

<CH>Tender Violence, Coercive Simplicity, *Geschlecht III*: An Introduction

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<A>I.

In an abandoned typescript of a publishable version of *Geschlecht III*, Derrida observes, ‘Two dates are also two signatures. To date is to sign a delivery from a given place, on a given date’ — much as the author of the preface to the published text signs the account of its delivery.<sup>1</sup>

What does it mean to sign a discovery? And, moreover, to put beneath the imprint of the name, the *place* of discovery along with the date, as is the practice in particular idioms when executing a document? The signature feigns to authenticate the discovery. The signature says, ‘I am the first or the only one to notice what has been overlooked, neglected, missed, misrecognized, lost’ or at least, ‘I am first to recognize — and hereby authenticate — that Derrida will have been the first to notice that Heidegger was the first . . .’. Already the principality of this executor is fractured into the prosthesis of the countersignature, which is required to provide a supplementary instrument to the signature to enable that execution. In this way, when I attest to the discovery of what was hitherto unheard(-of), I betray the first signatory either by reading too closely and hence too little of what went unheard, in which case the stamp of my name counterfeits the one that went before, or by reading so waywardly that it bears little resemblance to what they (read when they) signed. Either way, the signature can stamp only differentially. Furthermore, in the very act of signing — which is always to say countersigning — the discovery is able to betray itself and what it signs: that is, both what it purports to have been the first (or only) one to discover and also the possibility of discovery itself.

In the case of the countersigned discovery of *Geschlecht III*, the text that was found in the forgotten or overlooked place betrays — and disabuses the reader of — the fiction of a single,

unified place of discovery from which one might sign. This is not meant in the self-evident sense that the discoveries did not take place in Freiburg where they were countersigned but in archives elsewhere, at Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC), for example, where a third version, no longer a seminar but not yet a written text or conference presentation, was recovered. This process of recovering *Geschlecht III* began with a 33-page typescript transcribed from the second half of the seventh and all of the eighth sessions from the first year of a four-year seminar on 'Philosophical Nationality and Nationalism' that Derrida gave at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in 1984–5, a text that Derrida shared for discussion with some of the participants without reading it out as a paper, at a conference at Loyola University in Chicago in March 1985. This typescript was long thought to be the only fragment of the project in existence, but while working in the archive at IMEC, the editors of *Geschlecht III* discovered an unfinished 15-page fragment of a draft text for publication (which is referred to as the 'Intermediate Version' in the published translation). The first part of the published text is based on the Loyola transcript, with notes to significant deviations from the seminar, as well as annotations of revisions made in the later fragment.

To say that *Geschlecht III* has no unified place of discovery, though, is to make the more radical claim that there is no unified archive that serves as the site of discovery. The archive is always as much out of place as it is out of time. The fracturing into two dates and two signatures also applies to the 'given place' of origin. The law of eclipse and its technicity or prostheticity is such, Derrida suggests, that 'the "force" or "weakness" of a thinking is measured by its capacity for the strike (*Schlag*) and the double strike, that is, its capacity to inscribe itself in multiple places at once' (GIII, 142). This differentiation does not even stop at these twos:

In the question of *Geschlecht* and of ‘*Geschlecht*’ . . . there is not only a provocation to think relation as reference, as a relation of word to thing, nor only the sexual relation (*Geschlechtsverkehr*), but also a relation of the one to the two in which the fold of reference as difference precedes a certain duality or situates itself between two forms of the two, the second form coming to remark the first so as to affect it with dissension.

(GIII, 5)

If it appears that, at the end of the editors’ hunt in the archive, the countersignatory had in one fell swoop struck the tip of their spear like a flag-post in the newly found *Land*, the target of the captive text will have been precisely the impossibility of the indivisible *Ort* beside the signature. Archival discovery, if there is such a thing, is necessarily composed from multiple points and without reaching a point at which one could pin down what is discovered as univocal or complete.

With the hammer of the press, the printed volume of *Geschlecht III* thus countersigns — which is to say betrays — the waywardness, incompleteness and polytonality with which it imprints Heidegger’s strike. This also means that the text on the page reveals ‘*Geschlecht III*’ as a lie: not in the minimal sense that this recovered and reconstituted text never bore the imprimatur of the author’s name emblazoned on its cover, but insofar as its unity as ‘a’ text and as ‘the’ text entitled ‘*Geschlecht III*’ obtains only by virtue of the very concepts that undergo deconstruction therein. The word *Geschlecht* exemplifies the untranslatability of the idiom, which cannot readily be said in another language. It contains the sense of a blow or strike (*Schlag*), but in Heidegger’s hands, Derrida argues, it is already a double punch, for it marks not simply multiple senses but moreover *itself*. In a footnote to the first text thus marked with ‘*Geschlecht*’, Derrida insists on retaining the word in quotation marks, thereby re-marking the inscription to show how the idiom blocks access to the overlooked senses it signs. If Derrida is concerned with place as what

communicates with idiom, habitat and nationality, one of the points that he will make in the first year of the seminar from which *Geschlecht III* is drawn is that the idiom, as well as pointing the way to and from singular difference, can be pressed into the service of national or nationalist affirmation by promising privileged access to philosophy and the human condition. The German idiom would be the first, if not chronologically then at the head of the pack, to sign the discovery of those secrets, using a counterfeit universalism to authenticate a claim to national unity. The seminar makes it its task to unmask that conceit of universalism in which a particular national idiom is elevated into the status of a universal philosophy, disguising its national 'origin' behind a veneer of cosmopolitan translatability.

