

***Polemos*: 'I am at war with myself' or, Deconstruction™ in the Anthropocene?**

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I have simultaneously — I ask you to believe me on this — the double feeling that, on the one hand, to put it playfully and with a certain immodesty, one has not yet begun to read me . . . in the end it is later on that all this has a chance of appearing; but also, on the other hand, and thus simultaneously, I have the feeling that two weeks or a month after my death there will be nothing left. Nothing except what has been copyrighted and deposited in libraries. I swear to you, I believe sincerely and simultaneously in these two hypotheses.

Jacques Derrida, 'Learning to Live Finally — the Last Interview'¹

I am at war with myself (*contre moi-meme*), it's true, you couldn't possibly know to what extent, beyond what you can guess.

Jacques Derrida, 'Learning to Live Finally — the Last Interview'²

Two words haunt any ecologically attuned consideration of the historical hour in which our increasingly globalized world currently finds itself: one . . . is 'anthropocene'; the other, lurking as a grim potential, or even an unfolding reality, within the notion of the anthropocene is 'ecocide'.

Kate Rigby, 'Writing in the Anthropocene'³

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I. *Chiral 'Derridas'* — on the *other* hand

In Lars Von Trier's film *Melancholia* the impending collision with earth of a small planet, previously hidden by the sun, presents a beautifully digitalised cinematic allegory. While the screen impact terminates terrestrial life (which is to say, the screen itself, in a kind of cinemacide), it does so not as a disaster film. No booms, panicked multitudes. Rather, it does so as the interruption of what seem parlour room psychologies staged as hopelessly corrupt rituals — and specifically, that of marriage. At the arranged marriage all the markers of the future are gathered and decimated by the bride's melancholic negativity and withdrawal. The narrative premise is indexed to the 'mental' state of Kirsten Dunst's Justine, later called 'Aunt Steelbreaker' (linking her judgement against human behaviour to the collision) by her nephew, the futureless child. Manically performative, she becomes ruthlessly deconstructive in her refusal of stale, weak, criminal human rituals.⁴ In its way, the planetary collision mimes the cinematic arrival of the term *anthropocene* — or what I will call one of its two antipodal poles of non-sense.

The term 'anthropocene' is curious, at once leaden and foppish. It carries a trace of the obscene. Arriving from an ejaculation at a geologist's forum by Paul Crutzen, it seems the epitome of *anthropomorphism* itself — irradiating with a secret pride invoking comments on our god-like powers and ownership of 'the planet.' It is not surprising, then, that in the term's viral marketing its emerging *appropriation* is visible already. For instance, when it is used to promote (and rhetorically prepare the masses for) the necessity of a global pluto-corporatocratic future — since the 'states' are now pitifully inept, and bankrupt — jockeying for control of geo-engineering and resources. Think of the profits and power to be leveraged from the *geo-engineering to come*: 'climate change' is, it may turn out, profitable for what can no longer quite be called capital or the non-human corporate entity. Indeed, it has not taken long for environmentalists to be labelled ecofascists, for 'anthropogenic' climate change to be suppressed or denied by populist mediocratic streams and financed attack science. The *anthropocene*, nonetheless, is like a falling knife, in the irreversible sense of Von Trier's balletic collision — something that cuts through the blather, and it indexes extinction as if with a backglance.



Figure 1. Las Von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011), courtesy of Zentropa Studios, Magnolia Pictures, and IMDb.

Extinction: since the 'anthropocene' can only be named from without or after, as if by another looking back—hence Hollywood's routine evocations of aliens' arriving after the fact (as in Spielberg's *A.I.*). Some eye, or some thing, must witness and confirm this arc, this mark in geomorphic and biomorphic time. *It*, the term, implies a species consciousness marking its disappearance. It does so with rampant metaphors of inscribing and marking (scarification, stratigraphics, 'human imprint,' carbon footprints, and so on). The Derridean 'archive' defined most often as human script melts backward into vaster biosemiotic mutations in which it is also framed, and embedded. But the term *anthropocene* is a placeholder, non-semantic, a non-word and non-name that does not adhere to any binarised sense and cannot be deconstructed. It cannot not evoke all the metonymic depredations involved in irreversible global warming, resource wars, and even exponentially leveraged hyperfinance and megadebt, not to mention projections of 'population culling' to come. Even its 'time' is plastic, since it above all marks the time at which it emerges as a *speech act* (or marketable brainfart, gratis Crutzman). Does it name the accelerations of the industrial revolution or the recent decades of

exponential expansion, or what might be called the hydrocarbon ‘era’ since oil? Does it rather overlap with the Holocene precisely (extincted mega fauna), or go back to the first appearance of ‘humanualism’ itself? It would include what the 20th century called both metaphysics *and* its ‘deconstruction’ jointly, if the former had not been posited to stage the latter. Which returns to the question: deconstruction in, or ‘and,’ the *anthropocene*?

