

TO DESIRE, NEVERTHELESS, THE ALTERNATIVE: JOSHUA KATES, *FIELDING DERRIDA. PHILOSOPHY, LITERARY CRITICISM, HISTORY, AND THE WORK OF DECONSTRUCTION* (FORDHAM, 2008)

Hannu Poutiainen

*The eternal fraternity of theological optimism and of pessimism: nothing is more reassuring, but nothing is more despairing, more destructive of our books than the Leibnizian Book. On what could books in general live, what would they be if they were not alone, so alone, infinite, isolated worlds?*¹

A tribute nowadays commonly paid to Jacques Derrida is the insistence that his work, whatever its failings might be, will continue to have some lasting value as a contribution to some positive x : “phenomenology,” “philosophy,” “thought,” “ethics,” “the future,” and so on. Such insistence is inherently fraught with the danger of an injustice: for a tribute, in referring the value of one thing to that of another, may also have the object of tribute *laid under tribute* to something greater than itself. A tribute paid to y is always made with a view to an x ; x then becomes the arbiter of the value of y . To suppose that Derrida contributes something to some x is to believe that Derrida has had something to give to this x . Derrida, under this assumption, would have offered a thesis allowing a better appreciation of this x , a thesis that might become a *given* in any further handling of the x . His work would have given this given *to* this x to interiorise and appropriate. It would thus have given *itself* as giving *us* this x in a novel fashion. Derrida’s contribution, the given pertaining to x given to x by him, would therefore have depended on the x itself for its pertinence with respect to the x ; it would have received from the ideal normativity of the x its proper status. Derrida, then, would have been but the dialectical conduit of a gift given by the x to itself: another milestone in the infinite progress of the self-approximation of the a priori x . Philosophy itself—to the extent that the x in question lays claim to a putative identity, dialectical or otherwise—finds itself helplessly attracted by the *telos* of such a plenitude.

There is, beyond any doubt, a great deal of truth in this. Indeed, if one were to pick at random any of Derrida’s works, it would be easy to show the massive extent of its influence upon the way some given x gives itself to be thought. Derrida’s works, to the extent that they are thematisable, and this extent is always considerable, *do* contribute: adding power and clarity to the way we read—whatever it is that we read: philosophy, literature, art, law, architecture—they ceaselessly renew the injunction to read with a vigilant eye. They are, in the very best

sense of the term, pedagogical works.

But they are always much more than simply pedagogical. “I am tempted to say,” Derrida confides to Maurizio Ferraris in *A Taste for the Secret*,

that my own experience of writing leads me to think that one does not always write with a desire to be understood—that there is a paradoxical desire not to be understood. ... If something is given to be read that is totally intelligible, that can be totally saturated by sense, it is not given to the other to be read. Giving to the other to be read is also a *leaving to be desired*, or a leaving the other room for an intervention by which she will be able to sign in my text. And it is here that the desire not to be understood means, simply, hospitableness to the reading of the other, not the rejection of the other.²

How, then, if Derrida “does not always write with a desire to be understood”, should one respond to Joshua Kates’s *Fielding Derrida*, an ambitious work whose aim is precisely to render Derrida comprehensible *as* a contribution to a broader horizon of philosophical and cultural problematics? How to respond to what appears there as more than residual reference to the value of an *x*, an identity to which Derrida’s *project*, in *relying upon* that which makes up the identity of this *x*, would finally *redound* in the manner of something properly *tributary*?

A “project” that is “tributary” to that to which it “contributes”; that “redounds” in fundamental “dependence” to that on which it manifestly “relies”; this is the language of debt, of presuppositions taken up and borrowed from elsewhere, of interpretations accepted as settled truths; a language, then, that assumes itself capable of accounting rigorously for such an economy. The work to which I refer is explicitly cast in such terms. In using these terms, I have, therefore, already cited the work: not so much to cast doubt on the intentions animating the work as to emphasise the conceptual network—*itself essentially limited and perhaps of limited pertinence*—on which these intentions themselves depend.

What are these intentions? It is no frivolous claim that Kates stakes out: “Unearthing buried positions and presuppositions, framing field-specific assertions and truth-claims, and then correcting and nuancing these assertions in turn, such exegesis necessarily overflows the boundaries of Derrida’s own texts, even as it reaches into the depths of the mechanics and texture of his writings.”³ Such, then, are the book’s objectives. Reaching “into the depths” of “Derrida’s own texts” while “necessarily overflowing” their “boundaries,” intent on “framing” assertions and then “correcting and nuancing” them, seeking to “unearth” the “buried positions and presuppositions” of Derrida’s work: the protocols of a “scanner,” as Derrida says in his 1990 preface to his 1954 dissertation, that works with “imperturbable impudence.”⁴

This essay is a response to this axiomatic. What it reviews is not Kates’s book as a whole—which covers a lot of ground in Derrida studies, impressively ranging from Derrida’s reading of Marx to a comparison between Derrida and Merleau-Ponty—but rather a broad argument that runs through the work. Without a doubt the following pages will fail to match Kates’s work in terms of nuance and exactitude, an original and inventive work that, for me, remains an absolutely invaluable and indispensable reference. Yet for all the admiration I have for this work, my response will, I fear, tend towards the critical; for even if it is only at one point, at one singular and highly charged moment, that Kates has, as I read him, been inclined to take a wrong turn, it is this very turn that will, as I argue, prove fatal to some of Kates’s more original proposals.

◇

If one should ask, then, whether Derrida has had a contribution to make to phenomenology, as Kates agrees he has, and to which aspect of phenomenology this contribution would return, it would be necessary to inquire as to the issue to which Derrida’s work is tributary and which thereby has to be settled before Derrida may risk the more adventurous propositions for which he is duly famous. This requirement, as it somewhat unsurprisingly

TO DESIRE, NEVERTHELESS, THE ALTERNATIVE

turns out, concerns a certain conception of *language*; more surprising is the actual conception that Kates claims to bring to light. In Chapter 3 of *Fielding Derrida*, “A Transcendental Sense of Death? Derrida and the Philosophy of Language,” Kates writes (and I emphasise certain motifs upon which he time and again relies):

Derrida, at the most decisive junctures in 1962, it turns out, *wholly relied* on Husserl’s views of meaning and the sign, even as he had begun to explore certain fault-lines in Husserl’s project. Derrida’s construal of the sign, meaning, language, and writing were themselves *strictly Husserlian*, anchored in this notion of the linguistic sign as *Leib*, as flesh or spiritual corporeality. Were different starting points in the philosophy of language valid—should Husserl’s interpretation of the linguistic sign as a living flesh come into doubt—*none* of Derrida’s own findings *would remain*: neither those concerning a transcendental (and thus potentially quasi-transcendental) writing, nor a purportedly “transcendental sense of death,” nor even that of a pure equivocity and the perhaps problematic teleology that remedies this.⁵

