CHAIN ERR-READING: *JANE EYRE* BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

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"A book is essentially not a talking thing, but a written thing; and written, not with a view of mere communication, but of permanence." John Ruskin[1]

"Diese Freiheit und die Blickrichtung auf das apodiktisch Invariante ergibt es immer wieder — in der Evidenz des die invariante Bildung beliebig Wiederholen-könnens — als das Identische, originaliter jederzeit Evidentzumachende, in eindeutiger sprache Festzulegende, als das im strömend lebendigen Horizont ständig implizierte Wesen. [...] Der Urstifter der Geometrie konnte über das Apodiktische [als] Thema verfügen." Edmund Husserl[2]

"une lecture tentante, ô combien ! mais errante, et probablement égarée." Jacques Derrida[3]

1 J. Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies, The Works of John Ruskin*, on CD-rom, 65. Ruskin writes *Sesame and Lilies* in the same year (1865) he defends the Governor of Jamaica, Mr. Edward John Eyre, when the latter was being prosecuted for having had George William Gordon, "a coloured man of some education" and "member of the House of Assembly", tried by court-martial and sentenced to death in response to the fear of a negro insurrection in which Gordon was thought to be involved. See Michael Wheeler's editorial notes, vol. 18, xliv-xlvi. In *Jane Eyre*, Edward Rochester is of course slave-holder in Jamaica, and the Eyre family, in the person of Jane's uncle, John Eyre, trades with Jamaica.

2 "Beilage III", in Husserl's *Die Krisis der europaïschen Wissenschaften und die Transzendentale Phänomenologie*, 383. "This freedom over and the direction of the look on the apodictical invariant yield [sic] this latter always again — in the evidence of the ability-to-repeat at will the unvarying formation — as the identical, originally at all times making-to-be-evident , fixing indelibly in unequivocal language, as the always implied essence in the flowing, living horizon. [...] The proto-writer of geometry was able to make use of the apodictical [as] theme", my translation.

3 J. Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*, 234.

1. At the end of 2010, a Professor of English Literature asks me, after a short talk I gave in a English and Comparative Literature conference: "But when you teach your students, you don't do these kinds of readings like you presented today, do you?". There followed that familiar, uncomfortable, laughter. Ha ha. Like the sound of a German Democratic Republic one Mark coin, swivel-wobbling on a sheet of tin, falling flat. The question has been coming back to me like a recurrent dream, since I've taught in France. The present essay tries to dwell in the space — a sort of reading room or classroom as place for (teaching) reading — between the question and an ideal answer which I know will never know how to produce.

2. The French title of this special issue of *L'Atelier* is "Lecture/mé-lecture". The word "mé-lecture" (for Misreading) occasions an attempt to read what this word, or at least these assembled letters, *mé-lecture*, could "mean". The absence of a sounded **s** in plural words in French would make it impossible for a listener-contributor to the pronounced word to know if it was singular, *mé-lecture* or plural, *mé-lectures*. Either way, a listener-contributor could think, or understand, just based on the pronounced word, that he is being asked to discuss his current reading or readings: *mes lectures*. *Lecture*, *mes lectures*. Reading my readings. All reading turns back on itself and becomes a reflection on its very method. Reading as allegory of reading. Yet in *mé-lecture*, certainly if one thinks about censorship and sanctioning (if one's had some "tangles with the law"), it is possible to hear, and thus understand, "mais, lecture!" A "but reading" or a reading that emanates from and also propels itself forth, as a movement of resistance and self-defense, can be what a "but reading" or a "*Mais, lecture !*" signifies. Reading as the charge one makes when antagonized. In English, the title "Reading/misreading" seems simpler, to be given over to no errant detour by merely understanding its spoken sound: unless, that is, one is reading a book about a girl punished for reading a book by a largely illiterate family that goes by the titles of Miss Reed, Misses Reed, Mrs. Reed or, worse, Master Reed. How many times did the law throw the book at her?

3. In his *L'Expérience de la lecture*, Michel Lisse argues for reading as a sort of linkage about which one might add to Lisse's following formulation that the "enchainment" has necessarily something heretical about it, from *hairein* : "to take", "to choose", not to accept to be merely given the accepted. Lisse writes: "La lecture apparaît [...] comme une modalité de l'enchaînement. À partir du texte, au-delà du geste exégétique, paraphrastique — qu'il faut toujours effectuer sous peine de dire n'importe quoi —, il importe d'ajouter, d'enchaîner, d'écrire en donnant droit à une certaine dérive, à la conjonction ("*and... and*") plutôt qu'à la subordination..."[4].

4 M. Lisse, *L'Expérience de la lecture : 2 : le glissement*, 181.

4. What might this linkage, an enchaining, entail that involves drifting, and adding in the place of subordination: heresy? Ere we too readily hear/see here our way, in this essay we will pursue the matter of reading and mis-reading through its explicit formalizations in the work of Brontë, Derrida, De Man, Freud and others.

5. Words have to be not only *understood*, but read: heard, seen, in their materiality. Part of the enterprise of Jacques Derrida derives from such an insistence: "cette différence graphique (le a au lieu du e), cette différence marquée entre deux notations apparemment vocales, entre deux voyelles, reste purement graphique : elle s'écrit ou se lit, mais ne s'entend pas"[5]. Thus writes Derrida of the word "différance": the difference between the "a" and the "e" cannot be understood, exceeds the order of understanding, "On ne peut l'entendre et nous verrons en quoi elle passe aussi l'ordre de l'entendement" (*M* 4). Hence, reading must not be thought of as equivalent to a simple adequation between what is said and what is written.

6. Such, however, was how reading had been understood: "Livre de Dieu, la Nature aura été au Moyen Âge une graphie conforme à la pensée et à la parole divines, à *l'entendement* de Dieu comme Logos, vérité qui parle et s'écoute parler […] [L]a Nature était aussi une totalité ordonnée, le volume d'un livre lourd de sens, se donnant à lire, ce qui doit vouloir dire à entendre, comme une parole, d'entendement à entendement. 'L'oeil écoute' (Claudel) quand le livre a vocation de proférer le logos divin"[6]. The conformity between grapheme and divine thought and speech was the understanding of a non-separation between intention and speech. In such an understanding, the book of nature gave itself to be read as if to be read was simply to be understood, as a speech consubstantial with thought. However, were speech, or writing, to be somehow radically orphaned, this conformity would be lost.

7. In *La Voix et le phénomène*, Derrida also showed how meaning in oral discourse has been understood according to what one hears-as-immediate-understanding, and not according to what one would need to *read*, the written-in-the-oral. For Husserl, the understanding (*Deutung*, interpretation) of the meaning (*Bedeutung*, intention) only occurs in oral speech. The interpretation, the understanding, never occurs as reading but as listening, hearing: "la *Deutung* n'est jamais essentiellement lecture mais écoute"[7]. Yet what occurs when the eye sees more than the eye hears, or when the ear hears more than the eye sees?

5 J. Derrida, *Marges — de la philosophie*, 4. Abbreviated hereafter as *M* in text.
6 J. Derrida, "Hors-texte", *La Dissémination*, 59. Abbreviated hereafter *D* in text.
7 J. Derrida, *La Voix et le phénomène*, 36. Abbreviated hereafter *VP* in text.

8. Derrida's deconstruction of speech and writing, the differantial relation of the two wherein each is in the other to the extent that this term archi-writing names this deconstruction of speech and writing, is valid for the relation of writing and reading. Reading cannot operate according to the mere hearing of sound, because both oral and written language belong to a general economy, to a general writing: archi-writing, which is also to say, archi-reading. Reading, interpreting, understanding, requires both seeing and hearing, especially when these are at odds. As I will try to give to be read through an inspection of some scenes and passages from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, for there to be reading there must be a certain misreading, something that exceeds both the opposition of oral language and written language, and that of right reading and wrong reading: "quelque chose y passe l'entendement aussi bien que l'écoute, entendez par là une dimension graphique ou littérale, littéralement littérale, un mutisme qu'il ne faut jamais passer sous silence"[8]. One recognizes here, by the way, the allusion to the essay "La différance" quoted above. "To pass" means "to spread" (Indo-European root *pet-2*). Reading passages will here extend to passages about reading, misreading, and to the (mis)reading of passages.

9. Moreover, reading can be most astute when it emanates from an error, a misreading. The opening of Derrida's essay "Some Statements [...]" starts as a misreading, which however is the only way he could apprehend what was given to be read in the task that had been enjoined upon him:

> Quand j'ai commencé à me préparer pour cette rencontre, j'avais mal lu le titre proposé. Sans doute par distraction, au lieu de *The States of 'Theory'* (*States* au pluriel et *'Theory'* entre guillemets), j'avais cru lire *The State of Theory* (*State* au singulier et *theory* sans guillemets).
>
> Et je m'étais dit qu'alors la réponse allait de soi, elle était 'hic et nunc' *obvious. The State of theory*, aujourd'hui et dorénavant (*now and from now on*), n'est-ce pas la Californie ? Et même '*Southern California*' ?
>
> Vous entendez cela comme une boutade ou comme une dérobade. Mais c'est peut-être une réponse plus sérieuse, plus réaliste, plus historique, plus historienne qu'il n'y paraît.[9]

The English translator rendered "*mal lu*" by "mis-read". Derrida's misreading, his bad reading, was however what he believed to have read correctly; his essay explores how it might be a more accurate reading, in sum. His anticipation that the audience understands ("vous entendez") his *acte*

8 J. Derrida, *Ulysse gramophone*, 46-47.
9 J. Derrida, "Some Statements and Truisms about Neologisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and other Small Seisms", *Derrida d'ici, Derrida de là*, 224.

manqué as play on words or as avoidance incorporates the question of the addressees' hearing and understanding into his very project. The audience would misread his misreading if they took it only as a misreading.

