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| **WRITING AND ITS MACHINES**  ***Writing is also a matter of machines and protocols. One must, for better or for worse, use a tool, invent a method and count one's pages and one's lines in order to obey the laws of economy. But writing can also succumb to its part of madness and go to waste, lose itself and find itself back, in the delirium of its graphism.***  AN INTERVIEW WITH JACQUES DERRIDA  ON "WORD-PROCESSING"  **Q.L.** --- *We are going to begin with "Le main de Heidegger." (1) You explain that, in Heidegger, the manual craft,* "Handwerk," *is a noble craft since it is not "conditioned, like other professions, by public usefulness or by the search for profit" and that this craft "will also be that of the thinker or the teacher that teaches thinking."* *Elsewhere, this craft is always "in danger," particularly of being degraded by the machine. Heidegger is obviously thinking of the typewriter, but what is this new machine doing in this history, this machine that no longer poses an obstacle, that makes the text too readable, too easy, too clear for whoever lends his ear to it, since you have also spoken at length of "L'oreille de Heidegger's"* *(2) ?*  ***Jacques Derrida*** --- Even if it would be in order to depart from it, one had to begin by analysing Heidegger's posture or postulation. It belongs to a vast interpretation of technics, which calls for so many questions, which calls for them really, there where they are not as easy to understand as one would sometimes like to believe...  In order to line up matters around writing, I wanted to mark the way in which Heidegger's reaction was at the same time intelligible, traditional, and normative. The tradition of these norms is often respectable and it has considerable reserves -- if at least it remains vigilant before the technological mutation. But it can give way, sometimes in its least naive form, to a confident dogmatism, to an assurance that we ought to question. Heidegger, regrets, for example, that now even private letters pass by way of the machine, so that one no longer recognises the singular trace of the signatory nor the gesture of the hand in the graphic forms. Now, when one writes "by hand," one is not on the verge of technics, instrumentality did not wait, there is already regular reproduction, mechanical iterability. So it is not legitimate to oppose handwriting to "mechanical" writing like some pre-technical artisanship to technics. Moreover, so-called "typewriting," for its part, is also "manual."  You would like us to speak about personal experiences. Well, then, yes, like so many others, I have, all things considered, gone through this history or have let myself be traversed by it. I began by writing with a pen, and for a long time I remained faithful to it (we have to speak of faith here), transcribing only the "final versions" on the typewriter, at the point at which I separated myself from them. The machine remains a signal of separation, of severance, the agency of emancipation and of departure towards the public space. For the texts that were important to me, those that I had the somewhat religious feeling of "writing," I even banished the mechanical pen *stylo. I dipped a long penholder that had the slightly curved point of a certain drawing pen in the ink while multiplying preliminary drafts and versions before making them definitive on my first little Olivetti with an international keyboard that I bought abroad. I still have it. I must have had the impression that my artisanal writing indeed traced out its path through that space of resistance, [remaining] as close as possible to that hand of thinking or of the word we are reminded of by those pages in Heidegger that I later attempted to interpret in "Le main de Heidegger." As if this liturgy for a single hand were required, as if this figure of the proper body gathered up, bent over, applied, and stretched toward an inked point were as necessary to the ritual of thoughtful engraving as the white surface of the paper subjectile on the table's support. But I never hid from the fact that, as in every ceremonial, there had to be repetition, already a kind of mechanisation. This theatre of the prosthesis and the graft very quickly became a theme for me in all its dimensions, to some degree everywhere between "Freud et la scène de l'écriture" and Mal d'Archive*.  Later, as history continues, I wrote more and more "at the machine," as one says, at the mechanical typewriter, and then in 1979 at the electric typewriter, finally, around 1986-87, at the computer. Now, I can no longer do without this little Mac, especially when I am writing at home; I cannot even remember or comprehend how I got along without it before. It is a whole different start-up, a whole different exercise of "setting to work." I do not know whether the electric typewriter or the computer makes the text "too readable" or "too clear" for us. The volume, the unfolding of the operation obeys another organigram, another organology. I do not experience the interposition of the machine as a sort of progress in transparency, univocality, or facility. We are participating, rather, in an intrigue that is in part anecdotal. Heidegger recalls that the matter