1962, 1967. These dates structure Kates’s entire argument. I will try to respect the regulative value that Kates bestows upon them. For according to Kates, Derrida would have been, at least at the time of his 1962 *Introduction to Edmund Husserl’s The Origin of Geometry*, “strictly Husserlian” in “wholly relying” on Husserl’s “starting points in the philosophy of language.” Fully “anchored” in these notions, Derrida stands and falls with them; without them, “none of Derrida’s own findings”—not only in 1962, as it will appear, but in 1967 and beyond—“would remain.” Therefore, given this total and all-or-nothing dependency, whatever doubt is cast upon Husserl’s “interpretation of the linguistic sign as a living flesh” will by extension be cast upon Derrida’s own findings: for if there should be “different starting points” that would yield “valid” theories of language, these starting points would problematise not only Husserl’s philosophy of language but also Derrida’s—thereby compromising a great part of what Kates consistently terms the latter’s “project.”

Throughout *Fielding Derrida*, in full continuity with his previous efforts, Kates refers to these “different starting points” as “alternatives” to the approach for which Husserl and Derrida both opt. “Sometimes disagreeing with Derrida,” Kates describes his intentions in his 2005 book *Essential History: Jacques Derrida and the Development of Deconstruction*,

my aim is to make clear that the interpretive decisions that Derrida has made are by no means always self-evident, that these take shape within a wider range of alternatives—with the aim, again, of ultimately revitalizing Derrida’s thought and the sort of philosophical or theoretical discussion in which it participates more generally.⁶

It is necessary, then, according to Kates, to question the idea that Derrida at some point wrests himself free of Husserl’s hold as per his conception of language: the idea, that is, that Derrida, in what even Kates does not deny is a radical break from Husserlian orthodoxy, has also achieved the sort of independence from phenomenological expressivism that might permit him to apply these principles without letting them dictate the ultimate remit of his work. This questioning takes two distinct forms. On the one hand, Kates seems at times to argue as if his reading of Derrida were of a phenomenological sort. This happens whenever he says that Derrida’s “interpretive decisions”, being “by no means self-evident”, rely on a presupposed sense that is already a constituted given. On the other hand, Kates seems to hold that phenomenology itself, and Derrida’s work by extension, contains a residuum of unchallenged presuppositions that we should submit to a critique that need not itself be phenomenological.

The most interesting discussion in the book is one where the two aspects are interlinked. The object of the critique—Derrida’s analysis of the indexical “I” in *La Voix et le phénomène*—is in its own right a highly charged moment. The history of its reception exhibits a massive expenditure of energy. It is no great surprise, then, that Kates should read more into the passage than it actually warrants. In the following argument, focusing on precisely this moment of tension, I will rely on what I consider an exemplary selection of themes and theses

that center around Kates's repeated invocation of the *alternative*.⁷

What, in truth, does it mean to be an *alternative* to something? What sort of relation is it? In what circumstances and in what regard may some *y* be posed as an alternative to an *x*? This is the question on which I shall insist. If Kates does not reflect upon this issue, if at decisive junctures of his argument he seems to take the existence of viable alternatives for granted, it is utterly inescapable, as I shall show, that the question of the alternative remains an *operative* concept of his discourse. Operative; as such, inadequately thematised; hence open, all at once, to several alternative construals.



The Derrida that *FD* claims to discover remains essentially dependent on what might be called a Husserlian semanticism: the postulation of what Kates calls an autonomous realm of meaning radically independent of the world. The first part of this argument is familiar. Readers of Derrida will recall how Husserl—as summarised by Derrida in 1967—relates meaning (*Bedeutung*) to sense (*Sinn*): the expressive stratum—the linguistic expression of ideal meaning (*Bedeutung*)—refers for its content to the pre-expressive stratum of experienced meaning (sense, or *Sinn*), while the non-expressive stratum, comprising all indicative signs (*Anzeichen*), whether linguistic or natural, is the repository of such inadequately given meanings as can be rendered meaningful and thereby expressible only through the active intervention of an experiencing ego.⁸ This amounts to a construal of the linguistic sign that Derrida, on Kates's reading, never repudiates: as the intended and living flesh of a meaning that remains radically independent of its worldly embodiments, as a spiritual corporeality whose ties with transcendental *Sinne* are absolute, the sign as *Leib* stands “at the basis of all signs, of all linguistic signification, of every ‘linguistic or graphic body,’ spoken or written.”⁹ Kates argues, then, and this is the less familiar part of the argument, that this absolute bond ensures on the level of language that *expression of meaning* is logically and juridically prior to *reference to particulars*. Linguistic meaning, achieving its own ideal objectivity through the transcendental contribution of writing, constitutes the possibility of expression, while expressions, drawing both their right and their content from a meaning that is prior to them, immediately revert to a meaning that relates to itself through the spiritual corporeality of the sign.

This, in brief, is the chief and unforeseen novelty of *FD*: the view advanced there is that Derrida will never cease to follow Husserl in affirming the rights of *meaning* over those of *reference*. “There really are only two working alternatives in philosophy of language,” Kates writes:

the way of reference or the way of meaning. At this critical juncture, as in future ones, where Derrida must choose, he indeed chooses meaning. None of his subsequent philosophy, or post-philosophy, none of his subsequent deconstructions of these *topoi*, prove possible without his reliance on Husserl's own semantic presuppositions, as becomes evident here.¹⁰

Throughout *FD*, Kates will continue to valorise the “way of reference” as opposed to the “way of meaning.” A little later, in Chapter 4, Kates continues:

There [in “Signature Event Context”] Derrida makes clear that Husserl's positions in respect to language and discourse embody a precursor position to his own, insofar as Husserl rigorously thinks the independence of meaning from reference. An initial, radically semantic orientation that takes the work of language as wholly separate from reference ... is, in fact, the ground shared by Husserl, Saussure, and Derrida. ... Thus for Derrida, for Saussure, as well as for Husserl, meaning exists securely in its own right, apart from reference; it is correlated with language as a clearly delimited and autonomous domain.¹¹

Derrida, then, even as his future work will “plumb” the issues of “indexicality and even referentiality” via such themes as “repetition, iterability, and spacing”¹², will continue to posit the existence of an autonomous realm of

TO DESIRE, NEVERTHELESS, THE ALTERNATIVE

meanings. This is an entirely novel reading of Derrida; astounding, even, given that one cannot really find any anticipation of this in *Derrida*. Here, for instance, are two exemplary passages, passages that elucidate what might be taken, *pace* Kates, to represent Derrida's "actual positions" as concerns these linguistic issues. The first is from *Limited Inc*, the second from *Dissemination*.