10. In a syntagm that to approach will require several passages, *reading is chained errance*: it is not outside the text and it's not identical with the text. Reading must involve misreading, without being nonsensical.

> Une tâche de lecture.
>
> Produire cette structure signifiante ne peut évidemment consister à reproduire, par le redoublement effacé et respectueux du commentaire, le rapport conscient, volontaire, intentionnel, que l'écrivain institue dans ses échanges avec l'histoire à laquelle il appartient grâce à l'élément de la langue. Sans doute ce moment du commentaire redoublant doit-il avoir sa place dans la lecture critique. Faute de la reconnaître et de respecter toutes ses exigences classiques, ce qui n'est pas facile et requiert tous les instruments de la critique traditionnelle, la production critique risquerait de se faire dans n'importe quel sens et s'autoriser à dire à peu près n'importe quoi. Mais cet indispensable garde-fou n'a jamais fait que *protéger*, il n'a jamais *ouvert* une lecture.[10]

The opening is not onto the referent (metaphysical, historical, psycho-biographical reality). It is not outside language, writing. There is no *outside the text*. Everything is linked, enchained:

> Il n'y a jamais eu que de l'écriture; il n'y a jamais eu que des suppléments, des significations substitutives qui n'ont pu surgir que dans une chaîne de renvois différentiels, le 'réel' ne survenant, ne s'ajoutant qu'en prenant sens à partir d'une trace et d'un appel de supplément [...]. Ce qui ouvre le sens et le langage, c'est cette écriture comme disparition de la présence naturelle.
>
> Bien qu'elle ne soit pas un commentaire, notre lecture doit être interne et rester dans le texte. (*GR* 228)

11. The disappearance of natural presence could be the result of finding oneself orphaned from the origin, but it could also be that air as breath, voice as spirit, might always need to be written down, pinned down, chained or moored. Reading is a movement internal to the text. It remains to understand this movement, in its displacement (of understanding).

12. In *De la grammatologie*, Derrida, drawing on his reading of Rousseau, finds that "supplementarity" describes the chain, the being-chain, of the text. What he calls the *être-chaîne* could recall the old spelling of *être*: *ester.* By what gest or gesture this *ester* is the remains of the

10 J. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, 227. Abbreviated hereafter *GR* in text.

writer, it imports to recall that Brontë's fictional Rochester descended from the real seventeenth century writer, the Earl of Rochester, John Wil(-)mot. How far this structure of substitution spreads out remains a question, but for present purposes, the following is an important link in our chain.

> Le thème de la supplémentarité n'est sans doute, à certains égards, qu'un thème parmi d'autres. Il est dans une *chaîne*, porté par elle. Peut-être pourrait-on lui substituer autre chose. *Mais il se trouve qu'il décrit la chaîne elle-même, l'être-chaîne d'une chaîne textuelle, la structure de la substitution, l'articulation du désir et du langage, la logique de toutes les oppositions conceptuelles*. (*GR* 234)

13. Derrida did not only conceive of writing, and reading, along these lines. Drawing from Plato's *Phaedrus*, he also developed what heritage writing-as-orphan could entail[11].

14. Readability requires repeatability. Not repeatable: not writing. Not readable. This repetition implies the absence of whoever wrote, proferred, that which is read, but also that of the addressee, the one to whom it was sent to be read: "Il faut, si vous voulez, que ma 'communication écrite' reste lisible malgré la disparition absolue de tout destinataire déterminé en général pour qu'elle ait sa fonction d'écriture, c'est-à-dire sa lisibilité"[12]. Derrida's "si vous voulez" is semi-ironic, semi-polite, because in writing it, he annihilates his *destinataire*, his receiver/reader. What I write can only be readable if it functions as writing in the absence of any *empirical* (notice Derrida inserts "déterminé") addressee. Thus, "une écriture qui ne serait pas structurellement lisible — itérable — par delà la mort du destinataire ne serait pas une écriture" (LI 27). How far is *read* from *dream*? One wonders here how or how much a recurrent (*itéré*, *itérable*) dream constitutes a writing.

> When I was a little girl, only six years old, I, one night, heard Bessie Leaven say to Martha Abbot that she had been dreaming about a little child; and that to dream of children was a sure sign of trouble, either to one's self or one's kin. The saying might have worn out of my memory, had not a circumstance immediately followed which served indelibly to fix it there. The next day Bessie was sent for home to the deathbed of her little sister.
>
> Of late I had often recalled this saying and this incident; for during the past week scarcely a night had gone over my couch that had not brought with it a dream of an infant [...]
>
> I did not like this iteration of one idea—this strange recurrence of one image [...] On the afternoon of the day following [...] I found a man waiting for me [...] dressed in mourning [...].

11 Derrida discusses Plato's characterization of writing as orphan in "La pharmacie de Platon", in *La Dissémination*, quoted above, also, notably, in *Béliers* (Paris: Galilée), where the written, "le malheureux orphelin dont parle le *Phèdre* de Platon à propos de l'écrit", is abandoned, separated "d'un père"; such abandonment, called by Derrida "cette illisibilité immédiate", is also the resource that enables the written, perhaps, to give to be read (*de donner à lire*), to speak perhaps (*de parler [peut-être]*)" (39-40).

12 J. Derrida, *Limited Inc*., 27. Abbreviated hereafter *LI* in text.

> [...] 'Mr. John died yesterday was a week', [he said].[13]

The disappeared here is the addressee of the dream only in a sense: the dream announces a death, and the person who dies (Master Reed) is the one upon whom the message of the dream falls, even if Jane is the receiver of her own dream, too. This dream of an infant, which Jane calls "this baby-phantom", instances "iteration". Here, the dream is readable because of the chain in Jane's mind: a death had "served indelibly to fix" the dream into her memory. Her dream is readable because it announces the repetition affirmed and confirmed by Bessie. Its iteration signifies a certain "mort du destinataire".

15. Edmund Husserl, quoted in the epigraph, imagined a sort of super-reader, one who would be in total command of repetition, of restitution, such that nothing would be lost between a saying and its repetition.

> This freedom over, and the direction of the look (*Blickrichtung*) on, the apodictical invariant yield [sic] this latter always again — in the evidence of the ability-to-repeat at will the unvarying formation — as the identical, originally at all times making-to-be-evident, fixing indelibly in unequivocal language, as the always implied essence in the flowing, living horizon. [...] The proto-writer of geometry was able to make use of the apodictical [as] theme. (My translation)

In short, always able to reproduce exactly (invariant, invariably) what is there (apodictic) at the beginning, reading here is the making evident in language of the identical. What Husserl imagines is that readability is consubstantial with repeatability, as if it were enough merely to repeat in order to read, because repetition is the same as the original utterance, as if each were totally present to itself. But in order to read, there has to be an alteration and a leave-taking in the very repetition. To repeat the same thing would not be reading, because all distance (between sender and receiver, but also between sender and her- or himself) would be elided, and the reader would be collapsed into the mind of the writer at the time of inscription, the writer into her- or himself like the Big Bang that never, in any way, went "bang".

16. Sender and receiver can (must?) be absent from the writing for it to be what it is and for it to be readable. The absence of sender and receiver from the text, thus, is the evacuation of the "intentionality" question: "Pour qu'un écrit soit un écrit, il faut qu'il continue à 'agir' et être lisible même si ce qu'on appelle l'auteur de l'écrit ne répond plus de ce qu'il a écrit" (*LI* 29). *Jane Eyre* obviously can continue to be read in the absence of Charlotte Brontë. Jane Eyre is always already

13 C. Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 187-188. Abbreviated hereafter *JE* in text.

orphaned from its 'progenitor', if one will. Jane Eyre herself is always already orphaned from her parents ("poor orphan child" [*JE* 18]), both of whom are dead from her birth onwards. Her situation, or lack thereof, owes precisely to her status, or lack thereof, as orphan. One might say of *Jane Eyre* and Jane Eyre what Derrida writes of writing and reading:

> La situation du scripteur et du souscripteur est, quant à l'écrit, foncièrement la même que celle du lecteur. Cette dérive essentielle tenant à l'écriture comme structure itérative, coupée de toute responsabilité absolue, [...] orpheline et séparée dès sa naissance de l'assistance de son père, c'est bien ce que Platon condamnait dans le *Phèdre.* (*LI* 29)

Jane Eyre *errs*, she *wanders* (they are two of the most frequent words in the text), in Lowood and beyond. At Lowood, like most of the girls, she is an orphan. Never having known her parents, she cannot even be said to have experienced separation. Marked by an original separation. Separation is never painful for her, because it is her only mode of being. Separation for Jane Eyre is therefore something like freedom, radical freedom. Not freedom as privation, but freedom as radical autonomy.

