lacan adds when he alludes to the tendency of the dreams of the analysand to address the analyst is that receiver of the dream/letter is not necessarily the same as its addressee. *By whom* does the dream want to be recognized? By anyone who is there to hear it, says Lacan. Unconscious desire "wants" to be recognized by the consciousness of the dreamer, but this transmission is always thwarted by censorship: hence the unconscious recourse to dissimulating devices. What distinguishes the analyst from any other kind of recipient, including the preconsciousness of the dreamer, is that the analyst is a receiver who is ready to read what is sent.

The two senses of the word *transference* in Freud's thinking open up another way in the "Envois" letters can be read: as a collection of dream scripts. They are written with material derived from the signatory's—that is, Derrida's—waking experience, but this material has no autobiographical significance in the conventional sense of the word. If it does tell us anything about Derrida's life as a conscious, intentional subject, the status of that information is only incidental. In the context of the dream script, Derrida's day-residues serve as a vehicle for another autobiography, an inherited one.

Lacan maintains that unconscious speech transmits a desire that demands recognition. The question, for Abraham and Torok, is whose? Their definition of the foreigner incorporated in the crypt of the self postulates a heterogeneous agency within the psychic topography of the subject; and their definition of the transgenerational phantom implies a heterogeneity that is even more radical, for the phantom "speaks from a topography foreign to the subject" (Abraham, "The Phantom of Hamlet" 189). A similar question can be asked of the other side of the transaction. By whom does the transgenerational phantom want to be recognized? By the haunted mind? Lacan's allusion to the possible relay of address in dreams indicates that unconscious desire may seek out some outside reader and the analyst in particular. The "Envois" letters complicate this situation for the readers of the book. What would it mean to recognize the demand of a collective dream in which one is already participant? Since the analysis in question is a transgenerational haunting operating on a cultural scale, the literary

critic/analyst cannot be sure that he or she is not implicated in its transmission, perhaps even contributing to its postal relay.

Notes

1. In *Autobiographics in Freud and Derrida,* Jane Marie Todd reads Derrida's *Glas* and *The Post Card* as autobiographic works: "I take my premise from Derrida's claim that writing is not an activity undertaken by an entirely self-conscious subject and guided by his intentions, but the repetition of an already constituted language within which the subject must take his place" (2). Arguing that autobiography is always reenactment and sometimes even an acting out, Todd forwards a theory of autobiography as "the repetition not only of an individual unconscious, but of a philosophical heritage transmitted through language" (3). Because this repetition is necessary, autobiography—or "autobiographics" as Todd rephrases the term—can only be genealogical in nature:

> autobiographics is not simply the record of a life, or of a relation between self and self: it involves necessarily the other, and in particular, the legacy which the self inherits from his ancestry. If the subject is not a discrete individual, but a construct formed through a relation with the *déjà-la,* then autobiography can only be genealogical in nature, the record of a struggle between the self and those who precede it. (Todd 154)

In her chapter of on *The Post Card,* Todd grounds this argument in Derrida's reading of a story recounted by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: the story of Freud's observation of a child's game involving a spool attached to string. In "To Speculate—on 'Freud,'" the first long essay published in *The Post Card,* Derrida observes that this story is disguised autobiography. The child is Ernst, Freud's eldest grandson by his daughter Sophie, whose development of the game Freud observed over a period of years. The game consisted in throwing away the spool and then pulling it back by the string and exclaiming in commentary first "o-o-o-o" and then "a-a-a-a," sounds which Freud takes as "Fort! Da!" 'Gone! There!' Freud interprets the purpose of the Ernst's game as the working through of his mother's periodic absences: Ernst

dramatizes his mother's departure and return. Todd interprets Derrida's analysis of Freud's story as follows. The *fort/da* the game is a form of auto-affection that constitutes the subject:

> The dispersal of his toys (of himself) is made possible by the fact that the self is already a "collective" [. . .]. This auto-affectation that passes through the other makes it possible for the grandfather to become part of Ernst's "self" and vice versa. The operation of *fort/da*, then, in whatever form, is the formation of a self that is haunted by its other: it is an autobiographics that is always heterographic, always a relation to a genealogy. The self-appropriation involved in coming to consciousness also entails an exploration. (183)

Todd links Derrida's analysis of the *fort/da* scene in "To Speculate" to "Le facteur de la vérité," the other *Post Card* essay, in which Derrida opposes Lacan's reading on Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Purloined Letter." Derrida identifies an inheritance structure in "To Speculate—on 'Freud'" involving Freud; his daughter Sophie; and her two sons, Ernst (the child of the *fort/da* game) and Heinerle. This inheritance structure is repeated in "Le facteur de la vérité" in a covert story involving Freud; Marie Bonaparte; and her two "sons," Lacan and Derrida, who rival one another for the inheritance from Freud. This family rivalry is worsened by Barbara Johnson, who, in her reading of interpretative debate surrounding Poe's story, takes a position against Derrida, her teacher and the father of deconstruction, in favor of Lacan.

Todd makes a convincing argument that these two *Post Card* essays are autobiography, and her reference to Derrida's analysis of the *fort/da* game in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* offers a convincing account of how autobiography necessarily involves the other. The identity construction enacted by auto-affection makes the self a collective; therefore, autobiography is always genealogical in nature. However, Todd's theory of autobiography cannot account for writing that is up-front about its plural signatures. In other words, it cannot account for haunted writing. This explains why Todd fails to apply her reading strategy to the "Envois" letters even though she claims that it starts there.

2. No other critic has applied Abraham and Torok's theories of the crypt and the phantom to Derrida's "Envois." Applications of Abraham and Torok's theories of the crypt and the transgenerational phantom to other literary works include Abraham's essay on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in "The Phantom of Hamlet *or* The Sixth Act, preceded *by* The Intermission of Truth," included in the *Shell and the Kernel* anthology; Nicholas Rand's *Le Cryptage et la vie des oeuvres: Secrets dans les textes*; and Esther Rashkin's *Family Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Narrative.* Rashkin applies Abraham and Torok's theory of the crypt and the transgenerational phantom to Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*, Auguste de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *L'intersigne*, Honoré de Balzac's *Facino Cane*, Henry James's *The Jolly Corner,* and Edgar Allan Poe's The Fall of the House of Usher

3. Abraham and Torok credit Sandor Ferenczi with the concept of introjection, citing as their source Ferenczi's 1912 article "On the Definition of Introjection." Rand argues, however, that Abraham and Torok are the true creators of the concept in the broad sense that they intend (102).

4. In "Mourning *or* Melancholia," Abraham and Torok argue that introjection first appears soon after birth when the infant experiences the emptiness of its mouth alongside its mother's presence. The infant translates this emptiness into cries and other requests for presence, which it gradually learns to replace by words. Abraham and Torok argue that this is the initial model of introjection:

> However, without the constant assistance of a mother endowed with language, introjection could not take place. Not unlike the permanence of Descartes's God, the mother's constantly is the guarantor of the meaning of words. Once this guarantee has been acquired, and only then, can words replace the mother's presence and also give rise to fresh introjections. The absence of objects and the empty mouth are transformed into words; at last, even the experiences related to words are converted into other words. So the wants of the original oral vacancy are remedied by being turned into verbal relationships with the speaking

> community at large. Introjecting a desire, a pain, a situation means channelling them through language into a communion of empty mouths. (128)

This analysis can be helpfully applied to Derrida's reading of the game recounted by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. With the words "Fort" and "Da," Ernst introjects his mother's periodic departures and returns. When Freud incorporates (in the usual sense of the word) this autobiographical story in his essay on the death drive, he exhibits a refusal to introject the loss of his daughter. However, this incorporation is a way of working through a tendency to incorporate (in Abraham and Torok's sense of the word) rather than introject the loss of his daughter.

5. Todd's difficulties in accounting for haunting in the "Envois" letters may be the result of a confusion of the concepts "auto-affection" and "introjection." In *Speech and Phenomena,* Derrida identifies auto-affection, hearing oneself speak, as the material basis for the ideality, self-presence, and metaphysics of presence in general. While the *fort/da* game certainly involves auto-affection insofar as Ernst confirms his self-presence by hearing himself speak, the concept does not explain Ernst's use of the game as a means of coping with his mother's absences. Todd's reading therefore suffers from her apparent unfamiliarity with the concept of introjection as Abraham and Torok define it and the relevance of the concept for Derrida's work and *The Post Card* in particular.

6. Barthes discusses the substitute function of the love letter in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. In the writing of love letters, the relationship is between the letter writer and the letter, not between the lover and loved one. To write love letters is "To know that one does not write for the other, to know that these things I am going to write will never cause me to be loved by the one I love (the other), to know that writing compensates for nothing, sublimates nothing, that it is precisely there where you are not—this is the beginning of writing" (Barthes 100). I return to Barthes's account of the substitute function of the love letter in the next chapter, where I argue that the letter writer in Coeztee's *Age of Iron*, Mrs. Curren, gives a similar account of the function of her letter for both herself and her addressee. For both Barthes and Mrs. Curren, writing is a

response to the absence of the loved one. In Viktor Shklovsky's *Zoo, Or Letters Not About Love*, the significance of the letter writer's relation to the substitute—that is, to the letter—entirely replaces the significance of his relationship with the loved object.

7. In his introduction to *The Collected Dialogues of Plato,* Huntington Cairns points out that the traditional translation of *psyche* by "soul" is not appropriate in the Dialogues. In the various senses in which Plato uses the word, *psyche* is translatable, according to context, "as Reason, Mind, Intelligence, Life, and the vital principle in things as well as in man; it is the constant that causes change but itself does not change" (xx).

8. In the first part of the drift passage that I am about to cite, Socrates compares writing to painting. Written words are like the painter's products: "they seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing forever" (*Phaedrus* 521).

9. Abraham's example is a patient whose hobby is the study of the genealogy of European nobility: "Given the identity of illegitimate children, he can on request trace anyone's origins to prestigious forefathers" (Abraham, "Notes on the Phantom" 172). From this patient's transference onto Abraham during a meeting, Abraham surmises that the patient's father constructed a family romance designed to hide the fact that he (the father) was illegitimate. When transmitted to the son, the secret became a phantom:

> The father's family romance was a repressed phantasy: the initially restrained and finally delirious preoccupation of the patient seems to be the effect of being haunted by a phantom, itself due to the tomb enclosed within his father's psyche. The patient's delirium embodies this phantom and stages the verbal stirrings of a secret buried alive in the father's unconscious. (Abraham, "Notes on the Phantom" 173)

10. This identification of the family romance and its characteristic concern with legitimate legacy as the motive force behind the transgenerational phantom constitutes my specific

contribution to critical response to Abraham and Torok's work and its development by Derrida in *The Post Card.*

11. My reading of the "Envois" letters identifies concerns with authority and legitimacy in the signature performances that found and authorize Western philosophy, and I argue that the transmission of western philosophy as a discipline is traditionally structured on the model of the patriarchal family. The "Envois" letters speak of a patriarchal inheritance and a patriarchal haunting that operates covertly within that inheritance. *The Three Marias: New Portuguese Letters*, the collaborative work of three Portuguese women—Maria Isabel Barreño, Maria Teresa Horta, and Maria Velho da Costa—is a work that gives a feminist response to the exclusion of women from such transcultural and transgenerational transmissions. Published in Portugal in 1972, the *New Portuguese Letters* are a contemporary continuation and reevaluation of the seventeenth-century *Portuguese Letters*, a one-way correspondence of five love letters that were first published in 1669 in France as *Lettres portugaises traduites en français*. The continuation of *Portuguese Letters* by the *New Portuguese Letters* is significant because of the history of patriarchal appropriation in the reception of that work. Published anonymously and presented in an editorial introduction as "an accurate copy of the translation of five Portuguese letters which were written to a gentleman of quality, who was serving in Portugal," the *Portuguese Letters* were immediately received as a superior example of epistolary prose and a work of doubtful authenticity (qtd. in Miller 47). The question of the letters' authenticity continued to be debated by scholars and writers for some three hundred years. In their introduction to the Garnier edition of the *Portuguese Letters*, entitled "L'Énigme des *Lettres portugaises,*" F. Deloffre and J. Rougeot definitively establish that Gabriel-Joseph de Lavergne de Guilleragues, who had professed only to being the publisher of the letters, was their author. Published in 1962, nearly three hundred years after the letters' first publication, the Garnier edition is the first edition of the *Portuguese Letters* to designate an author on its title page.

Nancy Miller sums up the history of the reception of *Portuguese Letters* as presented by Deloffre and Rougeot as "the history of a debate over origins, authorship, and authority—Portuguese or French, real or invented, by a nun or by a writer" (Miller

47). She argues that, throughout the history of their reception, the question of the collection's legitimacy is bound up with the question of the gender of the letter writer. Those who maintained that women have a natural gift for love and letter writing believed that the letters were authentic. Those readers who considered men superior in either art believed that they were forged. Neither position defended the woman in the text. The fiction of authenticity denies the nun her "authorial prerogatives" (Miller 57): in the preface to the collection, the "editor" recognizes only their addressee and translator as persons who have a claim on the letters. The forgery theory indicates a male appropriation of the figure of the female for the purposes of masculine self-affirmation. As Miller puts it, when a man writes a woman's love letters addressed to a man, he puts on female drag in order to affirm the masculine self (49). Miller furthermore argues that male appropriation of the figure of the female in the *Portuguese Letters* was passed on in a legacy to the French and English epistolary novels of the eighteenth century.

The *New Portuguese Letters* reclaim the *Portuguese Letters* for a female legacy. Interspersed among the other pieces that make up the work—poems, fictional sketches, historical and contemporary letters—are a series of letters that are presented as a continuation of the five *Portuguese Letters.* Letters written by "Mariana Alcoforado," the nun whom nineteenth-century scholars identified as the author of the *Portuguese Letters*, are addressed to her lover, her mother, her cousin, and her childhood friend, among other members of her family and acquaintance. These are juxtaposed to letters that reply to Mariana's, letters written on her behalf, and letters written in her name. Part of this epistolary expansion is a letter series written by women who claim to have received a legacy from Mariana. As if in reply to the tradition of patriarchal appropriation carried out by scholarly and literary response to the *Portuguese Letters*, the three Marias invent a feminine genealogy following from Mariana's example, which one descendant calls a "spontaneous, philosophically minded offshoot of this female line"(Barreño, Horta, Vehlo da Costa 150). Perpetuated by the handing down of letters and diary extracts and surviving in the midst of social structures that support patriarchy, this is a lineage that "has gradually become aware of itself, of its necessity for being—and hence a lineage opposed to the forgetting and the diluting, the rapid absorption of a scandal within the peace of the family circle and the reigning social order" (Barreño, Horta, Vehlo da Costa

150). Self-consciousness, in this context, can only be covert and subversive: "If men create families and lineages in order to ensure that their names and property are passed along to their descendants, is it not logical for women to use their nameless, propertyless line of descent to perpetuate scandal, to pass along what is unacceptable?"(Barreño, Horta, Vehlo da Costa 150).

The *New Portuguese Letters* can be read as a feminist investigation into the transgenerational haunting of women by gender representations. Despite (or perhaps precisely because of) their doubtful authenticity, the *Portuguese Letters* have the status of a Portuguese cultural narrative, capable of generating representations of national identity and gender (the three Marias read the male-female relations depicted in *Portuguese Letters* as an allegory of seventeenth-century political relations between Portugal, Spain, and France). More specifically in terms of Abraham and Torok's theory of transgenerational haunting, the three Marias postulate a secret prehistory for feminism. The genealogical letters tell the story of a family secret and a secret "family." Like an inherited crypt lodged in the consciousness of its host, this subversive feminine lineage operates within patriarchy and practices self-consciousness covertly as a means of survival.

12. The "Envois" signatory says that "The Inheritance of the Pharmakon: The Family Scene," a subchapter of "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination, "interests* Plato and Socrates in the very position in which you see them posted on this card" (Derrida, *Post Card 52).* See that work for Derrida's analysis of the status of writing in Plato's *Phaedrus.* In this essay, Derrida discusses the role of fathers and illegitimate children in Plato's characterization of the relation of *psyche* and writing in *The Phaedrus.*

13. Freud does not use the term "Oedipus complex" in "Family Romances"; however, it is clear from the context of the argument that this is the situation that he is describing in the family romance fantasy. Freud published his study of the Oedipus complex in "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men" in 1910, a year after the publication of "Family Romances" (1909). However, Laplanche and Pontalis point out that Freud was using the concept in his analyses before either publication. In "On the Sexual Theories of

Children" (1908), for example, Freud uses the term "nuclear complex" as an equivalent to what he would later call the "Oedipus complex" (qtd. in Laplanche and Pontalis 286). Laplanche and Pontalis also cite a letter Freud wrote to Fliess on October 15, 1897 in which he writes, "we can understand the riveting power of *Oedipus Rex* . . . . The Greek legend seizes on a compulsion which everyone recognizes because he feels its existence within himself" (283). In this letter, Freud is referring to his discovery of his feelings for his parents during his self-analysis.

14. In "Boy Meets p: Barthes, Derrida, and the Signs of Love," Mark Nunes examines the status of romantic love in the "Envois" letters (farce or not?). Nunes argues that both Derrida in The "Envois" letters and Barthes in *A Lover's Discourse* imply that the language of metaphysics and the language of love are in some regard equivalent. Nunes argues that both writers place romantic love in the tradition of Aristophanes's hermaphrodites in Plato's *Symposium*, in which the lover is separated from a beloved with whom he was originally united, and Freud's use of the same myth to describe the action of Eros and ego-object relations in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and "Libido Theory and Narcism" respectively.

15. In this paragraph, I borrow heavily from the passage in "Mourning and Melancholia" (cited previously) in which Freud presents his theory that the loss in self-esteem demonstrated by the melancholic is an expression of a corresponding loss in the ego resulting from an identification with the lost object.

16. Todd makes a similar point. This description blurs the distinction between active interpretation and passive perception. Interestingly, this argument leads Todd to observe, in a passing comment that predicts my reading, that "In some sense, Plato and Socrates are dictating to Derrida *his* autobiography" (188).

17. In French psychoanalytic slang the expression "*faire une tranche de plus*" means to do another stretch of therapy (Forrester 223). *Tranche* means "slice," as in a slice of bread.

18. Todd makes a similar observation:

> what Freud could not see, but which nevertheless found its way into his texts, does not simply function as a gap in psychoanalytical knowledge or as a limit beyond which psychoanalysis cannot progress: that blind spot actually constitutes the condition for psychoanalytic knowledge in the first place. Thus, it cannot simply be eliminated by the supplementary work of later generations. The blind spot is part of the very structure of the science, the condition for its transmission, and to eliminate it would radically alter psychoanalysis as an institution. (154)

19. The image of the Oxford card is reproduced on the front cover of *The Post Card*; as a color miniature within the "Envois" collection; and, on a foldout page among the book's endpapers, as black and white reproduction of the postcard in actual size, which looks as if it were made hastily with a library photocopy machine for the purposes of reference. Derrida restages the phantom, several times, for readers of the book.

20. Abraham argues that this reference to the unknowable brings about a radical translation of the words psychoanalysis uses so that they can take on significations that seem to be the opposite of their customary meanings, a translation Abraham calls "anasemic." The language of psychoanalysis "designifies" words of their customary meaning by virtue of their reference to this unknowable, "Yet, emerging as they do in the interplay of toucher-touched—as images alluding to the untouched nucleus of nonpresence—Pleasure, Discharge, the Unconscious (as well as Consciousness and Ego in the their relation to them), do not strictly speaking signify anything, except the founding silence of *any act of signification*" (Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel" 84). In the example of somatic-psychic relation, it is the word *somatic* that undergoes anasemic translation, for in the psychoanalytic context *somatic* no longer refers to the "body," but that which "cannot be touched directly" (Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel" 87). Since Freud described the psyche as "an exterior layer, an envelope," the somatic "must therefore reign in a radial nonpresence *behind* the Envelope where all phenomena

accessible to us unfold. It is the Somatic which dispatches its messengers to the Envelope, exciting it from the very place the latter conceals. Under the influence of its solicitations, the whole of the Psychic is moved, the body proper included" (Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel" 87).

21. Gregory Ulmer accounts for the fragmentation of the "Envois" letters by arguing that Derrida (whom Ulmer straightforwardly identifies as the signatory of the letters) writes from the position of the super-ego, which is the censoring agency in Freud's topography of the psyche. He furthermore notes that Freud defines the super-ego as that part of the psyche that identifies with tradition, citing the following passage from Freud's *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* in Laplanche and Pontalis's "Super-Ego" entry: "a child's super-ego is in fact constructed not on the model of its parents but of its parents' super-ego; the contents which fill it are the same and it becomes the vehicle of tradition and of all the time-resisting judgements of value which have propagated themselves in this manner from generation to generation" (Laplanche and Pontalis 437). Ulmer argues that the signatory's discovery of the postcard is the organizing experience of the "Envois" letters because what it depicts is "countertradition." It "reveals, in one blow, the truth of tradition": Plato is in fact "behind" Socrates; and the French word "derrièrre" 'behind' is involved in a complex homonymic play on "Derrida," which implies that Plato's signature is implicated in Derrida's (Ulmer 47). Ulmer does not develop these observations in terms of transgenerational haunting as defined by Abraham and Torok, although some of the terminology he uses in other parts of his article indicates that he is familiar with at least some their work. Like Todd, Ulmer does not hear heterogeneous voices in the letters, which is necessary for reading the "Envois" letters as a haunted work.

22. In the seminar on Poe's "Purloined Letter," Lacan maintains that the letter has a proper itinerary which destines it to return to a determinable place. In the "La facteur de la vérité" (and, indirectly, throughout *The Post Card*), Derrida contests Lacan's theory of the letter with a theory of postal goings astray that he calls "destinerrance." The "Envois" letters can be read as a demonstration this argument. The iterability of the "Envois"

letters, as Derrida puts it elsewhere, enacts a "'destinerrance' of a sending determined by the response" (Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* 52). I discuss Lacan's reading of the two senses of the word *transference* in Freud's thinking because his contention that speech exists as soon as anyone is there to hear it resembles Derrida's theory. Is it a mistake? Is it not? If a mistake, what does it say? If not a mistake, what does that say? Taking a position on these questions would require intensive reading in Lacan's psychoanalytic writings.

Chapter 3

Epistolary Gifts: The Love Letter in Coetzee's *Age of Iron*

In chapter 1, I focused on the performative effect of the "Envois" letters, arguing that it has the force of a summons. The "Envois" letters are addressed to "you" in the singular, which implies an address reserved for a determinable subject, but the postal relay of the collection enacts a repetition of that address. As a published correspondence (fictional or actual), the "Envois" letters are open letters in which the personal pronoun *you* refers to you, the reader of the book, as well. I argued that the performative effect of relayed summons can be the invocation of a reader who responds affirmatively despite the mistake, and I examined what such a response implies about responsibility in literary analysis and psychoanalysis. In chapter 2, I turned to the other interpretative problem posed by the "Envois" letters: the identity of the "I" who signs. The "Envois" signatory concludes the letter that opens the collection with an I/we signature that intimates pluralities in the writing subject. Drawing from the psychoanalytic theories of Abraham and Torok, I argued that this signature is the consequence of a postal relay of another order: a secret unwittingly inherited along with a legacy, which can be discerned in the "Envois" letters as "in-voices."