What I call "text" implies all the structures called "real," "economic," "historical," socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents. Another way of recalling once again that "there is nothing outside the text." That does not mean that all referents are suspended, denied, or enclosed in a book, as people have claimed, or have been naive enough to believe and to have accused me of believing. But it does mean that every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this "real" except in an interpretive experience. The latter neither yields meaning nor assumes it except in a movement of differential referring. That's all.¹³

To put the old names to work, or even just to leave them in circulation, will always, of course, involve some risk: the risk of settling down or of regressing into the system that has been, or is in the process of being, deconstructed. To deny this risk would be to confirm it: it would be to see the signifier—in this case the name—as a merely circumstantial, conventional occurrence of the concept or as a concession without any specific effect. It would be an affirmation of the autonomy of meaning, of the ideal purity of an abstract, theoretical history of the concept.¹⁴

In citing these passages, I am of course inviting an obvious objection: 1962 and 1967, not 1988 and 1972, are the decisive dates here. It will be necessary, therefore, if I wish to remain true to my professed intention, to abstain from such appeals to textual evidence and to attend more closely to the actual logic of Kates's interpretation, even if I will be obliged here to narrow its breadth into an unjustifiably constricted form.

On what grounds may Kates impute to Derrida the affirmation of an "autonomous realm of meaning" even when some of Derrida's texts would seem to foreclose such an imputation? These grounds mark a great distance from what Kates considers a commonplace reading of two key Derridean notions: writing and death, such as they are treated, in the *Introduction*, in a purely transcendental sense. On this mainstream view, represented in *FD* by Peter Fenves and Leonard Lawlor, the threat posed to truth and meaning is one of radical unintelligibility: entrusted to an inscription that is essentially perishable, truth, as it participates in this perishability, risks voiding itself and becoming impossible to retrieve. Kates counters this view by noting Derrida's strict stipulations concerning the relation of a "pure writing" to a "pure consciousness": thoroughly anempirical, essentially divorced from all mundanity, writing, in truth, can only threaten meaning *as and through* meaning.

For Derrida, writing makes possible an infinite traditionality, a potentially infinite passing on of meanings, a virtually infinite transcendental community, correlative to the kind of objectivity belonging to essences and to scientific truth. Such a possibility of infinite transmissibility, however, can also *infinitely* distance a science, its meanings, and achievements, from its origins, from its founding acts and experiences. It can imply a now-infinite removal from its roots, *seemingly* making possible the loss or disappearance of truth in a radical sense. Writing, a condition of essential truth, on Derrida's reading, also makes possible the potential disappearance of this truth, since it opens the door to a now potentially infinite sedimentation.¹⁵

Once a meaning has become available for inscription, once it is incorporable in the body of a sign, sedimentations of further incorporable meanings, tending in number to infinity, will immediately begin to accrue to it: meanings, by their sheer profusion, will come to occlude a reactivation of their origins in such a way as has hitherto appeared, to these standard commentators, as a radical and worldly death of meaning. An impressive, persuasive, and strong reading; yet nowhere near to being conclusive.

Problems begin to amass at the very moment that Kates turns to Derrida's 1967 construal of death and language in the famous "I am dead" argument. Kates once again reiterates his belief that Derrida, if he is to achieve as radical a break with Husserl as is commonly ascribed to him, "must embrace at a very fundamental level"—and "in a way that proves decisive for the relation of his work to analytic philosophy"¹⁶—a Husserlian semanticism. "All speech, all discourse, Derrida is believed to have shown, entails the structural possibility of the speaker's absence (i.e. his or her death), an absence itself most apparent in writing"¹⁷: it is, once again, from a commonplace that Kates wants to distance himself.

It is characteristic of this commonplace, Kates argues, that it correlates the potential objectlessness (*Gegenstandslosigkeit*) of language with the radical disappearance of truth. "It can be shown," writes Geoffrey Bennington (a "prominent commentator," whose summary, marked with "admirable brevity," Kates quotes at length), that

like any other term, 'I' must be able to function in the absence of its object, and, like any other statement, (this is the measure of its necessary ideality), 'I am' must be understandable in my absence and after my death. ... The meaning, even of a statement like 'I am,' is perfectly indifferent to the fact that I be living or dead, human or robot.¹⁸

Kates doubts neither the accuracy nor the brevity of this description. Indeed it is all too obvious that he thinks it unnecessary, for his reservations are elsewhere:

[T]he claim that "I" really *is* a term "like any other," and that it does express or carry meaning, is highly controversial. Terms like "I"—but also "today," "now," "here," as well as the demonstratives "this" or "that," which are dubbed "occasional expressions by Husserl, others calling them "token reflexives" or "indexicals"—are expressions whose function is *not at all* to mean, it has been argued, but solely to refer, to refer directly. They are constituents of what are sometimes called singular propositions—statements that contain a reference to a particular, without any mediation by a concept or a sense.¹⁹

It is this claim, however, rather than Bennington's, that is truly controversial. And brazen, too: for Bennington had already published, in 1994, an extensive essay on the question of indexicals in Derrida. The central claim there is that the challenge posed by "Derridean iterability" to "Husserlian expressivism" occurs precisely by way of irreducibly *singular* or *particular* statements in highly determined contexts. "By arguing on the basis of an essential iterability of the deictic 'I,'" Bennington writes, "Derrida is less assimilating an indexical item to a lexical item, than infiltrating lexical items in general with indexicals—which is in fact the general drift of his demonstration that Husserl cannot purify expression of indication."²⁰ A conclusion diametrically opposed to what Kates claims to be the case:

Bennington's and Derrida's argument, then, presupposes quite a lot. Their conclusion, specifically, assumes that the "role" of the indexical, as this is sometimes called (the possibility of its application as predelineated in language: in the case of the "I," roughly, to refer to the speaker or the agent of expression; in the case of "now," to fix a moment of time), is to be identified with an actual meaning. For this argument to go forward, the role and the meaning of "I" must indeed be one and the same.²¹

One might be tempted, here, to quote an extensive footnote from Derrida's 1993 text "Passions", one that is so blatantly at variance with Kates's description that one would soon be forgiven for succumbing to this temptation. "For example," one would begin to quote Derrida, still within the paragraph one was in the process of writing when the citation first suggested itself, jumping thereafter into an indented paragraph devoted to the quotation proper:

TO DESIRE, NEVERTHELESS, THE ALTERNATIVE

suppose that I say “I,” that I write in the first person or that I write a text, as they say “autobiographically.” No one will be able seriously to contradict me if I claim (or hint by ellipsis, without thematizing it) that I am not writing an “autobiographical” text but a text on autobiography of which this very text is an example. No one will seriously be able to contradict me if I say (or hint, etc.) that I am not writing about myself but on “I,” on any I at all, or on the I in general, by giving an example: I am only an example, or I am exemplary, I am speaking of something (“I”) to give an example of something (an “I”) or of someone who speaks of something. And I give an example of an example. What I have just said about speaking on some subject does not require utterance, i.e., a discursive statement and its written transcription. It is already valid for every trace in general, whether it is preverbal, for example, for a mute deictic, the gesture or play of an animal. Because if there is a dissociation between myself and “I,” between the reference to me and the reference to (an) “I” through the example of my “I,” this dissociation, which could only resemble a difference between “use” and “mention,” is still a pragmatic difference and not properly linguistic or discursive.²²

A pragmatic difference, not properly linguistic but at work in language, and, moreover, in such a way as to permit an “I” to stand in for another “I.” Now, having given in to this temptation, one would not be far from noting how baldly Kates’s description contradicts this passage, and from adding, so as to accentuate that contradiction, that Kates pushes his argument even further by claiming that Derrida “comes to affirm, *perhaps* erroneously, that the indicative, or pragmatic dimension specific to language (not to mention pragmatism as such) is wholly tributary to the privilege of presence, specifically presence to a subject.”²³ A strange statement, this, and made all the stranger by the solicitude signaled by the “perhaps,” a solicitude one cannot quite have faith in, given that the purported affirmation is treated as obviously erroneous: “The work of *indexicals*, one might say,” unless one affirmed what Kates takes Derrida to affirm, “is simply the work of the *indicative*, the work of *indication* through language (all the terms being cognate).”²⁴

But such a digression will not do: 1993, after all, is a far cry from 1962 and 1967. One would then have to retrace one’s steps and proceed with the explication of Kates’s argument. Before going further, however, it will be necessary to note some ways in which Kates’s argument is simply flawed.

1) It is not possible to remove indexicals “from anything that might be genuinely called a meaning.”²⁵ Indexicals, after all, remain indexical *expressions*. A minimal symbolic investment—or, as J.N. Mohanty puts it in the case of the “I,” a semi-meaning²⁶—is necessary for an indexical to be what it is. David Kaplan, to whose work Kates refers this part of his argument, never denies this. Quite the contrary: D.W. Smith and Ronald McIntyre have noted that “Husserl’s account of demonstratives and Kaplan’s coincide up to a point: both hold that demonstratives refer directly; both recognize two levels of meaning for demonstratives, one that varies with the occasion of utterance and one that does not.”²⁷ No grave difference between Kaplan and Husserl, then.

2) Kates blurs distinctions that do not permit blurring. To say with Bennington that an “I” must remain “able to function” in the absence of “its object”, and that this functioning, in order to be recognised, necessarily requires a modicum of ideality, is not to say that the indexical “must carry a meaning.” Such teleology is profoundly foreign to Derrida and Bennington.

3) The view that Bennington and Derrida identify indexicals with actual meanings is an absurdity. For a situation to assume *some* meaning, for it to be able to yield *some* meaningful experience for *some* subject, is not quite the same as *to have* a meaning. And to have *a* meaning is not necessarily to have *just one* meaning. Indeed, the *capacity* of an utterance to *assume some* meaning in *some* possible context—to function, for instance, as indicative or expressive—is the very opposite of the *incapacity* to ever function otherwise than according to a meaning that it already *has*. This, it should be noted, is what the extensionalism of Gottlob Frege, to which Kates traces all the “other initiatives” he proposes as viable alternatives to deconstruction²⁸, will incontrovertibly lead to: as the renowned logician Jaakko Hintikka has noted, following Jean van Heijenoort, if concepts are to be fixed by their extensions alone (by the range of *really existing* things that make a statement true), and if every

statement is formulated according to an absolute and universally applicable logic like Frege's *Begriffsschrift*, it follows that there is *only one* possible interpretation for every statement and *only one* possible world with respect to which those interpretations can be made.²⁹ The result, of course, is that "one cannot on this view vary the representative relations between our expressions on the one hand and the reality on the other."³⁰ One cannot, that is, perform eidetic variations, which, as Derrida notes, are a hallmark of deconstructive plurivocity: "If all language, as was suggested elsewhere, is in itself a sort of spontaneous eidetic and transcendental reduction, and therefore also 'natural' and more or less naive, the multiplicity of reductions may be carried out by the more or less discordant concert of several voices."³¹ On this view, linguistic meaning, as thought by Husserl and Derrida, would not in fact constitute "an autonomous realm"; the "autonomy" which Kates treats with such great suspicion is in fact nothing less than the essential availability of language for reinterpretation in terms of alternative scenarios (as opposed to being fixed in terms of one single world or structure of meaning). Indeed, John D. Caputo already said as much in 1985; his words bear quoting at length. "Signifiers", Caputo says as per Derrida's notion of the sign,

are magical performatives which produce a staggering array of amazing results: science, art, outright fictions, graffiti, metaphysical systems, ethical exhortations, mythologies, scriptures, insults, commands, baptisms, poems, political constitutions, public prohibitions, curricula, colloquia, soliloquies, logical systems, normal and abnormal discourses of all sorts, and on and on. We can liken this productivity to the power of the 'imagination' in German idealism. For here, we have to do with *Ein-bildungs-kraft*: with an inexhaustible power to engender form, to produce formed effects. This is not to say that the power of differance is a subjective faculty. The energy in question is not the energy of a subject but the power of the differential system to generate new effects indefinitely.

Indeed Husserl himself had a glimpse into this abyssal power of productivity, albeit one which was couched in the language of transcendental subjectivity and transcendental freedom. He describes this for us in §§ 47–49 of *Ideas I* in terms of "the annihilation of the world," in a discussion aimed at showing the "constitution" of the world. The world around us is radically contingent, he says. The actual world is but a special case of a multitude of different, possible worlds. Things take shape for us as the correlate of a factual sequence of experiences, and we can imagine that these sequences would be different, would change.³²

On the possible-words view a statement is worth nothing in itself. Its value as true or false, decided only with respect to some particular world, is not an intrinsic one. Yet Kates, as I shall show in the next section, cannot postulate, precisely because of the way he privileges reference (extension) over meaning (intension), any such independence.

4) Ideality, therefore, does not require that any privilege be accorded to some single actual meaning. On the contrary: it may be said, as Martin Kusch has argued, that "Husserl seems to commit himself to a thesis ... according to which actuality is expressed by an indexical like 'I' or 'here'. That is to say, the predicate 'actual' does not pick out one and the same single world for all subjects, but it picks out for each subject (or group of subjects) 'its' (or 'their') world."³³ On Kusch's view, then, the relation that Husserl finds to obtain between indexicals and actual meanings—indication being the form in which a subject's actual experience gives itself to be expressed: *I am in this world*—is the very inverse of what Kates imputes.