> I wandered as usual among the forms and tables and laughing groups without a companion, yet not feeling lonely [...]. Probably, if I had lately left a good home and kind parents, this would have been the hour when I should most keenly have regretted the separation: that wind would then have saddened my heart; this obscure chaos would have disturbed my peace: as it was, I derived from both a strange excitement, and reckless and feverish, I wished the wind to howl more wildly, the gloom to deepen to darkness, and the confusion to rise to clamour. (*JE* 46)

Jane Eyre always already and always only knows separation and division, radical orphaned status. Therefore, separation for her, from the Reeds, from Lowood, from Rochester and Thornfield, from Rivers and Moor House appears easy. Separation is normal, usual, all she knows in fact. Therefore, too, the return to Rochester will be a choice, not a weakness, trying to get back to union that had been lost. It is a decision to choose a union for the first time, out of a fore-knowledge of separation, finitude.

17. In the conversation she has in bed with Helen Burns, as the latter utters what will be her last words, Jane asks where it is that Helen claims to be going to. Helen postulates the after-life as being the place where one is with one's parent, and even that there is only one parent ("the same mighty, universal Parent", "God is my father" [*JE* 69]), as if there were only the father and no mother. Helen endorses the patriarchal erasure of woman's place in any spiritual scheme, extremely typical of a certain Victorian culture having its roots in theories of male supremacy going back to

seventeenth century theories of patriarchy (Robert Filmer, 1588-1653). Her endorsement of patriarchy is not surprising from her, as she is a royalist advocating Charles I (*JE* 48). Helen therefore postulates the existence of a parent, who is the parent, the father, God. It is worth noting that Helen does have a father still living in this world who abandons her, which she finds perfectly acceptable, unlike Jane who has neither a human mother or human father living. Jane's question to Helen, which Jane does not voice but only thinks to herself, and narrates to the reader — "Again I question; but this time only in thought. 'Where is that region? Does it exist?'" (*JE* 69) — throws into question, and thus into doubt, Helen Burn's myth of some "mighty, universal Parent". (Bessie's song, offering God, Heaven, and Father, to the orphan child — not unlike Helen Burns). Jane's question raises the possibility of universal orphanhood. Life, human or animal, in *Jane Eyre*, as thought by Jane and by Charlotte Brontë, or by the reader, is defined as being-orphan. The problem is the problem of life as orphanage, life as parentless, godless. If the Parent/God is to be taken as Logos, as Meaning, as the Center that gathers all around it (like Mrs Reed gathers around herself her biological children Eliza, Georgiana and John, while yet abandoning Jane to errancy), if the Parent is conceived as the center that holds things in order, what Jane evokes is the possibility that there is no Parent, there is no Center, and therefore the possibility that all is centrifugal, scattered, dispersed, disseminated. *Jane Eyre* gives to be seen that the child is essentially wandering, in fundamental errancy because there is no center, no God, no father, no Parent. *Jane Eyre* thus gives to be read the text according to Plato's conception of writing as being an orphan, and the absence of father (logos, God, voice).

18. We have not finished.

> Un texte n'est un texte que s'il cache au premier regard, au premier venu, la loi de sa composition et la règle de son jeu. Un texte reste d'ailleurs toujours imperceptible. (*D* 71)[14]

19. To cut and paste.

> La décision de chaque lecture [doit régénérer] indéfiniment son propre tissu derrière la trace coupante. (*D* 71)

20. "The topic on which I had but touched" (*JE* 299).

> [On] se leurre [si on veut] regarder le texte sans y toucher, sans mettre la main à l''objet', sans se risquer à y ajouter [...] quelque nouveau fil. (*D* 71)

14 This and the following quotes from *La Dissémination* from the opening of "La Pharmacie de Platon".

21. "Knitting, sewing, reading, writing, cyphering ..."

> Ajouter n'est pas ici autre chose que donner à lire. Il faut s'arranger pour penser cela : qu'il ne s'agit pas de broder, sauf à considérer que savoir broder c'est encore s'entendre à suivre le fil donné. (*D* 71)

22. "... will be all you will have to teach" (*JE* 303).

> S'il y a une unité de la lecture et de l'écriture [...], si la lecture *est* l'écriture, cette unité ne désigne ni la confusion indifférenciée ni l'identité de tout repos ; le *est* qui accouple la lecture à l'écriture doit en découdre. (*D* 72)

23. "I would much rather he had knocked me down" (*JE* 349)

> Il faudrait donc, d'un seul geste, mais dédoublé, lire et écrire. (*D* 72)

24. "I was then his vision, as I am still his right hand. [...] He saw nature — he saw books through me"; "never did I weary of [...] putting into words" "and impressing by sound on his ears what light could no longer stamp on his eye" (*JE* 384).

> Et celui-là n'aurait rien compris au jeu qui se sentirait du coup autorisé à en rajouter, c'est-à-dire à ajouter n'importe quoi. (*D* 72)

25. "Teachers, you must weigh well her words, [...] punish her body to save her soul: [...] for [...] this girl [...] is a liar! (*JE* 56)

> Le supplément de lecture ou d'écriture doit être rigoureusement prescrit mais par la nécessité d'un *jeu*, signe auquel il faut accorder le système de tous ses pouvoirs. (*D* 72)

26. "I was a most precocious actress in her eyes"; "'I know her naughty tricks'"; "'it's my duty to show you that tricks will not answer'" (*JE* 14).

27. Better misread than dead: Bob Dylan explains how certain popular songs (say by the Rolling Stones, or others) are played identically, even though many years have passed since their first recording. This is true if one thinks of how the Stones play "Satisfaction" some forty years after its recording: virtually identically. Dylan explains (in *Chronicles*) how because he did not seek to record a definitive version, he is able to change perpetually the arrangements, as his concerts continue to demonstrate. Each performance is a reading of the song, both in the sense that a poet reads in public his work (not changing the lyrics, the words), but, through voice and intonation, a new text is produced. Non-connoisseurs of Dylan find that his readings are misreadings, even unrecognizable (based on a studio recording that never pretended to be the right reading). For

Dylan, to have to play the song the same way would be tantamount to being dead, to having no chance of being read. To be read is to be misread, because no reading is the same as a previous one. A similar remark could be made about the jamming concerts of The Grateful Dead, or jam bands in their wake (yet different, too, since the jamming tends to respect more the "original" arrangement than in the case of Dylan). The debt to jazz, of course, is affirmed, for both. This fundamental iterability, repetition in alterity, and vice versa, is indeed Derrida's point about iterability: "Cette itérabilité (*iter*, derechef, viendrait de *itara*, *autre* en sanskrit, et tout ce qui suit peut être *lu* comme l'exploitation de cette logique qui lie la répétition à l'altérité) structure la marque d'écriture elle-même"[15]. This possibility of deviation inside fidelity is what Derrida intimates, in *Politiques de l'amitié*, commenting upon how a copyist of the classical Greek for what in at least one French translation is "O mes amis, il n'y a nul amy" maybe made a mistake in taking an omega, the "grand O", not for the sign of "interjection vocative" but rather for a "datif pronominal". The deviation in meaning brought by the mis- (?) transcription introduced an alternate tradition of interpretation of the saying. Derrida concludes on this error or errancy: "Aucun intégrisme philologique n'effacera jamais la chance inouïe d'une invention géniale"[16]. Derrida devotes many pages to the differences in interpretation that such a minor transcription variation would entail. At stake is how a reading that could fully ascertain and reduce, once and for all, the signifier of the text to its signified would leave a dead text: one that no longer speaks, one that would cease to be readable.

28. In another context, speaking of a Holocaust survivor who remembers the second *Aktion* in Bolechow, Poland to have occurred in August, not September, 1942, despite records and testimonies to the contrary, Daniel Mendelsohn comments on how errors can be recorded even in the most official historical documents: "his [Bob Grunschlag's] refusal to trust blindly in the historian's printed words was something I shared, knowing as I did how easily it is to make even innocent mistakes — the eye that travels down to the wrong line when transcribing an entry from a faded piece of paper — let alone the more compromised kinds of errors we so often make, the mind that misremembers even fresh information because of the need to make certain random scaps of data into part of the stories we have been brought to tell ourselves about the world"[17]. Recording how even the most official historical records contain numerous errors (how a name, a date, an event, etc., are taken down) about his own family, Mendelsohn remarks: "because I have talked to so many survivors, as I've said, I'm not uneasy about this disparity between oral and written testimonies"

15 J. Derrida, *Marges — de la philosophie*, 375.
16 J. Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*. Abbreviated hereafter *POL* in text.
17 D. Mendelsohn, *The Lost*, 223. Abbreviated hereafter *The Lost* in text.