This chapter takes the concerns of my thesis in another direction by turning to a novel in which a letter is figured as a posthumous gift. J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron* is an epistolary novel consisting exclusively of a single letter. It is written by an elderly South African woman, Mrs. Curren, to her daughter, a political objector who has emigrated to the United States. Mrs. Curren is dying; she calls her letter her daughter's inheritance. My interest in this chapter is in the gift effects of Mrs. Curren's letter—not for the readers of the book (although these effects are felt by us as well thanks to the postal transactions of the epistolary novel), but for the daughter: Mrs. Curren's intended addressee. Drawing on Derrida's analysis of the gift event in *Given Time: I Counterfeit Money,* I postulate two effects of Mrs. Curren's letter: one that annuls its gift in a circular return and another that surpasses this circuit with another kind of postal relay that Derrida calls textual dissemination. While this chapter rehearses some of the concerns of my previous chapters—the transfer of a legacy and the open letter's repetition of effects for the reader of the book—it also asks an additional question. When a gift is figured as a letter, can it give in a manner that does not demand restitution of its designated addressee? Answering this question entails following the "procedures" of Mrs. Curren's letter in Austin's sense

of the word and following these procedures beyond the representational confines of the novel. For, as an epistolary novel consisting exclusively of only one letter, *Age of Iron* does not show any of the letter's effects. Nevertheless, I want to argue that the gift effects of Mrs. Curren letter are discoverable for the reader of the book. And, in a manner similar to the performative action the "Envois" letters, the performative action of Mrs. Curren's letter enacts identity construction: Mrs. Curren's, the daughter's, and the readers' of the book.

1. Reading the Epistolary Situation: Locution, Illocution, Perlocution

Age of Iron is a novel consisting exclusively of a single, extended letter. Yet few critics of *Age of Iron* comment on its epistolary qualities; and, aside from myself, none read this novel as an epistolary novel. How does one account for this critical response? In *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin attributes decisions of this kind to a choice made between two ways of focusing on a given speech act. Austin's argument can be helpfully applied to the question of how one reads (or fails to read) the epistolary situation of *Age of Iron*.

In the doctrine of illocutionary forces, Austin distinguishes between the "locutionary" and the "illocutionary" act. A locutionary act is an act of speech that is precise in its meaning. It has sense and reference and thus makes clear "what is being said" (Austin 73). An illocutionary act is a development of the locutionary. Besides having sense and reference, an illocutionary act furthermore refers in some manner to the circumstances of the occasion on which it is issued. As a consequence of this reference, an illocutionary act indicates its "force" or how "it is to be taken" (Austin 73). This distinction does not imply that the locutionary act lacks illocutionary force. The difference between these two kinds of act is that where the illocutionary act states its force explicitly, the locutionary act simply employs it. On the basis of the observation, Austin claims that the doctrine of illocutionary forces is the special contribution of speech act theory to the philosophical study of language. It demonstrates that "the occasion of an utterance matters seriously, and that the words used are to some extent to be 'explained' by the 'context' in which they are designed to be or have actually been spoken in a linguistic interchange" (Austin 100). Austin attributes the descriptive fallacy (the fault that he finds in the

language theories of "philosophers") to the mistaking of problems of illocutionary usage for problems of locutionary usage. In contrast to descriptive theories of language, speech act theory considers not only "the proposition involved (whatever that is) as has been done traditionally," but also "the total situation in which the utterance is issued—the total speech-act [. . .]" (Austin 52).

In a development of his exegesis of illocutionary forces, Austin explains a reader's choice between designating a given utterance as either constative or performative in terms of focus. All speech acts can be read as either kind of utterance. When we read a given utterance as a constative, "we abstract from the illocutionary [. . .] aspects of the speech act, and we concentrate on the locutionary: moreover, we use an over-simplified notion of correspondence with the facts—over-simplified because essentially it brings in the illocutionary aspect" (Austin 145-46). When we read an utterance as performative, "we attend as much as possible to the illocutionary force of the utterance, and abstract from the dimension of correspondence with facts" (Austin 146). Implicit in this account of critical attention is the claim that there are two ways in which we can conceive of the temporal relation of a given utterance to the context in which it is issued. If reading a given utterance as a constative entails an abstraction from the illocutionary, this is because we conceive of the constative utterance as having no effect on the context in which it is issued. As a description of some state of affairs or as a statement of some fact, a constative utterance is a report or reflection of those affairs or facts. We can judge a constative utterance as either true or false because we conceive of it as coming *after* the affairs or facts it would report or reflect: a constative utterance either corresponds or fails to correspond to affairs or facts conceived of as anterior. This is, as Austin says, an over-simplified notion of correspondence with affairs or facts because a constative utterance is an act of speech: it acts by describing. Just as much as an explicit performative, a constative must satisfy certain conditions if its performance of a description is to be felicitous. The terms *true* and *false* therefore "do not stand for anything simple at all; but only for a general dimension of being a right or proper thing to say as opposed to a wrong thing, in these circumstances, to this audience, for these purposes and with these intentions" (Austin 145). A designation of a given utterance as performative implies another assumption about the temporal relation of an utterance to the context in which it is

issued. If reading a given utterance as a performative entails an abstraction from the locutionary, this is because we conceive of a performative utterance in terms of the circumstances of the occasion in which it is issued.

Austin's point can be demonstrated by examining the two ways in which one can read Mrs. Curren's own account of what she is doing in writing her letter. Mrs. Curren claims that she writes her daughter so that a "certain body of truth" will "take on flesh: my truth: how I lived in these times, in this place" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 119). The reference in this statement to the times and the place in which Mrs. Curren writes directs our attention to the constative force of her letter: Mrs. Curren writes in order to describe for her daughter the manner in which she lives out her final days. These times and place are late-phase apartheid in South Africa. *Age of Iron* is set in 1986, the second year of the student-led educational boycotts and the year in which the worst of the township riots began. Mrs. Curren's letter—particularly the story she tells about her housemaid Florence, Florence's son Bheki, and his friend John—can be read as a personal testimony to the political and social realities of South Africa during this critical period of its history.[1] Written as a letter addressed to the daughter on the occasion of Mrs. Curren's imminent death, this testimony has the illocutionary force of an act of leave-taking. Leave-taking is the performative action of Mrs. Curren's entire letter, considered as a *single* speech act. It is the action Mrs. Curren performs *in* writing her letter as opposed to any of the actions she describes *with* it. And it is certainly the way in which the daughter would "take" Mrs. Curren's letter if she were to receive it.

Austin attributes differences in critical focus to differing reading strategies. I want to give a similar explanation for the differences between my reading of *Age of Iron* and readings which do not focus on the novel's epistolary aspect. When critics decide not to read *Age of Iron* as an epistolary novel, they do so because they have decided to attend to interpretative issues described or enacted by the novel's locutionary aspect, and they do so at the expense of treating its illocutionary aspect. For example, Susan VanZanten Gallagher examines the way in which Coetzee's allegorical style responds to the social and political situation of South Africa, a locutionary problem inasmuch as it is concerned with demonstrating the precision of allegorical reference.[2] Alternatively, critics attend to the illocutionary force of speech acts described *in* Mrs. Curren's letter, but not to the

illocutionary force of her letter as a whole. For example, Michael Marais examines the way in which the novel stages contending versions of truth, a reading which can be described as an illocutionary examination of constative utterances.[3]

To read Mrs. Curren's letter as a performative act of leave-taking is to read it *as* a letter, written on the occasion of her imminent death and addressed to her daughter. I want to argue that critics tend not to focus on the illocutionary force of Mrs. Curren letter because such focus is just what *Age of Iron*, as an epistolary novel consisting of only one letter, makes difficult.

To read *Age of Iron* as a constative is to abstract from the illocutionary aspects of Mrs. Curren's letter because the constative reading is concerned with precision of reference. To read Mrs. Curren's letter as a performative—that is, as a letter (and thereby *Age of Iron* as an epistolary novel)—is to abstract from its locutionary aspects because the performative reading is concerned with felicity. Felicity—or rather, its negative, "infelicity"—is the value by which Austin determines the conditions necessary for the "smooth or 'happy' functioning of a performative," conditions which he details in his "doctrine of *the things that can be and go wrong* on the occasion of such utterances, the doctrine of *Infelicities*" (14). Examining the three categories Austin lays out in this doctrine helps us understand what Austin means by "the total situation in which the utterance is issued—the total speech-act," which he claims must be considered if one is to determine the illocutionary force of an act of speech (52).

In the first of the three categories Austin presents in the doctrine of infelicities—infelicities of "misinvocation" as he subsequently names them—Austin presents (or hides) his theory of performative action. It deals with the speech act's invocation of a conventional procedure:

> (A. 1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
>
> (A. 2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked. (Austin 14-15)

In the category of infelicity, Austin makes two claims that can be read as premises in an implicit syllogism. To perform a speech act is to invoke a conventional procedure. Conventional procedures have conventional effects. To perform a speech act with felicity is therefore tantamount to bringing off the conventional effect of the procedure invoked by the act. In other words, it is the conventional procedure invoked by the speech act that effects or enacts the situation in which the speech act is uttered. This is why the speech act that refers to the circumstances in which it is issued is explicit about its force. When an illocutionary speech act refers to the circumstances in which it is uttered, it refers to its invocation of conventional procedures that effect or enact those circumstances. But regardless of whether an act of speech makes such a reference (regardless of whether it states its force explicitly), the illocutionary force of the act is recognizable because the procedures it invokes are conventional. Later on in the lecture series, Austin points out that even a physical gesture can have illocutionary force as long as the means of bringing off the act nonverbally are conventional (119).

In *Age of Iron*, Mrs. Curren discusses the infelicity pertaining to the second rule in the category of misinvocations (rule A. 2 in the passage cited above) in a long speech to Vercueil, the stranger who came into her life the day she was told her cancer was terminal. Lying on the street with Vercueil after having witnessed the police hunt down and shoot John, she describes her failed attempt to perform an act of giving an opinion. She speaks of a telephone conversation with Mr. Thabane (Florence's cousin or brother) in which she informs him of what she thinks of the comradeship for which Bheki and John die and blames both him and Florence for not doing anything to discourage it. Mrs. Curren describes her attempt to give her opinion in this conversation as infelicitous in Austin's sense. Austin would say that to give an opinion is to relate it to someone else: to deliver one's feeling about an issue for evaluation. The performance of this act will not be felicitous if this other person or persons deem the one speaking the words and so invoking the procedure of opinion-giving as inappropriate for the performance of the act. As Mrs. Curren puts it,

> To have opinions in a vacuum, opinions that touch no one, is, it seems to me, nothing. Opinions must be heard by others, heard and weighed, not merely listened to out of politeness. And to be weighed they must have

> weight. Mr. Thabane does not weigh what I say. It has no weight to him. Florence does not even hear me. To Florence what goes on in my head is a matter of complete indifference, I know that. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 148)

Austin would say that this infelicity renders Mrs. Curren's speech act "null and void, so that it does not take effect" (25): more specifically, her inappropriateness for the performance of the act renders her invocation of the procedure of opinion-giving a "misapplication," a subcategory of infelicities of "misinvocation" (Austin 17). Mrs. Curren attempts to give her opinion, but this speech act does not "come off," as Austin would say, because she is not deemed by Mr. Thabane and Florence as the appropriate person for the performance of the act.

Mrs. Curren understands her inappropriateness as having to do with her identity as a white South African. Given the political and social history of South Africa and Mrs. Curren's reception of that history in a legacy, she is not the appropriate person to perform the act of opinion-giving on a movement of black protest. She describes the establishment of apartheid in South Africa as a historical crime that she was born into. "It is part of my inheritance, " she says to Vercueil, "It is part of me. I am part of it" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 149). As a white South African, Mrs. Curren is an accomplice to that crime: she is, if not one of its principal perpetrators, its legatee. "I did not try to set myself apart. Though it was not a crime I asked to be committed, it was committed in my name" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 149). The passive reception of an inheritance implies its endorsement on the part of the legatee. What her reception of this legacy puts in question is therefore not the validity of her opinion, but her authority to speak. "I have not changed my mind," she tells Vercueil: "I still detest these calls for sacrifice that end with young men bleeding to death in the mud. War is never what it pretends to be. Scratch the surface and you find, invariably, old men sending young men to the death in the name of some abstraction or other. [. . .] *Freedom or death*! shout Bheki and his friends. Whose words? Not their own. *Freedom or death*!, I have no doubt, those two little girls are rehearsing in their sleep. *No!* I want to say: *Save yourselves!*" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 149). As a white South African, Mrs. Curren has inherited a legacy that disqualifies her voice, for people like Mr. Thabane and Florence, from the start. Yet she still feels impelled to speak:

> Whose is the voice of true wisdom, Mr. Vercueil? Mine, I believe. Yet

> who am I, *who am I* to have a voice at all? How can I honourably urge them to turn their back on that call? What am I entitled to do but sit in a corner with my mouth shut? I have no voice; I lost it long ago; perhaps I have never had one. I have no voice, and that is that. The rest should be silence. But with this—whatever it is—this voice that is no voice, I go on. On and on. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 149)

Mrs. Curren's discussion of her reception of a contaminating legacy and her declaration of commitment to continue speaking despite the necessity of speaking a contaminated and contaminating discourse (Mrs. Curren can only speak in her own voice—even if she "has" no voice) link the story she tells of Florence and her family to the action she performs by relating this story to her daughter. In another conversation with Vercueil, Mrs. Curren calls her letter her daughter's inheritance. So the events that Mrs. Curren describes in her letter are not unrelated to the action she performs vis-à-vis her daughter. Mrs. Curren is concerned with demonstrating the linkage between the two. Mrs. Curren's conversations with Vercueil, including this conversation about not having a voice, can be read as an attempt to reinvent her own discourse. By recording their conversations in her letter to her daughter, Mrs. Curren bequeaths her daughter this reinvented discourse.

Mrs. Curren's speech to Vercueil about not having a voice is a constative moment in her letter even if she describes a failed performative in it. However, Vercueil's importance to the inheritance that Mrs. Curren wants to leave her daughter has to do with the performative aspect of her letter as well as the constative. Mrs. Curren does not post her letter. She insists that it can only be sent after her death, and she chooses Vercueil as the one to entrust with the task of taking her letter to the post office. As Attridge points out in "Trusting the Other: Ethics and Politics in J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*," Mrs. Curren's insistence that her letter can only be sent posthumously hinges the delivery of her letter on the future actions of another person: the delivery of a posthumous letter is not something its writer can oversee. Attridge argues that the gift that Mrs. Curren has to give her daughter is bound up with her act of trust and with the necessity of trusting Vercueil in particular.

Although he does not treat *Age of Iron* as an epistolary novel, Attridge's

discussion of Mrs. Curren's act of trust makes him the only other critic who treats the significance and function of Mrs. Curren's letter *as* a letter. The problem he addresses is illocutionary.

Mrs. Curren examines the implications of the problem posed by the delivery of a posthumous letter in her account of the conversation with Vercueil in which she requests that he mail her letter. Neither here nor at any other point in her letter does Mrs. Curren give her reasons for insisting that her letter can only be sent posthumously. To Vercueil, she explains only why it is necessary that she ask him to perform this task. She cannot send her letter posthumously herself:

> "There is something I would like you to do for me if I die. There are some papers I want to send to my daughter. But after the event. This is the important part. This is why I cannot send them myself. I will do everything else. I will make them up into a parcel with the right stamps on it. All you will have to do will be to hand the parcel over the counter at the post office. Will you do that for me?"
>
> He shifted uncomfortably.
>
> "It is not a favour I would ask if I could help it. But there is no other way. I will not be here."
>
> "Can't you ask someone else?" he said.
>
> "Yes, I can. But I am asking you. These are private papers, private letters. They are my daughter's inheritance. They are all I can give her, all she will accept, coming from this country. I don't want them to be opened and read by someone else."
>
> Private papers. These papers, these words that either you read *now* or else will never read. Will they reach you? Have they reached you? Two ways of asking the same question, a question to which I will never know the answer, never. To me this letter will forever be words committed to the waves: a message in a bottle with the stamps of the Republic of South Africa on it, and your name.
>
> "I don't know," said the man, the messenger, playing with his spoon. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 28)

"He will make no promise," writes Mrs. Curren, describing her observation of Vercueil's reluctance to commit himself. "And even if he promises, he will do, finally, what he likes. Last instructions, never enforceable. For the dead are not persons. That is the law: all contracts lapse. The dead cannot be cheated, cannot be betrayed, unless you carry them with you in your heart and do the crime there" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 28). Mrs. Curren is describing an infelicity that Austin discusses in his third category of infelicities, which he distinguishes from the other two by labelling it with a Greek instead of a Roman letter. Where the other two categories detailed infelicities of misfire, which result in the act attempted not coming off and being therefore void and without effect, this category of infelicity deals with infelicities of abuse of procedure, in which cases the act is achieved but not implemented. As in each of Austin's three categories of infelicity, this category divides into two rules. Austin names the first an infelicity of insincerity; and has various names for the second: nonfulfillment, disloyalty, infraction, indiscipline, and breach. This category of infelicity pertains to the intentions and subsequent actions of *all* the persons participating in the procedure invoked by the act: the person uttering the words and so performing the speech act as well as the other participants involved in its procedure. Because this category of infelicities deals with contracts between persons, one might call this category the category of ethical infelicities (even through Austin warns us not read such connotations into his word choice). It reads as follows:

> (Γ. 1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further,
>
> (Γ. 2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently. (Austin 15)

In applying to Vercueil to take her letter to the post office, Mrs. Curren is concerned with both rules in this category. Vercueil may promise to take her letter to the post office (as indeed he does a little further on in this conversation), but not intend to do as he promises, in which case her attempt to take her leave of her daughter fails due to his dishonesty. Austin calls this infelicity an infelicity of insincerity. Alternately, Vercueil

may intend to do as he promises at the time of this conversation and even for as long as he keeps company with Mrs. Curren, but fail to mail her letter after her death, in which case her attempt to take her leave of her daughter fails due to his breach. In either event, Mrs. Curren will have written a letter in which she takes leave of her daughter, but this speech act will not have been carried into effect. Mrs. Curren will have "achieved" her act of leave-taking, but this achievement will not be implemented or consummated because her daughter will not have received the letter in which she performs this act (Austin 16). Since Mrs. Curren has no way of ascertaining Vercueil's intentions or of divining his actions after her death, she must run the risk of these infelicities.

Austin's account of the infelicities of abuse illustrates that the simple manual task Mrs. Curren is asking Vercueil to perform has more weight than her description of it suggests. By asking Vercueil to take her letter to the post office after her death, Mrs. Curren involves Vercueil in the procedures invoked by her letter, which, as he should be able to surmise from her description of her situation (she tells him that she has terminal cancer on their second encounter) and the content of her letter ("my daughter's inheritance"), involve leave-taking and the giving of a gift. Vercueil's evasive "Can't you ask someone else?" can be taken as an indication that he perceives this. It is, moreover, a question worth repeating. Of all the people she could have asked, why ask him? Why involve Vercueil specifically in her act of taking leave of her daughter? Her selection is clearly imprudent. Mrs. Curren replies to Vercueil's question by describing the inheritance she has to give her daughter as a South African legacy: a personal South African legacy, but a South African legacy nevertheless. These "private papers" are all her daughter will accept "coming from this country" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 28). Mrs. Curren implies that her choice of Vercueil as the one to entrust with the task of taking her letter to post office has something to do with that fact.

Who is Vercueil for Mrs. Curren? Attridge argues that Vercueil is a figure of alterity for Mrs. Curren. He stands outside of the social structures and codes of behavior with which she is familiar and therefore outside of everything Mrs. Curren can calculate and foresee:

> Mr. Vercueil, as Mrs. Curren comes to call him (without being sure of the spelling or indeed the pronunciation—"His name is Mr. Vercueil,' I said.

> 'Vercueil, Verkuil, Verskuil'") is a survivor on the fringes of South African society, living on the streets, alcohol-dependent, unaffected by the obligations of human relationship or community; a man so removed from the structures of social and political life that he even appears to have escaped the grid of racial classification on which apartheid rests. (His race, at least, seems to be an issue of no significance to the other characters, whereas their own lives, as the novel graphically demonstrates, are largely determined by the positions in which their racial categorizations place them.) He has shown himself to be outside any of the normal codes that govern interpersonal relations (which is to say, outside the codes of the realist novel); his unpredictability and unreliability, his imperviousness to the logic of an economy of labour and reward, service and indebtedness, often exasperating to Mrs. Curren, would seem to render him the least appropriate repository for anyone's trust. (Attridge, "Trusting the Other" 62)

Mrs. Curren knows that she runs the risk that her letter will not be sent no matter whom she asks to take her letter to the post office. However, later on in the letter, she explains the necessity of trusting in Vercueil in particular. To trust Vercueil is to make "a wager on trust":

> If Vercueil does not send these writings on, you will never read them. You will never know they existed. A certain body of truth will never take on flesh: my truth: how I lived in these times, in this place.
>
> What is the wager, then, that I am making with Vercueil, on Vercueil?
>
> It is a wager on trust. So little to ask, to take a package to the post office and pass it over the counter. So little that it is almost nothing. Between taking the package and not taking it the difference is as light as a feather. If there is the slightest breath of trust, obligation, piety left behind when I am gone, he will surely take it.
>
> And if not?
>
> If not, there is no trust and we deserve no better, all of us, than to fall into a hole and vanish.

> Because I cannot trust Vercueil I must trust him. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 119)

Attridge describes Mrs. Curren's counterlogic as "a precise *understanding* of trust, and of its relation to the vital questions of the other and the future" ("Trusting the Other" 66):

> Trust is a relation to the future that is based on no rational grounds; to entrust a task to someone in the certainty that it will be done is not to trust, but merely to act on the basis of advance knowledge; trust, like a pure decision, is born of uncertainty and uncertainty alone. It fully emerges only in the case of someone who, like Vercueil, cannot be trusted even to carry out the most trivial of tasks. The very triviality of the task thus makes this the supreme act of trust, upon which the entire judgement of the future rests—the future of South Africa, the future of humanity, "all of us." (Attridge, "Trusting the Other" 64-65)

Attridge argues that trusting Vercueil is important to the inheritance that Mrs. Curren wants to bequeath her daughter. The entire project of Mrs. Curren's letter depends upon this act of entrustment. By risking the destiny of her letter on Vercueil, she gives her daughter an experience of trust.

The above demonstrates that what I have been calling the performative act of Mrs. Curren's letter is in fact a complex of acts. With this letter, Mrs. Curren takes leave of her daughter, bequeaths an inheritance, and gives a gift. Why is it that the force of these acts is so difficult to discern? I want to argue that this difficulty is an effect of Mrs. Curren's performance of the act of leaving. Mrs. Curren's concern is to fulfil a requirement for the felicitous performance of an act that Austin specifies in the second category in the doctrine of infelicities: that the procedure invoked by the act be executed both (rule B. 1) correctly and (rule B. 2) completely (15). How is a mother to take leave of her daughter correctly and completely? Is it possible to meet these conditions? Everything would have to be said without reserve and without embarrassment. The necessity of saying everything draws out the length of her letter.

