

Writing

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nartfotm,oon, idm hon of the receiver never proves fruitful.

Recently, a student at the University of Chicago told me that a suggestion which I have made both in the classroom and in print has proved to be of interest to some of his friends but that it is not sufficiently clear to them. The gesture of writing. To write means, of course, to perform an action by which a material, (for instance chalk, or ink), is put on a surface, (for instance a blackboard

or a leaf of paper), to form a specific pattern, (for instance letters). force in the form of the writing interior to speech and essential to it has been contained outside speech. Not only / many reference to a particular public or its representatives misleading, but even the concept of an "ideal" receiver is detrimental in the theoretical consideration of art, since all it posits is the existence and nature of man,.../s such.

An unsuccessful repression, on the road to historical dismantling. I WANTED somehow to arrive at a figure, however approximate, for the total of the Nambikwara population. It is this that interests us, this unsuccessfulness which confers upon its be- coming a certain legibility and limits its

historical opaqueness. This student mentioned that it would be helpful if I were to write a note on the matter for the *Chicago Review*. And the tools used during this action, (for instance brushes and typewriters), are instruments which add something to something. "Repressions that have failed will of course have more claim on our interest than those that may have been successful; for the latter will for the most part escape our examination" (*Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund*

Freud, hereafter SE, XIV, 153). Art, in the same way, posits man's physical and spiritual existence but in none of its works is it concerned with his attentive . . . :-he symptomatic form. of the return of the repressed: the metaphor of writingJ.'

which haunts European discourse, and the systematic contradictions of the onto- exclusion of the trace. Thus one would suppose that the gesture of writing is a constructive action, if by "construction" we mean the bringing together of various objects to form a new structure(="con-struction"). The repression of writing as the repression of

that which threatens presence and the mastering of absence. But this is misleading. IF I DISTRUST my memory-neurotics, as we know, do so to a remarkable extent, but normal people have every reason for doing so as well-I am able to supplement and guarantee its working by making a note in writing. The enigma of presence "pure and simple": as duplication, original repetition,

auto-affection, and *dif{erance*. If we want to seize what the gesture of writing really is about, we have to consider its original

form. The distinction between the mastering of absence as speech and the mastering of absence as writing. In 1915 Rondon had put it at twenty thousand, which was probably too high. If we may trust

archeology, writing, at least as far as the Occident is concerned, was originally an act of engraving. The writing within speech. A poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the audience. Hallucination as speech and hallucination as writing. 'I write in order to peruse myself' Henri Michaux But at that time the nomadic bands were of several hundred people apiece, and all the indications I had collected along the line pointed to a rapid decline.

The relationship between *phone* and consciousness.

Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original? The Freudian concept of verbal representation as preconsciousness. The Greek verb "graphein" still connotes this. In order not merely to repeat what I have written elsewhere, I believe it will be best if I discuss here those objections to my suggestion which have been made publicly. Thirty years ago, for instance, the known fraction of the Sabane group comprised more than a thousand individuals; when that same group visited the telegraph station of Campos Novos in 1928 it consisted of one hundred and twenty-seven men, plus their women and children. I suspect that these objections arose out of difficulties similar to those that various students have felt. Some place some time in Mesopotamia people began to scratch soft clay bricks with sticks, and then burned them to harden the

scratched surface. Logo-phonocentrism is not a philosophical or historical error which the history of philosophy, of the West, that is, of the world, would have rushed into pathologically, but is rather a necessary, and necessarily finite, movement and structure: the history of the possibility of symbolism *in general* (before the distinction between man and animal, and even before the distinction between the living and the nonliving); the

of dijjerance, history as *dijferance* which finds in philosophy as *episteme*, in the European form of the metaphysical or onto-theological project, the privileged manifestation, with worldwide dominance, of dissimulation, of general censorship of the text in general. This would seem to explain adequately the fact that the translation and the original have very different standing in the realm of art.