Instead of briefly invoking the ‘untimely’ to return then to *the* contemporary—as Derrida does in *Specters of Marx* by invoking something arriving that does not occur in time but *to time*, ‘something *else*’—the ‘untimely’ positions itself as routine, ineradicable, banal.⁵ In ‘extending’ the ends of man to some imaginary ‘crossing’ to the animal, Derrida conjures and renders double-sided a metaphoric narration that mimes the 90’s pretense of opening to an otherness of ‘the other’ (subaltern, beast, or rock): that is, he performs the prospect of an empathic opening that is itself denied. It is possible that *animation* would be read back from the anorganic, other cellular and biomorphic logics. Instead of striking at anthropo-narcissism as a parenthesis from within (a ‘motif’ of deconstruction, says *Specters*), the entirety might be suspended from without—as by Von Trier’s *chiral* other planet, non-specular double. But the *translation effect* of the anthropocene continues to be applied to the ‘late Derrida’s’ stratagems: some are peeled back. Instead of *hospitality*, the inhospitable.⁶ Instead of the polemical premise of neo-liberal triumphalism of the early 90s or even ‘terrorism’, the last human-on-human antagonistic projection, ‘something *else*’. Instead of the late strategies to embed deconstruction within the tribe’s mainline academic traditions—‘the ethical’ or ‘the political’—one turns elsewhere in Derrida: humanualism, *khora*, the monstrous. Instead of trying to play against the idea of the ‘linguistic’ by moving outward, the concepts that might be at war with the ‘ethical’ Derrida would be generalised, *intensified*, rerouted nanographically.

The official arc of Derrida’s narrative— that of moving from a text-based deconstruction to the world, justice, politics, ethics, religion, the contemporary— can today be speculatively reversed or refolded. The ‘late Derrida’ can be read from such a macro-glance differently than its maintenance crew insists, unaware that these writings (or their initial recipients) were programed to an auto-immune phase Derrida more or less remarked (or even guides). As in his ‘last’ interview, when he

projects not only the disappearance of his work after his death (despite a well-oiled network of archivists) but that *no one* in the present is, as of yet, his reader ('one has not yet begun to read me'). That would be for 'later on'—perhaps generations, after the current phase of remembered contact and consignment efforts are gone. Does this 'later on' not point inevitably to the anthropocene, sometimes referenced as a 'mutation' to come?

Derrida adds 'I swear to you' to his plea of sincerity and belief—as if he had to convince someone this was not another spun labyrinth for a programmed audience: *as if* he had to convince another 'Derrida' this time, against whom he found himself at *war*.⁷ From the perspective of the *anthropocene* the true 'rogue' Derrida was the one who, through a calculation of canonical survival, responded to the urging of the 90's cadre to write as if to 'ethics,' to 'religion,' to 'politics'—or maintain the labyrinth of 'hospitality' with the pathos of undecidability as a rhetorical bait. One could of course always import the term 'material' back into trace in some capacity, perhaps attempt to reconfigure and speak of a hyper-material trace—Hägglund, in doing just this, calls it an 'arche-material trace'—but one would return to a term, 'materiality,' which Derrida had disavowed for himself (and would not even take over from Benjamin or de Man's inert deployments).⁸ Such becomes ever more intense and nanologically in play in advance of any archive of human writings or signatures, in a biosemiosis mimed by the *RNA* 'pings' that Timothy Morton evokes.⁹

It is interesting, then, that if one allows the *anthropocene* to read 'deconstruction'—that is, to shatter the mythos of a Derridean *persona* the exegesis of whom delivers a legacy intact—it would be possible to select what is relevant, rather, to *it*. It reads back. This might make a 'late Derrida' appear not as some *telos* of his early work by turning toward the world, but a backloop that precedes the latter as if by clearing the way to what had been at stake at various junctures. Thus, today, Derrida's 'I am at war *against* myself (*contre moi-meme*)' need be read more assiduously. Similar in type to Nietzsche's 'I have forgotten my umbrella,' it could be applied to the rift we have just named: a pulling back from the 'persona' that Derrida had fashioned, marketed, and encountered coming back at him, to be ever corrected or refined (interviews, movies), a splitting in which the other 'I' of the sentence represents a J.D. who had long refused to be photographed, rather

than the one who appears as the star of his movie (I will return to why Derrida's avoidance and disavowal of cinema emerges as a cipher here).¹⁰ Having artefacted the auto-immune vessel and the 'persona' for circulation — adhered to and literalised by Derrideans — he withdrew, announced that he may have no heirs and certainly no contemporary readers, and then spoke against the 'proper name' he had crafted. Since the reading of Derrida has not yet 'begun,' he notes 'sincerely,' it awaits a reader still — again, perhaps generations hence ('later on,' he says). One can imagine such a reader mystified by how the *après-Derrida*, instead of opening 'deconstruction' to 21st century logics, curled back to endless exegeses, reading Derrida according to 'Derrida.' This betrayal by 'fidelity' would be programmatic. The perspective of the *anthropocene* provides the violence necessary for a selective redefinition.