of thinking is handwork, a "*Handlung*," an "action," preceding any opposition between practice and theory. In this sense, thinking would be a "*Handlung*," a "manoeuvre," a "manner," if not a manipulation. But is that a reason to protest against the machine? The recourse to the typewriter or computer does not leave out the hand. It involves another hand, another "command," if I may put it that way, another induction, another injunction of the body to the hand and of the hand to writing. But at no time, at least for the moment, is it a matter of writing without hands, of writing while keeping one's hands in one's pockets. Far from it. Writing without hands is perhaps what we are doing now, when we record our voices. And even then ... for the hands are not only in the hands. Basically, the history I have just sketched is not chanted by an interruption of the manual gesture or by the event of a severed hand; it is rather a history of the hand, another history still maintained within the hand, that of a writing held in control in the hand, even if, no doubt, the destination of the hand, in a long-term history, is slowly being displaced. In the end, this is what we are talking about, and about the relation to the eye, to the rest of the body, etc. It would be necessary to think rather about other turns of manual labour, to the quasi-instantaneous passings --the time it takes for a mutation-- of another "*tournemain*" [i.e., "twinkling of the eye"]. Between the pen-tool or pencil-tool on the one hand, and machines on the other, it is not the hand that makes the difference, for it is maintained and remains at work, the hand being also the fingers. With mechanical or electric typewriters, the fingers still operate, there are more and more of them working. It is true that they go about it differently. One's fingers get caught up in it more -- and the fingers of two hands rather than one. All of this is inscribed, for some time still, in a history of digitality.  **Q.L*.*** --- *In the four-handed book you wrote with Geoffrey Bennington, there is a photograph that copies the miniature from the Bodleian Library, which was the subject of* ThePostCard*, where one sees Plato planted behind Socrates, who writes with a pen in one hand and a stylet in the other. In the photographed scene, it is you who is holding the "pen." Perhaps we have the invention of a new form of dialogue there. A dialogue that would be as "serious" as dialogue, because has been loaded with the entire weight of writing, but also more ludic because there is the whole measure of play in the computer, the video game. Would this not be some kind of step forward?*  ***J.D.*** --- Can one speak of progress here? There is indeed a transformation of the scene and, yes, a measure of play. This photograph itself, the initiative for which was not mine, was a provocation to which I thought I had to lend myself. It was necessary to mime, by displacing it into our modernity, the already strange scene of an authoritarian Plato standing up straight behind a seated Socrates who is busy writing or "scratching." If the idea of this tableau vivant occurred to us, it is first of all because the long note at the bottom of the page that it was supposed to accompany --*Circonfession*, that is-- was written on the computer, from the first word. Bennington had also assigned himself the task of constituting what he called a "data base" on the subject of my work ("Derridabase"), according to a computer program, if you will, that, without any quotation, would allow every reader to find all the propositions, all the places in the corpus in question, on the basis of a kind of hyperformalized index. So, Bennington was himself playing with this machine. In *Circonfession*, I had furthermore imposed on myself the somewhat aleatory constraint of a software that signalled at the end of a paragraph of a certain length, about 25 lines: "The paragraph is going to be too long, you must start a new paragraph." Like an order that came from I-do-not-know-who, from the depths of some time or some abyss, this somewhat threatening warning emerged on the screen, and I docilely decided to stop the long sequence, after the respiration of a rhythmic sentence, punctuated, to be sure, in a wavelike fashion by commas, but uninterrupted, punctuated without a period, if you will, thereby making the 59 periods comply with an arbitrary rule given by a program that I had not chosen -- with a somewhat stupid destiny. We both played with the computer; we pretended to obey it, to let ourselves be processed by it even as we exploited it to "process the text." As you know, the computer maintains the hallucination of an interlocutor (anonymous or not), of another "subject" (spontaneous and autonomous: automatic) who can occupy more than one place and can well play roles: face-to-face, surely, but also withdrawn, doubtless in front of us, but also invisible and faceless behind its screen. Like a god that is hidden but snores a little, handy at dissimulating itself even in the vis-à-vis.  