The difficulties readers have in discerning the force of her letter as an act of leave-

taking is therefore not due to any unexplicitness on Mrs. Curren's part.[4] Austin maintains that an utterance is explicit about its illocutionary force when it refers in some manner to the circumstances in which it is issued. On this account, Mrs. Curren's letter is explicit to the extreme. Mrs. Curren expressly and repeatedly refers to the circumstances under which she writes: she refers to the time and place in which she lives, South Africa during late-phase apartheid; she refers to her imminent death; and she refers to her daughter as the addressee of the letter. While one might call all of these references locutionary (they establish the meaning of Mrs. Curren's letter as a description of her final days), the reference to her daughter is locutionary *and* illocutionary. It not only refers to the daughter as the addressee of the letter (a referential and therefore locutionary reference), but it also refers to the addressed character of Mrs. Curren's writing and thus the context of her letter in the illocutionary sense: that one writes a letter *to* someone, and that one orients one's writing by that address. Mrs. Curren orients her entire letter toward her daughter. The very insistence with which Mrs. Curren refers to her daughter as the addressee of the letter may account for the difficulties readers have in discerning the illocutionary force of her letter *as* a letter. Far from being unexplicit about the actions she is performing in her letter vis-à-vis her daughter, Mrs. Curren is overexplicit about these actions, which has the paradoxical effect of diffusing the illocutionary force of her letter for the readers of the book. In regard to the action she is performing vis-à-vis her daughter, Mrs. Curren rarely states the force of her letter concisely. For example, she never writes, "In writing you this letter, I take my leave." Instead, Mrs. Curren sustains the illocutionary force of this performative act over the entire length of her long letter; she sustains it over such a long stretch of writing that it can go out of focus for the reader of the book. The same goes for Mrs. Curren's reference to the status of her letter as an act of gift giving. Mrs. Curren never uses the noun *gift* anywhere in her letter. She talks of giving and receiving, but never of gifts. If her syntax requires a noun, Mrs. Curren uses the word *letter*. Mrs. Curren is concerned with the action of giving, not the thing given. In other words, she views gift giving as Austin would: as a procedure that has effects and consequences.

This diffusion of illocutionary force is furthered by the restricted confines of *Age of Iron* as a space of representation. *Age of Iron* is an epistolary novel consisting exclusively of one letter. The limits of the book very nearly match those of Mrs. Curren's

letter. I want to argue that this contextual restriction defamilarizes Mrs. Curren's performative *as* a performative. Performative force is registered in the way in which an utterance produces, transforms, or effects a situation. As an epistolary novel consisting of only one letter, *Age of Iron* does not show that production, transformation, or enactment. *Age of Iron* does not show Mrs. Curren's letter arriving or, for that matter, *not* arriving to her daughter. Austin would say that, as an epistolary novel consisting of a single letter, *Age of Iron* shows Mrs. Curren's illocutionary attempt, but not its achievement. While suspension is an inherent feature of any performative act written as a letter—as the "Envois" signatory puts it *The Post Card*, a letter does not "happen" until it arrives—the restricted scope of *Age of Iron* shows nothing beyond that suspension. *Age of Iron* presents Mrs. Curren's letter to the readers of the book as an unrealized speech act.

Nevertheless, I propose to access the felicity of Mrs. Curren's letter as a performative, which is to say that I propose to consider the way in which it would affect her daughter if she were to receive it. And I propose to do this despite the fact that *Age of Iron* does not show that effect. Much of what I have to say in this chapter would therefore seem to speculate beyond the representational confines of the novel—an unorthodox procedure in literary criticism. Such criticism is not criticism, we have learned, but mere conjecture.

In defense of my methodology, I want to emphasize that, according to Austin, the effect of a performative utterance is a conventional effect. For Austin, a conventional effect is not one effect among others; it is not even a probable effect. According to Austin, a conventional effect is a determinable effect. If a speech act is performed with felicity, it *will* produce the conventional effect of the procedure it invokes. Austin distinguishes between illocution and perlocution in order to make this point. Perlocution is Austin's term for the effects and sequels that follow upon the achievement of the illocutionary (or locutionary) act. In contrast to the conventional effects brought off by conventional procedures, perlocutionary effects are "consequential." On the basis of this distinction, Austin develops his terminology of speech acts. Whereas an illocutionary act explicitly refers to the conventional procedures it invokes (and a locutionary act invokes conventional procedures without any explicit reference), a perlocutionary act refers to the consequential effects that follow upon the achievement of an illocutionary (or locutionary)

act (as when you understand my argument, but I do not convince you). The point to observe about this distinction, Austin insists, is that where the illocutionary act is conventional, its perlocutionary production of consequences is not, which means that a perlocutionary effect may or may not accord with the object of the act that prompted it. Turning this observation around, I want to argue that the conventional effects of Mrs. Curren's gift to her daughter are implicated in her letter and are, therefore, readable in *Age of Iron*. In other words, since conventional procedures have conventional effects, one should be able to identify the force of a performative utterance even if one is not witness to its production of effects. As Austin puts it, "A judge should be able to decide, by hearing what was said, what locutionary and illocutionary acts were performed, but not what perlocutionary acts were achieved" (122).

The following is the problem I want to address in the next two sections. I argued above that, by asking Vercueil to take her letter to the post office after her death, Mrs. Curren asks Vercueil to participate in the procedures invoked by her letter, which involve leave-taking and the giving of a gift. What is the conventional procedure of leave-taking? And how does it bear upon the conventional procedure of giving a gift? One takes one's leave *of* someone, and one performs this act because one knows that one's own departure is imminent. In other words, leave-taking is articulated in the knowledge that the exchange between subjects, the dialogue by which they conduct their relationship, is about to be finalized. To take one's leave is to speak of time. Mrs. Curren's leave-taking speaks of the imminent cessation of time for her own part (but not for her daughter); it also speaks of the time remaining to her for the performance of the act. Between the point at which cancer is deemed terminal and the death of the victim, there is normally a period of time long enough for leave-taking and brief enough to rule out postponement. Mrs. Curren writes her letter during this delimited period of time—during all of it. Her letter begins the day after she has been told that her illness is terminal, and it ends with her death. Mrs. Curren has the time and the need to take her leave of her daughter. By insisting that her letter can only be delivered after her death, she denies her daughter the opportunity to respond in kind. What does this do to the gift of her letter?

2. The Conventional and Unconventional Procedures of the Epistolary Gift

In the first chapter of *Given Time,* Derrida argues that time is what links the gift to economy. What is economy? Derrida examines the word's semantic values with reference to its derivation from the Greek *oikonomia*: "Among its irreducible predicates or semantic values, economy no doubt includes the values of law (*nomos*) and of home (*oikos*, home, property, family, the hearth, the fire indoors)" (*Given Time* 6). More specifically, *nomos* "does not signify the law in general, but the law of distribution (*nemein*), the law of sharing or partition [*partage*], the law as partition (*moira*), the given assigned part, participation" (Derrida, *Given Time* 6).[5] Besides these values, economy also implies the idea of exchange, of circulation, and of return. Derrida maintains that the idea of the circle is essential to any economic field: "circular exchange, circulation of goods, products, monetary signs or merchandise, amortization of expenditures, revenues, substitution of use values and exchange values. This motif of circulation can lead one to think that the law of economy is the—circular—return to the point of departure, to the origin, also to the home" (Derrida, *Given Time* 6-7).

The gift, "*if there is any*, would no doubt be related to economy. One cannot treat the gift, this goes without saying, without treating this relation to economy, even to the money economy" (Derrida, *Given Time* 7). Derrida's claim is that this relation is not one of protraction, but of contradiction. The gift, if there is any, must be that which interrupts economic circulation: it must be that which "in suspending economic calculation, no longer gives rise to exchange" (Derrida, *Given Time* 7):

> If there is gift, the *given* of the gift (*that which* one gives, *that which* is given, the gift as given thing or as act of donation) must not come back to the giving (let us not already say to the subject, to the donor). It must not circulate, it must not be exchanged, it must not in any case be exhausted, as a gift, by the process of exchange, by the movement of circulation of the circle in the form of return to the point of departure. If the figure of the circle is essential to economics, the gift must remain *aneconomic*. Not that it remains foreign to the circle, but it must *keep* a relation of foreignness to the circle, a relation without relation of familiar foreignness. It is perhaps in this sense that the gift is the impossible.

> Not impossible but *the* impossible. The very figure of the impossible. It announces itself, gives itself to be thought as the impossible. (Derrida, *Given Time* 7)

Derrida's thesis is that "For there to be gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt. If the other *gives* me *back* or *owes* me or has to give me back what I give him or her, there will not have been a gift [. . .]" (*Given Time* 12). "This is all too obvious if the other, the donee, gives me back *immediately* the same thing" (Derrida, *Given Time* 12). Derrida maintains that the gift is annulled "whether this restitution is immediate or whether it is programmed by a complex calculation of long-term deferral or difference" (*Given Time* 12). This point marks the difference between Derrida's reading of the gift event and Marcel Mauss's anthropological study, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1950), a classical work in the tradition of inquiry into the operation of the gift. For Mauss, the original and essential feature of the gift is "the interval that separates reception from restitution" which Derrida calls the interval of "delay to deadline" (*Given Time* 39). As Derrida puts it, the gift, according to Mauss, "must not be restituted *immediately and right away*. There must be time, it must last, there must be waiting—without forgetting [*l'attente—sans oubli*]" (*Given Time* 41). Derrida points out that the only difference between the gift as Mauss defines it and any other operation of exchange pure and simple is that the gift demands restitution within a delimited period of time, "neither an instant nor an infinite time, but a time determined by a term, in other words, a rhythm, a cadence. [. . .] The gift gives, demands, and takes time" (*Given Time* 41). Derrida's point is that the return of the gift to its sender is "an economic odyssey" (*Given Time* 24): a long-term deferral. What is more, this return is determined as soon as the gift appears or signifies as a gift. As soon as the donee recognizes the significance of the gift as a gift, it is destined to be annulled. Thus, "one may safely say that a consistent discourse on the gift becomes impossible: It misses its object and always speaks, finally, of something else" (Derrida, *Given Time* 24). Mauss's study "speaks of everything but the gift: It deals with economy, exchange, contract (*do ut des*), it speaks of raising the stakes, sacrifice, gift *and* countergift—in short, everything that in the thing itself impels the gift *and* the annulment of the gift"

(Derrida, *Given Time* 24).

So the gift "is annulled each time there is restitution or countergift. Each time, according to the same circular ring that leads to 'giving back' ['*rendre*'], there is payment and discharge of a debt" (Derrida, *Given Time* 12). This economic circuit makes the "good" of a gift easily reversible: "as good, it can also be bad, poisonous (*Gift, gift*), and this from the moment the gift puts the other in debt, with the result that giving amounts to hurting, to doing harm [. . .]" (Derrida, *Given Time* 12).[6] On what conditions, then, would there be a gift?

Derrida begins this inquiry by asking what is presupposed in any gift event. A semantic precomprehension of the word *gift* designates a formula that seems to be indispensable to the gift event, which Derrida makes explicit in the following axiom: "In order for there to be gift, gift event, some 'one' has to give some 'thing' to someone other, without which 'giving' would be meaningless'" (*Given Time* 11). This formula "supposes a subject and a verb, a constituted subject, which can also be collective—for example, a group, a community, a nation, a clan, a tribe—in any case, a subject identical to itself and conscious of its identity [. . .]" (Derrida, *Given Time* 10-11). The given "may not be a thing in the common sense of the word but rather a symbolic object; and like the donor, the donee may be a collective subject; but in any case A gives B to C" (Derrida, *Given Time* 11). Derrida maintains that these conditions "define or produce the annulment, the annihilation, the destruction of the gift" (*Given Time* 12). Why? Derrida gives two reasons: one pertaining to the donor of the gift and the other pertaining to its donee.

"For there to be gift, *it is necessary* [*il faut*] that the donee not give back, amortize, reimburse, acquit himself, enter into a contract, and that he never have contracted a debt. [. . .] It is thus necessary, at the limit, that he not *recognize* the gift as gift" (Derrida, *Given Time* 13). If the donee recognizes the gift as a gift, this simple recognition suffices to annul the gift: "Why? Because it gives back, in the place, let us say, of the thing itself, a symbolic equivalent" (Derrida, *Given Time* 13). Recognition amounts to perceptual keeping: the donee recognizes and so keeps "the meaning or the quality, the gift property of the gift, its intentional meaning" (Derrida, *Given Time* 14). The donee's recognition of the significance of the gift *as* a gift annuls it "even before *recognition* becomes *gratitude*"

(Derrida, *Given Time* 14): "There is no more gift as soon as the other *receives*—and even if she refuses the gift that she has perceived or recognized as gift" (Derrida, *Given Time* 14). Just as much as acceptance, refusal implies recognition and therein perceptual keeping of the significance of the gift.

If it is necessary that the donee not perceive the significance of the gift as a gift, it is equally necessary that the one who gives a gift not perceive its significance either: "otherwise he begins, at the threshold, as soon as he intends to give, to pay himself with a symbolic recognition, to praise himself, to approve of himself, to congratulate himself, to give back to himself symbolically the value of what he thinks he has given or what he is preparing to give" (Derrida, *Given Time* 14). This is another sense in which the seemingly indispensable formula of the gift—that someone gives something to someone other—produces the annulment of the gift. This formula presupposes a subject, collective or individual, who is conscious of its identity and who, through the gesture of the gift, seeks "to constitute its own unity and, precisely, to get its own identity recognized so that identity comes back to it, so that it can reappropriate its identity: as its property" (Derrida, *Given Time* 11). He/she/it constructs its own identity by projecting a reflection of itself as good or generous on the other. In other words, the subject constructs his/her/its identity by that which returns to his/her/itself via the other. The gesture of the gift is a means of enacting this return.

In a development of this argument, Derrida maintains that the recognition of the significance of the gift does not even have to be conscious in order to destroy it. The significance of a forgotten, repressed, or censored gift is still retained by the unconscious. Here, Derrida points out that psychoanalysis defines forgetting, repression, and censorship as psychic mechanisms which retain significance: they "reconstitute debt and exchange by putting in reserve, by keeping or saving up" (*Given Time* 16). Repression (originary or secondary) "does not destroy or annul anything; it keeps by displacing. Its operation is systematic or topological; it always consists of keeping by exchanging places" (Derrida, *Given Time* 16). Just as much as conscious keeping, unconscious keeping annuls the meaning of the gift in a symbolic recognition: "However unconscious this recognition may be, it is effective and can be verified in no better fashion than by its effects or by the symptoms it yields up [*qu'elle donne*] for decoding" (Derrida, *Given*

Time 16). For there to be a gift, then, it is necessary that the gift not appear or signify as a gift, for either the donor or the donee, consciously or unconsciously:

> For there to be gift, not only must the donor or the donee not perceive or receive the gift as such, have no consciousness of it, no memory, no recognition; he or she must also forget it right away [*à l'instant*] and moreover this forgetting must be so radical that it exceeds even the psychoanalytic categoriality of forgetting. [. . .] So we are speaking here of an absolute forgetting—a forgetting that also absolves, that unbinds absolutely and infinitely more, therefore, than excuse, forgiveness, or acquittal. (Derrida, *Given Time* 16)

The claim that Derrida forwards at the beginning of this first chapter—that the gift is, not impossible, but the figure of the impossible—now carries weight. How is absolute forgetting possible if the condition of the gift, as traditionally asserted, is that A gives B to C? Further on in this chapter, Derrida states that a gift cannot take place between subjects. On the contrary, the subject is

> constituted [. . .] in view of dominating, through calculation and exchange, the mastery of this *hubris* or of this impossibility that is announced in the promise of the gift. There where there is subject and object, the gift would be excluded. A subject will never give an object to another subject. But the subject and object are arrested effects of the gift, arrests of the gift. At zero or infinite speed of the circle. (Derrida, *Given Time* 24)

On the basis of this evidence, Derrida abandons the traditional axiom of the gift. What is more, even though all the anthropologies and metaphysics of the gift "have, *quite rightly and justifiably*, treated *together*, as a system, the gift and the debt, the gift and the cycle of restitution, the gift and the loan, the gift and credit, the gift and the countergift" [. . .] (Derrida, *Given Time* 13), Derrida announces that he is departing from this tradition. He takes another axiom as his point of departure: "There is gift, if there is any, only in what interrupts the system as well as the symbol, in a partition without return and without division [*répartition*], without being-with-self of the gift-counter-gift" (*Given Time* 13). In the third chapter of *Given Time*, Derrida identifies an operation of partition without return in textual dissemination. My objective, in what remains in this section, is to

discover what dissemination implies in this context.

In the third chapter of *Given Time,* Derrida gives a reading of Charles Baudelaire's dedication to his short story "Counterfeit Money." Here Derrida's topic is the gift event of textual dissemination, which he describes as an operation of postal relay: a forwarding beyond the economic circuit by which the gift is destined to return to its sender. This postal image is not incidental. Derrida insists that "we always set out from texts for the elaboration of this problematic, texts in the ordinary and traditional sense of written letters, or even of literature, or texts in the sense of differantial traces [. . .]" (*Given Time* 100). We cannot do otherwise than "*take our departure in texts insofar as they depart* (they separate from themselves and their origin, from us) *at the departure* [*dès le départ*]" (Derrida, *Given Time* 100). Texts travel beyond the control of their writers. To write is to deliver up a text to dissemination without return.

I want to argue that both the return and the nonreturn of the gift are dramatized by the letter form. In the first chapter of *Given Time*, Derrida argues that a semantic precomprehension of the word *gift* designates a formula that seems to be indispensable to the gift event: A wants to give B to C. The letter form, with its signature and address, emphasizes this formula.

How can one account for this emphasis? In the doctrine of infelicities, Austin points out that a conventional procedure can involve more than one person. Besides the one uttering the words, a conventional procedure invoked by a speech act can have other participants (Austin 15). It would therefore be fair to say that a conventional procedure has the capacity to configure persons: it can put the persons involved in the performance of an act in a conventional pattern of relation to one another. One writes a letter *to someone*, someone whom one thereby configures as one's addressee. This capacity to configure can be reflected in a syntactic formula because syntax also has the capacity to configure. Syntax configures pronouns and nouns to verbs and to other pronouns and nouns. By extension, it configures the persons and actions designated by pronouns, nouns, and verbs. The letter form emphasizes the syntactic formula of the gift because the signature and address of the letter are the epistolary equivalents to these nouns and pronouns. Another way of putting this would be to say that the signature and address of a

letter render the letter form explicit in the illocutionary sense: its address and signature are the equivalent to references to the context in which the utterance is issued.

A wants to give B to C. Any letter is reducible to this formula. A signatory wants to give a letter to an addressee. However, when a letter is published, it becomes an open letter, readable by anyone who is there to receive it. The letter then both specifies and surpasses its addressee. Austin would say that a letter becomes a literary performative when it is published: it breaks from critical, literary, and epistolary conventions to address you, its receiver. This break from convention is the effect of a repetition without which, Derrida argues in *Limited Inc*, the performative would not be possible.[7]

In his reading of Baudelaire's dedication to "Counterfeit Money," Derrida observes that Baudelaire gave up his story for dissemination even as he wrote it:

> From the moment he published it and even if he had not published it, from the moment he wrote it and constituted it by dedicating it to his "dear friend," [. . .] from the moment he let it constitute itself in a system of traces, he destined it, gave it [. . .] above and beyond any determined addressee, donee, or legatee [. . .]. The accredited signatory delivered it up to a dissemination without return. Why without return? [. . .] Whatever return it could have made toward Baudelaire or whatever return he might have counted on, the structure of trace and legacy of this text—as of anything that can be in general—surpasses the phantasm of return and marks the death of the signatory or the non-return of the legacy, the non-benefit, therefore a certain condition of the gift—in the writing itself. (*Given Time* 99-100)

The structure of trace surpasses the phantasm of return and marks the death of the signatory in the writing itself. This is a development of an argument that Derrida has forwarded in several of his works (as I shall show later on in this chapter): writing is capable of functioning in the absence of its writer and in the absence of the objects or persons it describes.[8] Later on in this chapter, I will return to the question of what this implies for Mrs. Curren in her desire to give a gift to her daughter. At present, I want to focus on the trope of postal relay as it is presented in this passage and implied throughout *Given Time*.

In his reading of Mauss's *Gift* in the first chapter of *Given Time*, Derrida observes that "the most interesting idea, the great guiding thread of *The Gift,*" is the idea of the "force" of the thing given—Austin's word for the quality that defines performativity (40):

> For those who participate in the experience of gift and countergift, the requirement of restitution "at term," at the delayed "due date," the requirement of the circulatory differance *is inscribed in the thing itself* that is given or exchanged. Before it is a contract, an intentional gesture of individual or collective subjects, the movement of gift/countergift is a *force* (a "virtue of the thing given," says Mauss), a property immanent to the thing or in any case apprehended as such by the donors and donees. Moved by a mysterious force, the thing itself demands gift *and* restitution [. . .]. (*Given Time* 40)

Through Mauss, Derrida defines gift giving between subjects as an act in Austin's sense (recall that Austin maintains that even a gesture can have illocutionary force as long as it is conventional). This definition is implicit throughout the first chapter of *Given Time*. When Derrida argues that the simple recognition of the gift suffices to annul it, he makes the point that the gift is annulled with the achievement of the illocutionary act of giving it—prior to its production of any perlocutionary consequence. The illocutionary act of gift giving is achieved when the recipient recognizes its illocutionary force: that is, that the gift is to be taken as a gift. This recognition suffices to annul the gift. Why? Because recognizing the significance of a gift as a gift amounts to keeping it and so incurring a debt that invites—or, rather, demands—restitution by convention (a demand is a strong invitation). What the recipient recognizes is not simply the gift as such, the thing given, but also the force of the conventional procedure invoked by the act of giving it. The recipient recognizes that he or she stands in debt to the giver. This is why the gift is annulled even before recognition becomes gratitude. In Austin's terms, gratitude is a perlocutionary effect of the gift: the equivalent to a recipient's accordance of a response. And it is only one possible perlocutionary effect among others.

Another way of putting this is as follows. When Derrida speaks of a "circular ring that leads to 'giving back' [*'rendre'*]," he defines the return of the gift as a program, proper to economic circulation and dictated by its law. When a gift is given from one

subject to another, it follows a course which eventually leads to its annulment. I want to argue that the return of the gift is a conventional effect in Austin's sense. I argued earlier in this chapter that Austin's theory of performativity is grounded in an implicit syllogism: to perform a speech act is to invoke a conventional procedure; conventional procedures have conventional effects; to perform a speech act with felicity is therefore tantamount to bringing off the conventional effect of the procedure invoked by the act. Gift giving is an act, performed with or without words, that invokes a conventional procedure. The imposition of a debt is the conventional effect of this procedure. This is why the "good" of the gift can easily be reversed. The felicitous performance of the act of giving a gift amounts to its infelicity.

A development of Austin's terminology can describe the nonreturn of the textual gift that Derrida describes in the third chapter. Derrida defines dissemination without return as the effect of a break with the economic system generated by the giving of a gift, which he describes variously as an "effraction, " an "overrunning, or a surpassing (*Given Time* 9; 30; 100). If gift giving invokes a conventional procedure by which the gift is destined to return to its sender, the overrunning of the circuit by the gift can be understood as a break with convention. In other words, the return and nonreturn of the textual gift are effects of its conventional and unconventional procedures.