This is not to say that Derrida played to and against a rhetorical need of the readership, or to the *bad reading* or caricature of deconstruction, or that inventions like 'democracy to come' or 'messianism without the messianic' — that is, the facility and carelessness of the *X without X* formula (since the original 'X' term, repeated, lingers and invariably re-roots itself) — were entirely tongue in cheek, however much the too handy app deteriorates as a short-cut or revision of the *sous rature*. Nor is it to say that rhetorical indulgences such as 'deconstruction is "justice"' were *only* seductions to rally the troops — who, quite naturally for humanists, wanted to be *good* (and, whether they knew it or not, Christian). Nor does it imply that the *après-Derrida* scene witnessed so far, a sort of soft Derrideanism without deconstruction, is less than admirable in executing its perceived program, however literalising or auto-immune the results. It *is* to note that the *anthropocene*, a post-binarised horizon that dislocates by fiat the 'anthropo-narcissist' parenthesis (say, 5000 years of writing), overleaps these strategies, sifts them from within this 'war' with himself (and itself) — which it apparently seems to many taboo to inspect. One cannot but be struck that being 'close' to Derrida the individual seems today less a mark of initiation, of genealogical pedigree or translatorial identification, than a guarantee of a submissive limit which J.D. discounted in advance (really, 'Derrideans?').

But if a certain 'deconstruction' burrowed too quickly into outbidding exegesis of Derrida's writing, predictably, or to the

refinements of unifying a crafted 'persona' and capitalising a 'legacy' in narrower and more banal academic circles, there is a problem with such a return to the '80s (halcyon graduate days for some). It does not conform at all or respond to the vast referential shift in horizons disclosed at about the time of Derrida's death. That shift is generally unaccounted for in 20th century critical thought—the point at which the anthropocene enters circulation, when *ecocide* and 'climate change' appear publicly marked (and again occluded). One might find occasional conferences still on 'Derrida and X' (psychoanalysis, faith, the web perhaps) but not yet on 'Derrida and the Anthropocene,' which would disrupt this circuit, disband proper names, re-introduce a violence that the franchise ceased to remember. Can the *DNA* of a 'deconstruction' early on claiming the most radical of auto-critiques—which one recalls with a certain melancholy—recur if it emerges at the price of various literalisations, memorialisations, pieties, and imaginaries of 'Jacques,' or need one wait, as he suggests, for another generation, assuming it has its chance? Nor does a defensive retort—he wrote on 'the animal'!—do the trick, least of all with the embarrassing regressions the last has given rise to (animal 'subjects?'). Nor does his *rhetorical* backtracking on his earlier writings encourage that protest (his incautious re-animation of the Levinasian 'other' despite his previous eviscerations). It is rather the absence or lack in his writing of eco-catastrophism that is remarkable in ways, as much, say, as his disavowal of cinema, or his occlusion of whatever 'de Man' came to signify for him. In each case, there is something too close perhaps, impinging on (or interfering with) the 'deconstruction' he chose to craft in order to keep a 'future' open, or *survive*. Rather, what Derrida names 'archive' leads him to turn back from crossing this rim repeatedly, and does so as if out of pedagogic imperatives—the perceived rhetorical limits of a readership. One might have wished for Derridean texts examining the pitiable nomenclature that persists amidst this solar haze of discourse—environmentalism, ecology, sustainability, the retro-personifications of systems theory, the regressive othernesses of animal 'studies.' One wonders that his servicers or helpers were so entranced by the routine that they had failed to urge him to write toward *the ecocidal*, being stuck rather in a backloop. This occlusion appears, rather, rhetorically endemic. Why?

It wasn't that Derrida was too 'untimely' but that he constrained his address to the too contemporary *in a certain way*—performing 'Derrida' on request or when urged to respond to *academic* trends or politics. And he could not stop going back, one sees it again and again, to *correct* his interlocutors, his 'Derrideans' and his breakaways (Nancy)—all along, or in part, battling against a 'bad reading' of him. (The treatment of Nancy in *On Touching* is, in this regard, signal and brutal.) It is not for nothing that Häggglund must insert a term that Derrida explicitly disavows, 'material,' in re-positing an 'arche-material trace'.¹¹ Indeed, it is impossible not to note that there are, his last interview implies, different 'bad readings' in the view of that 'I' (who was at war with *moi-même*): and since the reading of him had not 'begun,' that includes the *Derridean*.