'*Geschlecht*', then, can mean human species but it is also used for a set of types: sex, race, genus, genre, generation, family, stock, lineage, nation, dynasty. Exemplifying what it describes and thus re-marking itself, the dynastic performative power of '*Geschlecht*' lies in summoning a hyper-sovereignty or hyper-origin, the first among all princes. The text of *Geschlecht III* strikes against all these types in their sovereign claims to have found the origin, the foundation, the ground that would gather all difference. And yet its claim to existence as a free-standing text rests precisely upon these claims. In the first instance, *Geschlecht III* is executed via a series of discoveries of hitherto unknown textual fragments. The project of reconstruction was magnetized by the discovery of a secret origin or well-spring and further authorized by a philological-genealogical path to a promised yet never-reached destination: from the seminar to the Loyola typescript to the recovered unfinished 15-page fragment of a draft text for publication. In piecing together the text from these sources and in, say, privileging the Loyola transcript over the seminar and abandoned versions, the conventions of editorial work bestow unity on the basis of generation and inheritance.

In the second instance, the publication of *Geschlecht III* marks a new beginning of dissemination, inaugurating a new series of editions of Derrida's unpublished text with a new publisher, a new printing press, a new stamp. On the one hand, this marks a new beginning and a new first, which further inaugurates a new rhythm of publication, of French editions and translations, two per year. On the other hand — *d'un coup* — this hammer-strike, the first of several pairs of strikes, is arrhythmic in that it breaks with the sequence of reverse chronology through the unpublished seminars, and thereby, like the sovereign, makes an exception for the historical rupture created by the recovery of what was long lost. It makes a leap back for the purpose of recovering Heidegger in order to generate and mark an 'event in Derrida scholarship'.

*Geschlecht III* may be exceptional, but it is not alone. In the third instance, taking this lineage expressly as one of filiation and fraternity, there is a justification of kinship, further suggested by the ties between 'Geschlecht II' and *Geschlecht III* that share a common parent: this publication completes the set of four *Geschlecht* texts.<sup>2</sup> It is the paternal line that guarantees this familial belonging insofar as it is a matter of a common seed or germ. At one point, Derrida observes that in the 'Song of the Captive Blackbird' which Heidegger reads, it is the figure of the brother and the brother alone who has the capacity to gather the myriad tones into a unity:

Would this mean that all these 'familial' figures are figures that specify the brother, that not only the father and the son are brothers, which seems a bit obvious, but that the mother, daughter and sister are also brothers and that, above all, those who do not belong to the generic or genealogical family are brothers, the brother thus marking the rupture with the familial structure — rupture, escape, or emancipation, the friend following the brother (Figure of the homeland or beyond the homeland in fraternity? Natality,

naturality, nationality, or the opposite, or its beyond?) A question that I leave suspended.  
(GIII, 158)

But what might it mean to read *Geschlecht III* against the grain of everything that is said in that German word — to read in the archive right up against the generative seeding of firsts, patriarchal lineage and fraternal belonging? As in ‘*Geschlecht IV*’, Derrida’s thinking in the ninth session of this seminar is attracted — in an almost magnetic fashion — to Heidegger’s use of *tragen*, which means to bear or carry across, and hence to trans-late. *Tragen* communicates, Derrida notes, with *austragen*, which means to carry a child to term and to also to bring a dispute to resolution or reconciliation. And yet it is not the question of maternal production, of a matriarchal line, that preoccupies him but rather Trakl’s *Ungeborenes*, the un-born before generation and differentiation. Trakl’s words conjure up for Heidegger the more peaceful, soothing, silent sexuality before the violent second strike — ‘the bad blow’ — of sexual difference as discord (GIII, 63). Heidegger associates the *Austrag* with this more originary, gentler, sheltering difference that marks a step back from metaphysics towards its essence, as Derrida examines in the second year of *The Beast and the Sovereign*. In the ninth session of that final seminar he contends with a difficult passage in which Heidegger somewhat mysteriously says that *Walten*, the originary force and source of ontological difference, *waltet* here in this *Austrag* — that is, it prevails, reigns, overpowers in the conciliation between Being and beings. There is thus a measure of domination and hence of violence in this tender pre-agonistic duality: it takes a first strike to seal dissonant polysemy into a consonant multiplicity of significations, gathered together by family resemblances, by stock or roots (*souche*) (GIII, 125), or by a destination or destiny to which the strike is sent.