How does this analogy apply to *Age of Iron*? As an epistolary novel, *Age of Iron* puts Mrs. Curren's act of leave-taking before an audience that witnesses the performance of this act without participating in its procedure. Austin would say that this literary staging renders her speech act infelicitous: Mrs. Curren does not take her leave of the readers of the book. However, following Derrida's revision of the literary performative, one could argue that *Age of Iron* reworks Mrs. Curren's letter on the register of locution, that category of speech act that has grammatical sense and reference. Mrs. Curren's letter functions like an open letter: it both specifies and surpasses the daughter as its addressee. Mrs. Curren's letter addresses you, the reader of the book and generates a new context. It then takes on another illocutionary force. *Age of Iron* renders Mrs. Curren's address to her daughter an open letter, written from South Africa during the late-phase apartheid and delivered to a global audience.

Attridge makes a similar argument in "Trusting the Other." Mrs. Curren's gift to her daughter—an enactment of trust— is also Coetzee's gift to the readers of the book: "it is Mrs. Curren's unprogrammed and complete act of trust that saves 'all of us.' Trust in the other and in the future is at the ethical heart of a situation such as that which prevailed in South Africa in 1986, or that which prevails today" (Attridge, "Trusting the Other" 66). If this gift is genuinely received, *Age of Iron* will live on in its readers just as Mrs. Curren hopes that her letter will live on in her daughter. It will live on in all those who receive and read its words with care and attention, each and every individual reader of *Age of Iron*. As Attridge puts it, "Writing is that which lives on because its addressee is always multiple and divided; and to write is therefore to trust the other who will read—other because unknowable and unfixable in advance" ("Trusting the Other" 66).

Attridge's account of how *Age of Iron* lives on in its readers pertains in a general sense to all writing. All writing lives on because its readers are multiple and divided. Attridge, following Derrida, attributes the survival of the literary work to such multiplicity and division (I will make a similar argument about the gift of Mrs. Curren's letter to her daughter later on in this chapter). As a complement to Attridge's reading, I want to point out that this multiplicity and division of readers is the result of a multiplicity of performative addresses such as the one enacted by *Age of Iron*. Readers are *always already* multiple and divided. When we receive the performative address of *Age of Iron,* we are divided and multiplied *again.* In other words, when we read *Age of Iron,* we intercept an address destined for the daughter. Our manner of receiving this novel is therefore patterned after this address. In order to understand what happens when we receive the gift of *Age of Iron,* we need to understand how the position we occupy as readers is marked by daughters in general and *this* daughter in particular. What characterizes Mrs. Curren's daughter? What words or actions mark her singularity? And more generally, what kind of alterity does a daughter pose for a mother?

As the addressee of this letter, the daughter is marked as the recipient of an inheritance that is explicitly identified as South African. However, this daughter emigrated from South Africa in order to demonstrate her rejection of South African policies. Mrs. Curren is sending her account of her final days to a daughter who has demonstratively rejected South African legacies. In other words, Mrs. Curren's letter is not only written by

a mother to a daughter, but it is also written by a white South African resident to a white South African expatriate whose emigration is statement of political objection. While her daughter left South Africa, Mrs. Curren stayed. Mrs. Curren's address to her daughter has to be complicated by that fact.

I want to argue that this complication carries over to the performative action of *Age of Iron*. *Age of Iron* can be read as Coetzee's address to observers of the South African political situation, particularly expatriates who distanced themselves from the political and social realities of South Africa during late-phase apartheid.[9] Legacies traverse such distances. *Age of Iron* is at once an illustration and a demonstration of that fact: the novel stages and enacts South Africa's legacy to the international community.

Mrs. Curren writes a letter which she trusts Vercueil to send after her death. Attridge argues that if her daughter receives this letter, then she will not only witness her mother's act of trust, but also experience it. In the previous section of this chapter, I argue that by asking Vercueil to post her letter after her death, Mrs. Curren involves him in her giving of this gift to her daughter. In a sense, Vercueil's involvement *is* a part of the gift of her letter: its gift and its poison. For Vercueil's involvement is the symbolic equivalent to sending her daughter Vercueil. Later on in the letter, Mrs. Curren plays with the idea of rendering his participation more apparent for her daughter. She offers to buy Vercueil an airline ticket to the United States:

> "Would you like to go to America?" I asked him.
>
> "Why?"
>
> "To take my letter. Instead of mailing it, you could take it in person: fly to America and fly back. It would be an adventure. Better than sailing. My daughter would meet you and take care of you. I would buy the ticket in advance. Would you go?"
>
> He smiled bravely. But some of my jokes touch a sore spot, I know.
>
> "I am serious," I said.
>
> But the truth is, it is not a serious suggestion. Vercueil with a haircut, in shop clothes, mooning about in your guest bedroom, desperate for a drink, too shy to ask; and you in the next room, the children asleep, your husband asleep, poring over this letter, this confession, this madness—it

> does not bear thinking of. *I do not need this*, you say to yourself through gritted teeth: *this is what I came here to get away from, why does it have to follow me?* (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 177-78)

Even if Mrs. Curren's suggestion to Vercueil is not serious, her description of this scene in her letter to her daughter is. It issues a challenge. Despite her reception of a contaminated and contaminating cultural legacy, despite the necessity of speaking in a language which she is incapable of renouncing, Mrs. Curren's speaks to the other in her relationship with Vercueil. Her question to her daughter is whether she—also white, educated, and South African—would be able to do likewise. Attridge alludes to this complication in his reading of Mrs. Curren's defense of her decision not to summon her daughter back to South Africa. Pointing to the affinity, in Mrs. Curren's mind, between her own daughter and the township children ("they are 'children of iron'; her daughter is 'like iron'"), Attridge argues that Mrs. Curren's hope is "that instead of taking, she can give, and in that way project her own best existence into the future; her fear, of course, is that her child will be like the township children, hardened by the circumstances of her South African upbringing and incapable of the receptivity needed to understand and, in turn, pass on the gift" (72; 72-73).

I want to argue that *Age of Iron* poses a similar challenge to its readers. In "Racism's Last Word," Derrida's addresses international and specially European responses to South African policies. Writing this essay in 1983 (nearly ten years before *apartheid* was finally abolished), Derrida argues that the energy that the Western world puts into condemning *apartheid* is suspect in the face of its reluctance to do anything that would risk destabilizing the Pretoria regime. Outlining the importance of the Pretoria regime to the political, economic, and strategic equilibrium of Europe during the Cold War, Derrida argues that where the stability of South Africa is concerned, the Western world practices a dialectics of denegation: "Symbolic condemnations, even when they have been official, have never disrupted diplomatic, economic, or cultural exchanges, the deliveries of arms, and geopolitical solidarity" (Derrida, "Racism's Last Word" 295). Such condemnations are a political expression of a European denial that is registered even in the vocabularies of its languages. The Afrikaans word *apartheid* goes untranslated in other languages: "no tongue has ever translated this name—as if all the languages of the

world were defending themselves, shutting their mouths against a sinister incorporation of the thing by means of the word, as if all tongues were refusing to give an equivalent, refusing to let themselves be contaminated through the contagious hospitality of the word-for-word" (292).[10] Yet *apartheid* was a European creation:

> That a certain white community of European descent imposes *apartheid* on four-fifths of South Africa's population and maintains (up until 1980!) the *official* lie of a white migration that preceded black migration is not the only reason that *apartheid* was a European "creation."[. . .] The primary reason [. . .] is that here it is a question of state racism. While all racisms have their basis in culture and in institutions, not all of them give rise to state-controlled structures. The judicial simulacrum and the political theater of this state racism have no meaning and would have had no chance outside a European "discourse" on the concept of race. That discourse belongs to a whole system of "phantasms," to a certain representation of nature, life, history, religion, and law, to the very culture which succeeded in giving rise to this state takeover. (Derrida, "Racism's Last Word," 294)

In my discussion of the illocutionary force of Mrs. Curren's letter in the previous section, I pointed out that the borders of *Age of Iron* very nearly match the borders of Mrs. Curren's letter. Very nearly, but not perfectly. The novel concludes with a pair of dates that stand outside the limits of Mrs. Curren's letter: 1986-1989. These dates do not refer to the period of time during which Mrs. Curren wrote the letter. Transitions between entries indicate that Mrs. Curren writes her letter over a period of weeks, not years. Presumably, this pair of dates indicates the historical period during which Coetzee wrote this book. A reference in a conversation between Mrs. Curren and Mr. Thabane that takes place during her visit to the Guguletu township sets the novel in 1986. *Age of Iron* was published in 1990.

The novel's concluding pair of dates could be regarded as a kind of authorial signature. Coetzee indicates that this novel is a message like a letter, sent by an author who writes in a historical time and place. While this is a critical commonplace (every work of literature is marked by its historical contingency), the period during which a

South African work of literature is written is particularly significant. South Africa is one of those countries whose transmissions are heavily marked by their relation to a particular period of its history. Every South African cultural transmission or manifestation—everything from a letter to a building or an institution it may house, every idea, and even (perhaps particularly) every South African citizen—is marked before, during, or after apartheid. The dates 1986-89 indicate that *Age of Iron* was written during the final years of late-phase apartheid when it was clear that the system was about to collapse, but when it was by no means clear how or even if South Africa was going to make the transition to a democratic society. This transition, together with the healing process it made possible, began after the period during which this novel was written and is still going on today. The de Klerk government repealed most of the social legislation that provided the legal basis for apartheid in 1990 and 1991, and the country held its first democratic elections in 1994.

I want to argue that by sending Mrs. Curren's legacy into the public sphere, *Age of Iron* transfers something of the South African legacy to the Western world. The point of this transfer it to challenge, as Derrida puts it in "Racism's Last Word," its practice of the dialectics of denegation. If Mrs. Curren's gift to her daughter is an enactment of trust and if *Age of Iron* relays this gift to the readers of the book, even the relayed gift is not free of ambivalence. The objective of a challenge to denegation is to elicit acknowledgment, which is analogous to the recognition that Derrida argues suffices to annul the gift. One could say that this challenge is the poison of *Age of Iron* insofar as its purpose is to elicit a countergift, but then one would also have to say that this novel demonstrates how a poison can be gift: the reversibility the *Gift/gift* works both ways. *Age of Iron* makes political and ethical demands on its readers: it demands that they respond. It would be quite fair to describe such responses (including my own) as countergifts.

In the next section, I want to ask whether there is any sense in which Mrs. Curren's gift to her daughter can be conceived of as a gift without return. Can a gift really be a gift for an intended addressee? In asking this question, I am not looking for any operation that is independent of any of the ambivalences touched on above. My question is whether there is a gift in Mrs. Curren's letter *despite* these ambivalences. I argue that this gift (if there is one) has to do with her daughter's reading of the words of her letter

and that Mrs. Curren knows this. Mrs. Curren insists that her gift to her daughter can only take the form of a letter because she knows that a letter can give in a way that she as a giving subject cannot.

In *Given Time*, Derrida argues that even if the gift is a figure for the impossible, it is not the unnameable or the unthinkable. One still thinks, names, or desires the gift. Derrida describes the challenge this desire poses for the subject as

> a matter—desire beyond desire—of responding faithfully but also as rigorously as possible both to the injunction or the order of the *gift* ("give" ["*donne*"]) as well as to the injunction or the order of meaning (presence, science, knowledge): *Know* still what giving *wants to say, know how to give*, know what you want and want to say when you give, know what you intend to give, know how the gift annuls itself, commit yourself [*engage-toi*] even if commitment is the destruction of the gift by the gift, give economy its chance. (*Given Time* 30)

Mrs. Curren commits herself to this thinking in her exchanges with Vercueil. Vercueil is not only her companion in this thinking: he is her trying taskmaster, for he knows all about gift economies. Vercueil may stand outside of conventional codes of behavior and social structures; however, this does not mean that he unfamiliar with them. On the contrary, his rejection of these codes and structures amounts to a challenge to their validity.[11] Vercueil rejects any gesture of Mrs. Curren's that can be interpreted as a gift. That is to say, if he accepts the objects that she gives—shelter and food at first, and then employment and the recognition that goes with it—he rejects the spirit in which she gives them. His is not the rejection of a donee who refuses a gift after having recognized its significance. Vercueil rejects the significance of Mrs. Curren's gifts *as* gifts. In a continuation of the passage on trust cited in the previous section, Mrs. Curren identifies the specific object of Vercueil's rejection as the demand for symbolic repayment implied by the gesture of the gift:

> Easy to give alms to the orphaned, the destitute, the hungry. Harder to give alms to the bitter-hearted (I think of Florence). But the alms I give to Vercueil are hardest of all. What I give he does not forgive me for giving.

> No charity in him, no forgiveness. (*Charity*? says Vercueil. *Forgiveness*?) Without his forgiveness I give without charity, serve without love. Rain falling on barren soil. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 119-120)

Forgiveness is a symbolic equivalent to a countergift inasmuch as it returns to the giver. However, it is not simply one countergift among others. It pardons the giver for the economic effect of his or her action, the imposition of a debt that requires repayment, while still acknowledging the significance of the gift as a gift. When Vercueil refuses to forgive Mrs. Curren for giving, he lets her know that he will not participate in such self-condemning duplicity.

In the "wager on Vercueil" passage cited in the previous section, Mrs. Curren refers to trust, obligation, and pity. I want to argue that the trust, obligation, and pity to which Mrs. Curren refers are mutual. If Mrs. Curren trusts Vercueil because he cannot be trusted, she also asks him to trust her in turn. For Vercueil, Mrs. Curren may very well be the kind of person who cannot be trusted. She participates in social codes and structures that he has rejected, codes and structures that are organized by systems of debt and restitution.

3. Living On

The circumstances under which Mrs. Curren writes her letter are such that she has the time and the need to take leave of her daughter. By insisting that her letter can only be delivered posthumously, she denies her daughter the opportunity to respond in kind. Nowhere in her letter does Mrs. Curren (explicitly) comment on what it might mean for her daughter to receive such a letter. However, she records a conversation with Vercueil in which he does. This conversation takes place after Mrs. Curren delivers a long speech to Vercueil in which she describes what she presents as two contradictory messages that she would like to communicate to her daughter: her thankfulness for what the experience of having had a daughter has given her, the memory of which she says consoles her when she suffers most; and the impulse (that she never allows herself to act on) to appeal to her daughter for succor. As she puts it, "'I am so thankful,' I want to say, from a full heart. I also want to say, but never do: 'Save me!'" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 67). A little further on, the following exchange takes place:

> "Tell this to your daughter," said Vercueil quietly. "She will come."
>
> "No."
>
> "Tell her right now. Phone her in America. Tell her you need her here."
>
> "No."
>
> "Then don't tell her afterwards, when it is too late. She won't forgive you."
>
> The rebuke was like a slap in the face.
>
> "There are things you don't understand," I said. "I have no intention of summoning my daughter back. I may long for her but I don't want her here. That is why it is called longing. It has to go a long way. To the ends of the earth."
>
> To his credit, he was not deflected by this nonsense. "You have to choose," he said. "Tell her or don't tell her."
>
> "I won't tell her, you can be sure," I said (what I liar I am!).
>
> (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 67-68)

If Mrs. Curren is characteristically overexplicit about the illocutionary force of her language, Vercueil is characteristically underexplicit. His comments are bare locutions and unexplicit to the extreme, yet they have an impact on Mrs. Curren. And there is no question as to their import: Vercueil thinks that the only responsible course of action open to Mrs. Curren is to call her daughter and tell her that she needs her. If she writes about her longing in a letter that is in fact delivered after her death, she informs her daughter of an opportunity to comfort her mother in a time of need, but only after that opportunity has passed. Such a letter is hardly a gift. It has the illocutionary force of a posthumous accusation, which is why Vercueil insists that the daughter would never forgive Mrs. Curren for sending it.

Mrs. Curren does not deny Vercueil's charge. She evades it, and later on in her letter, she admits in an explicit statement that she is in fact accusing her daughter: "I cannot live without a child. I cannot die without a child. What I bear, in your absence, is pain. I produce pain. You are my pain" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 127). She continues in the next paragraph: "Is this an accusation? Yes, *J'accuse*. I accuse you of abandoning me" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 127). In this conversation with Vercueil, however, she defends her

decision not to summon her daughter by reiterating the difficulty of the situation. Her daughter's emigration from South Africa was a demonstration of political protest. Mrs. Curren refuses to summon her daughter back to South Africa out of respect for this act:

> "Let me remind you, this is not a normal country. People can't just come and go as they wish."
>
> He did nothing to help me.
>
> "My daughter will not come back till things have changed here. She has made a vow. She will not come back to South Africa as you and she and I know it. She will certainly not apply to—what can I call them?—*those people* for permission to come. She will come back when they are hanging by their heels from the lamp-posts, she says. She will come back then to throw stones at their bodies and dance in the streets."
>
> Vercueil showed his teeth in a broad grin. Yellow horse-teeth. An old horse.
>
> "You don't believe me," I said, "but perhaps one day you will meet her, and then you will see. She is like iron. I am not going to ask her to go back on her vows."
>
> "You are like iron too," he said, to me.
>
> A silence fell between us. Inside me something broke. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 68)

In this part of their conversation, Vercueil is so taciturn as to be laconic. What is it that Vercueil does not believe? That respect for the daughter's politics is sufficient reason not to summon her back to South Africa? Or that the daughter's emigration as a demonstration of political protest deserves respect? (Vercueil does not have the privilege of such gestures.) Vercueil's response is nonverbal—in Austin's terms, it is not even locutionary—and is therefore referentially imprecise. Mrs. Curren can only read derision in his grin. Nevertheless, Vercueil's grin is sufficient to indicate with force what he thinks of Mrs. Curren reply: she is making excuses of one kind or another. There are grounds for his scepticism. The pride with which Mrs. Curren describes her daughter's commitment to her vows (her daughter is "like iron") can also be read as reversible praise. Throughout her letter, Mrs. Curren makes references to iron. Earlier on in her

letter, she describes the period in which they are living, South Africa during late-phase apartheid, is an "age of iron" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 46). These are the times in which children like Bheki and his friend John are killed in violent confrontations with the police, in which parents are unable or unwilling to dissuade them from acts of heroism, and in which childhood and child-parent relations are undermined. Vercueil's rejoinder in the exchange cited above, "You are like iron too," points out that Mrs. Curren implicates herself in the spirit of these times when she refrains from summoning her daughter.[12]

At the conclusion to her speech about her daughter that precedes this exchange with Vercueil, Mrs. Curren explains that she refrains from acting on her impulse to call out to her daughter for help because "'that is something one should never ask of a child. [. . .] to enfold one, comfort one, save one. The comfort, the love should flow forward, not backward. That is a rule, another of the iron rules. When an old person begins to plead for love everything turns squalid. Like a parent trying to creep into bed with a child: unnatural'" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 67). Mrs. Curren describes the rules of giving as iron rules, which indeed they are on the economic model. She claims that she is prepared to live and die by those rules. It is this grandiose show of commitment that Vercueil succeeds in puncturing with his one-line rebuttal. In the continuation of their argument, Mrs. Curren admits this to Vercueil: "'Something broke inside me when you said that,' I said, the words just coming. I did not know how to go on. 'If I were made of iron, surely I would not break so easily,' I said" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 68).

A little further on, after some prompting from Vercueil, Mrs. Curren makes a second attempt to defend her decision not to summon her daughter in which she phrases her argument in other terms. No longer talking about iron rules or about comfort flowing in one or the other direction, Mrs. Curren justifies her refusal to summon her daughter in terms of what it means for a mother to give her life to a child:

> "I don't know whether you have children. I don't even know if it is the same for a man. But when you bear a child from your own body you give your life to that child. Above all to the first child, the firstborn. Your life is no longer with you, it is no longer yours, it is with the child. This is why we do not really die: we simply pass on our life, the life that was for a while in us, and are left behind. I am just a shell, as you can see, the shell

> my child has left behind. It doesn't matter what happens to me. It doesn't matter what happens to old people." (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 69)

For Mrs. Curren, to give life is to pass life on; it is also to live on in that which one gives. A mother's life is implicated in that of her child. She therefore does not "really" die. A mother relays life to her child. That is how life proceeds. Mrs. Curren does not want to die in a manner that undermines the value of that transfer.[13]

Mrs. Curren fails to persuade Vercueil with this second defense of her decision not to summon her daughter. His response is to point out another alternative to writing and sending her letter, "'You should have gone to stay with her'" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 70), which Mrs. Curren dismisses as impractical and, in any event, no longer feasible in the time remaining to her. I want to draw attention to a complication which is unstated throughout their argument, but which fuels its ethical urgency. There is a sense in which Mrs. Curren is obligated to take leave of her daughter in one way or another. Implicit in Vercueil's rebuke and Mrs. Curren's reaction to it is an awareness, on both their parts, that the daughter already stands in a relation of unpayable debt to her mother. For the daughter, this debt will be compounded by the news of Mrs. Curren's death when she hears of it—whether or not she receives this letter.

In the conversation cited above, Vercueil insists that refraining from telling her daughter about her longing is better—or, at least, a lesser evil—than telling her "'afterwards'" as he puts it, "'when it is too late.'" What if Mrs. Curren were to do as Vercueil urges her and *not* write her daughter or, more to the point, *not* arrange to have her letter sent after death? Even in this case, she would still be sending a posthumous message to her daughter. She would be communicating silence, which can be sent and received just as much as any letter. When the daughter learns of Mrs. Curren's death, she will surmise that Mrs. Curren had the time to take her leave but chose not to. To receive silence when words are appropriate is to receive criticism: in this case, criticism for the distance that the daughter's politics put between them; criticism for the fact that her daughter was not there when her mother needed her. One possible outcome of Mrs. Curren's trust in Vercueil is that her daughter may indeed receive silence instead of her letter. This is the gambit of her project.