A more general inference can be drawn from this last point. "Indication," Derrida writes in *Speech and Phenomena*,

thus enters into speech whenever a reference to the subject's situation is not reducible, wherever this subject's situation is designated by a personal pronoun, a demonstrative pronoun, or a 'subjective' adverb such as *here, there, above, below, now, yesterday, tomorrow, before, after*, etc. ...

TO DESIRE, NEVERTHELESS, THE ALTERNATIVE

We quickly see that the root of all these expressions is to be found in the zero-point of the subjective origin, the *I*, the *here*, the *now*. The meaning (*Bedeutung*) of these expressions is carried off into indication whenever it animates real intended speech for someone else. But Husserl seems to think that this *Bedeutung*, as a relationship with the object (*I, here, now*), is “realized” for the one who is speaking.³⁴

One might have supposed it obvious here that the reference to the *other* interrupts the presence-to-self that Husserl seeks so forcefully to uphold. Kates, however, plumbs these depths as follows:

At the present phase of Derrida’s analysis, however, what becomes apparent is that Derrida’s stance is undergoing a subtle alteration, doubtless in part under the pressure of Husserl’s own treatments. Though Derrida in this later moment in *Speech and Phenomena* continues to valorize indication in the most general sense, to privilege indication as an “originary” possibility at the very border between linguistic and nonlinguistic signs, as a function *within discourse itself* he starts to link indication to the work of presence, specifically a supervening presence of, and to, the subject. Discussing these occasional expressions, which, as so defined, contain an indicative moment, he states: “the root of all these expressions, one sees it very quickly, is the zero-point of the subjective origin, the *I*, the *here*.”

Derrida now sees this indicative dimension of the linguistic sign in use as redounding to the presence of the subject and thus to the metaphysics of presence—in particular, in the case of the use of “*I*”—and clearly, on these same grounds, Derrida would also steer clear of the alternative “analytic” treatment of the “*I*” set out above.³⁵

Derrida’s premises should sanction our saying exactly the contrary. This “subtle alteration” is far too subtle to actually exist.³⁶ Or is it merely by chance that Kates surrounds it with a “however” and a “though” that have no motivation in Derrida’s own phrasing? That this conclusion is developed further in a passage where a “nevertheless” and a “doubtless” will come to reduce Derrida’s future thought to an affirmation that indication is tributary to presence?³⁷ That this interpretation is suggested in *processual* terms (“is undergoing”, “continues to valorize”, “starts to link”) that would not suggest themselves without the postulation of some goal (that Kates now sees and would have us see that “Derrida now sees”)? Or, finally, that his discussion contains a veritable “Sar!” moment where he criticises Derrida by means of a distinction already to be found in the latter’s text? “After all,” Kates writes against Derrida’s and Bennington’s conclusions, “a proper name, or even a possible gloss on the meaning of ‘*I*,’ such as the phrase ‘the person now speaking,’ can by no means stand in for ‘*I*.’”³⁸ Yet Derrida has already acknowledged this: “An essentially occasional expression is recognizable in that it cannot in principle be replaced *in speech* by a permanent objective conceptual representation without distorting the meaning (*Bedeutung*) of the statement.”³⁹ That Kates thinks he can discount this acknowledgement on the basis of Derrida’s analysis of Husserlian teleology—according to which an infinite objectivity will be able to substitute for the *content* of every occasional utterance an *objective* expression⁴⁰—is highly telling. For what Husserl deems objective in this sense is not what can be uttered in communicative speech but what can be intuited in a total objectivity, an objectivity rooted in an “*absolute temporal position*”⁴¹ that is able to form a synthesis between disparate moments and the elements of speech available within those moments. Husserl writes:

Every normal statement is produced in the mode of actuality; the anomalous therefore stands within quotation marks or requires reference to the circumstances of the statement, from which the modification of sense becomes clear. *This modification is not an alteration of sense of the kind which takes place within the consciousness of actuality—for there we have sense only in the mode of the ‘actual’—but a modification which confers the character of fiction on the sense itself.*⁴²

Thus the objectivity of which Husserl and Derrida speak, and which the latter subjects to the most profound questioning, constitutes not a “gloss on the meaning of ‘*I*’”—which would amount to an alteration of sense

“within the consciousness of actuality”—but a broader analysis of the “absolute temporal position” that has permitted the “I” to be stated and identified in a particular way.⁴³

For Kusch, then, as well as for Derrida, though it permits a mediation between occasional expressions and individuated meanings, such actuality is always positional. Positional—hence contextual—hence indicative—and always necessarily unfulfilled. Kates, however, is strangely inattentive to the decisive role that the notion of context plays both in general and in Derrida. (A close reading of *EH* and *FD* would reveal that Kates understands “context”—everywhere operational yet nowhere defined—in what ought to be called a historicist-hermeneutic vein.) “One of the most important influences on meaning,” says Ronnie Cann, author of *Formal Semantics*, “is that of the context of utterance. The context plays a vital role in determining how a particular utterance is to be interpreted on any occasion. In particular, it is needed to restore ellipses, resolve ambiguity, provide referents for deictic elements and resolve anaphoric dependencies.”⁴⁴ Let me summarise the role of context in Derrida. 1) *A context*, whether “internal” or “external” to the sign, is “the set of presences that organize the moment of [a sign’s] inscription.”⁴⁵ 2) *All contexts* are “pragmatically determined.”⁴⁶ 3) *Context*, as a general term, designates “the real-history-of-the-world”: nothing *exists* outside context⁴⁷. 4) *No context* can be fully saturated and fixed by an intentional consciousness⁴⁸. 5) This pertains, due to the general structure of citationality, to *all possible contexts*: a context need not be actual in order to determine at least one potential use of a sign⁴⁹. 6) This, in its turn, necessitates a detour via ideality, given that Derrida affirms Husserl’s analysis of possibility as “irreal.”⁵⁰ 7) Derrida, therefore, in rigorously reaffirming the importance of context, should in fact be seen as repairing a fault in Husserl’s own understanding of context. “Husserl’s basic theory of intentionality,” D.W. Smith and Ronald McIntyre write, “fails to take account of such contextual influences on intention. Accordingly, it must be modified or extended to what we might call a ‘pragmatic’ theory of intentionality, in analogy with a pragmatic as opposed to a purely semantic analysis of linguistic reference.”⁵¹ A kind of *pragmatology*, then.⁵²

Now, relating this summary to what we have just read from Derrida, and relating Derrida’s text to Kusch’s interpretation of Husserl, it should be possible to propose, against Kates, a double defense of Derrida’s notion of linguistic meaning: that 1) *a reference to the subject’s situation is always and everywhere irreducible* and that 2) *a subject is always situated in one possible world that must be ideally related to other possible worlds*. This cannot but have a profound effect on how Husserl’s and Derrida’s “semantic presuppositions” are to be interpreted.