That is, there would be the hostile unreaders every Derridean knows to take arms against (e.g. Habermas), and the opportunistic misappropriations (e.g. Rorty), but then there is the elided third category—the 'bad' readings of those opposed to the 'bad reading,' presumably in his name. That is, precisely those who deemed themselves to be channeling a Derridean style or project, translators and the sort of servicing network that accumulated with celebrity and caricature. This other 'bad reading' is technically that of the Derridean who is disowned in the 'final' interview rather decisively. Nonetheless, one must admire the circuit of third-generation archivists and friends presuming to extend or transcribe this 'legacy.' Particularly so for delaying, as much as possible, the sort of painful dangers built into these situations: curling into imaginary bearers of the proper name, interested more in fetishising networks or re-iterations involved with academic capital and the pretense to channel a certain persona, banding into policing orthodoxies, retreating into the role of parochial conservators, and so on.

But if Derrida *occludes* 'climate change' from his writing—would not address or write to it—it might not be accidental. Addressing *it* would have stripped a rhetorical backdrop of his writings, which relied on a stated commitment to a Euro-centered *responsibility* (as if) to the future—an inhibiting Euro-centrism. It is not incidental that an iconic peculiarity, puzzling even to by-standers, would be a public reconciliation with Habermas. This absence of address of 'climate change' within the Derridean corpus (hence, of his dedicated exegetes)

resonates with other discrete *occlusions*: say, that of a certain post-binarised ‘materiality’, of mnemonics encountered as machinal (the end of all *psychism*, he deflects) and, curiously but in keeping with the latter, *cinema*. Rather than represent some blindspot or a repression — or some lack as if to be *supplemented* today — one might see here the riddle of a translation-effect held at bay and to be later released, that of being read by and from the anthropocene. That would be the ‘later on’ toward which J.D. points in saying ‘one has not yet begun to read me.’ This other reading to come is at war with the first, the auto-immune capsule of ‘late Derrida,’ presented as warm milk to the kids, withdrawing the tequila shots of the (not yet) ‘early’ Derrida — not trusting that it was ‘time’ for that, or whether that path would not lead to a pre-emption of the brand (the example of ‘de Man’).¹²

II. *The Cinanthropocene — an ‘art of diversion’*

One can read the ‘I am at war with myself’ as between these two or chiral Derridas — the one who refused being photographed and the star of the movie ‘deconstruction,’ in the broadest sense. Derrida, who would write much on graphics and photographs, would not write on cinema. In his interview for *Cahiers du Cinema* this aporia is on display, wherein the cinematic is given an autobiographical projection. In it (it deserves real attention) one is left with a cipher and a dissimulation. And just as there are the two Derridas — the one who refused to be photographed and the one who, relenting, would star in various movies (including the return-echoes of a ‘pop’ deconstruction in auto-immune mode he would increasingly fend off or manage) — there are *two* cinemas. *Chirality* implies a distinct asymmetry between supposed doubles — the way hands are never specularly doubled or aligned to begin with. On the one hand, what is called cinema is an ‘art of diversion,’ we hear, immersed in by Derrida as escapism (mostly *from* being in what he calls *America*, with which it is nonetheless allied). It is also intimate with his early years, transporting him to a fabled ‘France,’ allied to what is *without prohibition*, to the ‘infantile.’ He will have seen everything, recalls everything, he says, but retains no memory trace. ‘Without prohibition’ is not only erotic. These aporia pile up exponentially: *cinema* will be all about trace, yet he retains no memory trace of it; it will have included all techniques

of deconstructive writing, and subsumed psychoanalysis, yet it is an 'art of distraction'; it is the purest instance of spectrality, yet is not to be written on. In effect: 'Cinema is the absolute simulacrum of absolute survival.' The counter-vectors in this interview, the *aporia* of cinema in 'Derrida' in the context of his *disavowal*, are too numerous to pursue here but involve the following (if one may present, here, a montage):

Everything in cinema is permitted, including adjacencies between the heterogeneous roles [appearances] of publics and of relationships to the screen. . . . Cinematic experience belongs, altogether, to spectrality, which I link to everything one could have said about the spectre in psychoanalysis—or the very nature of the trace. . . . As spectral memory, cinema is a magnificent mourning, a work of mourning magnified. . . . It is thus double a trace: trace of witnessing itself, trace of forgetting, trace of absolute death, trace of that-without-trace, trace of extermination.¹³

If what can be called *cinematisation* drives the mnemonic and perceptual orders, and does so by way of backloops precessionary to any phenomenological trope, Derrida's refusal to write on it is not due to his self-exemption from a 'culture of cinema,' and it is not that it is 'diversionary' (no more, say, than the detour of writing a deconstructive 'ethics "of the other"'). Its relentless backloop precedes and swamps residual tropes of invention, 'open' futures, and 'trace' in a fore-closing fashion: it compromises a certain rhetoric of the *to come* as an inappropriate short cut. Which is not quite to say that cinema is to *khora*, it seems, as writing is to *archive*.