Mrs. Curren wants to give her daughter a gift, and the exchange with Vercueil

cited above demonstrates that she is sufficiently aware of the dynamics of gift-counter-gift to understand the difficulty, perhaps even the impossibility, of this endeavor. However, she also believes that writing her letter is a risk worth taking. There can be no unambivalent gift exchanged between subjects because there are no unambivalent relationships. However, the risk of ambivalence does not mean that one should avoid giving gifts for fear of their poison or avoid forming relationships for fear of their complications. As Derrida puts it in *Given Time*, responding to the injunction "Give!" entails giving "the economy of the gift its chance" (30). Mrs. Curren insists that her gift can only be given in a letter, because her daughter's reading of that letter sets up a situation that reflects, supports, and celebrates her relay of life to her daughter. Addressing her daughter directly a little further on in the letter, she describes her daughter's reading of the words of her letter as her way of "living on":

> This is my life, these words, these tracings of the movements of crabbed digits over the page. These words, as you read them, if you read them, enter you and draw breath again. They are, if you like, my way of living on. Once upon a time you lived in me as once upon a time I lived in my mother; as she still lives in me, as I grow towards her, may I live in you. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 120)

In an essay entitled "Living On/Border Lines," Derrida uses the same expression to describe what happens to a text when it is written and read:

> A text lives only if it lives *on* [*sur-vit*], and it lives *on* only if it is *at once* translatable *and* untranslatable [. . .]. Totally translatable, it disappears as a text, as writing, as a body of language [*langue*]. Totally untranslatable, even within what is believed to be one language, it dies immediately. Thus triumphant translation is neither the life nor the death of the text, only or already its living *on*, its life after life, its life after death. (102-03)

A text only lives if it lives on, and it lives on only if it is simultaneously translatable and untranslatable *into something else*, whether that be another language or a reading, which is a translation in the wide sense. Derrida's point is that, in both the narrow and the wide sense, translation necessarily involves a degree of change. In order to be readable, a text must be interpretable, which is to say that it must admit of

translation. Derrida locates textual survival in such limited change—limited, because, as he puts it in the passage cited above, if a text is entirely translatable, it "disappears as a text."[14]

In this passage, Derrida develops a point on which he has insisted since *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* in which he reads Husserl's phenomenological account of language in the first of the *Logical Investigations*. Writing is capable of functioning in the absence of the subject who writes and in the absence of the objects it describes. Absence is not only tolerated by language, as Husserl maintains; "it is *required* by the general structure of signification, when considered *in itself*" (Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* 93): "It is radically requisite: the total absence of the subject and object of a statement—the death of the writer and/or the disappearance of the objects he was able to describe—does not prevent a text from 'meaning.' On the contrary, this possibility gives birth to the meaning as such, gives it out to be heard and read" (Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* 93). In "Living On/Border Lines," Derrida describes the manner in which a text functions and continues to function in the absence or total disappearance of its author in similar terms: it "neither lives nor dies; it lives *on*. And it 'starts' only with living on (testament, iterability, remaining [*restance*], crypt, detachment that lifts the strictures of the 'living' *rectio* or direction of an 'author' not drowned at the edge of his text)" (Derrida, "Living On/Border Lines" 103).[15]

In "Living On/Border Lines," Derrida associates textual "living on" with iterability, remaining, and detachment from origins. In *Given Time*, Derrida associates these same qualities with the differential trace and dissemination by which, he argues, a gift event *may* take place. Here, Derrida calls the "death" of the donor agency "the fatality that destines a gift *not to return* to the donor agency" (*Given Time* 102). In a paraphrase of his argument in *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida insists that this fatality "is not a natural accident external to the donor agency; it is only thinkable on the basis of, setting out from [*à partir du*] the gift" (Derrida, *Given Time* 102). The text can give precisely because it departs from its origin. "This does not mean simply that only death or the dead can give," Derrida continues: "No, only a 'life' can give, but a life in which this economy of death presents itself and lets itself be exceeded. Neither death nor immortal life can

ever give anything, only a singular *surviving* can give (*Given Time* 102). Textual living on is a phantom continuation of a text in its reading.

All of this takes place despite the one who gives:

> whereas only a problematic of the trace or dissemination can pose the question of the gift, and forgiveness, this does not imply that writing is *generous* or that the writing subject is a *giving subject.* As an identifiable, bordered, posed subject, the one who writes and his or her writing never give anything without calculating, consciously or unconsciously, its reappropriation, its exchange, or its circular return—and by definition this means reappropriation with surplus-value, a certain capitalization. We will even venture to say that this is the very definition of the *subject as such.* One cannot discern the subject except as the subject of this operation of capital. But throughout and despite this circulation and this production of surplus-value, despite this labor of the subject, there where there is trace and dissemination, if only there is any, a gift can take place, along with the excessive forgetting or the forgetful excess that, as we insisted earlier, is radically implicated in the gift. (Derrida, *Given Time* 101-02)

On Derrida's account of the formation of the subject implicit in the act of giving a gift—"the movement of subjectivation" as he puts it earlier on in *Given Time* (24)—one can say that there is no way that Mrs. Curren can give an unmotivated gift to her daughter. The absolute forgetfulness that Derrida identifies as a condition for the gift is hardly possible for Mrs. Curren given her sustained concentration on her daughter as the addressee of her letter. Quite apart from the question of what would happen if the daughter were to receive this letter, Mrs. Curren annuls the gift of her letter even as she writes it. Mrs. Curren constructs her own identity by giving her gift. In the final section of this chapter, I want to argue that Mrs. Curren knows that this is what she is doing in writing this letter to her daughter, and she is unapologetic about the way in which she collects on this gift. However, she also knows that if her letter succeeds in giving a gift to her daughter, this will happen, as Derrida argues in the passage cited above, *despite* her labor and *despite* the circuit of exchange and capitalization on surplus-value that it inevitably sets in motion. In other words, Mrs. Curren insists on taking leave of her

daughter by way of a letter because she recognizes in the letter form a medium that can give in a way that she as the writing subject cannot.

4. Holding

With the device of the posthumous letter, Mrs. Curren would seem to have hit upon a way of upholding the economic circuit by which the gift returns to its sender. The deferred return of Mrs. Curren's gift to her daughter would not merely be long-term, but permanent. For there can be no reply, in the narrow sense of the epistolary, to a posthumous letter and therefore no concrete countergift for its gift. That is to say, there can be no reply unless one revises one's notion of what counts as a letter. The symbolic equivalent to a countergift can be conceived of as a letter in the wide sense.

In *Given Time*, Derrida touches on the topic of the posthumous gift in a comment on the gift effect of legacies, "particularly those exemplary legacies that are intellectual legacies" (69). The poison of such gifts, he asserts, "never fails to call forth the counter-poison which is presented in the guise of the counter-gift (restitution, tribute, celebration, commentary, critical reading, 'personal interpretation')" (Derrida, *Given Time* 69). Implicit in this comment is the contention that the death of the giving subject by no means cancels the debt incurred by the recipient of the gift. On the contrary, legacies have an enduring effect—one can say with accuracy that they haunt—precisely because the countergifts they elicit from their legatees *cannot* return to the historical legators.

To whom, then, does the countergift to a posthumous gift return? I want to argue that it returns to the recipient's "idea" of the giver or to what Abraham and Torok call the subject's introjection or incorporation of the lost object. Were the daughter to receive Mrs. Curren's letter and understand its significance, she *would* attempt to return its gift. However, she would not be able to direct her countergift to her mother, since Mrs. Curren's death would have removed her from the circuit of exchange by the time the daughter would have received her letter. The daughter would therefore have to direct her countergift to her introjected or incorporated idea of her mother. In other words, Mrs. Curren's arrangements for the posthumous delivery of her letter may set up the conditions by which her gift may be given with no thought of return, but not even the fact that the gift is posthumous can prevent the daughter from attempting to make restitution

to her memory.

The problem inherent in Mrs. Curren's gift to her daughter is that its function as a legacy undermines what Austin would call the perlocutionary objective of the act of leave-taking: the aim with which it is performed; its intended effect. An act of leave-taking is performed in the knowledge that a relationship between subjects is about to be finalized, and it is performed with the aim of achieving closure in that relationship. However, on Derrida's account of the haunting effects of legacy, closure is just what the recipient of a posthumous gift cannot achieve. Viewed from this perspective, Mrs. Curren's plans for the posthumous delivery of her letter seem to be entirely irresponsible. For, were they to be carried out, Mrs. Curren's letter would lock the daughter in the attempted performance of an unachievable act. This argument represents Vercueil's position on the perlocutionary effect of Mrs. Curren's letter to her daughter.

I want to argue that there is an aspect of Mrs. Curren's letter which is inaccessible to Vercueil—not because of any insight that he has or does not have, but because of the simple fact that her letter is not available to him. Vercueil is a locutionary speaker; he speaks in brief rejoinders. Vercueil has no experience of the gift effect of Mrs. Curren's letter as a sustained love address.

Above, I identified the perlocutionary object of an act of leave-taking as the achievement of closure, and I pointed out that, on Derrida's account of the haunting effects of legacies, closure is just what the recipient of a legacy cannot achieve. This is a summary account of the problem posed by the necessity of leave-taking for Mrs. Curren. For Mrs. Curren and her daughter mean more to one another than do a legator and a legatee. Writing her letter in the knowledge of her imminent death, Mrs. Curren anticipates her daughter's mourning. If the perlocutionary object of an act of leave-taking is the achievement of closure, this achievement runs counter to the desire of the subject in mourning. This is, as Derrida points out in the second chapter of *Given Time*, the unavoidable problem posed by the gift for the subject in mourning (36). How to desire forgetting? How to desire not to keep? The work of mourning amounts to keeping. I want to argue that Mrs. Curren insists on writing instead of summoning her daughter because the time it takes to read a letter may assist her daughter with this work. Thus, Mrs. Curren's gift to her daughter is a letter that addresses her daughter's mourning,

recognizes it, respects it—that perhaps even assists.

Mrs. Curren believes that she can only give a gift to her daughter—a gift that really is a gift—in the writing of a letter. This is not because she is especially intelligent or skilled in letter writing (although she is certainly both of these things), but because she knows the value of the sustained address. The gift quality of Mrs. Curren's letter can be described as sustained, figurative holding. This is why she takes all the time remaining to her for the performance of her act: the time it takes to write her letter would also be the time it would take for her daughter to read it.

What does Mrs. Curren require of the medium by which she communicates her gift? In an account of a conversation with her daughter over the telephone, Mrs. Curren compares the quality of communication afforded by that medium with the quality of communication afforded by a letter. Here, Mrs. Curren both describes the kind of letter she wants to write and performs the task she describes. She begins her comparison as follows:

> Mother and daughter on the telephone. Midday there, evening here. Summer there, winter here. Yet the line as clear as if you were next door. Our words taken apart, hurled through the skies, put together again whole, flawless. No longer the old undersea cable linking you to me but an efficient, abstract, skyborne connection: the idea of you connected to the idea of me; not words, not living breath passing between us, but the ideas of words, the idea of breath, coded, transmitted, decoded. At the end you said, "Good night, mother," and I, "Goodbye, my dear, thank you for phoning," on the *dear* allowing my voice to rest (what self-indulgence!) with the full weight of my love, praying that the ghost of that love would survive the cold trails of space and come home to you. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 117-18)

Words heard in a telephone call have no apparent materiality and therefore give the illusion of presence and immediacy. The telephone call seems to establish an unmediated link between self and other: "the idea of you connected to the idea of me" as Mrs. Curren puts it in this passage. For Mrs. Curren, the idealism of this link is

emphasized by satellite technology, which does not require that the telephone call travel by tangible carrier. Mrs. Curren is aware that the immateriality of words heard in a telephone call is only apparent. Words heard in a telephone call have in fact undergone translation: they have been "coded, transmitted, and decoded" as she puts it. What she finds disconcerting about this translation is its speed, which she perceives to be violent. What is more, something important is lost in the translation. Words heard in a telephone call are disinvested of living breath and give only its idea. Thus, when Mrs. Curren hears her own voice putting the full weight of her love on the word *dear*, she knows that only the "ghost of that love," intimated by a word inflected by tone but divested of living breath, can arrive to her daughter.

Mrs. Curren's assessment of the idealistic link established by the telephone call compares with Derrida's analysis of the privileged relationship between *logos* and *phone,* "thought" and "voice," in the tradition of Western philosophy that culminates in Husserl's metaphysics. In *Speech and Phenomena,* Derrida argues that this privileging depends upon an effacement of the materiality of language upon which the voice depends: "For it is not in the sonorous substance or in the physical voice, in the body of speech in the world, that he [Husserl] will recognize an original affinity with the logos in general, but in the voice phenomenologically taken, speech in its transcendental flesh, in the breath, the intentional animation that transforms the body of the word into flesh" (16). Husserl can assert the transcendence of the voice only insofar as he maintains an opposition between spirit and the body: he conceives of the voice as transcendent by associating breath with thought, which he takes as synonymous with intention and self-presence. Derrida reads Husserl's association of thought and the voice as follows:

> When I speak, it belongs to the phenomenological essence of this operation that *I hear myself* [je m'entende] *at the same time* that I speak. The signifier, animated by my breath and by the meaning-intention [. . .] is in absolute proximity to me. The living act, the life-giving act, the *Lebendigkeit*, which animates the body of the signifier and transforms it into a meaningful expression, the soul of language, seems not to separate itself from itself, from its own self-presence. It does not risk death in the body of a signifier that is given over to the world and the visibility of

space. (*Speech and Phenomena* 77-88)

Mrs. Curren associates breath with life as Husserl does, but she does not conceive of breath as transcendental. Breath connotes the life that animates the body for Mrs. Curren: that which she calls, in a continuation of the passage cited above, *spirit*, a word that she uses in a way that underscores its etymology. *Spirit* derives from the Latin *spiritus,* meaning "breathing," "breath," "air." *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines *spirit* as the "animating or vital principle in man (or animals); that which gives life to the physical organism, in contrast to its purely material elements; the breath of life." For Mrs. Curren, spirit is that which can be sensed in a living body, but not touched directly. One can sense life as breath or spirit when the other is physically proximate: in an embrace, for example, or in a face-to-face dialogue. Earlier in her letter, Mrs. Curren compares the embrace and the face-to-face dialogue with the figurative reaching out performed by her letter: "In another world I would not need words. I would appear on your doorstep. 'I have come for a visit,' I would say, and that would be the end of words: I would embrace you and be embraced. But in this world, in this time, I must reach out to you in words" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 8).[16] Even earlier in the letter, she describes her unembarrassed articulation of this longing in her letter as "a mother's truth":

> Home truths, a mother's truth: from now to the end that is all you will hear from me. So: how I longed for you! How I longed to be able to go upstairs to you, to sit on your bed, run my fingers through your hair, whisper in your ear as I did on school mornings, "Time to get up!" And then, when you turned over, your body blood-warm, your breath milky, to take you in my arms in what we called "giving Mommy a big hug," the secret meaning of which, the meaning never spoken, was that Mommy should not be sad, for she would not die but live on in you.
>
> To live! You are my life; I love you as I love life itself. In the mornings I come out of the house and wet my finger and hold it up to the wind. When the chill is from the north-west, from your quarter, I stand a long time sniffing, concentrating my attention in the hope that across ten thousand miles of land and sea some breath will reach me of the

> milkiness you still carry with you behind your ears, in the fold of your neck. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 5)

Inasmuch as Mrs. Curren describes the scent of her daughter's breath as an expression of life that travels, she departes significantly from the association of breath with self-presence that Derrida finds characteristic of western metaphysics. The scent of breath travels away from the living body; it is a kind of representative of that life and thus a letter in the wide sense, not reserved for any particular addressee but bearing the signature of the life that produces it. If the travel of scent goes unnoticed, this is because scent travels by dispersion or, as Derrida would say, by dissemination.

The telephone call can transmit words inflected by tone and in that manner communicate love. However, for the communication of her gift, Mrs. Curren requires words invested with living breath. In other words, she wants to give her daughter what she longs for herself. Since the daughter's distance does not allow Mrs. Curren to do that, she instead writes the story of her last days in a letter that her daughter will read and, in the act of reading, reinvest with her own breath. The following is the continuation of her long comparison of what the medium of the telephone call and the medium of the letter allow and do not allow her to give her daughter:

> On the telephone, love but not truth. In this letter from elsewhere (so long a letter!) truth and love together at last. In every *you* that I pen love flickers and trembles like St Elmo's fire; you are with me not as you are today in America, not as you were when you left, but as you are in some deeper and unchanging form: as the beloved, as that which does not die. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 118)

If words exchanged in a telephone call establish an idealistic connection between self and other, letter writing and reading also operate on the basis of a certain idealism. Mrs. Curren's address is not directed to her daughter as she is in her present moment and place, but to what she describes in the continuation of this passage as "the soul of you" (Coeztee, *Age of Iron* 118). That is to say, Mrs. Curren's address is not to the daughter who has grown and transformed herself in the process, but to her idea of her daughter, which she has formed over time and, in a sense, outside of time. This idea has a wider frame of reference than her daughter's historical contingency. It reflects Mrs. Curren's

total experience of her daughter, which includes modes of being that are no longer available to her daughter's self-understanding. In conversation with her daughter over the telephone, Mrs. Curren has to let this idea recede in order to participate in a dialogue in which both she and her daughter speak as subjects situated in time and place (recede but not disappear—a pure sense of a child's historical contingency may be neither desirable nor possible for a parent). Words spoken in a telephone conversation yield to the back-and-forth rhythm of the verbal exchange: one speaks and the other responds and then the first responds to the other in turn and so on. In a written letter, the address to the other is sustained. In an introductory piece to *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments,* Roland Barthes calls this quality of a lover's discourse a *figure* in the Greek sense of the word:

> The word is to be understood, not in its rhetorical sense, but in its gymnastic or choreographic acceptation: in short, in the Greek meaning: $\sigma\chi\tilde{\eta}\mu\alpha$ is not the "schema," but, in a much livelier way, the body's gesture caught in action and not contemplated in repose: the body of athletes, orators, statues: what in the straining body can be immobilized. So it is with the lover at grips with his figures: he struggles in a kind of lunatic sport, he spends himself, like an athlete; he "phrases," like an orator; he is caught, stuffed into a role, like a statue. The figure is the lover at work. (3-4)[17]

Barthes argues that, just as a body can be organized and held in a precise posture, so too can writing. In writing a love letter, the writer's effort consists not in release—sending and delivery in epistolary terms—but in composing and holding a gesture. The love letter writer practices this gesture, repetitively. In a reference to D. W. Winnicott's *Playing and Reality*, Barthes describes letter writing as a rhythmic practice that compares with a child's play with a transitional object, which Winnicott argues is a prelude to language development and creative expressiveness. Both the letter and the transitional object are symbolic substitutes, produced in response to the sustained absence of the other, which engage the subject in a rhythmic activity[18]:

> Absence persists—I must endure it. Hence I will *manipulate* it: transform the distortion of time into oscillation, produce rhythm, make an entrance onto the stage of language (language is born of absence: the child has

> made himself a doll out of a spool, throws it away and picks it up again, miming the mother's departure and return: a paradigm is created). Absence becomes an active practice, a *business* (which keeps me from doing anything else) [. . .]. (Barthes 16)

In writing her letter to her daughter, Mrs. Curren is engaged in such work. She orients her letter toward her daughter, repetitively. By writing "so long a letter," she seeks to practice this orientating gesture in an address that she sustains beyond even epistolary norms.[19] Mrs. Curren orients and reorientates herself toward her daughter every time she writes the word *you*. With the simile alluding to St. Elmo's fire in the passage cited previously, she describes her orientation toward her daughter as a recurrent pattern in her writing. Mrs. Curren compares the written pages of the letter to a tumultuous land- or seascape with lit points, the flicker of love she perceives in every *you* that she writes.[20] The word *you* is not merely a sign in the linguistic sense for Mrs. Curren: it is a mark of special import, even of divine significance, that comforts her and reassures her.

What relation does this sign have to the daughter or to Mrs. Curren's relationship with her? In *A Lover's Discourse,* Barthes insists that, in the writing of love letters, the relationship is between the letter writer and the letter, not between the letter writer and the one he or she loves: "To know that one does not write for the other, to know that these things I am going to write will never cause me to be loved by the one I love (the other), to know that writing compensates for nothing, sublimates nothing, that it is precisely *there where you are not*—this is the beginning of writing" (100). Since one writes in the absence of the other, the letter serves as a proxy for the loved one. The lover's address is therefore *to the letter*. Writing in her daughter's absence, Mrs. Curren knows that the address of her letter is a substitute for her daughter's presence. What is more, she knows that her address to her daughter as "the beloved, as that which does not die" pertains more to her own identity than to her daughter's (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 118). At the beginning of her letter, Mrs. Curren puts this insight as follows:

> The first task laid on me, from today: to resist the craving to share my death. Loving you, loving life, to forgive the living and take my leave without bitterness. To embrace death as my own, mine alone.

> To whom this writing then? The answer: to you but not to you; to me; to you in me. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 5)

In her long comparison of communicative media, Mrs. Curren adds to this account of the substitute function of her letter. She writes in the hope that her letter will have a substitute function for her daughter as well. When her daughter reads this letter (if she receives it), it will serve as a substitute for the mother whom the daughter will have lost:

> It is the soul of you that I address, as it is the soul of me that will be left with you when this letter is over. Like a moth from its case emerging, fanning its wings: that is what, reading, I hope you will glimpse: my soul readying itself for further flight. A white moth, a ghost emerging from the mouth of the figure on the deathbed. This struggling with sickness, the gloom and self-loathing of these days, the vacillation, the rambling too [. . .] all part of the metamorphosis, part of shaking myself loose from the dying envelope. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 118)

Mrs. Curren addresses her letter to her daughter's soul; and she hopes that, reading, her daughter will perceive her soul in turn. Mrs. Curren works this image into a conceit that compares her manner of living during these final days to the metamorphosis that produces a moth, the classical symbol for the soul.[21] Mrs. Curren writes this letter about the manner in which she lives out her final days so that her daughter will see her soul preparing itself for flight and comprehend the fact of its ascension. In other words, Mrs. Curren hopes that her letter will assist her daughter with the work of mourning that she will have to undertake upon receiving this letter. In Abraham and Torok's terms, the daughter will have to amend her idea: she will have to conceive of her mother not only as absent, but also as lost. Abraham and Torok define mourning as a language process by which the subject introjects the idea of a lost loved one so as, ultimately, to release that idea and be released from it. As a parent is wont to do when he or she helps a child through a necessary but difficult experience, Mrs. Curren literally puts her daughter through the motions of this work by writing a letter that her daughter will have to read and, by reading, introject. Mrs. Curren's letter requires a symbolic action from her daughter that is productive for mourning and counterproductive for melancholia. In this

regard, one can describe the effect of Mrs. Curren's letter as a kind of psychological holding of her daughter through the words of her letter. She extends the length of her letter beyond epistolary conventions in order to prolong this holding. Mrs. Curren's letter engages her daughter in a discursive activity that will take some time: the several hours, at least, on first reading, and potentially many more if her daughter rereads the letter. Even if the daughter will be engaged in the work of mourning for a much longer period of time than it takes to read and (even reread) this long letter, Mrs. Curren's letter nevertheless engages her daughter in a discursive activity during the first critical period of this work. What Mrs. Curren gives her daughter with this letter are the words with which to begin.

As is appropriate when there is talk of souls of the departed delaying their ascension, Mrs. Curren assures her daughter that her intention is not to haunt:

> And after that, after the dying? Never fear, I will not haunt you. There will be no need to close the windows and seal the chimney to keep the white moth from flapping in during the night and settling on the brow of one of your children. The moth is simply what will brush your cheek ever so lightly as you put down the last page of this letter, before it flutters off on its next journey. It is not my soul that will remain with you but the spirit of my soul, the breath, the stirring of the air about these words, the faintest of turbulence traced in the air by the ghostly passage of my pen over the paper your fingers now hold. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 118-19)

This letter will not haunt the daughter. Mrs. Curren devotes her epistolary skill to producing this benign effect. But is it an effect that Mrs. Curren can claim to be able to determine? There is a sense in which the daughter is responsible for the way in which she responds to her mother's gift. Mrs. Curren can assure her daughter that she, for her part, does not intend to haunt, but she cannot prevent her daughter from creating her own phantoms nevertheless. Austin would classify the various ways in which the daughter could respond to Mrs. Curren's letter under the rubric of perlocution: perlocutionary effects are consequential effects that follow upon the achievement of an illocutionary act, but which are nevertheless discrete actions. In contrast to illocutionary effects, perlocutionary effects are not determined by convention, which means that they cannot be

predicted. If Vercueil posts her letter after her death and if her daughter receives her letter and understands its meaning and force, Mrs. Curren will have achieved her illocutionary act: she will have taken her leave of her daughter. However, her achievement of this act is distinct from any perlocutionary effects that her letter may produce in her daughter. Mrs. Curren cannot rightly claim to be able to determine which of these perlocutionary effects her letter will have on her daughter.