To reiterate: Kates believes he has shown Derrida to rely on a Husserlian assumption concerning *semantics*. This assumption, Kates argues, comes down to Husserl’s analysis of the linguistic sign as a spiritual corporeality: all linguistic items are ideal objectivities, independent of spatiotemporal variation, which can only aim at ideal contents if enlivened by an intentional animation. This assumption, Kates says, has “undergirded” Derrida’s analysis “all along.”⁵³ Therefore, “whatever talk of a transcendental sense of death signifies, it cannot be equivalent,” even *after* 1962, “to a complete loss or death of sense on the transcendental plane.”⁵⁴ It follows by the same token that “meaning exists securely in its own right, apart from reference; it is correlated with language as a clearly delimited and autonomous domain.”⁵⁵

In this penultimate section I will focus my attention on one single question. This question communicates with the issue of the *alternative* that Kates so eagerly invokes but neglects to thematise. The question is this: does the description above really amount to a thesis concerning *semantics* as such and in its totality? More specifically: can this description of the linguistic sign serve as an adequate definition of semantics, that is to say, of all the possible *functional relations* in which language stands to its objects? Here, for comparison, is the initial definition of semantics that Ronnie Cann gives at the beginning of his *Formal Semantics*:

(1) A semantic theory must:

1. Capture for any language the nature of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences and explain

TO DESIRE, NEVERTHELESS, THE ALTERNATIVE

the nature of the relation between them;

2. Be able to predict the ambiguities in the expression of a language;

3. Characterise and explain the systematic meaning relations between the words, the phrases and the sentences of a language.

...

(2) A semantic theory must provide an account of the relation between linguistic expressions and the things that they can be used to talk about.⁵⁶

Husserl, of course, grounds semantics in what he calls a “pure logical grammar” and thereby grants to it a regional pertinence. Derrida refers to this pre-semantic pure logical grammar in a decisive passage in “Signature Event Context”: “the issue is indeed one of a purely *logical* grammar, that is the universal conditions of possibility for a morphology of significations in the relation of knowledge to a possible object, and not of a pure grammar in *general*, from a psychological or linguistic point of view.”⁵⁷ Yet Kates, in commenting on “SEC”, is content to note Derrida’s approval of the “architectonic distinction ... between a pure logical grammar, focused on meaning alone, and a higher-order logic taking in validity, the object, and truth”⁵⁸ by means of which Husserl “rigorously thinks the independence of meaning from reference.”⁵⁹ This obfuscates the matter. The purpose of a pure logical grammar is *to account for all possible relations to all possible objects before those relations are interpreted or reinterpreted with regard to any single domain of meanings or existents*. From this it follows that the semantic theory most appropriate to Husserlian phenomenology, and to which it may comport its formidable powers of analysis, is that of possible worlds semantics: a semantics, that is, where meanings are defined as *functions from expressions to extensions in possible worlds* and therefore as *merely a more complex sort of reference*.⁶⁰ A problematic conclusion: it appears that Kates invokes the question of semantics and appeals to it without ever addressing the matter. Here, for instance, is a salient and exemplary passage, a wonderful piece of exegetical precision that nevertheless cannot but stray wide of the issue:

[F]or Derrida ... the linguistic sign as such is an *ideal individual*, ultimately belonging to culture and history, only able to be accessed through repeated intentions and acts of intention. These, in turn, necessarily bring with them higher-order acts of meaning and intending—both toward the objects at which they aim (*Gegenständen, Objekte*) as well as the logically articulated conceptualizations (*Bedeutungen*) through which these objects are presented. The sign thus stands in a total complex comprised of: (1) merely spatiotemporal bodies (*Körper*); (2) living spiritual corporealities or flesh (*Leib*); and (3) acts of meaning (*bedeuten*) and meanings (*Bedeutungen*)—specifically logical conceptualizations; and this is indeed how Derrida conceived the (linguistic) sign, both spoken and written, in 1962.⁶¹

This description only satisfies Cann’s stipulation (2): “A semantic theory must provide an account of the relation between linguistic expressions and the things that they can be used to talk about.”⁶² A semantic theory must do more than spell out a number of formal rules on the basis of which a statement may be considered valid and disambiguated. It also has to describe and justify the pure possibility of semantics as such. It is in describing this possibility that Kates succeeds with admirable clarity, rigour, and novelty. What he painstakingly shows is that Derrida agrees with Husserl as to the *possibility of semantics*; what he does not see—but what can now begin to be thought thanks to his efforts—is that Derrida cannot but agree with Husserl as to the *semantics of possibility*. It is in terms of such a semantics that D.W. Smith, Roland McIntyre, Jaakko Hintikka, and Martin Kusch, among others, interpret Husserl. On this view, it may be said that Husserl’s *Bedeutungen* consist in functions that assign propositions to objects in possible worlds. They connect statements to *alternative situations* in which the statements hold true. “On the possible-worlds version of Husserl’s theory, then,” Smith and McIntyre write in *Husserl and Intentionality*, “an act is not directed toward an object simpliciter but only in, or relative to, a possible world. And so an act’s intentionality consists in a pattern of directedness that reaches into various different possible worlds under the noematic guidance of the act’s Sinn.”⁶³ Unlike Frege, then, Husserl is not required by his theory to treat every object of reference as an existing entity. It may happen, as it does in the case of indefinite beliefs, that such objects, being potentially “dispersed” or “indeterminate”,

vary from one world to the next: existent here, inexistent there, possessing such-and-such traits in one world another set of traits in another. But even then the linguistic *Leib* intending these disparate objects may well remain the same.⁶⁴



1962, 1967. These dates function for Kates as an ordered pair of regulative metonymies. They mark, in a highly condensed fashion, a series of continuities and discontinuities whose proper interweaving he has attempted to unravel. “1962” stands for a certain complex situation in which Derrida stood as “a young philosopher, relatively unknown, with almost no prior publications”⁶⁵; “1967,” on the other hand, condenses a massive output of papers and essays written between 1959 and 1967. In 1962, Derrida’s work is *tout court* a contribution to Husserlian thought; in 1967, while in many respects liberating itself from Husserl’s influence, it remains in some essential respects tributary to the latter. A synecdoche of this relation may be found in the phenomenon of the *book*. In 1962, Kates says, the “tantalizing formulation of an original spatiotemporality allied to a ‘pure tradition and history’ immediately leads Derrida to offer his ‘phenomenology of the written thing’ in the form of ‘the book’”⁶⁶, while in 1967, most obviously of course in *Of Grammatology*, it is “the role of the book” that “most notably” indicates “the distance between Derrida’s treatment of writing here [in 1962] and in 1967.”⁶⁷

But this synecdoche is not simply a synecdoche. Its effects depend on the configuration of the metonymic dates. And it is precisely by means of the *book* that “1962” and “1967” can be so reconfigured as to make necessary a passage through “1963.” The year, that is, that saw the publication of “Force and Signification”, which later became the opening essay of *Writing and Difference*. Here, by way of conclusion, I shall offer a few remarks concerning an important passage therein that cannot but have an impact *both* on the issue of Derrida’s “semantic preconceptions” *and* on the general relation between “1962” and “1967.”