(*The Lost* 224), "but I can see how they might be unsettling to some people" (*The Lost* 225). Errors unsettle, cause to shift, de-sediment.

29. That Jane Eyre is figure of *air* and thereby of spirit, breath and voice, is a frequent observation (most completely demonstrated by Elizabeth Imlay in her *Charlotte Brontë and the Mysteries of Love. Myth and Allegory in* Jane Eyre), and thus the fact of her rival being named Blanche *Ingram* makes sense insofar as sharpening the voice versus gramme distinction. At a crucial moment where Jane, and the reader, is waiting on tenderhooks to find out if Rochester will pronounce her name as his desired partner, Rochester will repeatedly say her name, cryptonymically ("you err", "I err", "capital error", "my word is *error*" (*JE* 185, 186). Although Rochester is in this scene all but asking her to voice herself, she herself remains steadfastly silent, hoping that some air will answer for her : "He paused for an answer: and what was I to say? Oh, for some good spirit to suggest a judicious and satisfactory response! Vain aspiration! The west wind whispered [...], but no gentle Ariel borrowed its breath as medium of speech: the birds sang in the tree-tops; but their song, however, sweet, was inarticulate" (*JE* 186). Prompted again by him, she musters up "suffered and erred", but Rochester wants articulation, consonants, not voice but writing which she is unable to give him to read. Language as gramme, as instrument, as consonant is what the *text* thus stages: "'But the instrument — the instrument!", "I have found the instrument for my cure, in———-'" (*JE* 186). Rochester stops speaking here, leaving a long blank following the two letters "in". Jane, the narrator, records that, here, "He paused", and records how the birds sing, how the wind rustles the leaves, how long "was the silence protracted" as she looks at him, "the tardy speaker" (*JE* 186-187). Because she fails to emit a sound, to voice as much as a whisper, he fills the blank, with the instrument that can complete the first two broken-off letters of "in———": "Miss Ingram". Writing, the gramme, fills the blank which Jane's air, voice, couldn't give Rochester to read. When Derrida, in "Scribble", writes, "quelle chance laissera-t-on au pauvre texte de respirer enfin, de se donner à lire enfin lui-même?"[18], he obliquely describes this situation in *Jane Eyre*. Cocksure, joking, jester, Rochester purports to want, to expect, natural voice; wants the text to breathe all by it-her-self (Jane Eyre, *Jane Eyre*) without writing: but for her to speak would be to have to speak in writing, and in her silence the only answer that can come forth is white paper filled by writing: Blanche Ingram.

30. Gathering and dispersal, which Blanchot calls "respiration de l'esprit", is his figuring of reading, and takes us a way to *Jane Eyre*, er, "Chain Err". If you scream the name "Jane", with

18 J. Derrida, "Scribble", préf. à W. Warburton, *Essai sur les hiéroglyphes*, 14.

violence, you cannot not pronounce it "chain". If you pronounce "Eyre", in one of the two ways the book authorizes, you cannot not pronounce it "err" (the other way is "ire", another paper). Reading *Jane Eyre* is the experience, back and forth, of to "chain" and to "err", to secure and to lose one's place radically. Maurice Blanchot gives the following formulation for this rapport: "*Intelligere* nous signale la dépendance à l'égard de *legere* et du préfixe *in*, et *legere* à son tour s'ouvre sur le *logos* qui, avant de signifier langage (parole, marque), dit le rassemblement en soi de ce qui est dispersé en tant qu'il doit rester dispersé. Dispersion et rassemblement, ce serait la respiration de l'esprit, le double mouvement qui ne s'unifie pas"[19].

31. If a reading established a meaning in one of those referential senses evoked by Derrida in *De la grammatologie*, then the reader would unchain it from the text. Several years earlier, Derrida cast this idea as follows: "Car un sens n'est entré en histoire que s'il est devenu un objet absolu, c'est-à-dire un objet idéal qui, paradoxalement, doit avoir rompu toutes les amarres qui le retenaient au sol empirique de l'histoire"[20]. A text would have a meaning if the meaning were to have become an absolute object, that is, one that had broken all its moorings, for example to the text in which it came into, or out of, being. A reading of *Jane Eyre*, for example, that could produce the meaning of *Jane Eyre*, of a passage or of a word of *Jane Eyre*, would be one that no longer needed the passage or word of *Jane Eyre*: it would have unleashed itself from the chain of relays in which it was moored. When Derrida defines reading in *De la grammatologie* (as we saw: *chaîne* above), he is indicating that a reading is always a process that never becomes a result that would no longer need the text. Because words are *idéalités enchaînées* (*Intro* 59 *sq.*), not *idéalités libres*, because in other words, words in *Jane Eyre* are moored in homonymy, homophony, anagrammaticity, and in particular in the idiomaticity of the letter, reading cannot help but be sent in errancy through numerous potential misreadings, which however are the only possible way for a reading to emerge that is different from, if however anchored in, the text itself. For a reading to be a reading it must risk, and indeed embark upon, an errant and itinerant drift. A drift, bereft, a raft.

32. In reading along the line of the letter, the combinatory letter, we are therefore not pursuing what Derrida sought to write against, literary writing understood in a thematic way: "l'écriture littéraire s'est presque toujours et presque partout, selon des modes et à travers des âges très divers, prêtée d'elle-même à cette lecture transcendante, à cette recherche du signifié" (*GR* 229).

33. Indeed, we are not reading *Jane Eyre*. It is reading us. We do not exist prior to *Jane Eyre*. The

19 M. Blanchot, "Les Intellectuels en question : ébauche d'une réflexion", 6-7.
20 J. Derrida, "Introduction" to Edmund Husserl, *L'Origine de la géométrie*, 53. Abbreviated hereafter *Intro* in text.

reader is not an extra-textual subjectivity; rather, s/he is an effect of the text. Here is Derrida on the reader:

> Par définition le lecteur n'existe pas. Pas avant l'œuvre et comme son simple "récepteur". Le rêve dont nous parlions concerne ce qui dans l'œuvre produit son lecteur, un lecteur qui n'existe pas encore, dont la compétence n'est pas identifiable, un lecteur qui serait "formé", entraîné, instruit, construit, engendré même, disons inventé par l'oeuvre.[21]

M-i-s-r-e-a-d-i-n-g = i-s d-r-e-a-m-i-n-g, and who would dare to say that dreaming is délire (other than perhaps Husserl)? We can only teach what the work teaches us. I teach what it tells me to teach.

> Inventé, c'est-à-dire à la fois trouvé par chance et produit par la recherche. L'oeuvre devient alors une institution qui forme ses propres lecteurs, leur donne une compétence dont ils ne disposaient pas encore: une université, un séminaire, un colloque, un cursus, un cours. (*CEIAI* 292)

Chance and research produce, invent, the reading. I do not teach *Jane Eyre* "in" a class, say, of the *agrégation* or the *CAPES*. *Jane Eyre* is the class in which I teach, where teachers and students are instructed, by *Jane Eyre*, how to read (such class, moreover, being different from the classes depicted in *Jane Eyre* in which Jane Eyre is represented doing her teaching).

> Si on faisait confiance à la distinction courante de la compétence et de la performance, on dirait que la performance de l'œuvre produit ou institue, forme ou invente une nouvelle compétence du lecteur ou du destinataire qui devient dès lors une contresignature. (*CEIAI* 292)

Ideas come in speaking, and understanding comes in reading, that is, in writing one's reading, which must needs involve counter-signing.

> Elle lui apprend, s'il le veut bien, à contresigner. Ce qui intéresse ici, c'est donc bien l'invention du destinaire capable de contresigner et de dire "oui" de façon engagée et lucide. (*CEIAI* 292)

Saying "yes", confirming and affirming what the text teaches the reader to see, to say, to daresay, to read-say, to read-write.

> Mais ce "oui" est aussi une performance inaugurale et nous retrouvons la structure de l'itérabilité qui nous empêcherait à ce point de distinguer en toute rigueur entre la performance et la compétence, comme entre producteur et récepteur [...], entre l'écrivain et le lecteur. (*CEIAI* 292)

This "yes" requires breaking new ground, authorially yet according to an iterative structure (repeat,

21 J. Derrida, "Cette étrange institution appellée 'littérature'", *Derrida d'ici, Derrida de là*, 292. Hereafter abbreviated *CEIAI* in text.

alter) whereby deviation or errancy associated with a misreading is however reading insofar as a reading that merely repeated would be not reading. After, or before, all, Jane Eyre, *Jane Eyre*, and Charlotte Brontë, are the readers as much as writers or writing of the text produce the reader or his/her reading.

34. One can say with Angelus Silesius, "Freund es ist auch genug. Im Fall du mehr willst lesen,/ So geh und werde selbst die Schrift und selbst das Wesen"[22]. If you want to read more, then become writing and even the essence itself. Reading must become writing in order to be reading. This apostrophe, "Friend, it is also enough", from text to reader, is the reverse prosopopeiac conferral upon the reader of his writerly, textual, status.