The overall focus of the four-year seminar is the question of philosophy's imbrication in national and nationalist affirmation. One of the chief avenues by which Derrida approaches this thorny issue is via what he calls the 'philosophical idiom'. By 'idiom' he means not simply what can be said in only one language and what is hence untranslatable or translated only with notable violence but in a more indeterminate sense what is proper to a particular nation, what is an irreplaceable mark of national propriety. A national idiom becomes an obstacle for philosophy — something from which it ought not suffer, Derrida says<sup>3</sup> — to the extent that it aspires to the status of the universal and hence to what is generalizable, what passes or transports itself beyond the enclosure of the national, let alone the nationalist. And yet he will also argue that national affirmation is not accidental to philosophy but is itself thoroughly philosophical, a 'philosopheme'. He tracks how in a number of German thinkers — above all Fichte, for whom the linguistic nature of Germanness is paramount, and coming only later to Heidegger, who will continue to link language to place, albeit not a national territory — the German idiom, together with a German-national principle of originarity and creativity, is destined to become not a just 'a' philosophy but philosophy itself via a circular motion that returns to this national source and encompasses all that is 'foreign' within the category of this cosmopolitan, yet silently German, philosophy, in a gesture of quasi-imperialist expansion.

'*Geschlecht*' is both an example of national idiom and, re-marking itself, Fichte's name for this expansionist genealogy and hence the destiny or promise of the German people. Accordingly, in distinguishing his 'method' and Heidegger's from the performativity of the promise, Derrida nonetheless rejects the way in which Heidegger is wont to reduce the dislocation of departure to the gathering into the point of promised arrival, the destinal sending homewards of thinking to German poeticity. If Trakl's *Abendland* is, for Heidegger, the place of a promise more originary

than the Platonic-Christian Occident and Europe, this gestation before birth is, for Derrida, not simply an abstract condition of possibility or calculable programme or capacity awaiting fulfilment. Rather, it is a ‘value of promise overlooked that, in general, is overlooked in Heidegger’ (GIII, 111) whose arrival and destination would necessarily remain open to the possibility of going off course. Given this, how does a return to Heidegger give Derrida the opportunity to read against the grain of everything suggested by the word *Geschlecht* — that is, in ways not determined by the generative seeding of firsts, patriarchal lineage and fraternal belonging?

## <A>II.

In the thirteenth session of the seminar, Derrida broaches the return to the *Heimat* and to Heidegger — to the question of the place of Heidegger — through a multiplication of issues gathered under the ‘very general heading of the “performative”’ (GIII, 140), issues that he touches upon in the previous session but that he now confronts in a decided, numerically ordered reflection on his method. Third and final amongst these issues is ‘what we are doing here by . . . choosing to study Heidegger, a Heidegger text on a poet, so slowly, so patiently, within a seminar on philosophical nationality and nationalism’ (GIII, 141). For, Derrida continues, he can

imagin[e] the impatience of some of you, not only with the emphatic slowness of this reading, but with the duration of this sojourn with Heidegger. Heidegger again! And this return of Heidegger, and this return to Heidegger! Isn’t it enough already? Is this still topical? (GIII, 141)

The concern with these two things — the Germanness of the idiom to which Heidegger returns in his readings of Trakl as in his readings of Hölderlin, and the commanding, order-imposing character of the language that does not speak except to announce in a singularly German idiom not



just that which is to come but arrival itself — both of which might be neatly summed up in the assignation ‘Heidegger’, is now superseded by that of a third, which is to say the question of the reason for their return, ‘Heidegger’s’ return, ‘again’. And in returning ‘again’, in being returned to again, ‘Heidegger’ multiplies and splits, though not only into ‘the Heidegger that returns or to which one returns [who] is not the same as the one that made its appearance in France just before and just after the war, nor the one that reappeared again ten years later’, or ‘the Heidegger of [Derrida’s] today [who] is still other, the political question being put to him . . . no longer the same’ (GIII, 142). ‘Heidegger’ — ‘Heidegger again!’ — also separates the thinking from the gesture of returning to a singular source (‘the’ Heidegger) of a thought. This is what concerns Derrida, finally, at the close of the last session he delivers before breaking for Easter, but in no way necessarily as the final or conclusive word on the matter. If, as Derrida recalls, Heidegger already availed himself of an ‘enigmatic performativity’ (GIII, 141) while discussing the return, *das Land* and *Heimat*, ‘manipulat[ing] and maneuvering . . . language’ in order to link language to place in the name of ‘the German idiom’ (GIII, 140), what might Derrida — or any of us — be doing by choosing to study Heidegger that does not merely reiterate the gesture of recognizing the uniqueness of a philosophical-national language — German — and of the approach — Heidegger’s — so intimately bound up with its discovery and destiny?