I came very late to this figure of "text processing": for a long time, I resisted. I thought I would never succeed to comply with the law of a machine about which I understood basically nothing. I know how to make it work (sort of), but I do not know *how* it works. I therefore do not know, I know less than ever "who it is," who goes there. Non-knowledge, in this case, is a distinctive trait; it is foreign to the pen but also to the typewriter. With the pen and the typewriter, one thinks one knows *how* it works, how "it responds." Whereas the computer, even if one knows up to a certain point how to use it, it is rare that one knows, with an intuitive and immediate knowledge --in any case, I do not-- *how* the interior demon of the apparatus operates. What it obeys. This secret without mystery frequently marks our dependence with regard to many instruments ofmodern technology, of which we know how to use them and what purpose they serve, without knowing what happens with them, inside them, on their side; and this would give us a lot to think about concerning our relation to technics *today*, concerning the novelty of this experience.  I come back to the computer. In one respect, it seems to restore a quasi-immediacy of the text, a desubstantialised substance, more fluid, lighter, hence closer to speech, or even to so-called interior speech. It is also a question of speed and rhythm: it goes faster, faster than we do, it passes us by; but at the same time, because of our ignorance as to what is going on in the dark inside of the box, it also surpasses understanding and one has the impression of dealing with the soul (the will, desire, design) of a demiurgic Other, as if already, good or evil genius, an invisible addressee, an omnipresent witness would hear us reading in advance, would capture and send back to us, in the face-to-face, *without* *waiting*, the objectified image of our speech that has been right away stabilised and translated into the speech of the Other, a speech already appropriated by the other or come from the other, a speech also of the unconscious. Truth itself. As if the Other-Unconscious could dispose of our speech at the very moment it is so near to us, but as if it could just as well interrupt it, destroy it; and we maintain a deaf conscience of this, we are not sheltered from an accident, which is more frequently the case with the computer than with the typewriter or the pen. A simple power outage, a careless or awkward gesture can instantly annihilate hours of work. This added spontaneity, freedom, fluidity would be like the surplus of precariousness, of a threatened or even calmly worried exposure, the benefit of a sort of alienation. I understand this word in a neutral fashion: it would be a matter of an "estrangement," of a machine-like Other-Unconscious that would send our own speech back to us from a completely other place. Love and hate: this new machine would install another explication of the differences of the body, the eye, and the hand --the ear as well-- with the dictation of a foreign body, with the law, with the order of the Other-Unconscious.  **Q.L.** --- *When a writer writes a text, he passes through a whole series of intermediaries. There used to be, and for many there still is, manual writing, then the typing, then the proofs, first and second, then the publication of the book, and every time, except at the end, there is the possibility of modifications, the possibility of correction, the possibility to come back. With "word-processing" too there is the possibility to come back, but this possibility is immediate. It no longer happens in stages.*  ***J.D.* ---** It is another time, another rhythm. First of all, one corrects faster and in an almost indefinite fashion. Before, all ended after a certain number of versions (corrections, erasures, collages, white-out fluid), that was enough. Not that the text was considered to be perfect, but after a certain duration of the metamorphosis, the process was interrupted. With the computer everything happens so fast and so easy that one lends oneself to believe that the revision can be indefinite. Already a interminate revision, an infinite analysis, announces itself, as if held in reserve behind the finite analysis of all that makes it to the screen. In any case, this analysis can, within the same time, be prolonged in a more intense fashion. Within that same time, not the least visible or objective trace of the corrections of the previous day is retained. Everything, the past and the present, can in that way be locked away, annulled, forever encrypted. Before, the erasements and the overwritings left a sort of scar on the paper, or a visible image in the memory. There was a resistance of time, a thickness in the duration of the erasement. Now, the whole negative drowns, effaces itself, evaporates immediately, sometimes from one moment to another. It is another experience of the so-called "immediate" memory and of the passage of memory into the archive. Another provocation for what is called "genetic criticism" and developed itself around the drafts, the multiple versions, the proofs, etc.  