35. Because the allegorical representation of Reading is the irreducible component of any text, any text requires that any act of reading in it be displaced, be sent on a system of relays and transfers. The -ing form of the verbal noun or nominal verb, *read-ing*, denotes the continuous movement without which there is no such "thing" as reading, as if even such a "thing" were an -ing form, a moving thing or the thing of the moving. To read any one passage, it is necessary to read others, and in a to and fro movement. Because this movement is reading, reading is always irreducibly allegorical. An act of reading is always deflected from its immediate concern, such that its understanding is gained only through an elsewhere-moving. Reading is not what it is, always more, and less, than what it is, always missing reading by this more, and less, such that misreading is, by definition, the modality of reading.

> All that will be represented in such an allegory [of reading] will deflect from the act of reading and block access to its understanding. The allegory of reading narrates the impossibility of reading. But this impossibility necessarily extends to the word "reading" which is thus deprived of any referential meaning whatsoever. Proust may well spell out all the letters of *LECTIO* on the frames of his stories (and the novel abounds in gestures aimed in that direction), but the word itself will never become clear, for according to the laws of Proust's own statement it is forever impossible to read Reading. Everything in this novel signifies something other than what it represents, be it love, consciousness, politics, art, sodomy, or gastronomy: it is always something else that is intended. It can be shown that the most adequate term to designate this "something else" is Reading. But one must at the same time "understand" that this word bars access, once and forever, to a meaning that can never cease to call out for its understanding[23].

22 A. Silesius, *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*, VI, 263, 223. "Friend it is also enough. In case you want to read more,/ Then go and become yourself the writing and yourself the essence", my translation.

23 P. de Man, "Reading (Proust)", *Allegories of Reading*, 77.

Reading is "something else", the "something else". Reading is not the identification of a meaning (though itself another -ing form). It is not reducible to the sequestering of that to which it would refer. The irreducible *allegorical* dimension — another place, not equal to itself, an elsewhere — names what occurs in reading: the putting elsewhere a meaning that the movement of reading is always drawn to and sent away from.

36. Start again.

37. "Reading" and "Misreading" might be understood in terms of results. I have a "reading" of a particular phenomenon, I present a "reading", for example, of a particular passage: is it the steps taken, or the result, or both? Preliminary to a "reading", to upsetting the protocols, is getting one's take on the passage right.

> [...] une règle de méthode herméneutique, telle qu'elle me paraît encore valoir pour l'historien de la philosophie autant que pour le psychanalyste, à savoir la nécessité de s'assurer d'abord du sens patent, et donc de parler la langue du patient qu'on écoute : de bien comprendre, de façon quasi scolaire, philologique et grammaticale, compte tenu de conventions dominantes et stabilisées, ce que Descartes *voulait dire* à la surface déjà si difficile de son texte, tel qu'il est interprétable selon des normes classiques de lecture, et de comprendre cela même *avant de* soumettre cette première lecture à une interprétation symptomale et historique réglée par d'autres axiomes ou d'autres protocoles. Il faut bien comprendre cela même *avant de et pour* déstabiliser, là où c'est possible et si c'est nécessaire, l'autorité des interprétations canoniques[24].

38. Yet, with the conjunction to get "what Descartes meant", comes a step beyond what is provable, venturing into unprovable reading. Indeed, reading by definition needs to be unprovable: if it is provable, it appears to fall back into doubling commentary. An example of the venturesome, unprovable, reading would be, for example, one alert to metalepsis, to the limits of metalepsis:

> Rashi's analysis of the text of *parashat Noach* suggests that the noun that God uses to describe what he's planned for men and animals, which we generally translate as 'Flood' — the Hebrew *mabool* — is a word with subtleties far greater than the English translation can convey. Alert as ever to the nuances of etymology and diction, the great scholar toys with the components of the Hebrew — the letters *m-b-l* — and muses on three possible verbs, all containing the *b-l* cluster, each of which adds to our understanding of the shades of meaning that *mabool* could have [...]. These are *n-b-l*, 'to decay'; *b-l-l*, 'to confuse'; and *y-b-l*, 'to bring'. (*The Lost*, 172)

Reading also crosses language, and mixes languages. In which language does the reader think, or

24 J. Derrida, *Résistances*, 97-98.

hear, and in how many languages should or can the reader think, hear, understand? In *The Lost*, what is heard by a young American boy as kessle or castle gives way to years of misunderstanding, for the Yiddish word pronounced by his grandfather actually meant "box", as in its related German term, *Kästchen, kästle*. A different form of the red room, the *kessle* as a box, a being-contained, the book as box, versus the absence of book and the absence of containment, run throughout Mendelsohn's *The Lost*. Black-bordered boxes, the mathematicians' questions regarding the maximum volume of a contained space, Noah's Ark as a floating box, the box-cars that took people to box-shaped gas chambers: all are related to the book as box. When one lives — as those who make up the cast of *The Lost* — in a world where Polish, Yiddish, German, Ukrainian, English, Hebrew and other languages co-exist, how does one know in which language to read?

39. "Reading" and "Misreading" might also be understood in terms of a process. As process, in what could a misreading consist? Certainly, "reading" cannot be restricted to one that starts at the beginning of a text, and continues to its end, and is autonomous, uncontaminated by breaks during which other, different, texts would be read. Because of how my life now is, I read five or six books more or less simultaneously (not to mention snippets from other books). That is, I can in the same day (have to) read Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Daniel Mendelsohn's *The Lost*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*, and Nicholas Royle's *Quilt.* Years ago, I would read one book at a time. I used to think that to read five or six novels or books, in such an process of random alternation, would have kept me from "reading", but I now think this heterologous or heteromerous way of proceeding is certainly also reading, and not misreading. I think here of Jacques Derrida, who did not read a book from start to end, but would move around almost like a hummingbird, back and forth across the book, in a zigzagging and seemingly disorderly way. He claimed this process enabled him to see many things that a start-to-finish way did not. The non-thematic reading he undertakes in "La Double Séance" would similarly only for naive readers be considered "misreading", understood in terms of process.

40. Reading, for Paul de Man, has something of prosopopeia to it (of the reader giving face, and voice, to the text, to the material inscription that strictly speaking has neither face nor voice), and if the reader does not recognize this, de Man would probably consider the reader not to be self-reflexive enough in his reading. Without awareness of the rhetorical dimension of reading, such reading would probably be considered misreading by de Man, insofar as reading has to be aware of its essentially misreading rhetorical tropicality, and so only reading that recognizes its status as misreading can be reading. That reading which is blind to it would be uncritical misreading, as

opposed to deconstructed misreading.

41. In this regard, it is possible to read in literature, or a certain speaking in figures and telling of stories, a mode of inquiry that is more vigilant than that which philosophy or a thinking of being can attain when philosophy or such thinking neglect figurality. The irreducibility of metaphor (what, following de Man, we call "rhetorical tropicality") means meaning is always elsewhere, transported. That means meaning is never present to itself. Meaning is always, as says de Man, intra-textual. No sooner have you read a word, than you have to leave it and articulate it with others, which "means" that what it means is always conferred, from and by that in relation to which it is. One might try to *chain* metaphor, to arrest its drift, but it would be error to think fundamental errancy can be fixed.

42. If reading, for de Man, always has something prosopopeiac, reading for Jacques Derrida requires, inversely, a virtual readability even if no actual reading ever takes place. A text in a sense reads itself, always already, even if no one ever reads it or figures out how to read it. Here is Derrida in 1962, on writing as a transcendental field and as condition for reading:

> [L']absence de la subjectivité au champ transcendental, absence dont la possibilité libère l'objectivité absolue, ne peut être qu'une absence factice, même si elle éloignait à tout jamais la totalité des sujets réels. Le champ de l'écriture a pour originalité de pouvoir se passer, dans son sens, de toute lecture actuelle en général ; mais sans la pure possibilité juridique d'être intelligible pour un sujet transcendantal en général, et si le pur rapport de dépendance à l'égard d'un écrivain et d'un lecteur en général ne s'annonce pas dans le texte, si une intentionnalité virtuelle ne le hante pas, alors, dans la vacance de son âme, il n'est plus qu'une littéralité chaotique, l'opacité sensible d'une désignation défunte, c'est-à-dire privée de sa fonction transcendantale. (*Intro* 85)

Writing would be chaotic letters, sensible opacity, were there not the ghost of virtual intentionality persisting even in the emptiness of the text's defunct soul. A text depends on a reader whether it really has one or not. A text, in Derrida's sense ("dans le texte") is a "red-room", in the sense of a space that has always already been read, even if only in sheer ideality. Jane Eyre, *the character*, becomes that read-text by dint of her conjuring up of the ghost ("might waken a preternatural voice", "some haloed face", "Mr. Reed's spirit", "it glided"), such that "some coming vision from another world" (*JE* 13) reads her, making her not be "l'illisibilité de l'inscription lapidaire", not the "opacité sensible" but rather into the expression of voice.

43. Chain enable.

44. Reading *Jane Eyre* is the experience, *pereo*, ("the Latin verb *pereo*, the literal meaning of which is 'to pass through'" [*The Lost*, 212]) passing through and out of the encounter between being chained and erring. The reader (who is a character in the book: "I have alluded to him, Reader"; "Reader, I married him" [*JE* 2, 382]) is the experience of the articulation and of the disarticulation of linking and severing, a "severring".