Hence the question: ‘this return to Heidegger! Isn’t it enough already? Is this still topical?’ (GIII, 141). As an initial response to himself, Derrida remarks that ‘what I will call — without being sure of these words — the force, the necessity, but also the art of a thinking, is not measured by the duration and permanence of its radiant presence . . . but by the number of its eclipses’, and that ‘after each eclipse that [a] thinking is capable of, it reappears again different as it emerges from the cloud, . . . the same legacy . . . no longer the same’ (GIII, 142). Indeed, he continues:

a thinker who does not accept the law of this eclipse and who does not calculate with it is not a thinker, [or] at least a calculator who does not know how to calculate with the non-calculation that is the greatest risk. (GIII, 142)

A thinker such as himself, Derrida, must therefore calculate with the incalculable, that is, with the possibility of an ‘eclipse without return’ and of the interruption and impermanence of a thinking once forceful and necessary. He must therefore also turn to the question, as he does in this session, of the contingency of the archive, of legacy, and of thinking on ‘its capacity for the strike (*Schlag*) and the double strike, that is, its capacity to inscribe itself in multiple places at once, to occupy multiple writing surfaces’ (GIII, 142) in order to endure. The thinker who accepts the ‘law of the eclipse’ therefore also embraces thought’s requirement for technics — or the great theme of the ‘end of the book’, as Derrida calls it elsewhere during this period<sup>4</sup> — which introduces a non-oppositional difference between memory and inscription, a structured and political economy of ‘thinking memory and technological memory’ (GIII, 145), into any text we read. Such a thinker also therefore accepts that between the one and the other ‘strike’ with which a legacy is stamped, structural differences in power are disclosed.

But Heidegger ‘himself’ is no such thinker. Derrida suggests that Heidegger is, rather, ‘a thinker who does not accept the law of this eclipse’, even as his text, that is, *Geschlecht III*, speaks of the course of the sun apropos of the poetry of Trakl. One might even say that the “force” or “weakness” of [Heidegger’s] thinking is measured’ (GIII, 142) precisely by its insistence on its incapacity to inscribe itself in multiple places at once because it cannot, or will not, inscribe itself in any idiom other than the German in which historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) (GIII, 151), and the specificity of the human species, is thinkable by dint of the mark or strike of its very idiomaticity, the mark that marks marking itself, as contained inimitably in the word *Geschlecht*.<sup>5</sup> And thus

Heidegger's thinking lacks a capacity for the strike and double strike that it itself announces, in the idiom of the strike, which is also the only idiom it knows — whence the need from time to time for Derrida to introduce words that Heidegger himself does not use, such as 'desire' and 'revolutionary promise' (GIII, 128, 119). Under the pressure of Derrida's close reading, Heidegger's thinking turns out to be too weak to bear the mark of its own strike, too weak to break open a path rather than return to type (GIII, 130), and too weak to return except as a shell of itself and a gesture of its promise. What might it mean, then, for Derrida, for his part, to turn 'again' to *this* Heidegger, a third Heidegger that is neither just the return of the 'same' nor its new (cultural, historical, linguistic) translation but, rather, the inability to countenance its own weakness except by dissociating it from what it claims is its proper mark and idiom?<sup>6</sup> What might it mean that Derrida turns to Heidegger, only to turn again and end, provisionally, on the suggestion that his source exists on the sheer insistence ('promise') that it will not, in all its sound and fury, simply signify nothing?

Of course, it is a risk taken by readers of any unpublished document that has been recovered from an archive: the risk that such a document salvages nothing and does not return to the fold of meaning. But Derrida returns to Heidegger to take stock of this risk that Heidegger shows himself to be incapable of embracing and the retreat from which marks out the place of his thinking. What is striking about Heidegger's thinking for Derrida is how it 'gathers', as he says in the twelfth session, 'the *Zwietracht* into *Zwiefalt*', the conflict between *Geschlechter* (species, genera, sexes) into 'tender duality', and how it sets out the difference between two species of differences so as in the same stroke to insinuate it as 'gentle', twofold, sexual difference and as a departure from agonistic difference, though the insinuation of this gentleness is nevertheless precisely a branding and a strike (GIII, 126). Through Heidegger, Derrida finds that returning home with a promise of

polysemy can amount to a fundamental act of violence — a violence that separates out the sexual twofold from the polysemous — that is concealed in the gentle tones of coercive conciliation, simplicity and gathering. Every insistence by Heidegger on the ‘transitive’ character of the ‘silencing’ of unicity in Trakl’s poetry is, Derrida notes, a performative strike of the chord and a gathering of the gathering (GIII, 125) that too readily specifies *Geschlecht*’s polysemy as difference that is dual, already determined as sexual, and therefore ‘gentle’. Moreover, such gathering gathers only in its specified idiom, the idiom of the *one Geschlecht* or of the type that insists on the unicity of its various iterations — sex, race, stock, branch, generation, lineage, species, nation, humanity — as the future of the two. In Heidegger’s treatment, according to Derrida, the one is not even distinguishable from the two, much less opposed to the two: logically prior to tender difference, there was already the compromise, the opposition-to-be-neutralized, and the ‘sealing [of] the consonance’ (GIII, 127) of the multiplicity of signification.