This passage concerns the relation between “the Book” and “books.” Derrida makes it clear that this relation is not one where the more general term encompasses the plural as instances of itself. “Books”, to borrow Kates’s terms, are not finite “possibilities of meaning”⁶⁸ that would redound to the “proliferating infinitude”⁶⁹ of some “ongoing infinite historicity of meaning”⁷⁰ that would amount to a total Book. If they were, Derrida writes, “to write would still be ... to attempt to forget difference: to forget writing in the presence of the so-called living and pure speech.”⁷¹ Hence the truth of the book must be the very inverse: “The pure book, the book itself, by virtue of what is most irreplaceable within it, must be the ‘book about nothing’ that Flaubert dreamed of—a gray, negative dream, the origin of the total Book that haunted other imaginations.”⁷² To translate this into semantic terms: the *pure book*, opposed to the *total Book* and maintaining a generative relation with singular and separate *books*, just as the virtual system of language is irreducible to a speech whose truth is already decided, denotes nothing but the perpetual possibility of any book to be *reinterpreted in terms of some other book*. (Or, as Derrida will later write: “One text reads another. ... Each ‘text’ is a machine with multiple reading heads for other texts.”⁷³) The Leibnizian terms in which Derrida casts his discussion are of the utmost importance here: Leibniz, as is well known, is generally credited with the invention of the idiom of “possible worlds”, and it is precisely to Leibniz’s notion of the *best possible* world—which, as best, is the one world that God has willed into existence—that Derrida likens the absolute and infinite Book.

To write is not only to know that through writing, through the extremities of style, the best will not necessarily transpire, as Leibniz thought it did in divine creation, nor will the transition to what transpires be always *willful*, nor will that which is noted down always infinitely *express* the universe, resembling and reassembling it. It is also to be incapable of making meaning absolutely precede writing: it is thus to lower meaning while simultaneously elevating inscription. The eternal fraternity of theological optimism and of pessimism: nothing is more reassuring, but nothing is more despairing, more destructive of our books than the Leibnizian Book. On what could books in general live, what would they be if they were not alone, so alone, infinite, isolated worlds? To write is to know that what has not yet been produced within literality has no other dwelling place, does not await

TO DESIRE, NEVERTHELESS, THE ALTERNATIVE

us as prescription in some *topos ouranios*, or some divine understanding. Meaning must await being said or written in order to inhabit itself, and in order to become, by differing from itself, what it is: meaning. This is what Husserl teaches us to think in *The Origin of Geometry*.⁷⁴

Every book is a possible world, every world a possible book, related to one another in an “autonomous sur-compossibility of significations”⁷⁵ that interrupts beforehand the dictation of an infinite and unified history whose development is regulated by an Idea in the Kantian sense. Formulated in 1963, reiterated endlessly through Derrida’s oeuvre in forms as diverse as “Nietzsche’s umbrella”⁷⁶, the “preface”⁷⁷, and the “more or less discordant concert of several voices”⁷⁸, this relation, as a synecdoche of the relation between “1962” and “1967”, explodes that conjunction from within.

Deconstruction as monadology: this is where *Fielding Derrida*, read in a certain way, arrives. Every inscription is a monad of meaning, related to the infinite but divorced from it by dint of its finitude, never completely dead, never completely born, always arising from and redounding upon another monad. *Fielding Derrida*, then, at a stroke, is one of the *most* and one of the *least* deconstructive response to deconstruction. “When one inherits,” Derrida says, “one sorts, one sifts, one reclaims, one reactivates. I also believe, although I’m not able to demonstrate it here, that every assignation of an inheritance harbors a contradiction and a secret.”⁷⁹ It is such a desire to inherit *otherwise*, to inherit some *alternative*, that Derrida’s work instills; deconstruction, perhaps, has always been the thought of the alternative—not simply as the relation that thought holds with “the alternative”, with things that are alternatives to one another, or with the concept of the alternative—but thought itself as that which arises from the alternative. The alternative is always that which is desired on the basis of that which leaves something to be desired. Kates, however, in his desire to respond to those aspects in Derrida that have left him something to desire, has responded to this desire with an interpretation that leaves him with no alternative; his interpretation, then, although its *impulse* is a deconstructive one, exposes itself to deconstruction to the precise extent that it is no longer deconstructive. For it is the alternative, binding its origin to itself in giving the origin to be thought in as many modes as there are notions of the possible, that first of all *contributes to* desire. In more senses than one.

HANNU POUTIAINEN is a PhD student in Literature at the University of Eastern Finland. He is in the finishing stages of his doctoral dissertation on deconstructive logic and the ontology of the double. The journals in which he has published include the *Oxford Literary Review* (2012) and *Derrida Today* (forthcoming).