2. An attempt to justify a theoretical reticence to utilize Freudian concepts, otherwise than in quotation marks: all these concepts, without exception, belong to the history of metaphysics, that is, to the system of logocentric repression which was in order to exclude or to lower (to put outside or below), the body of the written trace as a didactic and technical metaphor, as servile matter or excrement. In November 1929, moreover, an influenza epidemic broke out when the group was camping at the point known as Espirro.

For example, logocentric repression is not comprehensible on the basis of the Freudian concept of repression; on the contrary, logocentric repression permits an understanding of how an original and individual repression became possible

within the horizon of a culture and a historical structure of belonging.

I should begin by briefly summarizing my suggestion. And although

we no longer do such a thing very often, it is this half-forgotten gesture of scratching which is the essence, (“*eidos*”) of writing. Why it is a question neither of following Jung, nor of following the Freudian concept of the hereditary mnemonic trace. Moreover, it seems to be the only conceivable reason for saying “the same thing” over again. Certainly, Freudian discourse—in its syntax, or, if you will, its labor—is not to be confused with these necessarily. It has nothing to do with constructing.

This text is the fragment of a lecture given at the *Institut de psychanalyse* (Dr. Green’s seminar). It is, on the contrary, a taking away, a de-structuring. In that case the surface upon which this note is preserved, the pocket-book or sheet of paper, is as it were a materialized portion of my mnemonic apparatus, the rest of which I carry about with me invisible. At that time we were concerned with opening a debate

around certain propositions advanced in previous of my essays, notably, *Grammatology* (“De la grammatologie,” *Critique* 223-24). It is, both structurally and historically, closer to sculpture than to architecture.

Could these propositions—which here will remain present in the background—have a place within the field of psychoanalytic questioning? The disease turned into a form of pulmonary oedema, and three hundred Indians died of it within forty-eight hours. It is a gesture of making holes,

of digging, of perforating. Regarding such a field, where were these propositions to be maintained, as concerns their concepts and syntax? For what does a literary work “say”?

The first part of the lecture touched upon this question in its greater generality. I write ... I write: I write ...

I write: ‘I write ..’ I write that I write ... etc. The whole group disintegrated, leaving the sick and dying to fend for themselves. The central concepts of this section were those of *presence* and of *archi-trace*. What does it communicate? We will indicate cursorily, by their general headings, the principal stages of this first part. A penetrating gesture. In studying certain earlier thinkers, I became aware of this way of conceiving the relation between the quest for truth (philosophy or science) and society: Of the thousand Sabane who had once been known of, only nineteen men and their families were still alive in 938. Philosophy or science, the highest activity of man, is the attempt to replace opinion about “all things” by knowledge of “all things”; but opinion is the element of society; philosophy or science is therefore the attempt to dissolve the element in which society breathes, and thus it endangers society. To write is to inscribe, to penetrate a surface, and a

written text is an inscription, although as a matter of fact it is in the vase

✦ majority of cases an inscription.

1. Despite appearances, the deconstruction of logocentrism is not a psychoanalysis of philosophy. It “tells” very little to those who understand it.

These appearances: the analysis of a historical repression and suppression of writing since Plato. This decline is due not only to the epidemic, but also to the fact that some years ago the Sabane were in a state of war with some of their easterly neighbours. This repression constitutes the origin of philosophy as *episteme*, and of truth as the unity of *logos* and *phone*. Hence

philosophy or science must remain the preserve of a small minority, and philosophers or scientists must respect the opinions on which society rests. Therefore to write is not to form, but to

in-form, and a text is not a formation, but an in-formation.

Repression, not forgetting; repression, not exclusion. Its essential quality is not communication or the imparting of information. Repression, as Freud says, neither repels, nor flees, nor excludes an exterior force; it contains an interior representation, laying out within itself a space of repression. I believe that we have to start from this fact, if we want to understand the gesture of writing: it is a penetrating gesture which informs a surface.