I want to argue that Mrs. Curren is concerned about the perlocutionary consequences of her letter precisely because they are *not* determined by convention. According to Abraham and Torok, there are *two* ways in which a subject in mourning can respond to the news of the death of a loved one: he or she can either introject loss, and thereby take up the work of mourning, or refuse to do so, and thereby take up the "nonwork" of melancholy. The melancholic subject incorporates ideas associated with the lost love object in order to reconstruct that object internally and house it secretly within his or her own psyche. Mrs. Curren insists on writing instead of summoning her daughter because she believes that communicating this news of her death by letter will influence her daughter's choice between these two responses.

Austin would say Mrs. Curren's letter would give her daughter a choice of perlocutionary responses (if she receives it). There would be a "break in the chain," as Austin puts it (113), between the accomplishment of Mrs. Curren's speech act and its production of perlocutionary consequences. Or is it not that simple? I argued earlier in this chapter that Mrs. Curren fashions the gift of her letter after her relay of life to her daughter. She gives her daughter an experience of textual "living on" which I argued is comparable to the dissemination of the gift as Derrida describes it in *Given Time*. Mrs. Curren's prediction of what will happen when her daughter reads this letter is the context in which Mrs. Curren uses this expression. I recite the passage I discussed earlier in this chapter:

> This is my life, these words, these tracings of the movements of crabbed digits over the page. These words, as you read them, if you read them, enter you and draw breath again. They are, if you like, my way of living on. Once upon a time you lived in me as once upon a time I lived in my mother; as she still lives in me, as I grow towards her, may I live in you.

(Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 120)[22]

Mrs. Curren writes the words of a letter that her daughter will have to repeat in order to read. She claims that her daughter's reading of the words of her letter is her way of living on. Would this be the illocutionary or perlocutionary effect of her letter? Would it constitute the achievement of her leave-taking of her daughter or a consequence of that act? The difficulty of this question arises in part from Mrs. Curren's association of living on with the act of writing and the act of reading. These are physical as well as cognitive acts. Austin observes that, whereas we have a vocabulary of names for distinguishing an act of saying something from its consequences, "we do not seem to have any class of names which distinguish physical acts from consequences [. . .]" (112): "For with physical actions, we nearly always naturally name the action not in terms of what we are here calling the minimum physical act, but in terms which embrace a greater or less but indefinitely extensive range of what might be called its natural consequences (or, looking at it another way, the intention with which it was done)" (Austin 112). The "break in the chain" that the illocution-perlocution distinction is designed to mark is wanting in the vocabulary we use to describe physical actions (Austin 113). Acts of saying something seem to have a "special nature" in this regard (Austin 113). In contrast to acts of speech, they cannot be conceived of as distinct from their consequences. However, Austin notes, the divorce between acts of doing something and acts of saying something is not complete. There is some connection. Speaking involves "the uttering of noises, which is a physical movement" (Austin 114). When Mrs. Curren pictures her soul as a moth that rises from the last page of her letter to brush her daughter's cheek, she draws attention to this connection between the mind and the body. The act of writing and the act of reading both require a relation to the words on the page that is at once physical and cognitive.

Whereas the apparent immateriality of the telephone transmission seems to transport words directly into the mind of the listener and thereby establish an idealistic link between self and other, the tangibility of the letter interrupts this connection. The letter intervenes with its manifest materiality: words written in ink on paper, sentences composed in lines, a composition that spans pages, many pages in this case. For Mrs. Curren, the materiality of the letter allows for a metonymical association of the letter with the living bodies that write and read. When and if she receives this letter, Mrs. Curren's

daughter will repeat its words in the process of reading, draw breath in keeping with its syntax, lift and turn its pages, and even occupy the same space in relation to the pages as her mother did when writing. Mrs. Curren writes words that anticipate her daughter's living breath. For the daughter, this letter will give an intimation of her mother's body, breath, and life. It is the slight breath of wind created by her daughter putting down the letter's last page that releases the moth that brushes the cheek. The brush of this leave-taking is part of the gift that Mrs. Curren gives her daughter: the chance not only to comprehend her passing, but also to feel it. (I might add that the materiality of the envelope in which Mrs. Curren will have to enclose her letter, with its South African stamps and postmark, also intervenes in the idealistic connection between mother and daughter. The envelope will intimate another kind of metonymical association between bodies: it will associate the daughter with the postal processing of South Africa and the social and political spirit that animates that "body.")

Even if the moth conceit confounds the exact borderline between cause and effect and therein the borderline between illocution and perlocution, it conveys an image of conclusive leave-taking. With the expression "living on," however, Mrs. Curren is referring to an effect that survives after her soul's departure. My question therefore remains: is this effect illocutionary or perlocutionary? Answering this question requires a review of the various kinds of illocutionary effect, for Austin maintains there are more than one.

Austin states that his point in distinguishing between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts is to isolate the achievement of an act from its consequential production of effects and sequels. He adds later on in his lecture series that the illocutionary act is nevertheless "connected with the production of effects in certain senses" (Austin 116). There are three ways in which an illocutionary act can be "bound up with effects" (Austin 118). First, an illocutionary act cannot be said to have been happily, successfully performed unless its audience hears what is said and understands its meaning. This effect generally amounts to "bringing about the understanding of the meaning and of the force of the locution. So the performance of an illocutionary act involves the securing of *uptake*" (Austin 117). Second, if an illocutionary act is a performative, it "takes effect" by bringing about a certain state of affairs (Austin 117). It

can, as Derrida puts it in *Limited Inc*, produce or transform a situation. Third, an illocutionary act can "invite by convention a response or sequel" (Austin 117). This third situation pinpoints the borderline between illocution and perlocution. If the recipient understands that an invitation to respond has been extended, the illocutionary act is achieved. However, the manner in which the recipient reacts to this invitation constitutes a distinct act: it "cannot be included under the initial stretch of action" (Austin 117). The recipient may withhold or accord the response he or she has been invited to give. Either reaction is the perlocutionary effect of the act extending the invitation.

As I argued in the previous section, when Derrida contends that the simple recognition of the gift suffices to annul it, he makes the point that the gift is annulled with the achievement of the illocutionary act of giving it—prior to its production of any perlocutionary consequence. The illocutionary act of gift giving is achieved when the recipient understands its illocutionary force: that is, that the gift is to be taken as a gift. This recognition suffices to annul the gift. Why? Because recognizing the significance of a gift as a gift amounts to keeping it and so incurring a debt that invites—or, rather, demands—restitution by convention (a demand is a strong invitation). This is why the felicitous performance of the act of giving a gift amounts to its infelicity. What the recipient recognizes is not simply the gift as such, the thing given, but also the conventional procedure invoked by the act of giving it. Thus, the gift is annulled even before recognition becomes gratitude. Gratitude is a perlocutionary effect of the gift: the equivalent to a recipient's accordance of a response. And it is only one possible perlocutionary effect among others.

On this reading, one can say that there is no way that Mrs. Curren can give a gift to her daughter that would not compel her to make countergifts. Even if she were to reject Mrs. Curren's inheritance, the daughter would still receive and keep the gift of this letter as soon as she recognizes its significance as a gift. This keeping—or "uptake" as Austin puts it—would be the illocutionary effect of Mrs. Curren's letter for the daughter: its conventional and therefore unavoidable consequence. The issue that I want to address now is what this keeping or uptake entails for the subject in mourning.

Mrs. Curren's letter can be conceived of as an illocutionary act that invites by convention a response or sequel. Mrs. Curren writes a letter that would announce her

death to her daughter if she were to receive it. What "invitation" would this news extend? Abraham and Torok would argue that Mrs. Curren's letter presents the daughter with the task of modifying her idea of her mother: to conceive of her mother not only as absent but also as lost. Were the daughter to receive this letter and comprehend the invitation it extends, Mrs. Curren would have achieved the illocutionary act of extending this invitation. If the daughter were moreover to respond to the letter by taking up this task, Mrs. Curren would also have achieved her perlocutionary objective: she would have succeeded in encouraging the daughter take up the work upon which mourning depends—work which may conclude, if it ever entirely concludes, with the achievement of closure. However, the daughter's perlocutionary response to the letter could be to refuse to undertake this task. She could elect to engage in the "nonwork" of melancholia: instead of introjecting her loss, the daughter could incorporate her idea of her mother and house it intact in a psychic crypt hidden within her own psychic economy. In this case, the daughter would set up a psychic economy in which the gift of Mrs. Curren's letter and her own countergifts would circulate indefinitely.

Mrs. Curren's daughter would be faced with the task of mourning for her mother (and either accept or refuse it) even if she were to receive no message from her mother. It would suffice that she receives the news of her mother's death. Mrs. Curren insists on writing instead of summoning her daughter because a letter has to be introjected in order to be read. I want to compare introjection to the structure of trace and of textual dissemination, which Derrida argues allows for "the overrunning of the circle by the gift" (*Given Time* 30). Abraham and Torok define the introjection as a psychic expansion that operates by symbolic dispersion. If it sets up an internal circuit of economic return, it also sets up the conditions for the linguistic dispersal of this circuit. In other words, both mourning and melancholia produce internal circuits of economic return. The difference between these economies is that one expends itself in a psychic expansion while the other endures with haunting effect. Melancholy sets up a simple system: simple because closed. Mourning sets up complex system: it both circulates and dissipates—Derrida would say "disseminates." By writing her daughter a letter which her daughter will have to introject in order to read, Mrs. Curren sets the complex system going for daughter. This is how Mrs. Curren hopes to influence her daughter's perlocutionary response to the

letter. The necessity of reading the words is the gift of Mrs. Curren's letter—the gift that really is a gift; the gift without return—for her daughter or any reader of *Age of Iron*.

Another way of putting this would be to say that the gift of Mrs. Curren's letter has two illocutionary effects: one that is conventional insofar as it sets up a circuit of economic return and another that is unconventional insofar as it overruns this circuit. The conventional effect ensures that the daughter will construct a psychic economy in which the gift of Mrs. Curren's letter will circulate. The unconventional effect ensures that this economy disperses in a linguistic expansion—at least for the periods of time that it takes for her daughter to read and reread this letter. The important point to observe is that these effects are not unrelated to one another. As Derrida put is in *Given Time*, "the overrunning of the circle by the gift" is the "exteriority that *engages* in the circle and makes it turn" (30). So the gift of Mrs. Curren's letter, its textual living on, is not unrelated to that same procedure which, as Vercueil points out, reverses the gift quality of her letter by imposing on her daughter an unpayable debt. The gift of Mrs. Curren's letter is, as I put is above, complex, but Mrs. Curren is prepared to risk this complexity.

For, finally, what is textual living on if not the general performativity of writing? Austin argues that an illocutionary act takes effect when it brings about an understanding of its meaning and force: when it secures uptake in its recipients (117). This effect is not perlocutionary: it is not a consequence of an accomplished act. It *is* that achievement. Mrs. Curren's letter takes effect when it is read, and because its force is performative, this securing of uptake also produces or transforms the circumstances in which it is issued. It would produce or transform Mrs. Curren's daughter if she were to read it; it produces or transforms us who do read it.

Notes

1. Mrs. Curren witnesses a township riot when she drives Florence and her two daughters to the Guguletu township where they normally live (Florence has taken all three of her children to Mrs. Curren's house in a suburb of Cape Town in order to escape the upheaval resulting from the school boycotts; however, her fifteen-year-old son Bheki disappears back into Guguletu after he and his friend John are harassed and John is injured on the street outside of Mrs. Curren's house). Together with Florence, Mrs.

Curren discovers Bheki's body with a bullet hole through his head in the aftermath of the burning of a squatter camp on the outskirts of the township. Somewhat later, she witnesses the police hunt down and shoot John on the street outside of her house, where he has hidden after his release from the hospital.

2. In her chapter on *Age of Iron,* Gallagher attends exclusively to the locutionary aspect of the novel in a reading of the parent-child relationships described in Mrs. Curren's letter. This approach is appropriate to Gallagher's critical objective in writing her book: to respond to allegations by Neo-Marxist, historicist critics that Coetzee's allegorical style amounts to "an irresponsible, or impotent, metaphysical escapism" (ix). Gallagher's project is "to resituate Coetzee's fictions in their discursive moments, to examine a variety of social, cultural, and rhetorical contexts from which his novels emerge and in which they participate" (ix). She argues that Coetzee's novels not only "respond to the oppressive practices that have pervaded South African life for hundreds of years," but that they also respond to South African discursive practices, particularly in regard to the way in which they construct its history:

> South Africa is a country in which discourse itself has contributed to oppression, a country whose history has been deliberately constructed to maintain white supremacy. Coetzee's response has been to expose and subvert national myths of history, as well as to create alternative narratives, stories to hold up against the nightmare of South African history. The stories he tells emerge from South African realities, but they suggest in their very form and technique that an alternative to those realities exists. Avoiding the authoritative voice of history, Coetzee presents us with a storyteller's elusive, ambiguous, yet melodious account of South Africa. (Gallagher x)

Another way of putting this would be to say that Coetzee's allegorical style is not only precise in its reference to the social and political realities of South Africa, but that it also questions the referential authority of official accounts of those realities. Referential precision, on Austin's account, is a locutionary concern. I would add that pointing out the possibility of referential aberrations amounts to an ethical questioning of the locutionary.

Gallagher's reading of Coetzee's allegorical style demonstrates how the study of the locutionary aspects of a work can raise important questions about the ways in which we access experience through language. However, in choosing to focus on this dimension of Coetzee's writing in her reading of *Age of Iron*, Gallagher entirely overlooks the illocutionary aspect of the novel. Gallagher describes *Age of Iron* as a first-person narrative and "an allusive, impressionistic monologue," entirely missing the addressed character of Mrs. Curren's writing and its performative reference to a relationship with another (193). She mentions that *Age of Iron* is "Written as an extended letter," but only in the context of an argument that, in writing this novel, Coetzee "turns to a novelistic form more realistic that any of this previous books [. . .]" (193). One of the traditional claims of the epistolary novel is that the writing it presents is realistic. Gallagher argues that the realism of *Age of Iron* indicates that, with this novel, "Coetzee appears to have come to terms with himself as a South African novelist" (193). In *Foe,* Coetzee's previous novel, he "struggled with the demons plaguing the authoritative storyteller" (193). Gallagher implies that Coetzee chose to write *Age of Iron* in the form of a letter because that form is up-front about the fact that the knowledge it presents is perspectival.

For other critical assessments of the debate surrounding Coetzee's fiction and its reference to South African political history, see David Atwell's *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* and "The Problem of History in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee." For Coetzee's own comments, see "Idleness in South Africa" in *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* and "The Novel Today." For another reading of the ways in which *Age of Iron* comments on the South African political and social situation, see Atwell's "'Dialogue' and 'Fulfilment' in J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*."

3. Marais is wholly concerned with the constative aspects of *Age of Iron.* His objective is to contrast official representations of social injustices—a passage describing a television news broadcast, for example—with Mrs. Curren's perspectival reports. Marais mentions that the novel is written as a letter addressed to a daughter only in the context of an argument that the daughter is a figure of the expatriate, white South African who does not

want to know about South African atrocities. Apart from this metaphorical account of the letter's address (metaphorical because it asserts a symbolic connection between the daughter and the reader), Marais does not treat *Age of Iron* as an epistolary novel. He calls Mrs. Curren the novel's "protagonist" (2).

4. Austin's definition of the locutionary act as a speech act which has force but which is unexplicit about it suggests that the locutionary speech act would very often be summary. Mrs. Curren's long letter constitutes a single, extended speech act. It is hardly summary. Illocutionary unexplicitness implies less language, not more. Mrs. Curren's conversations with Vercueil confirm this implication. While Mrs. Curren's manner of conversing is precise and explicit in Austin's sense, Vercueil's manner of conversing is precise and unexplicit. His remarks in these conversations are nearly always brief in the extreme. They are, at most, bare locutions, yet Vercueil's responses have force for Mrs. Curren—at times even enormous force. The unexplicitness of the locutionary act does not make it any less efficacious.

5. *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives the derivation of the word element *-mony* as the Greek *-nomia*, which is related to *nomos* 'law' and *nemein* 'distribute.'

6. Word etymology indicates a field of predicates and semantic values that is intimated by the meaning of the word in current usage. In pointing out that a gift can be poisonous, Derrida is referring to the diverging historical developments of the word *gift* in Germanic languages. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the Modern English word *gift* derives from the Old English *gift* 'payment for a wife' or 'wedding' in the plural, which compares to the Old Frisian *jeft* 'gift'; the Middle Dutch *gift(e)* 'gift, poison'; the Old High German *gift* 'gift, poison'; and the Old Norse *gipt* 'gift' and the plural *giptor* 'wedding' (a sense that has survived in Swedish and Danish. In Swedish, the word *gift* means "poison" and "married"). These diverging historical developments of the word *gift* indicate an etymological uncertainty that reflects the ambiguity of the gift event.

In *Dissemination*, Derrida cites various etymological studies that detail the same uncertainty in Latin languages (130-32). The French word *don* 'gift' comes from the

Latin *dósis* and the Greek δοσις 'a dose (of poison).' *Pharmakon* in Greek means "poison," "drug," "medicine," and "dye."

7. In *Limited Inc*, Derrida argues that the performative, like any other sign, can be cited, and "in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. This does not imply that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchoring [*ancrage*]" (12). See chapter 1 for a discussion of this argument.

8. Attridge implicitly refers to this argument when he points out that Mrs. Curren's arrangements for the posthumous delivery of her letter give her an authorial status vis-à-vis the letter. For the daughter, Mrs. Curren's letter would be a letter from the dead: "The letter will thus function more like literature than most letters, since the work of literature, too, casts itself off from its author and renders questioning problematic—something that Coetzee, when questioned about this fiction, frequently insists upon" (Attridge, "Trusting the Other" 63).

9. In his reading of biblical references in *Age of Iron*, Marais makes a similar argument in another theoretical idiom: "By identifying the South African reader with Mrs. Curren's daughter, the novel therefore characterizes this reader as a lotus-eater, someone who has abandoned and forgotten his or her country" (21). Identification is not what I mean when I claim that the performative action of a relayed address has the power to (re)construct and so divide the identity of the reading subject. Where identification implies similarity, the performative effects of the relayed address imply difference, both within the subject and between subjects. In this regard, the effect of a relayed address compares with an ideological "interpellation" in Louis Althusser's sense. I will return to the implications of this comparison at my conclusion to the thesis.

10. Susan Gallagher notes that the word *apartheid* has the status of a loanword even in its language of origin. The original sense of *apartheid*, roughly translatable as "apartness"

or "separateness," is now seldom used in European Dutch (Gallagher 1).

11. Vercueil's rejection of social codes and structures repeatedly makes him the object of social criticism which forcefully points out the rules to which he fails to conform. The force of his affront can be measured in the hostility that the township people express toward Vercueil, which Attridge describes as follows:

> Florence can see him only as "rubbish" and as "good for nothing," and the boys despise him perhaps even more strongly. (It is, incidentally, in their treatment of him that we have the strongest suggestion that he would be placed by the apartheid system in the category of "non-white," since they appear to regard his alcoholism as a capitulation to white domination: "They are making you into a dog!") ("Trusting the Other" 71-72)

12. While I argue that Mrs. Curren's initial attempt to defend her decision not to summon her daughter is suspect, Attridge accepts this defense. Attridge argues that Mrs. Curren's insistence on preserving the one-way passage of mother-to-daughter inheritance is a consequence of the political situation of South Africa. In order to return to comfort her mother, the daughter would have to return to South Africa, which she has vowed never to do as long as apartheid continues. Thus, "it is the history of South Africa and, more specifically, the policies of Afrikaner nationalism which have determined that the gift of a mother's love will take the form of a letter, since they are the direct cause of the daughter's decision to leave the country" (Attridge, "Trusting the Other" 61). Even though "iron rules are just what Mrs. Curren distrusts," her insistence that her letter be sent after death is "her way of living in the times" (Attridge, "Trusting the Other" 72):

> in another age, she would telephone her daughter (as Vercueil, pragmatic as ever, urges her to do), who would fly back to South Africa to comfort her dying mother. Mrs. Curren's hope, however, is that instead of taking, she can give, and in that way project her own best existence into the future; her fear, of course, is that her child will be like the township children, hardened by the circumstances of her South African upbringing and incapable of the receptivity needed to understand and, in turn, pass on the gift. (Attridge, "Trusting the Other" 72-73)

13. Mrs. Curren's claim that her experience as a mother gives her an alternative perception of what it means to give can be read as an allusion to Hélène Cixous's distinction between masculine and feminine gift economies in "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/ Forays." Citing Freud's account of the psychic organization of the individual (summarized in my note on topography in chapter 2) and Marx's account of capitalist societies as examples of masculine economies, Cixous defines the feminine gift economy as one that embraces "otherly" economic behavior. Judith Still summarizes Cixous's argument as follows: "Cixous suggests that while there is no absolute free gift, yet there can be a gift which does not involve a profitable (supplementary) return: 'all the difference lies in the why and how of the gift, in the values that the gesture of giving affirms, causes to circulate; in the type of profit the giver draws from the gift and the use to which he or she puts it . . . . She is able not to return to herself, never settling down, pouring out, going everywhere to the other'" (91).

14. In "This Strange Institution Called Literature," Derrida conveys a similar image with the trope of signature and countersignature (see chapter 1 for a discussion of these terms). Attridge alludes to this trope in another essay on *Age of Iron* entitled "Literary Form and the Demands of Politics: Otherness in J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*" where he argues that the performance or production of literary truth "is also a kind of suspension" (247). Attridge proposes that we think of the literary work not as an object possessing a meaning or meanings but as "an *act of signification*" ("Literary Form and the Demands of Politics" 159):

> I leave open the double reference of this phrase—to an act of writing and an act of reading—because I wish to emphasize that both are productive of the text as literature. The act of reading is clearly a response to the act of writing, but the notion of "response" here is a complex one, since it is not merely a matter of an act calling forth a wholly secondary and subsidiary reaction, but of a reenactment that makes the "original" act happen, and happen differently with each such response. (245)

The difference between Attridge's reading of *Age of Iron* in this article and my own is

that Attridge does not see a similar effect is being described in Mrs. Curren's claim that the words of her letter will live on her daughter's reading.

15. In this passage, Derrida refers to the crypt as an instance of textual living on. This is an allusion to the psychic crypt as defined by Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, which I treated in the previous chapter. The melancholic subject incorporates—that is, "translates" by transcribing internally—ideas associated with a lost love object in order to house that object secretly within his or her own psychic topography. The psychic crypt and its transgenerational sequel, the phantom, can therefore be understood as "texts" that live on in Derrida's sense. They neither live nor die; they live on. They survive in a phantasmic fashion.