NOTES

1. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass. New York and London: Routledge, 2004, 11. Hereafter WD.
2. Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, trans. Giacomo Donis, Ed. Giacomo Donis & David Webb. New York: Polity, 2001, 30–32. Hereafter TS.
3. Joshua Kates, *Fielding Derrida. Philosophy, Literary Criticism, History, and the Work of Deconstruction*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. Hereafter FD.
4. Jacques Derrida, *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy*, trans. Marian Hobson. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003, xiv.
5. Kates, FD, 62.
6. Joshua Kates, *Essential History: Jacques Derrida and the Development of Deconstruction*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005, xviii. Hereafter EH.
7. Kates, FD, 62–64, 71, 73, 255n6, and the whole of Chapter 4.
8. Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, 160–161. Hereafter MP.
9. Kates, FD, 56.
10. Kates, FD, 70.
11. Kates, FD, 89.
12. Kates, FD, 69.
13. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, Ed. Gerald Graff. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988, 148. Hereafter LI.
14. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson. London & New York: Continuum, 2004, 5.
15. Kates, FD, 142.
16. Kates, FD, 63.
17. Kates, FD, 63.
18. Kates, FD, 64. Kates is referring to Geoffrey Bennington, “Derridabase,” in Bennington & Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1993, p. 110. Hereafter DB.
19. Kates, FD, 65.
20. Geoffrey Bennington, *Legislations: The Politics of Deconstruction*. London, New York: Verso, 1994, 293. Eftichis Pirovolakis argues similarly in his *Reading Derrida and Ricœur: Improbable Encounters between Deconstruction and Hermeneutics*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010, 120–127.
21. Kates, FD, 66.
22. Jacques Derrida, *On the Name*, trans. David Wood. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993, 143n14.
23. Kates, FD, 69, my emphasis.
24. Kates, FD, 68.
25. Kates, FD, 68.
26. J.N. Mohanty, *Edmund Husserl's Theory of Meaning*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976, 77–79.
27. D.W. Smith & Ronald McIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality. A Study of Mind, Meaning, and Language*. Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: D. Reidel, 1982, 225n31. Hereafter HI.
28. See Chapter 4 of Kates, FD.
29. See, for instance, Jaakko Hintikka, *Selected Papers Volume 2: Lingua Universalis vs. Calculus Ratiocinator*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997, 162–164. Hereafter LUCR. A lengthier reading should demonstrate that Kates holds precisely this position (Kates, FD, 85 contains a symptomatic passage). Another reading of Derrida diametrically opposed to this view is to be found in Patrick O'Connor's intriguing book *Derrida: Profanations*. London & New York: Continuum, 2010.
30. Hintikka, LUCR, 164.
31. Jacques Derrida, “Et Cetera...” Trans. Geoffrey Bennington, in *Deconstructions: A User's Guide*, Ed. Nicholas Royle. London & New York: Routledge, 2000, 296. Hereafter Etc. For Derrida's suggestion, see Jacques Derrida, *Introduction to Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry*, trans. John P. Leavey. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989, 66–69. Derrida, as I read him, argues here for the double reinterpretability of all language: once language is transcendently reduced, its relation to expressible essences is rendered accessible, after which the eidetic reduction will permit the relation between singular expressions and singular essences to be freely and unboundedly varied (so as to yield, among other things, different interpretations correlated with different possible worlds).
32. John D. Caputo, ‘The Economy of Signs in Husserl and Derrida: From Uselessness to Full Employment’, in *Deconstruction and Philosophy. The Texts of Jacques Derrida*, ed. John Sallis. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987, 107. The volume consists of papers presented at a 1985 conference on Derrida's work.
33. Martin Kusch, *Language as Calculus vs. Language as Universal Medium. A Study in Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer*. Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer, 1989, 96–97, Hereafter LC.

TO DESIRE, NEVERTHELESS, THE ALTERNATIVE

34. Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973, 94. Hereafter SP.
35. Kates, FD, 67–68.
36. It would be odd if Derrida, in writing SP, had somehow collapsed “under the pressure of Husserl’s own treatments,” given that, as he notes in TS, the book itself originated as a presentation: “I wrote it in a few weeks in the summer for a conference in the United States, and then I showed it to Hyppolite who said to me ‘it could be made into a book’—that’s how it happened, but it was anything but a project for a book” (Derrida, TS, 30). Kates speculates on the exact time when SP was written (see Kates, FD, 225n16); Derrida’s remark suggests that the book was formed on the basis of pre-existent material and does not therefore figure as a foray into something that was altogether novel to him.
37. “Doubtless, Derrida ... will continue to plumb all the more provocatively that indexicality and even referentiality in the form of repetition, iterability, and spacing Nevertheless, Derrida ... comes to affirm ... that the indicative, or pragmatic dimension of language ... is wholly tributary to the privilege of presence” (Kates, FD, 69).
38. Kates, FD, 65. A questionable claim, for it is possible to refer to oneself by one’s proper name: think of Julius Caesar in Shakespeare’s play.
39. Derrida, SP, 94 (my emphasis). Derrida says “in speech”, dans le discours: see *La Voix et le phénomène*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967, 105. Strangely, Kates elides this passage in both of his books.
40. Derrida, SP, 100–101.
41. Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgement. Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, trans. James B. Churchill and James Ameriks. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973, 173. Hereafter EJ.
42. Husserl, EJ, 300 (my emphasis). See also Kusch, LC, 98–99.
43. On the issue of infinite objectivity and its interruption, see Bennington, DB, 116–118. Another essential reference with regard to the speaking “I”—which Kates omits—would be Derrida’s 1965 essay “La parole soufflée” (Derrida, WD, 212–245).
44. Ronnie Cann, *Formal Semantics. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 22. Hereafter FS.
45. Derrida, MP, 317.
46. Derrida, LI, 148.
47. Derrida, LI, 136, 152.
48. Derrida, LI, 8, 14–15, 58–59.
49. Derrida, LI, 62–63.
50. Derrida, SP, 53n3.
51. Smith & McIntyre, HI 219.
52. “[A]n analysis ... at the intersection of a pragmatics and a grammarology,” in Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume 1*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008, 373. This suffices by itself to dispute Kates’s claim that for Derrida “the indicative or pragmatic dimension of language is tributary to the privilege of presence and the subject” (Kates, FD, 70).
53. Kates, FD, 56.
54. Kates, FD, 56.
55. Kates, FD, 89.
56. Cann, FS, 1.
57. Derrida, MP, 320.
58. Kates, FD, 70.
59. Kates, FD, 89.
60. As Jaakko Hintikka says in his essay “Semantics for Propositional Attitudes”: “The theory of reference is ... the theory of meaning for certain simple types of language. ... Instead of the theory of reference and the theory of meaning we perhaps ought to speak in some cases of the theory of simple and of multiple reference, respectively” (Hintikka 1979, 145). The essay appears in *Modality and Reference*, ed. Leonard Linsky. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, 145–167.
61. Kates, FD, 57.
62. Cann, FS, 1.
63. Smith & McIntyre, HI, 311.
64. Smith & McIntyre, HI, 338, 349.
65. Kates, FD, 57; see also Kates, EH, 53–54.
66. Kates, EH, 254n32.
67. Kates, EH, 67.
68. Kates, FD, 60.
69. Kates, FD, 60.
70. Kates, FD, 60.
71. Derrida, WD, 14.

72. Derrida, WD, 8–9.
73. Jacques Derrida, 'Living On/Border Lines', in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, trans. James Hulbert, Ed. Geoffrey Hartman. London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979, 107.
74. Derrida, WD, 10–11.
75. Derrida, WD, 10, translation modified.
76. Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles/Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, trans. Barbara Harlow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
77. Jacques Derrida, 'Outwork', in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson. London & New York: Continuum, 2004.
78. Derrida, Etc, 296.
79. Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television. Filmed Interviews*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek. New York: Polity, 2002, 25.