Of course: we are not aware of that fate while performing that gesture. I have only to bear in mind the place where this "memory" has been deposited and I can then "reproduce" it at any time I like, with the certainty that it will have remained unaltered and so have escaped the possible distortions to which it might have been subjected in my actual memory. Certainly it is not exhausted by belonging to them. we do not think about the act of writing while writing, but about what we are writing, (which is, if you

consider it, a dubious statement). Witness the precautions and the “nominalism” with which Freud manipulates what he calls conventions and conceptual hypotheses. But a large group installed not far from Tres Buritis was wiped out by influenza in 1927: of the six or seven survivors, only three were still alive in 1938. Writing has become a habit, and habits are what we do without having to think about it. And a conception of difference is attached less to concepts than to discourse. Yet an translation that intends

perform a transmittin unctioll cannot transmit a thing but a nomination-hence, something inessential. But Freud never reflected upon the historical and theoretical sense of these precautions.

I write: I trace words on a page. The Tarunde group, once one of the largest, numbered twelve men, with their families, in 1936: three years later these twelve were reduced to four.

The necessity of an immense labor of deconstruction of the metaphysical concepts and phrases that are condensed and sedimented within Freud's precautions. This is the hallmark of bad translations. The metaphysical complications of psychoanalysis and the so-called human (or social) sciences (the concepts of presence, perception, reality, etc.). In fact: writing has become more than a habit. To respect opinions is something entirely different from accepting them as true.

What was the position at the time of my arrival? Philosophers or scientists who hold this view about the relation of philosophy or science and society are driven to employ a peculiar manner of writing which would enable

them to reveal what they regard as the truth to the few, without endangering the unqualified commitment of the many to the opinions on which society rests. There is, if I am not mistaken, a writing center in our brain, so that we are somehow born with the capacity for writing, like birds are born with the capacity for nest building.

Linguistic phonologism. - ut o we not generally regard that which lies beyond communication in a literary work-and even a poor translator will admit that this is its essential substance-as the unfathomable, the mysterious, the "poetic"? The necessity of an explicit question concerning the meaning of presence in

general: a comparison of the undertakings of Heidegger and of Freud. Probably a bare two thousand Indians were scattered about the territory. The epoch of presence, in the Heideggerian sense, and its central support, from Descartes to Hegel: presence as consciousness, self-presence conceived within the opposition of consciousness to unconsciousness. They will distinguish between the true teaching as the esoteric teaching and the socially useful teaching as the exoteric teaching; whereas the exoteric teaching is

meant to be easily accessible to every reader, the esoteric teaching discloses itself only to very careful and well-trained readers after long and concentrated study. Althou such a parallell is probably misleading. The concepts of archi-trace and of dif- ferance: why they are neither Freudian nor Heideggerian. And is this not something that a translator can reproduce only if he is also-a poet?

Differance, the pre-opening of the ontic-ontological difference (cf. *De la grammatologie*, p. 1029), and of all the differences which furrow Freudian conceptuality, such that they may be organized, and this is only an example,

around the difference between “pleasure” and “reality,” or may be derived from this difference. Writing cannot be in our “genetic program” the same way nest building is in the genetic program of birds, because, after all, it is a cultural, not a natural, behavior pattern. The difference between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, for example, is not uniquely, nor primarily, a distinction, an exteriority, but rather the original possibility, within life, of the detour, of deferral (*Aufschub*) and the original possibility of the economy of death (cf. *Beyond*

the Pleasure Principle, SE XVIII). It does

not come to us like the behavior of sucking, for instance. It comes to us rather like the behavior of walking and speaking: we have to learn it, but

we must learn it, if we are to behave according to human nature.

If I want to make full use of this technique for improving my mnemonic function, I find that there are two different procedures open to me. *Differance* and identity. But again: writing does not seem to belong to the same level as do walking and speaking. *Differance* within the economy of the same. I could not hope to make a systematic count, because certain groups were always hostile, and because, during the nomadic season, all the bands were continually on the move.