16. Attridge argues that Mrs. Curren half-blames her historical location for the impossibility of such a union and half-recognizes it as a fantasy ("Trusting the Other" 78). He points out that the daughter's presence would not "have made the giving, and the living on that is its potential outcome, easier. The longing for unmediated communication, for a physical bond to seal and perfect what is thought of as merely verbal transmission, is driven by a fantasy of total union that cannot, in fact, exist between individuals [. . .]" (Attridge, "Trusting the Other" 61). Attridge is right to call the image of the embrace in this passage a fantasy and moreover a fantasy that Mrs. Curren half-recognizes. The daughter's presence would neither settle their differences nor allow Mrs. Curren to give a gift that does not require repayment. However, I disagree with his identification of what Mrs. Curren longs for as a total and unmediated union achieved by a physical bond in comparison to which verbal communication can only serve as an unsatisfactory substitute. I am arguing that what Mrs. Curren longs for is an opportunity to sense the life that animates her daughter's body. Moreover, her awareness of what she longs for stands apart from the gift she is attempting to make to her daughter, although she fashions the latter after the former, since she assumes that her daughter experiences or will experience (after she learns of her mother's death) a reciprocal longing.

17. Although Barthes distinguishes between the rhetorical and the gymnastic or choreographic senses of the word *scheme*, one could argue that the classical division of rhetorical figures into tropes and schemes incorporates something of the gymnastic or choreographic sense in the later category. A trope is a figure that gives writing texture. Mrs. Curren's allusion to St. Elmo's fire in a simile that compares the pages of her letter to sea or landscape is an example of a complex trope. It not only gives texture by adding metaphoric depth to the writing, but it also creates an image of the written page as a textured art object: for Mrs. Curren, the repetition of the word *you* creates a pattern on the written surface of the pages of her letter. A scheme is a figure that affects the structure or shape of the argument and is therefore comparable to a bodily gesture. The apostrophe, a turning away from one's immediate audience to address another who may be present only in the imagination, is a figure belonging to the category of schemes. Mrs. Curren's address to her daughter is structured by a scheme in the Greek acceptation of the word that Barthes highlights: a figurative equivalent to a physical gesture organized by the lover's orientation toward the loved one. *Age of Iron* reinforces this gesture rhetorically by rendering Mrs. Curren's letter an apostrophe, a scheme in the rhetorical sense, articulated before a postcolonial audience.

18. Winnicott's theory that there is a direct connection between childplay with transitional objects and culture compares with Abraham and Torok's theory that language acquisition is an effect of the symbolic introjection of absence, which they argue is basic to psychic functioning: "language acts and makes up for absence by representing *by giving figurative shape* to presence [. . .]" ("Mourning *or* Melancholia" 128). These representations can be "*comprehended* or *shared*" insofar as others also experience absence and emptiness and therefore take the same recourse to figurative reconstruction (Abraham and Torok, "Mourning *or* Melancholia" 128). In the previous chapter, I argued that this language sharing is dramatized by the situation of subjects in the epistolary transaction. Letter writing is a mode of introjection. The letter writer writes to the addressee because he or she is absent: the letter is therefore a substitute for the presence of the loved object. The process of substitution is reversed in the reading of the letter. As Barthes puts it in his reference to Winnicott's theory, the letter writer writes *to the letter* or, more precisely, to

the other that the letter replaces. If the addressee is to receive this address, he or she has to substitute himself or herself for this other.

19. The phrase "so long a letter!" in the passage from *Age of Iron* cited above can be read as an allusion to the Mariama Bâ's novel, *So Long a Letter*, which is written as a single, extended letter from a Senegalese woman to an expatriate friend living in the United States. Presumably, Coetzee fashioned the form of *Age of Iron* after this novel and acknowledges his debt to Bâ in this allusion. There is an important difference between the two novels, however, which is worth noting in the context of my discussion of Mrs. Curren's protracted address to her daughter. While Mrs. Curren makes arrangements for her letter to be delivered after her death, the signatory in *So Long a Letter,* Ramatoulaye, plans to hand her letter over to her friend when she returns to Africa for a visit, and the novel concludes with the friend's return to the city. The final lines of the letter refer to the arrangements they have made for a reunion on the following day. Thus, while Ramatoulaye's letter is a prolonged contribution to an exchange that will continue, Mrs. Curren's letter is a leave-taking to which the daughter will be unable to respond.

20. According to *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, St Elmo's fire is "the glow accompanying the brushlike discharges of atmospheric electricity that usually appears as a tip of light on the extremities of such pointed objects as church towers or the masts of ships during stormy weather. The name St. Elmo is an Italian corruption, through Saint' Ermo, of St. Erasmus, the patron saint of Mediterranean sailors, who regard St. Elmo's fire as the visible sign of his guardianship over them" ("St. Elmo's Fire").

21. With the word "soul," Mrs. Curren refers to the Greek word *psyche* 'soul,' which is represented in classical folklore by the figure of the moth or the butterfly, an image Mrs. Curren invokes in the continuation of this passage. In a number of classical folk motifs, *psyche* is also represented as a beautiful princess who is persecuted by a jealous Venus and rescued by Cupid, the god of love ("Psyche"). In *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius tells the tale of Psyche as an allegory of the progress of the soul guided by love ("Psyche"). Mrs. Curren may be referring to this myth when she claims that her letter puts "truth," used as

a synonym of "soul," "and love together at last" (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 118). This sense of *psyche* is to be distinguished from the way which the word is used in Plato's *Phraedrus* (discussed in chapter 2), where Plato has Socrates argue for the superiority of speech over writing on the basis the proximity of speech to the *psyche* of the speaker. Socrates describes *psyche* as a discerning faculty that knows what speech wants to say, and he argues that writing is not conducive to the communication of truth because it is capable of functioning in the absence of the *psyche*'s guidance. In his introduction to *The Collected Dialogues of Plato,* Huntington Cairns notes that the word *psyche* in Socrates's usage is translatable, according to context, as "mind," "intelligence," reason," or "intention."

22. For a reading of references to Christ's words at the Last Supper in this and other passages in *Age of Iron*, see Marais, who points out an analogy between the reception of the Eucharist and the reader's reception of the text of *Age of Iron.*

Conclusion

Postal Relay, Politics, Ethics

In *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, Butler contends that Derrida's insistence on the structural iterability of the performative depoliticizes the socially complex sense of convention implicit in Austin's theory: "The sense of convention in Austin, augmented by the terms 'ritual' and 'ceremonial,' is fully transmuted into linguistic iterability in Derrida. [. . .] its repetitive function is abstracted from its social operation and established as an inherent structural feature of any and all marks" (150-51). Butler argues that the social analysis of performative effect requires another reading:

> Approaching the question of the performative from a variety of political scenes—hate speech, burning crosses, pornography, gay self-declaration—compels a reading of the speech act that does more than universalize its operation on the basis of its putatively formal structure. If the break from context that a performative can or, in Derridean terms, *must* perform is something that every "mark" performs by virtue of its graphematic structure, then all marks and utterances are equally afflicted by such failure, and it makes no sense to ask how it is that certain utterances break from prior contexts with more ease than others or why certain utterances come to carry the force to wound that they do, whereas others fail to exercise such force at all. [. . .] Derrida appears to install the break as a structurally necessary feature of every utterance and every codifiable written mark, thus paralyzing the social analysis of forceful utterance. (150)

If I argue that the force of address in *any* letter (love or hate) can be felt by anyone who reads it, does that "paralyze" the social analysis of the iterable force of forceful—that is, political— letters?

In *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin uses the word *convention* synonymously with *custom*: a conventional procedure is established by practice. Butler argues that Austin's sense of convention, augmented by the terms "ritual" and "ceremonial," is comparable with Althusser's definition of ritual in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." Althusser argues that our sense of identity as subjects is constructed by our constant practice of rituals of ideological recognition. We recognize

ourselves as subjects "in the practical rituals of the most elementary everyday life (the hand-shake, the fact of calling you by your name, that fact of knowing, even if I do not know what it is, that you 'have' a name of your own, which means that you are recognized as a unique subject, etc.) [. . .] " (Althusser 173). Such rituals "guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects" (Althusser 172-73). Althusser identifies the interpellative hail as the specific mechanism that brings about this recognition:

> Ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or "transforms" the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there!"
>
> Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was "really" addressed to him, and the "it was *really him* who was hailed (and not someone else)." (174)

The power of this interpellative hail to construct identity does not originate in the hailer. The hail interpellates the receiving individual, who thereby becomes a subject, by citing ideology, which Althusser conceives of as discursive context.[1] The hail interpellates by placing subjects in an ideological context. What appears to be an effect of the hailer is therefore in fact an effect of another agency. The power of the interpellative hail to recruit subjects derives from the ideology that the hailer cites.

Althusser defines ideology as a discursive context that is available to subjects for citation. This account of ideology certainly compares with the conventional procedure that the speech act invokes. In *Excitable Speech*, Butler draws from Althusser's theory of identity construction in a political reevaluation of Austin's theory of the performative: "Performativity," she contends, is the "power to effect or enact what one names [. . .]" (49). When a performative utterance is addressed to you, it may, if it is felicitous, effect or enact you, which is tantamount to saying that it has the power to identify you. This

power is not an effect of the speaker of the performative, but of the discursive context that the speaker cites: "If a performative provisionally succeeds (and I will suggest that 'success' is always and only provisional), then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices"* (Butler 51). Thus, "The doctor who receives the child and pronounces— 'It's a girl!'—begins that long string of interpellations by which the girl is transitively girled: gender is ritualistically repeated, whereby the repetition occasions both the risk of failure and the congealed effect of sedimentation" (Butler 49).

I agree with Butler that Austin's notion of the conventional can be developed in Althusserian terms. What I take issue with is her contention that Derrida transmutes this notion of conventionality (Austin's or Althusser's) into a universalized and depoliticized struturalization of the performative. I recite a passage which I discussed in my first chapter and which Butler also cites. Derrida observes that while Austin acknowledges that failure is an ill to which all conventional acts are heir—"infelicity is an ill to which *all* acts are heir which have the general character of ritual or ceremonial [. . .]" (Austin 18-19)—"he appears to consider solely the conventionality constituting the *circumstance* of the utterance [*énoncé*], its contextual surroundings, not a certain conventionality intrinsic to what constitutes the speech act [*locution*] itself [. . .]" (*Limited Inc* 15). This is not a transmutation of the concept as Butler claims, but an extension.

Butler claims that "In writing that a performative is 'repetitive or citational in its structure,' he [Derrida] clearly opposes the Austinian account of repeatability as a function of language as social convention" (148). How so "clearly"? Look at the context from which Butler takes this phrase. Derrida has just rehearsed the claim he makes somewhat earlier in this essay: that the so-called failure or infelicity of the performative—the infelicity of the literary performative, for example—can be conceived as a "positive possibility" (*Limited Inc* 17). A repeated performative can be termed an alternative success. He goes on from here to argue that even the performative that Austin defines as "successful"—that is, a performative issued in "normal" circumstances—is predicated on iterability. I recite a passage I discussed in my first chapter: "Could a

performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a 'coded' or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship, or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were identifiable in some way as a 'citation'?" (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 18). To invoke a conventional procedure in an act of speech is to repeat it. Derrida's point is that while Austin excludes the literary performative on the grounds that it cites "ordinary" circumstances (Austin claims that literary use of the performative is parasitic on normal use), his theory of performativity proceeds from the premise that the procedure invoked by a speech act (in ordinary circumstances) is an iterable model. The sentence from which Butler cites the phrase pertaining to the repetitive structure of the performative comes in between these two arguments. It concerns the status of the speech act as an event as well as "the status of events in general, of events of speech or events by speech, of the strange logic they entail and that often passes unseen" (*Limited Inc* 18). His development of this statement show that the "strange logic" Derrida refers to in this sentence is the paradox he defines in "'This Strange Institution Called Literature" as the paradox of iterability, in which the singular and the general co-imply one another. Derrida finds an articulation of this paradox in Austin's recognition that a speech act's citation of a conventional procedure is to some extent singularized by the occasion on which it is issued. "That is why," writes Derrida citing Austin, "there is a relative specificity, as Austin says, a 'relative purity' of performatives" (*Limited Inc* 18). Derrida's point is that "this relative purity does not emerge *in opposition to* citationality or iterability, but in opposition to other kinds of iteration within a general iterability, which constitutes a violation of the allegedly rigorous purity of every event of discourse or every *speech act*" (*Limited Inc* 18) So if one wanted to map out the field of performativity, "one ought to construct a differential typology of forms of iteration, assuming that such a project is tenable and can result in an exhaustive program [. . .]," a question that Derrida holds in abeyance (*Limited Inc* 18). "In such a typology," Derrida argues, "the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterance" (*Limited Inc* 18). Nor will the "not serious" be excluded from ordinary language because the "ordinary" will no longer be a viable category of experience.[2] Derrida does not oppose Austin's theory, but points

out a possible way of extending it.

For Butler, the semantic force of a word communicates its ideological historicity in Althusser's sense. She charges Derrida with a structuralization of the performative that abstracts Austin's notion of the conventional from "the sedimentation of its usages" (Butler 148).

> Derrida focuses on those ostensibly "structural" features of the performative that persist quite apart from any and all social contexts and all considerations of semantics. Performative utterances operate according to the same logic as written marks, according to Derrida, which, as signs, carry "a force that breaks with its context . . . The breaking force [*force de rupture*] is not an accidental predicate but the very structure of the written text . . . ." Later on that same page, Derrida links the force of rupture to spacing, or the problem of the interval that iterability introduces. The sign, as iterable, is a differential mark cut off from its putative production or origin. Whether the mark is "cut off" form its origin, as Derrida contends, or loosely tethered to it raises the question of whether the function of the sign is essentially related to the sedimentation of its usages, or essentially free of its historicity. (Butler 148)

The "origin" of which Derrida speaks in the passage from *Limited Inc* that Butler cites is not, as she implies, the historicity of the sign, but the author or speaker of the speech act, conceived of as the originator of the performative and its absolute determinator. In arguing that "a written sign carries with it a force that breaks with its context" (*Limited Inc* 9), Derrida is rehearsing a point on which he has insisted in many of his books: that writing is capable of operating in the absence of its author and that it is capable of saying less or more than its author intends. I put back the clause that Butler replaces with ellipsis in the passage she cites from *Limited Inc*: "a written sign carries with it a force that breaks with its context, *that is, with the collectivity of presences organizing the moment of its inscription*" (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 9; emphasis added). At this juncture of his reading, Derrida is indeed talking of a semantic context: the semantic context which, on Austin's account, is determined by the conscious presence of the speaker to that which he or she says and which imposes a "semantic or hermeneutic

horizon" on the speech act that is delimited by that conscious presence (*Limited Inc* 9). Derrida develops this definition in his next sentence, which Butler also omits to cite. After asserting that the breaking force of a mark "is not an accidental predicate but the very structure of the written text" (*Limited Inc* 9), Derrida develops his point in terms of the "so-called 'real' context" of an uttered speech act:

> This allegedly real context includes a certain "present" of the inscription, the presence of the writer to what he has written, the entire environment and the horizon of this experience, and above all the intention, the wanting-to-say-what-he-means, which animates his inscription at a given moment. But the sign possesses the characteristic of being readable even if the moment of its production is irrevocably lost and even if I do not know what its alleged author-scriptor consciously intended to say at the moment he wrote, i.e. abandoned it to its essential drift. (*Limited Inc* 9)

There is nothing in the phrasing of the passages Butler cites (or omits to cite) that implies that the spacing which allows for emergence of the mark does not also allow for the emergence of that mark's semantic historicity. In fact, in the continuation of the passage cited above, Derrida implies that the repeated mark can function in other contexts in such a manner as to reveal "other possibilities":

> As far as the internal semiotic context is concerned, the force of rupture is no less important: by virtue of its essential iterability, a written syntagma can always be detached from the chain in which it is inserted or given without causing it to lose all possibility of function, if not all possibility of "communicating," precisely. One can perhaps come to recognize other possibilities in it by inscribing it or grafting it onto other chains. No context can entirely enclose it. (*Limited Inc* 9)

Derrida's argument here is demonstrated by the semiotic possibilities that the "Envois" signatory discovers when he transcribes passages from his own letters to the collection he is preparing for publication. This transcription reveals the postal technology of the writing. The "Envois" signatory discovers the semiotic possibilities of the repeated words and even of the repeated letters within those words as when he observes the letters *s* and *p* recurring in the words "*ps*ychoanalysis," "*p*hilo*s*ophy" and "*p*o*s*ts" (Derrida,

Post Card 176). I want to argue that interpellative hails can emerge from within the subject as "in-voices." In stating this, I am not just asserting that ideological discursive contexts can be cited unconsciously. Abraham and Torok define the phantom as a gap in the subject's topography which structures his or her discourse with a ventriloquist's effect. On this account, the transgenerational phantom would therefore have to be described as the negative of a discursive context that operates on a structural basis and that affects semiotics.

Butler is right to claim that the political and social effects of a speech act are bound up with the conventionality of the act in Austin's sense. They are enacted, as Derrida puts it in *Limited Inc*, by "the conventionality constituting the circumstance of the utterance [*énoncé*], its contextual surroundings" (*Limited Inc* 15). Another way of putting this would be to say that the political and social effects of a speech act are enacted *in context*: that is to say, they have to do with the circumstances of the occasion in which a given utterance is issued. Thus, in *Age of Iron*, the times and place in which Mrs. Curren writes her letter complicate its gift to her daughter. Mrs. Curren writes as a mother addressing her daughter on the occasion of imminent death. However, she also writes as a South African addressing an expatriate South African, whose emigration was a demonstration of political protest. One of the points I made in chapter three is that these complications are repeated in the "relayed" context of *Age of Iron.* Written and published by a South African author, *Age of Iron* addresses readers in the Western world—and particularly South African expatriots —who have distanced themselves from its social and political situation. I pointed out that these political and social effects come about because of the irreducible iterability that Derrida points to in *Limited Inc. Age of Iron* reworks Mrs. Curren's letter on the level of locution. Read as a letter in an epistolary novel, Mrs. Curren's address to her daughter generates a new context in which it takes up another illocutionary force. This illocutionary force is not unrelated to that which Mrs. Curren's letter would have for her daughter. What they have in common could be described as a ritual of ideological recognition in Althusser's sense. Mrs. Curren's letter would interpellate her daughter if she were to receive it. It would interpellate her daughter *as* her daughter as opposed to all the other roles her daughter would play for the other

people in her life (from references in Mrs. Curren's letter, we know, for example, that the daughter is a mother herself and a wife; and these, one would assume, would be a only few of a great number of her daughter's identities). The force of the letter would interpellate her as a South African who still has responsibilities for the social and political events of the kind Mrs. Curren describes. The latter interpellation is repeated by *Age of Iron* for the readers of the book, only this time it addresses the practice of the politics of denegation.

Both Mrs. Curren's letter in *Age of Iron* and the "Envois" letters are presented as relayed letters by their publication as books.The difference between these two epistolary works is that *Age of Iron* emphasizes the "originary" context of Mrs. Curren's letter (the novel's fictional context) while the status of the "Envois" letters as remainders de-emphasizes the context from which the fragments were transcribed even while it testifies to this prior context as originary (which may or may not be a fiction). *Age of Iron* points out a *similarity* of contexts: the fictional context of Mrs. Curren in relation to her expatriate daughter; and the actual context of South Africa in relation to the Western world. The "Envois" letters point out a *difference* between contexts: the private context of a sequence of love letters and the public context of the published collection. In *Age of Iron*, the social and political implications of Mrs. Curren's letter and their applicability to the postcolonial situation are established by the similarity of circumstances in which the letter and book are issued. In the "Envois" letters, there are few "circumstances" of the occasion on which the letters were "originally" written which hold in any significant way for the readers of the published correspondence. While one could say that this difference renders the postal effects of the "Envois" letters more private—a signature-countersignature exchange between the text and its reader, or the psychoanalytic construction of the in-voices that haunt Derrida's discourse—what is discovered in the context of these private fields is not any less political or social. These discoveries render the public-private distinction impractical.[3] In terms of the signature-countersignature or transference-countertransference situation I described in my first chapter, the postal effects of relayed letters link destination to identity; and identity, as Althusser would say, is an ideological construct. The effacious power of the relayed summons has the power

to construct the identity of the reader who receives it. More than that: identity is constructed by interpellative addresses of the kind enacted these works. This is not to say that the interpellative address divides identities which were entire subjects prior to reading: as subjects, readers are *always already* divided and multiple. It is to say that when we recognize the force of an interpellative address, we are divided and multiplied *again*. The "Envois" signatory describes this situation as follows:

> I am suffering (but like everyone, no? me, I know it) from a real pathology of destination: I am always addressing myself to someone else (no, to someone else still!), but to whom? I absolve myself by remarking that this is due, before me, to the power, or no matter what sign, the "first" trait, the "first mark, to be remarked, precisely, to be repeated, and therefore divided, turned away from whatever singular destination, and this by virtue of its very possibility, its very address. It is its address that makes it into a post card that multiplies, to the point of a crowd, my addressee, female. And by the same token, of course, my addressee, male. (Derrida, *Post Card* 112)

Elam's reading of the question of genre posed by the personal pronouns in this and similar passages in the "Envois" letters illustrates the social and political implications of the relayed address:

> Through ambiguous pronouns ("I," "you," and "me," not "he" or "she"), mindful of Benveniste, Derrida refers the subject to an instance of discourse whose gender is always in question, because it cannot be determined outside that pragmatic instance. The addressee is multiple, previously marked and even re-marked. We could say, then, that Being is sent; the world and language are inextricably given. But that givenness cannot be dissociated from the question of gender, a question that will not go away, that always remains to be answered. (150)

Elam argues that Derrida's formal insistence on the status of the first and second-person pronouns as makers of identity—"as shifters by which gender, number, and position can be shuffled and multiplied"—is a means of exploring the dissemination of subjective identity (158): "Derrida is not simply mirroring a 'postmodern condition' in

which identities have become divided and multiple [. . .] Identity is not something that we have recently lost, or might recover. Rather, Derrida is concerned to insist upon the dispersion of subjectivity as a structural necessity that both constitutes and confounds communication [. . .]" (Elam 159).

The scene of filiation and authority that the "Envois" signatory reads in the Oxford card also has political and social implications: "the more or less adoptive, legitimate, bastard or natural son dictates to the father the testamentary writing which should have fallen to him. And not a daughter in the landscape, apparently, not a word about her in any event. *Fort:da*" (Derrida, *Post Card* 61). The transmission of Western metaphysics from generation to generation is a scene from which women have been traditionally excluded.

Derrida's account of the literary performative does not depoliticize performative or interpellative force: viewing literature as performative or interpellative for its readers means realizing that it would be impossible to divorce literature from political or social scenes. What it does do is challenge the view that all interpellations in Althusser's sense are violations. What if one wants to be interpellated by a repeated address?

I want to suggest that some of the violence that Butler perceives in hate speech—the interpellative act as she defines it—derives from its power to interrupt. An interpellation is an interruption by definition. It is no accident that the example Althusser gives of an interpellative hail is an address consisting of three words: the policeman's "Hey, you there!" Like invective, assertions of authority are generally worded as summary locutions. The more abrupt the articulation, the greater its interpellative force. The policeman's hail is a locutionary act on Austin's definition: a speech act that employs illocutionary force without being explicit about it. As an example of an interpellative act, the policeman's hail demonstrates locutions can be efficacious just because they are unexplicit about the actions they are performing. The policeman's "Hey you there!" has greater effect than would its illocutionary translation, "I hail you!" What interests Althusser about this example is the accuracy with which such missives arrive at their destination: "Experience shows that the practical telecommunication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always

recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed" (174). Austin would say that the policeman's hail arrives at its destination because it has referential precision characteristic of locutions. The point to observe here is that the tacitness of the locutionary act does not make it vague or aimless.