> L'histoire a son lieu dans l'enchaînement, *Verkettung*, du sujet et de l'objet. Mais comme cet enchaînement ne peut être originaire que s'il ne relie pas secondairement un objet et un sujet déjà constitué et donc anhistorique, cet enchaînement est l'origine même des deux termes qu'il enchaîne.[25]

The book title, *Jane Eyre*, announces the relation of fixation, of anchoring, of a certain *idéalité enchaînée*. "Jane" is privileged site of the former, instanced by the conversation between Diana and Jane: "'What makes you say he does not love you, *Jane*?' 'You should hear himself on the subject. [...] Would it not be strange, Die, to be *chained* for life to a man who regarded one but as a useful tool?'" (Chapter 35; l-my emphasis). To be married to Diana's brother would be for Jane to "Die", as her naming Diana here (hear, or see? when we read, do we imagine hearing an oral conversation or read its transcription? Ruskin says [or writes?] that "a book is essentially not a talking thing, but a written thing"), and as Jane will later tell Rivers ("If I were to marry you, you would kill me" [*JE* 351]). The novel *Jane Eyre* is a reflection on reading as sequencing, on *enchaînement.* "[T]he interrupted chain of my reflections" (Chapter 10), where she places her pragmatic advertisement, with Mrs. Gryce, permits the encounter with Rochester. Her hook-up with him is prefigured by the game of charades, in which "as he moved, chain clanked", whereby Rochester is identified as "Bridewell" (Chapter 18). Rochester would enchain Jane, "I will put a diamond chain around your neck" (Chapter 24), but when Jane is to be married (linked) to Rochester, Chapter 26, the outcome is rather "a lamp suspended from the ceiling by a chain". Rivers takes over: "'forging a fresh chain to fetter your heart?'" (Chapter 32). The genealogical chain of Jane Eyre is restored, when Jane Eyre inherits from John Eyre: "Circumstances knit themselves, fitted themselves, shot into order: the chain that had been lying hitherto a formless lump of links was drawn out straight,—every ring was perfect, the connection complete" (Chapter 33). Jane becomes Jane Eyre/Heir, thanks to the genealogy of John Eyre. Thus, whereas Rochester had intended to enchain Jane ("'I'll just — figuratively speaking — attach you to a chain like this' (touching his watch-guard)"; *JE* 231), it will be him whom she enjoins to herself: "just as if a royal eagle, chained to a perch, should be forced to entreat a sparrow to become its purveyor" (Chapter 38). Thus, the chain (or) sequence is complete,

25 J. Derrida, *Heidegger : la question de l'Être et l'histoire*, 8th lecture, course delivered in 1964-1965 at the École Normale Supérieure, in Paris. This course is being edited for publication in the autumn of 2011.

when Rochester's vision returns with his seeing literally the "*watch-guard*" (*JE* 231) which she becomes, "'Jane, have you a glittering ornament round your neck?' I had a gold watch-chain: I answered 'Yes.'" (Last chapter). Vision returns as the 'watch-Jane', the watchful Jane.

45. Brontë's novel makes proliferate reading possibilities which one cannot claim to be correct, authentic, in the sense of *genuine*, from the author, or even from an author. Yet in this proliferation, one is led to induce that such proliferation of the inauthentic, or unverifiably authentic, is where the authentic is, in its very absence. A misreading, which might be a miss reading, a missing reading or a Mrs or Miss reading, i.e., a certain "feminine" reading, might be what reading fundamentally is. (One could sketch a full-fledged gendered reading of *Jane Eyre* by focusing only on the equation of "curls" = "girls": i.e., one could deconstruct the patriarchal sovereignty in *Jane Eyre* were one to follow the isotopy of "curls" and "girls".) A fundamental figurality, non-literality, a metaphoricity, might be what Brontë in *Jane Eyre* brings the reader to, which is as much as to say, abandons her or him to.

46. In the present context of reading, misreading, and of their multiple applications in *Jane Eyre*, it is relevant to observe that *Jane Eyre*, in an inherent way, is about inheritance. In-here: stick, remain fixed, ghais, stick, cling. "Inherit", from *ghe*: to release, let go. *Ghe-ro*, in Latin heres: heir, "orphan". Released from her parents by their death, orphan without financial support, Jane Eyre finds herself to be heir, the heiress, of a large fortune that clung to her throughout her entire existence. This inherent inheritance belies her itinerant transmission of herself to herself, her heir-self and her errant self, from chapter to chapter, from episode to episode, from page to page, from word to word, from letter to letter, from blank space to blank space. *Jane Eyre* and the "subject position" figured by Jane Eyre, are transmitted, transmit themselves, in the movement of their reading. Yet even such an inter-temporal, intra-temporal, inter-textual and intra-textual reading comes after a structure of inheritance.

47. This transmission can be a mis-transcription, a slip of the bequeathing pen. For years, Daniel Mendelssohn misreads the name, Ruchele, of the third girl of his great uncle and great aunt, Schmiel and Esther Jäger, because he does not know how to read the "l" and the "e", taking them for a "t" and a "z". He had always read a handwritten version of her name as Ruchetz, and not as Ruchele. Had he seen the correctly spelled name, when hunting for references to her existence, he would not have identified it. A computerized word-search would be the worst reader in the world, if but one letter is wrongly transcribed. This obtains also with "Belchow", "the latter being a name

that I know to be inaccurate but which someone else might, at this moment, be carefully writing down on a notecard somewhere" (*The Lost*, 170). What if a copyist miscopies, if a writer misspells? Why does *Jane Eyre* give us to read both "I had indeed appeared as a *begger* to her" and "You are mistaken in supposing me a *beggar*" (*JE* 290, my emphasis)?

48. Similar to Derrida's contention that the unheard good luck of an invention of genius by dint of a mistake or accident can never be annulled by philological fundamentalism is Freud's basic notion that the misunderstanding of an *acte manqué* is always successful. We saw above Derrida ponder about what might be the origin of the uncertain transcription in "Oh, my friends, there is no friend". Freud relates that "[p]eople speak in such cases of a 'demon of misprints' (*Druckfehlerteufel*) or a 'type-setting fiend' (*Kobold des Setzkastens*)"[26]. Such instances "go beyond any psycho-physiological theory of misprints" (*SE* 15: 31). Freud of course devoted at least two studies to the question of what he groups under the general heading of "parapraxes", among which are perhaps most notably "slips of the tongue" (*versprechen*), "slips of the pen" (*verschreiben*) and misreading (*verlesen*): *On the Psychopathology of Everyday Life* ("Verlesen und Verschreiben" for "Misreadings and Slips of the Pen"[27], and *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. Misreading takes, he writes, the general form: "a person may read something, whether in print or manuscript, different from what is there to read (a *misreading* [Verlesen])" (*Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, [*SE* 15: 25]).

49. The general phenomenon of such (mis)reading is, according to Freud, owing to how "words, since they are the nodal points of numerous ideas, may be regarded as predestined to ambiguity". Neuroses and dreams have no compunction, writes Freud, about taking advantage of this feature of words, in cases such as condensation and disguise: "If one ambiguous word is used instead of two unambiguous ones the result is mis-leading (*irreführend*)" (*SE* 5: 341).

50. The slip of the tongue, the transfer of letters in a word, produce a verbal formation that is both a condensation and a displacement. Freud gives the following example for how a slip of the tongue puts into expression ambiguous combinations where something unremarkable would have otherwise supposedly been intended:

> "Yes indeed!" she answered, "they're a fine *Lippschaft*". She meant to say "*Sippschaft* [lot, crew]", but in the slip she compressed two ideas: viz. that her brother had himself once begun a flirtation with the daughter of this family, and that this daughter was said to have recently become involved in a

26 S. Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. 15, p. 31. Abbreviated hereafter as *SE* in text.
27 S. Freud, *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagsleben*, www.gutenberg.org/files/24429/24429-h/24429-h.htm

> serious and irregular *Liebschaft* [love-affair]. (*Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, vol. 6, 67)

In *Jane Eyre*, these movements are less in actual slips of the tongue in the diegesis, or in the narrative, and more in the different bundles of letters that recombine or turn up in different word-forcing revelations. The *roc* in Brocklehurst and Rochester, and *ehurst* and *hester* ending both their names, suggests how close they are to each other. Heeding the play of "temple", "curl", "Miss Temple", the hyperbolic curls of Bertha and all the depictions of female hair in the book might lead or read to the sexuality of the sorority or sorority of sexuality.

51. When Charlotte Brontë couples Rochester and Brocklehurst, these two paragons of rock hard masculinity, "we find *an unobserved error taking the place of an intentional concealment or repression*" (*SE* 6: 221). Helen, Jane, sharing the same bed, and all the young girls of Lowood in love with Miss Temple; what is the distortion or the adjustment by which is perceived what happens sexually in *Jane Eyre*? "Only for the rarest and best adjusted mind does it seem possible to preserve the picture of external reality, as it is perceived, against the distortion to which it is normally subjected in its passage through the psychical individuality of the percipient" (*SE* 6: 229).