This is altogether becoming a bit too easy. The resistance, because basically there is always resistance, no longer has the same form. One has the impression that now a theatre programs or stages this resistance, that is to say, also the reply, the order of changing, of erasure, of correcting, of overwriting or effacing. The text is, as it were, given *en spectacle*, without waiting. One sees it *rising* *up* to the screen, in a more objective and anonymous form than on a hand-written page, a page that *descended* from us. In that way, the things go upwards: this spectacle takes place almost above us, we see it seeing us seeing, surveying us as the eye of the Other, or rather, simultaneously, it also takes place under the eye of the nameless foreigner, whose vigilance and whose spectre it immediately convokes. It conveys much faster the objectivity of the text to us, and in that way it changes our experience of time, of the body, of the arms and hands, our distant embrace of the written thing. This written thing becomes at the same time nearer and more aloof. There we have another re-movement [*é-loignement*], *re-movement* means here putting at distance of the aloof, but also a putting at distance that abolishes the aloof. Another removement, then, and I suppose that it *alters* every sign. This does not mean that it perverts or degrades the sign, butat the arrival of the written thing, it renders *other* our yesterday explication, our familiar altercation, our family scene, if I can put it that way. I would not be able to specify here in what respect this hospitality changes. Every time and for each one of us, it is different. I am often asked the question: "Has your writing changed since you write with the computer?" I am incapable of answering it. I do not know which criteria to measure it to. There is a change allright, but I am not sure whether it affects the written, even if it touches writing.  **Q.L.** --- *I have been reading you for a long time, and I do not see a sudden change.*  ***J.D.*** --- Neither do I. But I am sensible to another dramaturgy, if you will. When I sit down at the table and I turn on my computer, the scenario is different, but I do not know whether that translates itself into a change in the written. The most disobedient texts where the norms of linear writing are concerned, I ventured them well before the computer. Now it would be easier for me to do this work of dislocation or typographic invention, of graftings, of insertions, of cuttings and collages, but from that point of view or in that form it does not interest me much anymore. That has been theorised, and that was done -- yesterday. The path of those new typographies, having become commonplace nowadays, has, in a experimental fashion, been traced out long time ago. Hence, other "disorders" have to be invented, more discrete ones, less jubilatory and exhibitionist, and that are contemporaries of the computer this time. What I was able to try to change in the page set-up, I did in an archaic time, if I dare to say so, when I still wrote by hand or with the old typewriter. In 1979, I wrote *La Carte postale* with the electric typewriter (even though, in that book, I already speak a lot about the computer and software), but I composed *Glas*, the page set-up of which presented itself also as a short treaty on the organ by sketching out a history of organology up until now, on a little mechanical Olivetti.  **Q.L.** --- *[In French] one talks about "traitement de texte." Talking about "traitement" is not at all innocent.*  ***J.D.*** --- The word "traitement" imposes itself on me when I think of some specific situations. When I teach, for instance --because I prepare my courses on the computer-- it is much easier for me, thanks to the "cut - paste" device, to recompose the session at the last moment, in a few seconds, and to announce at the beginning, thus leaving it as it were suspended over the stage, a block whose necessity only became apparent to me at the end;I then displace a paragraph or an entire page while adjusting and articulating the argument in an economic fashion. All this was possible before, I am well aware of this, but the same gesture was slow, heavy, and sometimes discouraging. The word-processor makes one gain an outrageous amount of time, it gives a liberty that would perhaps not be given without it. The transformation, though, is economic, not structural. There are all these devices for gaining [time] in the finishing touch or the polishing: the play of the italics, the division of the paragraphs, the direct intervention on the lexical statistics, if I can put it that way, on the localisation of occurrences. Only since recently do I use the spelling checker. It is instructive too: which are the words that are not considered normal or acceptable usage in French and will thus remain censored by the dictionary that is commonly incorporated in the machine today, as they would be by some other readership, some other media power, for example.  You alluded to the time of proofs. I do miss a bit the duration, the intervals, the rhythm that chanted the history of a writing then, all those to and fro's before the publication. It was also the chemistry of a conscious or unconscious maturation, the chance for mutations in us, in our desire, in the hand-to-hand fight [*corps-à-corps*] with our own text in the hands of the other. Nowadays, as you know, we hand over a floppy to the editor at the same time as a manuscript. Before all this leaves for the printer's, a new actor checks the floppy and makes editorial proposals in the American sense of "*editing*." On the floppy, the proof of the proof is shared with that invisible intermediary, but in the exchange with the printer, it is never inscribed on a paper support.  **Q.L.** --- *You are professor, you give lectures. You prepare each lecture on the computer, you write it and then you pronounce it. There is thus an echo of that lecture but this echo can mix itself with that of the machine.*  ***J.D.* ---** When one prepares a course or a lecture, during weeks one sees reappearing in front of oneself, at the same time objective, stable, independent and nevertheless floating, a little fantasmatic, a body of letters set on page that one no longer carries within oneself, and at least more completely within oneself as the more interior image of those drafts of manual writing. This exposition indeed sends back the murmuring of a text in echo that came from down there, the echography of oneself as other. This is the movement about which we spoke earlier on, that accelerated but suspended objectivation, fluid or ethereal. (I remark between brackets that certain American colleagues go into the class or the lecture hall with their little portable computer. They do not print anymore, they read directly, in public, from the screen. I saw it at the Centre Pompidou, a few days ago. A friend held a lecture on American photography there. He had this little portable Mac under his eyes, as a "*prompter*": he pushed a button to unroll his text. The presupposes a great confidence in that strange *souffleur*. I am not yet there, but it is coming.  **Q.L.** --- *We are arriving at the complete suppression of the paper support. We are even arriving at the suppression of the speaker. There is nothing more other than the text.*  ***J.D.* ----** The movement is obviously contradictory: more lucid, more vigilant but also more fantasmatic or more oneiric. The computer installs a new place, where one is more easily projected into the exterior, into the spectacle, into the face of the written that is, in this way, according to a trajectory of estrangement, withdrawn from the presumed intimacy of writing. The other way around, due to the plastic fluidity of forms, their continual flux, their quasi-immateriality, one is also more and more sheltered in a sort of protecting haven of refuge. (No) more outside [*Plus de dehors*]. Or rather, there is, in that new experience of specular reflection, more outside and there is no more outside. One sees oneself without seeing oneself enveloped in the helix of that outside/inside, dragged along by another revolving door of the unconscious, exposed to an other that came from the other. This can in fact be felt, in another way, for the "*Web*," that "net," that WWW (*World Wide Web*) that is woven around us by a network of computers, across the world, but around us *in us*. Think of the "addiction" of those who travel night and day in the silent diction of that WWW. They can no longer pass these crossings from the world to the surfboard [*la voile*] -- and to the veil [*le voile*] that crosses or paralyses them in its turn.  **Q.L. ---** *Are we not, with the computer, with word-processing, with the immediacy of the screen, on touching terms with an endless, indefinite text? While the book, on the other hand, has the merit of cutting short, all at once.*  ***J.D.* ---** Yes, we do not know what will happen tomorrow, but one feels that the editorial machine, the book market, the printer, the library itself, in short the ancient world, still play a interruptive role. The book is at the same time the device and the moment of expiry, that obliges us to *interrupt* the process of the computer, to put an end to it. This stop dictates the end to us, we are withdrawn from the copy: "so, now there must be put an end to it," there is a date, a limit, a law, a duty and a debt. It must pass onto another support. One must print. For the moment, the book is the moment of that stop, the moment of interruption. There will be a day, it is coming, when the interrupter that will never disappear (this is in essence impossible), will no longer be the order of another support, paper, but another audio-visual device, the CD-Rom perhaps. That will be another market of interrupters. To me, the word "interrupter" does not have a negative signification. There have to be interrupters, it is the condition for all form, the formation of form itself.  For me, I can say that, in the end, I accept the mutation. And at the same time a certain book fetishism, that will but be served by the book's becoming scarce. *De la grammatologie* mentioned and analysed the "end of the book," but it was not at all in order to celebrate it. I believe in the value of the book, in what it preserves of the irreplaceable and in the necessity to fight for having it respected. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I do not know how to say this, we will assist what might be called, by shifting the accent, a new religion of the book. Another bibliophilia will follow the book by the trace everywhere it will have to make place for other supports.  **Q.L. ---** *Will there be an equivalent of bibliophia with regard to the CD-Rom, or floppies?*  ***J.D.