In all of this, cinema is to be heard as double and a double of itself (at war with *itself*)—there are the movies one recalls, and there is the cinematic operation and sheer mnemotechnics that recasts the spell, drug, or trance as a machinal iteration. *Cinema* is not, as Derrida opines, the fantasy-technics of writing all along but involves a logic that is pre-letteral and pre-hieroglyphic, back to the cave paintings, in effect programming the sensorium. It is, in this sense, *khora*-like and at the same time a 'popular' cultural power. The space without 'prohibition' registers what Joana Maso has termed a memory outside of memory, a sheer, machinal trace exponentially accelerated. As

Bernard Stiegler observes in this context, cinema ‘is’ *life* — which is to say, cinanimation.¹⁴ One can read this today, perhaps, because the ‘era’ of cinema is technically dead, over and accomplished, like a species getting to have a geological era named after it.

Von Trier’s planetary collision — the two zeros, *spools* or spheres kept apart by the sun veering into one another finally, *touching*, impacting — links the *anthropocene* to cinema as an always non-human logic or perspective. It recalls Derrida’s late diatribe against ‘Christian marriage’ itself (the mergence of opposites), mentioned with one foot out the door. Given the hyper-accelerations of 20th century techno-media and the coincidence of any era of ‘cinema’ with that of *exponential* growth, techno-genocide, hyper-consumption and global financialisation — that is to say, the totalising mediocratic trances of today — we could instead trope this as the *cinemanthropocene* or *cin-anthropocene* era, the epoch without ‘epochality’. This makes Derrida’s disavowal of cinema as a ‘diversionary art’ the more problematic and an effaced cipher.

Cinema would be banished. It would be occluded by Derrida but not because it was a pop or ‘diversionary art’ (a banality and cliché of modernist aesthetics). Nor would it be *disavowed* because it was ‘infantile’, or related to ‘America’ (always problematic for him). Nor would it be banished because, in contrast to the photograph, which could be written on *cinematically* in effect, cinema exponentially deranges the *citational* relationality one could pretend to hold in place. Instead of the still photograph with its ‘citational structure’ (Eduardo Cadava), each imperceptible frame multiplies the citational abyss in a horizontal vertigo (Hitchcock) beyond mastery. Moreover, cinema is ineradicably alert to its machinal ‘materiality’ and ability to produce phenomenalities from mnemonics and points. Nor was it disavowed because the cinematic ‘mark’ precedes any scriptive sign, letter, or graphic — that is, as Derrida notes, it implies in advance all deconstructive techniques. It would be disavowed in a similar manner to how ‘climate change’ would, or a certain ineluctable and non-binarised ‘materiality’, or a machinal trace that implacably drives (and displaces) ‘psychism’.

The unbridgeable rift between the two Derridas (‘I’ at war *contre* ‘myself’) accords with a *rift* today within the fading

meme of 'deconstruction' as a franchise. On the one hand, there would be a 'deconstruction' busy tending to the proper name, obsessively, dutifully, yielding a soft *Derrideanism without deconstruction*. *Deconstruction*TM. And on the other hand, there is what might be called a *deconstruction without 'deconstruction'* in so far as the *anthropocene* alleviates and rereads the former—selectively and aggressively. What rises to the surface in the name of the J.D. at war with 'Derrida,' and what ceases to be relevant to this new *referential horizon*? Do writings marginal to the angelicists, corporatists, academic archivists and one-time contemporaneity seekers float to the fore? That is, not the writings on 'archive,' but on *khora*; not the work on 'the animal,' but on *humanualism*; not the rhetorician of mourning, hospitality, spectrality, *sovereignty*, and the 'otherness of the other' but another polemicist, at war with these.

III. Time Out— or, *Quo Vadis, Derridianism?*

The puzzle that forms itself between the warring Derridas bears repeating—since it is, he says, a burden much more than you 'can guess'. The attempt by 'deconstruction' to extend a legacy through ever more refined exegesis of Derrida (according to Derrida) has had the opposite effect according to a recent, sympathetic rebuke. For Martin McQuillan it has produced a narrowly defined entity cut off from the contemporary theory market and increasingly irrelevant to graduate students. The more it would endeavour to extend and anchor Derrida's 'legacy', the more it has executed his prediction of *disappearance*. If this occurs despite (or because of) these earnest efforts, McQuillan asks in his *Deconstruction without Derrida* (2012), what would it be willing to 'sacrifice' in order to 'survive'?