This is to say that for Derrida, Heidegger establishes the polarity to be negotiated, which is above all a polarity between two sexes, as a pretext for ‘a sort of negotiation and compromise [that is] continuously underway that [both] requires us to rework the implicit logic that seems to guide Heidegger’ (GIII, 81) and is implicit in that very logic. Life itself, or at least whatever is the other of death, is imagined as a continuous negotiation and compromise between two *Geschlechter* on the pretext that there are two, two in need of compromise. The dream of not just a pair but a pair in need of and capable of compromise and on the basis of which all compromises are imagined as necessary for the continuation and survival of the (one) species is thus not a risk at all. It is, rather and ironically, a remnant of ‘the most continuous great logic of philosophy’ that remains at work in Heidegger in spite of himself and that he outwardly retreats from, a logic ‘that presupposes an exteriority between essence and accident, pure and impure, proper and improper, good and evil’

(GIII, 82), discord and accord, and that positions itself as the law governing the eventual sameness in difference of each pair.<sup>7</sup> It is a value of eventual sameness that may be found ‘as one matches a pair of shoes’, Derrida elaborates in connection with Heidegger’s reading of Trakl’s *Abendland* as both the promise of morning and portent of departure. And on the pretext of discovering such eventual sameness as in a pair of shoes, a gathering is mustered that involves ‘the whole obvious paradox’ of sameness that both inheres in and emerges from coincidence (GIII, 114). From the paradoxical mustering or ‘situation’ out of which the pair appears hence arises the question of what a ‘pair’ is at all. And this, in turn, raises the question of what ‘most continuous great logic’ governs the pair and how the ‘paradox’ of its situation compromises the pairing by haunting it, as it were, as a third figure.

This ‘whole obvious paradox of the situation [*Erörterung*]’, this third figure that marks out the place and weakness of Heidegger’s thinking is, as it were, what returns Derrida to ‘Heidegger again’ in this seminar. Indeed, throughout *Geschlecht III*, Derrida confronts the question of the third even as he dwells on variations, or rather Heidegger’s variations, on the two — the two versus the one, duplicity versus simplicity, indeed polysemy versus unicity. A first indication thereof is given in the very first minutes of the first session, where according to the so-called ‘Intermediate Version’ Derrida introduces the figure of a ‘Heidegger’ with whom the reader is exhorted ‘not [to] lose patience’: for, Derrida continues:

Heidegger’s text is already very difficult (secret) in its original language . . . [and] it is barely readable in the best translations, at least in those places where the decisive resources of his discourse . . . retain an untranslatable tie to the German language. (GIII, 2)

And at the end of a note to this passage, Derrida remarks:

It would . . . be legitimate . . . to take this text on Trakl as a situation (*Erörterung*) of what we call translating. At the heart of this situation, of this site (*Ort*), is *Geschlecht*, the word or the mark. For it is the composition and decomposition of this mark, Heidegger's work in his language, his manual and artisanal writing, his *Hand-Werk*, that the existing translations . . . inevitably tend to erase. (GIII, 3n. 3)

At each instant of Heidegger's discussion (the everyday lexical definition of *Erörterung*) of Trakl and *Geschlecht* (understood in its lexical variations on the type, i.e. sex, race, stock, etc.), the question of the word or mark as such, that is, the *shape* traced by Heidegger's *hand*, which in itself remains illegible and thus untranslatable, also insinuates itself as the 'situating' or 'situation' (*Erörterung*) that underpins the marking and placing of *Geschlecht* while undermining the presupposibility of the simple existence of a place — a text, an archive, a legacy — where such marking and placing, that is, reading, might take place.

Such consideration of the 'whole obvious paradox of the situation [*Erörterung*]' also leads to an ambivalence. In the 'Intermediate Version', Derrida remarks that 'this pathway toward a locality passes necessarily by way of a thinking of *Geschlecht* as a thinking of the blow (*Schlag*) and of repetition, of the redoubled blow, of the "good" and "bad" blow' (GIII, 8–9n. 10). The pathway, in Heidegger's treatment and in Derrida's approach thereto, is not a path down which thinking steps because it questions and which leads towards some conclusive end or result. Rather, as Derrida unpacks from the bivalence of the *nach* in the *fragen nach* of Trakl's German, the question questions both *towards* what it runs after, and *after* that which already takes place in and as the place sought after. Thought questions *after* the place, 'but one must already be on the way in order to ask one's way', which is to say, with Heidegger, that thought is of pathlike character (*Wegcharakter*), is itself '(on) the way (*unterwegs*)', and in the movement of this path (*Bewegung*)

which is its own being-path, thought therefore questions (GIII, 13). As with Heidegger's reading of Trakl's bivalent *Abendland* as both morning and evening or arrival and departure, the 'pathway toward a locality' (GIII, 8n. 10) thus 'passes necessarily' through a *redoublement* that registers as a pair of 'blows', one 'good', the other 'bad', the ambivalence of whose distinction marks the place of *Geschlecht* towards and after which the question concerning any and all of *Geschlecht*'s lexical variations strives.