What does this say about the postal effects of Mrs. Curren's letter in *Age of Iron* and the "Envois" letters? While the performative force of either work can be said to interpellate their readers, these interpellations occur within the context of lengthy articulations that are highly explicit in Austin's sense. The duration of the utterance makes a difference. In stark contrast to the abruptness that characterizes interpellative invective or assertion of authority, the interpellative force of Mrs. Curren's long letter is constant: a figurative holding. Mrs. Curren draws out the interpellative force of her letter by suspending her address, which, I would argue, is a gesture of care. In the "Envois" letters, duration has a different effect. I argued in my first chapter that the "Envois" letters are disconcerting because they change as you read them, and because they change you as you read. Another way of putting this would be to say that the "Envois" letters perform a kind of interpellative rhythm that one could describe as flirtatious. As the signatory of the letter printed on the back-jacket cover puts it, "At the very instant when from its address it interpellates, you, uniquely you, instead of reaching you it divides you or sets you aside, occasionally overlooks you" (Derrida, *Post Card* back-jacket cover). The reader is not passive in this rhythmic activity, for the interpellation is mutual. This is the situation that Derrida describes (without the seductive overtones) in "'This Strange Institution Called Literature'" with the trope of signature and countersignature. To sign is to formulate an idiomatic singularity. To countersign is to respect that gesture; however, it is also to add something to the space of reading and therein to change it. Countersignature "comes both to confirm, repeat and respect the signature of the other, of the 'original' work, and to *lead it off* elsewhere, so running the risk of *betraying* it, having to betray it in a certain way so as to respect it, through the invention of another signature just as singular" (Derrida, qtd. in Attridge, "Interview with Jacques Derrida" 69). In other words, reading is not merely a question of receiving. If one looks at what happens from the work's side, reading is *also* an interpellative—that is, a reinterpretative—action.

Notes

1. By *ideology*, Althusser does not mean a doctrine proper to a particular historical period. In fact, he claims that "ideology has no history, which emphatically does not mean that there is no history in it (on the contrary, for it is merely the pale, empty and inverted reflection of real history) but that it has no history *of its own*" (Althusser 160). Rather, Althusser explains, his argument should be understood along the lines of Freud's proposition that "the *unconscious is eternal*, i.e. that it has no history. If eternal means, not transcendent to all (temporal) history, but omnipresent, trans-historical and therefore immutable in form throughout the extent of history, I shall adopt Freud's expression word for word, and write *ideology is eternal*, exactly like the unconscious" (161). Althusser compares the "eternity" of ideology to the "eternity" of the unconscious on Freud's account in order to illustrate that the power of the interpellative hail is not attributable to historical subjects. Michel Foucault describes something similar, without the psychoanalytic idiom in a piece entitled "Two Lectures," where he gives an account of the operation of social power:

> Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (*Power/Knowledge* 98).

Foucault specifies that what he means by power is not ideology, since it is "both much more and much less than ideology" (*Power/Knowledge* 102). In other words, Foucault rejects ideology as Karl Marx and Georg Lukács define it: as a falsification that can be dispelled by correct analysis. Foucault's definition of power compares with Althusser's definition of ideology as an ahistorical context that is activated when it is

cited and which has the power to interpellate its subjects. For a critical account of the difference between Althusser's, Marx's, and Lukács's positions on ideology, see Elam (144-46).

2. The category of intention has a place, for example, in the felicitous accomplishment of Mrs. Curren's gift to her daughter. In other words, for Mrs. Curren, the act of gift giving she performs with her letter is not literary: that is, not relayed or iterable. Within the context of the story, the accomplishment of this act is dependent on Vercueil's intentions. If the daughter is to receive Mrs. Curren's letter and comprehend its gift, Vercueil must be sincere in his promise to post her letter after her death and actually carry through with that promise.

3. In his introduction to a special topic edition of *The Publications of the Modern Language Society*, Lawrence Bell traces the genealogy of the idea of responsibility in deconstruction, arguing that "Levinas's argument that ethical obligation for the other is primary for ontology, for being itself" becomes in deconstruction an ethics of reading that links responsiveness in reading to responsibility (11). Literature is the reader's other. The problem Bell finds with this translation it that it privatizes ethical experience: "does it boil down, whatever the nominal agenda, to a privatization of human relations that makes the social and the political secondary?" (14). Bell implies that, for social and cultural constructionalists and Neo-Marxist materialists, deconstructive inquiry amounts to a bourgeois valuation of private experience: "For no matter how strongly literary-ethical inquiry asserts the inseparability of social and personal, the starting point of 'obligation' will continue to seem suspiciously privativistic [. . .]" (15).

Works Cited

Abraham, Nicolas. "Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology of Secrets." Rand, *Shell and the Kernel* 165-76.

---. "The Phantom of Hamlet or The Sixth Act, preceded by The Intermission of 'Truth.'" Rand, *Shell and the Kernel* 187-205.

---. "The Shell and the Kernel: The Scope and Originality of Freudian Psychoanalysis." Rand, *Shell and the Kernel* 79-98.

Abraham, Nicolas, and Maria Torok. "'The Lost Object—Me': Notes on Endocryptic Identification." Rand, *Shell and the Kernel* 139-56.

---. "Mourning *or* Melancholia: Introjection *versus* Incorporation." Rand, *Shell and the Kernel* 125-38.

---. "The Topography of Reality: Sketching a Metapsychology of Secrets." Rand, *Shell and the Kernel* 157-61.

Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1971.

Attridge, Derek. "Literary Form and the Demands of Politics: Otherness in Coetzee's *Age of Iron*." *Aesthetics and Ideology*. Ed. George Levine. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994. 243-263.

---. "Singularities, Responsibilities: Derrida, Deconstruction, and Literary Criticism." Caruth and Esch. 106-126.

---. "'This Strange Institution Called Literature': An Interview with Jacques Derrida." Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. *Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. New York: Routledge, 1992. 33-75.

---. "Trusting the Other: Ethics and Politics in J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 93.1 (1994): 59-82.

Atwell, David. "'Dialogue' and 'Fulfilment' in J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*." *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970-1995*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. 166-79.

---. "The Problem of History in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee." *Rendering Things Visible: Essays on South African Literary Culture*. Ed. Martin Trump. Athens: Ohio UP, 1990. 94-133.

Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1962.

Bâ, Mariama. *So Long a Letter*. 1980. Trans. Modupé Bodé-Thomas. London:

Heinemann, 1981.

Barreño, Maria Isabel, Maria Teresa Horta, and Maria Velho da Costa. *The Three Marias: New Portuguese Letters*. Trans. Helen R. Lane. New York: Bantam, 1976.

Barthes, Roland. *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. 1977. Trans. Richard Howard. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990.

Bass, Alan. "Translator's Introduction: L before K." *The Post Card*. By Jacques Derrida. xiii-xxx.

Benstock, Shari. *Textualizing the Feminine: On the Limits of Genre*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1991.

Benveniste, Emile. *Problems in General Linguistics*. Trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek. Coral Gables: U of Miami Press, 1971.

Bollas, Christopher. *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*. London: Free Association Books, 1987.

Borinsky, Alicia. "No Body There: On the Politics of Interlocution." *Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature*. Ed. Elizabeth Goldsmith. Boston: Northwestern UP, 1989. 245-256.

Butler, Judith. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Cairns, Huntington. Introduction. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters*. Ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. New York: Pantheon, 1961. xiii-xxv.

Caruth, Cathy. "The Insistence of Reference." Introduction. Caruth and Esch. x-xx

Caruth, Cathy, and Deborah Esch, eds. *Critical Encounters: Reference and Responsibility in Deconstructive Writing*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1995.

Cixous, Hélène. "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays." *The Newly Born Woman*. By Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément. Trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996. 63-132.

Coetzee, J.M.. *Age of Iron*. London: Penguin, 1990.

---. "The Novel Today." *Upstream* 6.1 (1988): 2-5.

---. *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*. New Haven: Yale UP,

1988.

Cope, Karin. "Publicity is Our Pride: The Passionate Grammar of Gertrude Stein." *Pre/Text* 13.3-4 (1992): 123-36.

Davidson, Harriet. "'I Say I Am There': Siting/Citing the Subject in Feminism and Deconstruction." Caruth and Esch. 241-261.

Deloffre. F. and J. Rougeot, eds. *Lettres portugaises, Valentins, et autres oeuvres de Guilleragues*. 1669. Paris: Garnier, 1962. v-xxiii.

Derrida, Jacques. "Biodegradables: Seven Diary Fragments." *Critical Inquiry* 15.4 (1989): 812-75.

---. *La Carte Postale de Socrate à Freud et au-delà*. Paris: Flammarion, 1980.

---. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981.

---. *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation.* Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1985.

---. "*Fors*: The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok." Foreword. Trans. Barbara Johnson. *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*. By Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986.

---. *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.

---. "The Law of Genre." *Glyph Textual Studies* 7 (1980): 202-232.

---. *Limited Inc*. Ed. Gerald Graff. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1972.

---. "Living On/Border Lines." Trans. James Hulbert. *Deconstruction and Criticism*. Ed. Harold Bloom et al.. New York: Routledge, 1979. 75-176.

---. "Me-Psychoanalysis: An Introduction to the Translation of 'The Shell and the Kernel' by Nicolas Abraham." *Diacritics* 9.1 (1979): 4-16.

---. "My Chances/*Mes Chances*: A Rendezvous with Some Epicurean Stereophonies." Trans. Irene Harvey and Avital Ronell. *Taking Chances: Derrida, Psychoanalysis, and Literature*. Ed. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982. 1-32.

---. "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)." *Diacritics* 14:2 (1984): 20-31.

---. *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U

of Chicago P, 1987.

---. "Psyche: Invention of the Other." *Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. New York: Routledge, 1992. 310-43.

---. "Racism's Last Word." *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1985): 290-99.

---. *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998.

---. "Sending: On Representation." *Social Research* 49.2 (1982): 317-26.

---. *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973.

---. "Telepathy." *Oxford Literary Review* 10 (1988): 3-41.

"Divination." *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989.

Elam, Diane. *Romancing the Postmodern*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Felman, Shoshana. *The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with J. L. Austin, Or Seduction in Two Languages*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983.

Ferenczi, Sandor. "On the Definition of Introjection." *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psycho-Analysis*. Trans. Eric Masbacher et al.. London: Hogarth Press, 1955. 316-18.

Forrester, John. *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Derrida*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Trans. Colin Gordon et al. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980.

Freud, Sigmund. *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*. New York: Collier, 1963.

---. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." 1920. Vol. 18 *Standard Edition* 7-64.

---. "Family Romances." 1909. Vol. 9 *Standard Edition* 235-41.

---. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. James Strachey. New York: Avon, 1965.

---. "Mourning and Melancholia." *Collected Papers*. Ed. Philip Rieff. New York: Collier, 1963.

---. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. James Strachey et al.. 24 vols. London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74.

Gallagher, Susan VanZanten. *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991.

"Gift." *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989.

Hamilton, Edith, and Huntington Cairns, eds. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters*. New York: Pantheon, 1961.

Hayles, Katherine N. *The Cosmic Web: Scientific Field Models and Literary Strategies in the 20th Century*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984.

"Invocation." *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989.

"Invoke." *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989.

Johnson, Cyraina E. "The Echo of Narcissus: Anxiety, Language and Reflexivity in 'Envois.'" *International Studies in Philosophy* 22.1 (1990): 37-50.

Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954*. Trans. John Forrester. New York: Norton, 1988.

Lanham, Richard A.. *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms: A Guide for Students of English Literature*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1968.

Laplanche J., and J.-B. Pontalis. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: Norton, 1973.

Major, René, ed. *Affranchissement du transfert et de la lettre: Colloque autour de La Carte postale de Jacques Derrida*. 4 et 5 avril 1981. Éditions Confrontation, 1982.

Marais, Michael. "'Who Clipped the Hollyhocks?' J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron* and the Politics of Representation." *English in Africa*. 20.2 (October 1993): 1-24.

Miller, J. Hillis. *Topographies*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995.

Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Trans. W. D. Halls. London: Routledge, 1990.

Miller, J. P. and William T. Richardson, eds. *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1988.

Miller, Nancy K.. "'I's in Drag: The Sex of Recollection." *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Literature* 22:1 (1981 Winter): 47-57.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kaufman. New York: Vintage Books, 1969.

Nunes, Mark. "Boy Meets p: Barthes, Derrida, and the Signs of Love." *Journal of the Association for the Interdisciplinary Study of the Arts* 1.1 (1995): 17-26.

Plato. *Phaedrus*. Trans. R. Hackforth. Ed. Hamilton and Cairns. 475-525.

---. *Letters*. Trans. L. A. Post. Ed. Hamilton and Cairns. 1560-1607.

"Psyche." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica. 20 April, 2000 <http://www.eb.com/>.

Rand, Nicholas T.. *Le Cryptage et la vie des oeuvres: Secrets dans les textes*. Paris: Aubier, 1989.

---, ed. *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Nicholas T. Rand.Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994.

---. Editor's Note. Rand, *Shell and the Kernel* 75-78.

Rashkin, Esther. *Family Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Narrative*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.

Richardson, Samuel. *Clarissa or the History of a Young Lady*. 1747-8. London: Penguin, 1985.

Shklovsky, Viktor. *Zoo, Or Letters Not About Love*. 1923. Ed. and Trans. Richard Sheldon. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1971.

"Spirit." *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Love Me, Love My Ombre, Elle." *Diacritics* 14 (1984): 19-36.

Still, Judith. "Feminine Economy." *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*. Ed. Elizabeth Wright et al. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992.

Todd, Jane Marie. *Autobiographics in Freud and Derrida.* New York: Garland, 1990.

Torok, Maria. "The Illness of Mourning and the Fantasy of the Exquisite Corpse." Rand, *Shell and the Kernel* 107-24.

---. "Story of Fear: The Symptoms of Phobia—the Return of the Repressed or the Return of the Phantom?" Rand, *Shell and the Kernel* 177-88.

---. "The Post-Age." *Diacritics* 11.3 (1981): 39-56.

Wills, David. "Post/Card/Match/Book/*Envois*/Derrida." *SubStance* 13.2 (1984): 19-38.

Winnicott, D. W.. *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock, 1971.

Works Consulted

Epistolary Theory and Criticism

Alliston, April. *Virtue's Faults: Correspondences in Eighteenth-Century British and French Women's Fiction.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996.

Altman, Janet Gurkin. *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form.* Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1982.

Beebee, Thomas O. *Epistolary Fiction in Europe: 1500-1850.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.

Castle, Terry. *Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's* Clarissa. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982.

Cook, Elizabeth Heckendorn. *Epistolary Bodies: Gender and Genre in the Eighteenth-Century Republic of Letters.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996.

Davis, Lennard. *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel.* New York: Columbia UP, 1983.

Day, Robert Adams. *Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson.* Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1966.

Deloffre. F. and J. Rougeot, eds. *Lettres portugaises, Valentins, et autres oeuvres de Guilleragues.* 1669. Paris: Garnier, 1962. v-xxiii.

Ellis, Kenneth. *The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Administrative History.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1958.

Favret, Mary A.. *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics, and the Fiction of Letters.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.

Flynn, Carol. *Samuel Richardson: A Man of Letters.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982.
Goldsmith, Elizabeth, ed. *Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature.* Boston: Northwestern UP, 1989.

Jensen, Katherine Ann. *Writing Love: Letters, Women, and the Novel in France 1605-1776.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1995.

Kamuf, Peggy. *Fictions of Feminine Desire: Disclosures of Heloise.* Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1982.

---. *Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988.

Kauffman, Linda S.. *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986.

---. *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes in Modern Fiction.* Chicago: U of Chicago P,

1992.

Keymer, Tom. *Richardson's* Clarissa *and the Eighteenth-Century Reader.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Miller, J. P., and William T. Richardson, eds. *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1988.

Miller, Nancy K.. *The Heroine's Text: Readings in the French and English Novel, 1722-1782.* New York: Columbia UP, 1980.

Perry, Ruth. *Women, Letters, and the Novel.* New York: AMS, 1980.

Preston, John. *The Created Self: The Reader's Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction.* London: Heinemann, 1970.

Ronell. Avital. *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech.* Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1989.

Warner, William Beatty. *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.

Watt, Ian P.. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding.* Berkeley: U of California P, 1957.

Deconstruction and Ethics

Attridge, Derek. "Expecting the Unexpected in Coetzee's *Master of Pertersburg* and Derrida's Recent Writings." *Applying to Derrida.* Houndmills: MacMillian, 1996.

---. "Innovation, Literature, Ethics: Relating to the Other." *PMLA* 114 (1999): 20-31.

Bennington, Geoffrey and Jacques Derrida. *Jacques Derrida.* Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.

de Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.

Derrida, Jacques. *Aporias.* Trans. Thomas Dutoit. Stanford, Stanford UP, 1993.

---. "Deconstruction and the Other." *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers.* Ed. Richard Kearney. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984. 105-26.

---. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority.'" *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice.* Ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, and David Gray

Carlson. New York: Routledge, 1992. 3-67.

---. *The Gift of Death*. Trans. D. Willis. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994.

---. *Glas*. Trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990.

---. *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.

---. *On the Name*. Ed. Thomas Dutoit. Trans. David Wood, John P. Leavey, Jr., and Ian McLeod. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995.

---. "Pas I." Gramma. 3.4 (1976): 111-25.

---. *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre*. Paris: Galilée, 1987

---. "Scribble (writing-power)." *Yale French Studies* 58 (1979): 116-47.

---. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978.

Elam, Diane. *Feminism and Deconstruction: Ms. en Abyme*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Johnson, Barbara. *A World of Difference*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987.

Keenan, Thomas. *Fables of Responsibility: Aberrations and Predicaments in Ethics and Politics*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Time and the Other and Additional Essays*. Trans. Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1987.

Smith, Robert. *Derrida and Autobiography*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.

Ulmer, Gregory. "The Discourse of the Imaginary." *Diacritics* 10 (1980): 61-75.

---. "The Puncept in Grammatology." *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters*. Ed. Jonathan Culler. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988. 164-89.

Psychoanalysis

Abraham, Nicolas, and Maria Torok. *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonomy*. Trans. Nicholas Rand. Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1986.

Chase, Cynthia. "'Transference' as Trope and Persuasion." *Discourse in Psychoanalysis and Literature*. Ed. Shilomith Rimmon-Kenan. London: Methuen, 1987. 211-32.

---. "Translating the Transference: Psychoanalysis and the Construction of History."

Telling Facts: History and Narration in Psychoanalysis. Ed. Humphrey Morris and Joseph H. Smith. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992. 103-26.

Felman, Shoshana. *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987.

---. "To Open the Question." *Literature and Psychoanalysis.The Question of Reading: Otherwise*. Special issue of *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977): 5-10.

---. *What Does a Woman Want? Reading and Sexual Difference*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993.

Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Freud, Sigmund. "Analysis Terminable and Interminable." 1937. Vol. 23 *Standard Edition* 209-54.

---. "Constructions in Analysis." 1937. Vol. 23 *Standard Edition* 255-69.

---. "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis." 1918. Vol. 17 *Standard Edition* 7-122.

---. "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious." 1905. Vol. 8 *Standard Edition* 3-258.

---. *Moses and Monotheism*. Trans. Katherine Jones. 1939. Vol. 23 *Standard Edition* 3-137.

---. "Negation." 1925. Vol. 19 *Standard Edition* 233-39.

---. "A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad.'" 1925. Vol. 19 *Standard Edition* 227-32.

---. "On Dreams." 1901. Vol. 5 *Standard Edition* 636-86.

---. "An Outline of Psycho-Analysis." 1940. Vol. 23 *Standard Edition* 141-207.

---. "Papers on Technique." 1911-15. Vol. 12 *Standard Edition* 83-173.

---. "A Premonitory Dream Fulfilled." 1941. Vol. 5 *Standard Edition* 623-25.

---. "Psycho-Analysis and Telepathy." 1941. Vol. 18 *Standard Edition* 177-93.

---. "Remembering, Repeating, Working Through: Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis." 1914. Vol. 12 *Standard Edition* 145-56.

---. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. James Strachey et al.. 24 vols. London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74.

---. "The Unconscious." 1915. Vol. 14 *Standard Edition* 159-215.

Klein, Melanie. *The Selected Melanie Klein*. Ed. Juliet Mitchell. Harmondsworth:

Penguin, 1986.

Rand, Nicholas. "Family Romance or Family History? Psychoanalysis and Dramatic Invention in Nicholas Abraham's 'The Phantom of Hamlet.'" *Diacritics* 18.4 (1988): 20-30.

Rand, Nicholas, and Maria Torok. "The Secret of Psychoanalysis: History Reads Theory." *Critical Inquiry* 13: 2 (1987): 279-86.

Reeder, Jurgen. "Dialogiskt tolkande: Psykoanalytiska handlingar ur ett hermeneutiskt perspektiv." *Divan* 1-2 (1998): 53-64.

Ronell, Avital. *Dictations: On Haunted Writing*. Lincoln: U Nebraska P, 1986.

Rosenheim, Shawn. *The Cryptographic Imagination: Secret Writing from Edgar Poe to the Internet.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.

Rashkin, Esther. "Tools for a New Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism: The Work of Abraham and Torok." *Diacritics* 18.4 (1988): 31-52.

Royle, Nicholas. *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Willbern, David. "Freud and the Inter-Penetration of Dreams." *Diacritics* 9.1 (1979): 98-110.

Speech Act Theory and Related Reading

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Ed. John B. Thompson. Trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991.

Derrida, Jacques. "The Law of Genre." *Glyph Textual Studies* 7 (1980): 202-232.

Durand, Régis. "The Disposition of the Voice." *Performance in Postmodern Culture*. Milwaukee: Twentieth Century Studies, 1977. 99-108.

Postcolonial Theory on Identity Construction and Related Reading

Attridge, Derek and Rosemary Jolly, eds. *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*. Berkeley: U of California P and Cape Town, South Africa: David Philip, 1993.

Bennington, Geoffrey. "Postal Politics and the Institution of the Nation." *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. New York: Routledge, 1990. 121-137.

Coetzee, J. M.. *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*. Ed. David Attwell. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992.

Foucault, Michel. "The Functions of Literature." *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*. Ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman. New York: Routledge, 1988. 307-13.

---. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon, 1984. 76-100.

---. "What Is an Author?" *Partisan Review* 42 (1975): 603-14.

Lingis, Alphonso. *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994.

Spivak, Gayatri. *In Other Worlds: Essays on Cultural Politics*. London: Methuen, 1987.

---. *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Young, Robert. "Colonialism and the Desiring-Machine." *Liminal Postmodernisms: The Postmodern, the (Post-)Colonial, and the (Post-) Feminist*. Ed. Theo D'haen and Hans Bertens. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994. 11-34.

---. *White Mythologies: Writing, History, and the West*. New York: Routledge, 1991.