When one surveys the theoretical landscape of 2012 and examines the state of philosophy or the Humanities across the global academy, one might well ask the question: what has deconstruction been doing [since 2004]?... [I]t has been with remarkable speed that deconstruction as a topic has fallen off the theoretical agenda... relegated to a side show in the carnival of Theory today... If deconstruction is to reclaim the ground it has lost in the graduate imaginary since the death of Derrida then it will have

to engage with and challenge that agenda... a risk that no one in deconstruction seems willing to take at this moment... [T]he question might be asked: what will deconstruction be prepared to sacrifice in order to survive?¹⁵

The answer seems simple: *deconstruction* might bracket the rhetorical artefaction of a 'late Derrida' when read *as if* that were a movement into the world or a telos of J.D.'s writing rather than a rhetorical innovation among others. It might give up its fetishisation of a *persona* (irrelevant to the writing), and address the new, remarkably dark aporia of the anthropocene and ecocide. Like Cortez's men fleeing the *noche triste* of Montezuma, drowning because they would not abandon their gold, the only thing earnest *Derrideans* need give up is what they could not use or deploy in the current conditions in any case.

Enter, the 'anthropocene'. This term or non-name arrives in a tangle of forces without any appeal to *sovereignty*. It has turned the current geopolitical and geo-economic climate into a paralysed network of zombie systems (in denial) angling for momentary advantage before the next reset hit: Euro-collapse? Methane bubbles from the tundra? Oceanic acidification? — the menu is suddenly endless.

On the one hand, as said, the term manifests the essence of anthropomorphism at its peak of narcissistic self-congratulation — *anthropo-narcissus* gets a plaque named after it stamped in the geological record. On the *other* hand, it seems distinguished for practicing auto-extinction, *ecocide*. How do the histories of *writing* from within the Western parenthesis interface explicitly with this acceleration, particularly with the latter's links to carbon and imprints? How might the rhetorical tools of deconstruction read the anorganic and invisible puzzle of *oil*, the rhetorical inventories of hyper-financialisation (derivatives, fiat currency, and megadebt), or the global klepto-mediocracies consolidating, post-democratic and neo-feudal telepoloji? As you see, though, in this same 'last' interview (as if J.D. had only one death), Derrida provides the template, or green light, even if this is not what the *après-Derrida* has, so far, dared to 'risk':

And the responsibility for this today is so urgent: it calls for an unrelenting war against *doxa*, against those who are today called

‘media intellectuals,’ against a general discourse that has been preformatted by media powers that are themselves in the hands of certain politico-economic, editorial, and academic lobbies. At once European and global. (‘Learning to Live’, 28)

Where, today, is this ‘unrelenting war against *doxa*’? One would think, if that were commanded, Derrideans would jump to it, but apparently it implies ‘risk’ (McQuillan). It is a good enough place to start though: in particular as this war against a ‘general discourse that has been preformatted by media powers that are themselves in the hands of certain politico-economic... models’ appears ever more totalized today and frames the drift of post-democratic neo-feudal mediocracies, the occlusion of ‘climate change,’ and the logics of hyper-financialisation played out as a global economic ‘crisis.’ Trance wars. Does it matter that the current non-present ‘present’ is not one of your run of the mill *times out of joint*, since it subsists beyond known tipping points in a posture of denial that alters life forms negatively going forward aeons? It accomplishes this unusual grammar — a future-past-unconditional — not by some deed but by altering nothing in the inertia of business as usual (no need to consider the nuclear and bio-weapons factors). It is the event. Does it matter that said ‘present’ speaks from within a curious parenthesis of peak food, peak oil, peak water, peak credit, or peak humans — in a posture allied to a cinematic trance?

So, was a certain ‘late Derrida’ (how to say this?) *not deconstructive* enough — overly preoccupied by rhetorical calculations of *survival*? Does a *decon*-meme detach itself from that ‘Derrida,’ go to war with it? Has the inheritance of 20th century critical idioms, particularly those of the 90’s, weighed against, diluted, indeed entrapped contemporary practices — as, for that matter, the entire fetish rhetoric of accessible *alterity*, the human ‘other,’ or the *otherness of the others* does (as still of the phantasmal human *polis*)? Would one need instead to risk calculi and algorithms that are more properly *khoratic* in order to reconfigure a piece of deconstructive *DNA* — without much genetic engineering — toward the non-relations of carbon, of ‘oil’ (the circuit of auto-cannibalization of life in decomposition, black, toxic to touch,

stored 'sunlight,' suffused into suicidal restorations of this underworld into the biosphere, as runaway global heating)? Or more positively, might not a cohort brewed in rhetorical skills of the rarest sort open interrogations of the 'something *else*'? That is, not only of media spells staging post-binarised dilemmas and telecratic whiteouts (a decapitated 'America' forbidden, essentially, to discuss climate change), or the crystallisation of new *a-literacies* (the wired youth) as regards any 'era of the Book.' But more interestingly still, might they not engage ('deconstruct?') the labyrinthine discourse today of rogue *financialisation* and its facades, tools, currency simulation, derivatives, and klepto-suicidal culture (of exponential 'growth')?