Yet, one might ask, why insinuate that the 'good' and the 'bad' are an interchangeable pair? Or more to the point, when might a *Schlag* — yes, a mechanized strike of the typewriter key, but also a manifestation of (domestic, racial, anthropocentric) violence — be judged 'good'? When Heidegger conceals his *Hand-Werk* in untranslatability, is this sleight of hand the handiwork that moves from typology to topology down a path that covers the tracks of its insidious complicity with the thought that there is necessarily such a thing as a 'good' blow? This is in keeping with how Heidegger's path leads to a *redoublement* of the blow — and hence a 'good' blow — that subsumes both doubles under a reciprocal repetition that Heidegger sees as gentle simplicity in the twofold. In contrast, Derrida wants to think of a 'redoubled blow' whose valorization, far from gathering polysemic diversity, marks a force of differentiation that bursts open a chance to interrogate the dynamics of that *Ein-schlagen* and its self-concealing violence. It is a violence whose ramifications reach far beyond what Heidegger was capable of recognizing: from division into two and separation to unbridled individuation (*Vereinzelung*) and 'démariage' (a French translation of one of *Vereinzelung*'s agricultural connotations), which denotes the removal and thus control over the 'marriage' of plants and their reproductive processes, to population control, migration control, border control, and so on. (GIII, 48–9).

And Derrida pinpoints exactly where the failure of Heidegger's 'topology of being' (GIII, 10) lies: 'while he grew attached to the pair of shoes and their truth in painting', he says in a parenthetical insertion, 'he never picked up, that I know of at least, Kant's glove' (GIII, 14). As Derrida indicates in a footnote, 'Kant's glove' refers to a passage in §13 of the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, where Kant argues that our intuitions of incongruent counterparts — pairs whose members mirror one another, such as gloves — serve as the basis for arguing for the ideality of space and time. Like spherical triangles, Kant writes, gloves are fully equal and similar to one another yet 'one hand's glove cannot be used on the other'.<sup>8</sup> For Kant, an *inner* difference therefore exists between the two that we can make 'intelligible through no concept alone, but only through the relation to right-hand and left-hand, which refers immediately to intuition',<sup>9</sup> demonstrating that we can say a lot about the primary predicates of outer things (extension, place, space more generally) without detracting from how they are in themselves. Incongruent counterparts thus prove that sensibility consists 'in the *genetic difference of the origin* of the cognition itself'.<sup>10</sup> The 'truth' of a representation, then, is decided by the rules for connecting appearances correctly and coherently in experience, the possibility of which is prepared by taking the forms of sensory representations, space and time, for mere appearances, and these in turn as being found inside objects.

In his second set of lectures on *The Beast and the Sovereign* from 2002 to 2003, Derrida glosses Kant's corresponding argument in 'What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?', describing handedness as derived from an 'axiom of subjectivity[,] . . . a zero-point of orientation . . . that prevents me from confusing my right and my left, [even though] there is no conceptual, objective, and intelligible difference between a right-hand glove and a left-hand glove'.<sup>11</sup> From this subjective principle of sensory irreplaceability, Derrida notes, Kant



extrapolates a space deriving initially from the bodily situation of a solitary man who claims to eschew any objective or techno-scientific point of reference but eventually extending to thinking in general, a space that is, ‘precisely, unconditioned’ because it is occasioned by a ‘leap into the night’ of ‘infinite extension’.<sup>12</sup> For Derrida, morality as such in the Kantian sense hinges on this feeling of inner difference between otherwise equal and similar objects. Our postulates of God, the highest good, and the future world are contingent upon ‘the right of reason’s need’<sup>13</sup> to ‘orient itself in thought on the basis of a principle that is always subjective’<sup>14</sup> and to give itself the law and authority to decide between good and bad, right and wrong.

But Heidegger, according to Derrida, picked up neither on the possibility that he partook of a tradition of logic governing the eventual sameness in difference of the pair, nor that the same logic situates the bodily situation of a solitary man at the centre of this sameness in difference (GIII, 14). Instead, Heidegger claims to proceed from another sense of orientation, *Erörterung*, the ‘situating’ that ‘will have to orient itself as it orients thought toward the situation of the site’ (GIII, 15). In contrast to Kant, according to whom the glove and its sensory irreplaceability refers moral matters to the ‘right of the need proper to reason to orient itself in thought on the basis of a principle that is always subjective’,<sup>15</sup> Heidegger claims not to ‘give *himself* the end as a question’; rather, the end is ‘given to him on the way (*unterwegs*), in the being-path of thought as the pathway *toward* but also *after* (*nach*) the given place’ (GIII, 13). But what if the relation governing this pathway were not merely reciprocal repetition but the incongruence of counterparts? The gentle twofold in which Heidegger wants to see the pair resolved unravels as an act of self-concealing violence that extrapolates all movement and pathmaking (risk, rhythm, future world) from the zero-point of the self-legislating subject. And the ‘whole obvious paradox of the situation’, whereby a ‘good’ blow is insinuated by the ‘bad’ blow and their eventual interchangeability with

one another, gives way to the insight that the judgement that a blow is ‘good’ issues, in the first instance, from a place of a very specific kind of corporeal specification.