52. A reading is always a reception according to a filter of perception. Such perceptual filter enables one to see, or read, something very different from what presents itself. Jane Eyre is confronted with numerous experiences that put her into contact, indirectly and directly, with Rochester's married status, and even with his wife; yet she misreads all of them, seeing or reading what she wants, which is also to say what she does not want. Freud casts such misreading as follows:

> In Lichtenberg's *Witzige und Satirische Einfälle* [1853] a remark occurs which is no doubt derived from a piece of observation and which comprises virtually the whole theory of misreading: "He had read Homer so much that he always read 'Agamemnon' instead of 'angenommen' [supposed]".
>
> For in a very large number of cases [*Fällen*] it is the reader's preparedness that alters the text and reads into it something which he is expecting or with which he is occupied. The only contribution towards a misreading which the text itself need make is that of affording some sort of resemblance in the verbal image [*Wortbild*], which the reader can alter in the sense he requires. Merely glancing at the text, especially with uncorrected vision, undoubtedly increases the possibility of such an illusion, but it is certainly not a necessary precondition for it. "Misreadings", (*Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, *SE* 6: 113)

A student asks a teacher: "so what does really happen between Jane and Rochester?" The teacher

thinks: "does she really think they have an existence outside the words on the page?" The teacher falters: the student's question catches like wild fire through the parched pine needles of the drought-stricken forest floor of the book whose acid-burning pages are the walls of the building he teaches in. And what if Brontë's book were what didn't happen *in* the words, but rather *through* or *by way* of, by the by-ways of the words? What if the curiosity of the most varied origins contained new insights? "As with slips of the tongue, certain cases [of misreading] appear to owe their origin to a work of condensation which has no further motivation" than from being from a "most varied origin" (*SE* 6: 273). Imagine that imagining had some truth to it: "*There is in fact some truth in*" the "interpretations" of the "paranoic" (*SE* 6: 256). Replace "paranoic" with the "analytic" or the "curious" mind, as the mind that is always besides, no matter what, the point which itself is never there in front of you, like words on a page.

53. Freud concludes about all the psychopathological modes of interpretation, including misreading: "*Certain shortcomings in our psychical functioning* [...] *and certain seemingly unintentional performances prove, if psycho-analytic methods of investigation are applied to them, to have valid motives and to be determined by motives unknown to consciousness*" (*SE* 6: 239).

54. Freud as reader of readers, and thus as meta-reader, commenting on the philologist Meringer and the psychiatrist Mayer, who had classified forms of parapraxes or misunderstandings, will be refigured by Paul de Man, commenting on the classifications for misreading that Harold Bloom came up with. Here is, first, Freud: "Two writers, Meringer and Mayer (a philologist and a psychiatrist), in fact made an attempt in 1895 to attack the problem of parapraxes from this angle. [...] They distinguish the various kinds of distortions imposed by the slip on the intended speech as 'transpositions', 'pre-sonances' [anticipations], 'post-sonances' [perserverations], 'fusions' [contaminations] and 'replacements' [substitutions]" (*SE* 15: 32).

55. The comparison between Freud's analysis, in *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, of all the forms of mis-reading and mis-speaking, all prefixed, in German by *ver-* ("they begin with the syllable '*ver*'", [*SE* 15: 26]), and more specifically of the five categories of Meringer and Mayer, and Paul de Man's review article of Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* (de Man, famous among other things for his recasting of Heidegger's syntagm *Die Sprache spricht* by *Die Sprache verspricht sich*), is striking for the extent to which the latter continues the former. Prior to analyzing the status of Bloom's list, which contains six kinds of misreading (one more than Meringer and Mayer's five), de Man insists in Bloom on

how to conceive of what happens in what one calls "reading" : "The first insight provided by Bloom is that the encounter" "between reader and text" "*must* take place" and that this encounter occurs before any biographical or historical event. Reading *must* occur, and its occurrence preempts biographical or historical considerations. This precision — prior to a biographical or historical subjectivity — means that "texts originate in contact with other texts", not from contact with "agents or events", unless, as de Man adds, "agents or events" are themselves always already "texts". Literature is based on such influential encounter, that is to say, it is "intratextual. And intratextual relationships necessarily contain a moment that is interpretive"[28].

56. As exemplification of what de Man, following Bloom, calls intra-textual reading, read the following:

> The structure is [...] that of homonym, in which disparate meanings happen to be expressed by the same word. By accident, here, the signs for the meaning and the signs for sign can coincide. Meanings and signs are linked not by intrinisic resemblance but by the accident of identity. [...] The pointed accuracy and multiple relevancy of the poet's words leave one unable to say what one means, by making one mean several different things at once. The passage at once requires to be read literally and makes literal reading impossible."[29]

57. The impossibility for literal reading to occur — to decipher the literal meaning it is also necessary to integrate the occurrences of the word in other places in the text — is the possibility, the necessity, of intra-textual reading, such that reading is incessant displacement: displacement of reading, as objective and subjective genitive. Reading occurs as displacement, but for this reason, reading is nothing but the dislocation, the destabilization, of reading: reading as errancy.

58. Such encounter, such intra-textuality (be it between two different texts, between a text and a "reader" ["who" is a text]), or between two words of any one text), "implies", he writes, "a reading." For our purposes on the *subject of misreading*, De Man's next statement is important: "The main insight of *The Anxiety of Influence* is the categorical assertion that this reading be a misreading or, as Bloom calls it, a 'misprision'" (BI 273). Because every encounter implies a modification of both parties in the encounter, reading, in order to occur, must be misreading. Likewise, no reading can occur without such misreading: the latter is the condition of possibility, and the very definition, of the former. Now, akin to Freud presenting the five misreadings according to the philologist Meringer and the psychiatrist Mayer, the philologist de Man (author of the essay

28 P. de Man, "Review of Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence*", *Blindness and Insight*, 272. Abbreviated hereafter *BI* in text.

29 C. Chase, *Decomposed Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition*, 27.

"Return to Philology", *Resistance to Theory*) and reader of Heidegger that he was depicts the "categories of misreading" (*BI* 276) of the psychologizing Bloom ("psychological vocabulary" [*BI* 276] of Bloom, the "subject-centered vocabulary of intent and desire" [*BI* 276], "extralinguistic impulses rooted in a subject" [BI 276]) as *rhetorically-derived terminology*: "a taxonomy of recurrent patterns of error in the act of reading", "six categories or 'revisionary ratios' (clinamen, tessera, kenosis, daemonization, askesis, and apophrades)" (*BI* 274).

59. For the purposes of reading (neither "reading" nor "misreading" will do), the deduction or reduction drawn by de Man is important: "Bloom's categories of misreading" do not only operate between different authors, different texts of a single author, different chapters of a single text, "but also" "between the different parts, down to each" "paragraph, sentence, and, finally, down to the interplay between literal and figurative meaning within a single word or grammatical sign" (*BI* 276). The encounter that is reading occurs at every caesura. Moreover, the meaning of a text, or the "affective appeal of text" is "just as well the result of linguistic structure as its cause" (*BI* 276). The "subversive" nature of Bloom's categories dwells not just in "meaning" being "shown to be centered in a linguistic property instead of centered in a [psychological] subject", but in a fundamental, nay abyssal, "put[ting] into question" of terms such as "cause, effect, center, and meaning" (*BI* 276). For de Man, the main interest of Bloom's theory has not to do with influence but with the "structural interplay between the six types of misreading, the six 'intricate evasions' that govern the relationship between texts" (*BI* 276). This government is, however, without sovereign. This rhetorical reading, this always open "encounter", has itself no power to assert meaning; the only assertive power is that of a confrontation among a plurality of voices, of texts to use de Man's term: "the rhetorical terminology de-constructs thematic modes of discourse but it has no assertive power of its own. This assertive power (if it can still be called that) resides in the interplay between the various modes of error that constitute a literary text" (*BI* 276).

60. If de Man, following Bloom, is "correct" to conclude upon the misreading inherent to all, therefore, in errant reading, such may be the correlative of Freud's deductions that "the product of the slip of the tongue may perhaps itself have a right to be regarded as a completely valid psychical act": "the faulty act was itself quite a normal act" (*SE* 15: 35).

61. Perhaps there is some overlap of *chain err* and *Jane Eyre*. "Parapraxes are not chance events but serious mental acts; they have a sense; they arise from the concurrent action — or perhaps rather, the mutually opposing action — of two different intentions" (*SE* 15: 44); and "in cases of

distortion of names, for instance, we cannot suppose that it is always a matter of competition between two similar but different names" (*SE* 15: 43).