That these appear absent today reflects the anaesthetised state of academic culture in the *late anthropocene*—call it a sort of *pre-ptsd*—when the untimely has become unexceptional and numbingly rote. That culture's perpetual relapse into pre-critical and crypto-humanist positions parallels that of geo-political and economic systems more broadly, to say nothing of the unwinding of university programs. Indeed, it mimes the global financial elites' consolidation of a cognitive crony-capitalist kick-the-can-down-the-road backloop (denial) in which, mathematically, virtual generations are despoiled or cut off (hyper-debt, resource depletion, mass extinctions). Intra-generational war seems deferred in much of the West only by laced foods, ipods, and a plenitude of pharmaceuticals.

Might a *mutant* or properly anarch(ival)ist deconstructive meme find its opportunities and relevance endless in this 'environs'? It need only, for the moment, 'sacrifice' the proper name, the brand, the pretense that more exegesis on *Derrida* is, or was ever, 'deconstruction'—since without the wager (no one takes 'risks,' says McQuillan again), without the *contretemps*, and without the engagement of contemporary mutations, it would hardly conform to Derrida's *practice*. Is *survival* really *that* necessary to assert (I mean, *today*?)—and, once it is asserted, does that not guarantee ethical contaminations, calculation, simulation, that is, failure? One need only begin with an affirmation of extinction—and proceed to unriddle the aporia of a Western parenthesis read, now, from the *cinanthropocene*.

IV. *Trance wars of the late Anthropocene*

What is clear is that ‘deconstruction’ today deconstructs nothing, curls back on itself fetishistically, and relies on a certain misreading of the *persona* (‘Jacques’) for instructions that were missing. Its execution is even more suspect—hagiographic ameliorations, naturalisations. (This, of course, includes shifting the title of the ‘last’ interview from ‘I am at war with myself,’ as it appeared in *le Monde*, to the ameliorating bathos of ‘Learning to Live, Finally. . . .’ shifting from Derrida’s gesture of disinheritance and autogenic war to a farewell to Hamlet: one witnesses between these two titles the *war* between the two Derridas recurs as a translational effect.) It is also clear that if the ‘anthropocene’ implies ecocide, and the current global regimes accelerate or seal this process, and if these same do so through a totalisation of mediocratic trances, then there is—even for the most peace-seeking among us, like myself—an implicit *war* within the global disposition. Its stakes might be any ‘futures’ at all (a truly misused and misbegotten term) or ‘survival’ on a para-species level—but that, in itself, also should not be the metric.¹⁶

Let us conjure a *splitting* from which something like two *chiral* spheres appear that are asymmetrical, non-specular, and *impact*. They might reflect as in a funhouse mirror the two Derridas at war, the two cinemas (movies and the cinematization of ‘life’). The first might well be called ‘light’ deconstruction (laboring to extend a ‘legacy,’ evolve the ‘new’ Enlightenment to come that is, Derrida pretends, in Europe’s DNA as a promise). A deconstruction resituated in an Enlightenment fable, or for short, *decon-light*. The other would be—let’s *not* call it *dark deconstruction*, but one without ‘deconstruction’ or the proper name. This other mode was always in alliance with one read *from* the anthropocene, one re-instituting the ‘wager’ in ways that have nothing to do with *dissemination* or survival. In terms of the algorithm of the ‘I am at war with myself,’ this latter might identify with ‘J.D.’ against ‘Derrida’ in this war, with what needs no corporate branding or face at all. It might be ‘dark’ in the same kitsch vein as Morton’s *dark* ecology or the conceit of a *black* Enlightenment—where the latter’s elaboration, as in a photographic negative, turns out to be auto-extincting, as has been said of market ‘democracy’ today or to come. (From the point of view of the anthropocene, there is no privileging of Europe as the best hope of the world—as Derrida

pretends he must, since it is ‘him’.) Of course, the second non-column or sphere relinquishes the ‘light’ to its well-franchised academic cousin, ‘Derrideanism (without deconstruction)’, aka, ‘deconstruction,’ of which one can still find specimens today—or almost, in Martin McQuillan’s opinion, if it is, as he notes using a climactic trope, going under the ‘waves’.

McQuillan asks: what has ‘deconstruction’ been doing since Derrida’s death if the franchise seems to only *have accelerated the disappearance which he predicts*? In particular, he suggests, *Derrideans* have avoided all attempts to dialog with the critical market place (or ‘new’ names), have avoided the ‘contemporary’ (what Derrida could not do), have avoided environmentalism or ‘climate change,’ and seem to retreat into an auto-immune posture increasingly irrelevant to new graduate students or a defaulting Humanities edifice in general. There are some perhaps still saying their morning ‘Yes Yes,’ clawing an ‘ethics’ of undecidability (which has always led to nothing, least of all ethical deconstructors bearing some posture of justice). Yet what one might call a *melangenic* deconstruction may be the most affirming of all, if that is desirable, for being distinctly scornful of the auto-immune drive of *survival* that ‘light’ deconstruction thinks it pursues (even with the evidence in to the contrary).