The non-differentiation between the “‘good’ blow’ and the ‘blow deemed “good”” is an outcome, if a concealed one, of Heidegger’s own version of a ‘leap’ (*Blicksprung*, which Derrida glosses as the ‘blow’ [*coup*] or ‘glance’ [*coup d’œil*]) that he sees as ‘bring[ing] one to the place of the poem’ (*an den Ort des Gedichtes zu bringen*) (cited in GIII, 15). Kant’s ‘leap into the night’<sup>16</sup> concerning sensory irreplaceability leads him to a recognition of ‘the genetic *difference* of the origin of cognition itself’<sup>17</sup> at the centre and ground of moral judgements. Heidegger’s ‘leap’, which he legitimates as a rhythm of ‘reading’ that is not beholden to any rules established by philological or philosophical method, gathers at an ‘originary’ sense of ‘situating’, one that defies standard lexical definition and designates instead ‘the tip of the spear (*die Spitze des Speers*): ‘the place toward which all the orienting forces of the weapon converge (*zusammenlaufen*) to gather there as in an *indivisible* point’ (GIII, 15–16, emphasis added). Kant’s insight into the ‘genetic difference of the origin of cognition’ leads towards reason’s ‘need’ to orient itself towards an always subjective principle, which also gives contour to the bodily situation of the solitary person located at the centre of his moral universe. Heidegger outright denies this ‘place’, but this place, as Derrida points out, is more indicative of Heidegger’s own ‘place’ than Heidegger could ever have admitted (GIII, 17). As some of Derrida’s own handwritten notes suggest, found at the end of one of his footnotes to the ‘Intermediate Version’: ‘There is one place — [??] — *desire* for place — to gather [in ink:] scene of *Geschlecht*’ (GIII, 9n. 10, italics added). Concealing it as an archival discovery of his own, Heidegger insists on a topology of gathering, of polysemy reduced to simplicity, the ‘tip of his spear’ in his hand.

## &lt;A&gt;III.

These comments are prefaced in the footnote with some musings on the *schlagen* of *Geschlecht* — echoing the invocation of the hammer of the printing press in ‘Tympan’ 12 years earlier — as a kind of overprinting in the double sense of printing over, say, a previous text, and of printing excessively and hence of pressing too hard on a text. As with the blow, Derrida speculates that there can be a good or bad overprinting and wonders whether the overprinting blow must necessarily be regretted. If pressing a text means unavoidably imprinting upon the text with another text, by contrast where the note trails off, Derrida has begun a comparison between two ways of refraining from overprinting. One is, as it were, uncritical, abstaining from pressing the text with critical questions and leaving it untouched; the other remains opaque, and yet both perhaps would give a clue as to the ‘good’ overprinting or re-marking. Whereas the Heideggerian second blow presses difference into coincidence, might this other reading entail a tactful questioning, of treating the text, including *Geschlecht III*, with kid gloves? Or would it avail itself of a differential proliferation of touches, of strokes and caresses, of glances and glancing blows? This differential force would be the untouchability of the idiom as what has destroyed from the outset any recuperation into a national or nationalist *telos*.

This force likewise displaces the origin of the archive. In counterpoint with the Heideggerian destinal conception of the archive as inheritance and filiation, we might instead think of sisters and mothers and of the maternal as the gestation before birth, before the purported origin and hence rendering it temporally out-of-joint. Difference would not be gathered violently and silently into sounding a fundamental tone or tonic. Rather, maternity is differentiation as a series of prosthetic articulations that extend — as David Wills has suggested apropos of the ways in

which language and listening technologize<sup>18</sup> — from outside all the way into the interior, thus ruining in advance a teleology of propriety, belonging and point of arrival.

The archive thought otherwise is not the site of a heroic discovery of descent but a prostheticizing relay of sororities (and sonorities), necessarily possibly incomplete and out-of-joint, replete with lacunae, ruptures, contradictions, testimonial utterances fragmented in advance by trauma. As Black-feminist scholars have demonstrated, the archive reproduces the racial enclosure of the ship, the plantation and the colony.<sup>19</sup> In a redoubled violence, a second blow erases, silences the first violent strike of racial and gendered violence. Hence it is a question less of prising open this repression than of turning a third ear to the ghostly echoes of repressions inherited and secreted away, the hauntings at the origin, by way of zigzag readings or experiments in critical fabulation that undo every ruse of war and stratagem of mastery — the fecund generativity of she-wolf preceding the fratricidal twins at the origin of the politics, preceding and ruining in advance subjection, domestication, subjugation. As a discovery, *Geschlecht III* is a fabulous text, birthed in being unborn and its force all the stronger for its non-presentation, its historic silence. To this hypocritical ruse and that of an imperialism that conceals its violent strike in the name of peaceful relations, it is perhaps necessary to counterpose another concept of the archive. This would, moreover, call for a slow and differentiated deconstruction of archival labour in which one carries what is irrecoverable and impossible to bear.