* ---** Probably. One will then fetishise this draft prepared or printed with this software, this floppy that archives one stage of a "*work in progress*." I already know writers who keep the first versions of an essay, novel or a poem on floppy. Once that these computer archives are locked away (because it is always much easier to manipulate them without leaving a trace), they will have completely different pretensions. One feels that coming too. One will even fetishise the computer of the "great writer" or the "great thinker," like Nietzsche's typewriter. No history of technologies has effaced that picture of Nietzsche's typewriter. Quite to the contrary, it becomes more and more precious, sublime, protected by a new aura, the aura of the means of "technical reproducibility" this time; and that does not necessarily contradict the theory that Benjamin proposes about it. Such computers will become museum pieces. The fetishist pulse has, by definition, no limit, it will never be disarmed.  As to those near to us who, in these time, do not themselves use neither typewriter nor computer, they can be counted on the fingers of one hand. I know some of them...  **Q.L. ---** *So do I. Our friend Pierre Vidal-Naquet...*  ***J.D.* ---** Hélène Cixous, Michel Deguy... When one gives something in order to have it typed, one reconstitutes, wanted or unwanted, a sort of "master/secretary" relation. A relation of dictation, one thinks of Goethe, for example. But there are many among us who do without the secretary. Structurally there is no more secretary. Those who, by their function, still want to mark their authority call upon a secretariat, even when they in fact know how to use a computer. I cannot imagine a President of the Republic, a high official, or a cabinet minister typing at the computer. They correct by hand, the old way, a text that has been prepared by another, and give it back to someone to prepare "a clean copy" again. As happened some time ago with alphabetical writing, a certain democratisation passes thus by way of the use of the machine (provided that one can afford one! the prices are not going down that quickly...)  **Q.L. ---** *One recognises the master by that he has no machine on his desk.*  ***J.D.* ---** This is the old figure of the master in politics, the master thinker, the master poet. No machine. No direct relation to the machine. The relation to the machine is secondary, auxiliary, mediated by the slave-secretary, much too often and in an unfortunate fashion by *her*, the secretary. We would have to talk about the word-processor, about power *and* about sexual difference. Power must have the power of mediating itself, if not delegating itself, in order to exist. In any case, in order to appear, and this is not always something different.  **Q.L. ---** *One could say that the text that appears on the screen is a fantomatic text. There is no more matter, no more ink. There are no more shadows and no more light, while the book, on the contrary, is a dense, material object.*  ***J.D.* ---** The figure of the text that has been "processed" on the computer is fantomatic to the extent that it is less bodily, more "spiritual," more ethereal. But there, there is a sort of disincarnation of the text. But its spectral silhouette remains, and on top of that, for the majority of intellectuals and writers, the program, the software of the machines still conforms to a spectral model of the book. Everything that appears on screen is organised *in view of* the book: linear writing, numbered pages, value-coded graphics (italics, bold, etc.), differences of character sets and traditional characters. Certain telewriters do not, but "ours" still respect the figure of the book, they use, serve and mime it, they take on its form in a quasi spiritual, "pneumatic" fashion, near to the whisper: as if it would suffice to speak in order for it to be printed.  **Q.L. ---** *This leads us perhaps a little too far away from word-processing, even if it, in a certain way, prolongs the problematic. The original theme was "What does the word-processor mean* *for you, as philosopher?" The intervention of the typewriter, you stressed, was not that radical.*  ***J.D.* ---** Where knowing what that changes for philosophy is concerned, and not only for my work (hardly important, in fact), I ask myself all the time what would have happened to Plato, Descartes, Hegel, Nietzsche and even to Heidegger (who in fact knew the computer without knowing it) had they met this "thing," not only as an available instrument but as a theme for reflection. From Pascal, Descartes, Leibniz to Heidegger, passing by means of Hegel, philosophers have without doubt meditated on the calculator, the think-machine, the translator, formalisation in general, etc. But how would they have interpreted a culture that tends to be dominated in such a way, in its very daily life, throughout the whole universe, by such technical inscription and archivisation devices? Because in philosophy, what matters is most of all the relation of thinking to the "image," to language, to the simulacrum, to representation. How would Plato have had to written what is called the "myth of the cave" in order to take these transformations into account? Would he only have had to change the rhetoric of his pedagogy or would he have had to think the ontological structures of the relations between ideas, copies, simulacra, thinking and language, etc. otherwise?  **Q.L. --** *Until a relatively recent period that can be situated at the end of the Middle Ages, the transcription that we have, the text, is never that of the author, written with his hand at the pen*. *Together with the autographic manuscript a new configuration appears, one that will last a few centuries and which we are leaving now in order to return to the point of departure, the separation of the powers of thinking and those of writing*.  ***J.D.* ---** There is certainly a sort of parenthesis there, a few centuries long. In 5th and 4th century Greece, in Plato's time, the manuscript was not worshipped. The autographic text was not yet taken into account, and it did not begin to be fetishised until much later. This is not over, but we are no doubt moving into a other system of conservation, commemoration, reproduction and celebration. A great era is coming to an end.  This may scare us. We have to mourn for what has been our fetish. The compensations, the supplements of fetishism confirm that the destruction got going (you know, I do not believe in the limits of fetishism, but that is another story, if not another subject). We are frightened and happy testimonies. We have known the transition from the pen to the typewriter, then from the typewriter to the electric typewriter, then to the computer, and this in thirty years, in one generation, the only generation to have made the whole crossing. But the journey continues...  **Q.L. ---** *Word-processing does not only raise problems of writing but also, in the more or less long range, problems of transition.*  ***J.D.* ---** A serious problem indeed. Due to what we said earlier on, namely that the text is instantaneously objectivised and transmissible, ready for publication, it is near to public and "ready to be printed" from the moment of its inscription on. One imagines, one has the tendency to believe or to make believe that everything that is recorded in that way has therefore publicational value. That what circulates on Internet, for example, belongs to a space of automatic publication; the public/private distinction tends to be effaced there, entailing the lawsuits, the allegations of law and legitimisation that can be multiplied by this, but also the movement of appropriation of the *res publica*. This is what is nowadays one of the important things at stake in politics, politics itself. For better or for worse, in a fashion that is sometimes justifiable, sometimes less so, the barrier, the "interruption," the stop of the book still protected a process of legitimisation. A published book, however bad, still remained a book evaluated by supposedly competent agencies; it seemed legitimate, sometimes sacralised, to have to be evaluated, selected, consecrated. Nowadays everything can be launched into the public space and considered --by some at least-- publishable, thus featuring the classical, virtually universal, even sacred, value of the published thing. That can give rise to all sorts of mystifications and this can already be noticed, even if I have but a very limited experience of what happens on Internet. Those international sites welcome and juxtapose, on the subject of deconstruction for example, extremely serious discussions worthy of publication and chit-chat that is not only fastidious but that is furthermore without any future. (It is true that this can also happen, let us not forget, to colloquia or in journals -- be they academic or not. There are already intelligent journals on Internet; they reproduce all the traditional procedures of legitimisation and publication, only the paper is lacking, so that the costs of printing and distribution are economised). The other way around, and this goes for the media in general, as the discussion is more open and everybody has access to it, a certain critical possibility can, on the contrary, find itself encouraged and developed where the classical evaluative agencies could sometime play a censoring role: the choice made by editors or publishing machines is not always the best, there is repression, marginalisation or the silencing people. A new liberation of the flux can at the same time let no matter what pass and make room for a critical possibility that would formerly have been limited or inhibited by the old machines of legitimisation -- that are, in their manner, also word-processors.  Interview conducted and transcribed by Beatrice and Louis Seguin.  Translated by Johan Bruyninckx.  Notes:  1. "*Geslecht* II: Heidegger's Hand," translated by John P. Leavey Jr., in: John Sallis (ed.) *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) pp.161-196. ---- "La main de Heidegger (*Geslecht* II)" in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), p.415-451.  2. "Heidegger's Ear, Philopolemology (*Geslecht* IV)," translated by John P. Leavey Jr., in: John Sallis (ed.), *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, Studies in Continental Thought, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1993, pp.163-218. "L'Oreille de Heidegger, philosolémologie (*Geslecht* IV)," in *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), p.341-419. |