Of course, there is an irony here: nothing would have guaranteed J.D.’s survival and relevance to the 21st century more than—contrary to his expectations or strategy—having addressed the very zones that he occluded: *ecocide*, the mnemonic machine, cinema, an other materiality than humanists or phenomenology would recognise. Instead, Derrida gave us specters. (Had it not occurred to him that *ghosts* were, in fact, mock-uncanny and gothic-literary—think Caspar—in contrast to the plague of zombies and vampires that have exponentially flooded pop culture?) Derrida’s ‘war’ with himself need not recall Nietzsche’s depiction of a Euripides who, in writing the *Bacchae*, switches sides and flings himself into the counter-Apollonian abyss, or Wagner’s Siegfried awakening from his trance just before Alberich’s spear finds his back, or Alec Guinness in *Bridge over the River Kwai* falling upon the switch that would blow up his pride and creation—the engineered bridge. If J.D. turns against the rhetorical moves and performatives he had, laboriously, set in place, it would be as if in the name of yet another justice than that of ‘the otherness of the

(human) other,' or in the non-name of the 'J.D.' that had refused to be photographed. So the good news, for those requiring some indication, some spectral imprimatur, is that such seems clear in the 'last' interview. Specifically, in its insistence in all 'sincerity' that he saw no heirs, that the reading of him had not yet 'begun,' and that his work, judging from what he knew of emergent Derrideanisms, would disappear at his death — two weeks, perhaps a month, to say nothing of eight years.

'Quo Vadis, *Derrideans*?' The *gute Nachricht*, again, is that the answer to McQuillan's blunt question is remarkably simple. All that need be 'sacrificed' is the misidentifications with a persona of 'Jacques' and the imaginary of an exegetical resolution tied to eroding academic capital — plus, perhaps, the usual academic vanities, investments, and imaginaries (for instance, that something like deconstruction were ever genealogically direct). Nonetheless, a certain *other* J.D. seems to some missing as a *warrior* effect before these high-stakes spells of the *anthropocene*, these entirely new aporia, and it may be time to waken the living dead. Occupy *Deconstruction*TM.

Notes

- ¹ See Jacques Derrida, 'Learning to Live Finally—the Last Interview,' by Jean Birnbaum, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Brooklyn, Melville House, 2005), 33–4.
- ² Derrida, 'Learning to Live Finally', 46.
- ³ Kate Rigby, addressing the topos of 'Writing in the Anthropocene: Idle Chatter or Ecoprophetic Witness?' *AHR* 47 (November 2009), 1–2.
- ⁴ See Bruno Latour, 'Waiting for Gaia. Composing the common world through arts and politics,' 5, http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/124-GAIA-LONDON-SPEAP_0.pdf.
- ⁵ See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx—The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (New York, Routledge, 1994), 77.
- ⁶ See Timothy Clark, 'Derangements of Scale', in *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change*, v. 1 (Open Humanities Press, 2012), 154, <http://openhumanitiespress.org/>.
- ⁷ See Martin Hägglund's *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2008).

- ⁸ For a related re-animation of the figure of 'materiality' in Derrida, see Pheng Cheah, 'Nondialectical Materialism', *diacritics* 38:1–2 (Spring-Summer 2008), 143–15.
- ⁹ Timothy Morton, 'Ecology as Text, Text as Ecology', *The Oxford Literary Review* 32.1 (2010), 12–14.
- ¹⁰ See Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, translated by Giacomo Donis, Ed. Giacomo Donis and David Webb (Polity, 2001), 52–3.
- ¹¹ Martin Hägglund, 'The Arche-Materiality of Time: Deconstruction, Evolution, and Speculative Materialism', *Theory After Theory*, ed. D. Attridge and J. Elliott (London, Routledge, 2011), 265–77.
- ¹² See Tom Cohen, Claire Colebrook and J. Hillis Miller, *Theory and the Disappearing Future: On de Man, On Benjamin* (London, Routledge, 2012).
- ¹³ Jacques Derrida, 'Cinema and its Phantoms', translation by Helen Regueiro Elam (unpublished) of 'La cinéma et ses fantômes', *Cahiers du cinéma* 556 (2001), 75–85.
- ¹⁴ See Laurence Simmons, 'Jacques Derrida's Ghostface', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 16:1, 137.
- ¹⁵ Martin McQuillan, *Deconstruction without Derrida* (London, Polity Press, 2012), 3–5.
- ¹⁶ See Timothy Morton, 'Ecologocentrism: Unworking Animals', *SubStance*, 117 (37, 3) (2008), 74.