The essays in this collection originated as papers delivered at the conference on ‘Sex, Race, Nation, Humanity: Derrida’s *Geschlecht III*’, which took place on 8–9 April 2019 at the Centre for Philosophy and Critical Thought at Goldsmiths, University of London. Treating issues ranging from the relation of Heidegger’s ‘neutral’ term ‘Dasein’ to the conception of a not-yet-binary sexuality (Simon Glendinning), the relevance of Derrida’s refusal to translate the term

‘*Geschlecht*’ for his broader discussion of philosophical nationalism (Adam Rosenthal), the politics of the motif of ‘leaping’ (Simon Wortham), the sonic valences of the wing-flap in Trakl’s poem, Derrida and Cixous (Naomi Waltham-Smith), *Geschlecht III*’s dialogue with the work of Bernard Stiegler (Mauro Senatore), and the links between mother, land and natality in view of multispecies ecology (Elina Staikou), the essays not only each represent a new take on Derrida’s reading of Heidegger; they also bring together long-standing debates and innovative approaches to Derrida and deconstruction, and extrapolate ramifications for the rethinking of sexual difference, textuality and indeterminacy, and the family. While they are gathered here together, this special issue does not aspire to be the final or most pointed word on *Geschlecht III*, nor do the articles sing with one voice or with any consonant or familial harmony. Derrida observes towards the end of the thirteenth session that for Trakl, and Heidegger reading Trakl, ‘the brother is the only one who gathers this song together: neither the sister, nor anyone else (neither father, nor mother, son, or daughter)’ (GIII, 153). The texts assembled here are like the sisters, mothers and daughters of *Geschlecht III* that mark a rupture with the familial structure that word names. They are all overprintings that press upon and re-mark not only *Geschlecht III* but one another, each testament to the force and risk of violence in reading.

#### <NOTES>NOTES

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1 Jacques Derrida, *Geschlecht III: Sex, Race, Nation, Humanity*, edited by Geoffrey Bennington, Katie Chenoweth and Rodrigo Therezo and translated by Katie Chenoweth and Rodrigo Therezo (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 3n. 5, hereafter GIII.

2 Jacques Derrida, ‘*Geschlecht I: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference*’ in *Psyche, Inventions of the Other, Volume II*, edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 7–26; Jacques Derrida, ‘Heidegger’s Hand (*Geschlecht*

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II)' in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume II*, edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, translated by John P. Leavey Jr and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008); Jacques Derrida, 'Heidegger's Ear: Philopolemology (*Geschlecht IV*)' in *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, edited by John Sallis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 162–218.

3 Jacques Derrida, 'Onto-Theology of National-Humanism (Prolegomena to a Hypothesis)', translated by Geoffrey Bennington, *Oxford Literary Review* 14:1 (1992), 3–23 (1).

4 Jacques Derrida, 'Culture et écriture: la prolifération des livres et la fin du livre', *Noroi* 130 (1968), 5–12.

5 Derrida notes that 'Heidegger would like . . . to dissociate two things, two times two things: on the one hand, technics and a certain thinking memory as two foreign essences; on the other hand, the animal and the human, the bestial animal and the human animal, the former having no memory, no thinking memory, the latter distinguishing itself by a certain force of thinking memory. These two oppositions or demarcations do not come down to the same thing, but they nevertheless cannot be dissociated' (GIII, 143–4).

6 The question of not simply multiplying pairs but deconstructing pairs through a third foot, hand, ear, eye or breast is expressly linked to that of the idiom and its (un)translatability in a footnote in '*Geschlecht II*'. Derrida, 'Heidegger's Hand (*Geschlecht II*)', 302n. 13.

7 Derrida says that this 'great logic' that remains at work in Heidegger is 'ironic' because it remains 'in spite of powerful deconstructive movements in Heidegger against the great logic of Hegel' and in spite of 'what he says about logos as gathering' (GIII, 82). But as we see elsewhere in the seminar, Derrida also finds continuities with corresponding logical moves in the Platonic-Christian tradition and in Kant.

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8 Immanuel Kant, 'Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science (1783)', in *Theoretical Philosophy After 1781*, edited by Henry Allison and Peter Heath and translated by Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 29–170 (82).

9 Kant, 'Prolegomena', 82.

10 Kant, 'Prolegomena', 85, emphasis added.

11 Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign II*, translated by Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 73. To 'orient oneself' in the Kantian sense means, Derrida points out, to attend to 'the feeling of a difference in my own subject, namely the difference between my right and left hands'. Immanuel Kant, 'What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking? (1786)' in *Religion and Rational Theology*, translated and edited by Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1–18 (8).

12 Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign II*, 59–60.

13 Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 10.

14 Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign II*, 60.

15 Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign II*, 60.

16 Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign II*, 59–60.

17 Kant, 'Prolegomena', 85.

18 David Wills, 'Positive Feedback: Listening Behind Hearing' in *Thresholds of Listening: Sound, Technics, Space*, edited by Sander van Maas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 70–88.

19 Perhaps among the most well-known interventions in this area are the work of Saidiya Hartman and Christina Sharpe: for example, Saidiya Hartman *Lose Your Mother: A Journey*

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*Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006) and Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).