62. What I want to highlight here, in this reading of "ere" (sounds like *err*, not *ear*, although that depends), in this err-reading of an always already ("ere") or *repetition*, is that there is no real agreement on how the name "Eyre" should be pronounced. Some argue that it should be pronounced like "ere", and others with the diphthong, like "ire". What I want to note is how, in Gateshead, Jane is between two moments of "ire," there is the ire she felt when she defended herself against the attack of John Reed: "My habitual mood [...] fell into the embers of decaying ire" (JE 13). Here, what is said is that her "ire" is becoming corrupted, decayed, is decreasing. Then, when again provoked by the same John Reed, that decaying ire returns, "but as I instantly turned […] deep ire […] my corruption" (*JE* 22). The point I am trying to draw out is that Jane is not only an "interloper," an "uncongenial alien" because she is foreign, because she is like a gipsy, an outsider, and also not only because she is of the same birth as the dead man, the uncle Reed, who seems also to be a kind of a foreigner, like a gipsy that those (the surviving Master Reed) who own the estate and the State cannot get rid of. My point is, foreigner both as alien and as death, Jane is also a literary foreigner, as she passes into common words, as her proper name, *Eyre*, disappears and reappears in common nouns like "ere" and "ire," and this alienness, this strangeness, this literary ghostliness of the signifier, is another form her "real spirit" takes (she is an allegory of Psyche).

[…[30]]

63. The unusual impossibility of reading *Gulliver's Travels* that afflicts Jane Eyre in Gateshead happens, textually, through a movement that itself passes through the following series of link-words: 1) "vessel"/"travel"/"voyage"; 2) the word "book" becoming "wall-nooks" becoming "woods" and returning to "book"; 3) "tart", "vain"/ "vein", "leaves"/ "leaves".

64. Reading fails when its excess is also its lack. After the trauma of the "Red-room", Jane is given a "tart" on a "brightly painted china plate". She had loved to "examine" the plate but had never been permitted to do so. She also cannot eat the "tart". Neither the art of the plate, nor the art of the tart ("delicate pastry"), can transport her, although the plate is a "vessel". They have become "vain", a past try. Just as the "vessel" fails to transport, so too are books unreadable. Bessie asks Jane if she wants a "book" and Jane reflects upon the word "book": "the word *book* acted as a

30 Here would be inserted the matrix of this article, its condition of possibility, to wit, the *chain of err* in *Jane Eyre*, consisting in a *gathered* dissemination (*err, air, ere, dare, dear, reed, read,* etc.) out of whose remainder originates the appearances of truth and error. For this matrix, download the Appendix to this article.

transient stimulus" (*JE* 17). The book she asks for is *Gulliver's Travels*. Yet its travels, although hitherto a "vein" of interest becomes as "in vain" as the "tart" had become a "vain favour". The book of travels transports no more than the "vessel" of the plate did. It does not permit a "voyage". The transfer from "vessel" to "voyage" and to "*Travels*" is relayed by a tranfer from the leaves of the book, in "turned over its *leaves*", to the leaves of plants, "in vain among foxglove *leaves*". This "in vain", repeating "vain favours" and "vein of interest" in the same paragraph, opens the vein of reading, and a bleeding stains the paragraph: "book" => "*book*" => "wall-nooks" => "woods" => "I closed the *book*", is one line, bringing into visibility the others ("foxglove *leaves*" => "turned over its *leaves*"; "vessel" => "voyage" => "*Travels*"; "vain" => "vain" => "vein"; "eerie" => "dreary" => "wand*erer*"; "dread" => "dared"). This homonymic (*leaves*), homophonic (*vain/vein*), homosemic (*vessel/voyage*), metaleptic (*book*, *wall-nook*, *woods*, *book*), anagrammatic (*dread*, *dared*) network obliges a reading of Jane's failure to read: "I would have a book" => "This book I had again and again perused" => "I close the book, which I dared no longer peruse". Such is how one reads Jane's incapacity to read, terrorized by the Miss Reeds, the Master Reeds, and the Mrs (*misses*) Reeds. This incapacity reached its apoplexy in the space of punished reading (the *Red Room*). This is why Jane must escape, and why any such reader must similarly protect him- or herself from the terror exercised by the merely powerful.

65. Jane does not, and cannot, read there (there are no books). It is a place accessible, however, through words: "in those last words lies the secret of the red-room—the spell [...]" (11). Jane herself becomes a read text. Seeing herself in the mirror, as a any reader might also recognize herself in a textual character, she thinks her image "like one of the tiny phantoms [...] Bessie's evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors" (*JE* 11). Yet Jane does not read in the red-room; rather, she is read. This becoming-text, becoming object and not subject, reversing the prosopopeia performed by a reader, Jane, who brings out of textual inanimation the figures read and into the liveliness that is the space of reading, happens to Jane, who becomes better read than dead, or read and therefore as if dead. The lexeme "read" [red] is not used in the red-room passage, but it makes many appearances, from the rimes, to the word in words, to the anagrammes: "Gateshead", "bed", "red", "red", "bed", "bed, sp*read*", "head", "dead", "bed", "bed", "headstrong", "bled", "Gateshead", "red", "Gateshead", "d*read*", "bed", "dead", "head", "*read*ily", "d*read*ful", "dared", "dare", "h*eard*", "*drea*ry", "dared" (*JE* 10-12). Jane Eyre does not, herself, in the red-room read: she is however read, seeing herself, in the mirror, first as figure from a book, and then by the light that spotlights her, that reads her voice out of her, like a reader mouthing the words read in the text.

When in the dark red-room at night, Jane imagines Mr. Reed's spirit, like a "haloed face", guarding her, whereupon she uncovers her own eyes, only to find herself seen: "shaking my hair from my eyes", "to look boldly around the dark room. At this moment a light gleamed on the wall. Was it, I asked myself, a ray from the moon penetrating some aperture in the blind?" (*JE* 13). Later, Jane will realize it was a "gleam from a lantern", though in the moment, she "thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world" (*JE* 14). This light brings forth from Jane a primal scream so shattering that it is not even recorded in the text, at the moment it occurs (the scream will be, but only lines later). Be it the moon, the lantern or an otherworldly look, this light figures the eyes of a reader, able to bring forth voice from the read text. When de Man, commenting Wordsworth on how the sun shines upon the epitaph on a tombstone ("the sun looks down upon the stone"), he points out that "the sun becomes the eye that reads the text of the epitaph"[31]. If, against this prospect, de Man was cremated, his ashes spread out in an unknown place without any tombstone, in *Jane Eyre*, eye-light, through the "blind", highlights *Ey*(r)*e*, and this reading confers voice upon her: "a sound filled my ears", we and she find out after, is the "what a scream!", the "what a dreadful noise!" (*JE* 14) heard by Abbot and Bessie. In the red-room, Jane is read, and the eye-light brings a voice out of the text it reads. Jane becomes the text (the read room) whose figuring takes the form of being illuminated such that it speaks, or at least, produces voice.

66. Although with Rivers, "I grew pliant as a reed under his kindness" (*JE* 357), when with the Reeds, Jane is only the victim of a number of bad reads, false interpretations, dishonest accusations and rigged verdicts "Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, for ever condemned?" (*JE* 11), victim of each "Miss Reed", of the "Misses Reed" together, of a "Master Reed" (who/that uses the book as a blood-drawing missile weapon), and "Mrs. Reed or her children" (*JE* 10, 12). Unlike the light that reading her, brings forth her voice, these "Reeds" all reduce her to an a-signifying thing, "a *thing* that could not sympathise", "a heterogeneous *thing*", "a useless *thing*", "a noxious *thing*" (*JE* 12). As thing, she is far from, it might appear, a *king*, the *rey*, the kings, the *reyes*, the sovereign: "Il faut […] tenter de le lire dans la langue qu'il parle, même si on ne s'y limite pas" (*PA* 100). The "r" in her name keeps the reader from seeing in her just a figure of the Eye, the sort of perch of vision or "eyrie" (*JE* 175). The red room stages, for sure, a particular mode of hyperbolic, because poetic, sovereignty (reign of the door, *foreign*, as that space of passage and encounter).

67. In the red room, Jane is in the room of what, of whom, she takes to be the sovereign.

31 P. de Man, "Autobiography as De-facement", *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 75.

Recurrent word and theme in *Jane Eyre*, the sovereign or sovereignty haunts the red room explicitly. The "pale throne", perhaps indicating a dead thrown, like Nietzsche's "pale criminal" (*Thus Spake Zarathoustra*), is associated with not only the sovereign of her mother's brother, who was the ruler of the Reed household until his death. In the red room, Jane is struck by the "vacant majesty" of the bed and room, and this space is seen as a "visionary hollow" (*JE* 11). These two pairings, "vacant majesty" and "visionary hollow" relate chiasmatically. "Vacant" and "hollow" share the same signification of emptiness. If "majesty" is normally associated to an idea of *political* sovereignty, linked here to the rule her uncle had of his household when alive, the word "majesty" is in this chiasmus linked to "visionary", attesting a poetic sovereignty, a poetic *majesty*, to wit, that which Jane thinks the ghost of her dead uncle assures her in a form of poetic justice at the wrongdoing to which she is subjugated by those illegitimate Miss and Mrs and Master Reeds who do not respect the dying wishes of her uncle. "Il y a la majesté souveraine du souverain, du Roi, et il y a, plus majestueuse ou autrement majestueuse, plus souveraine et autrement souveraine, la majesté de la poésie, ou la majesté de l'absurde en tant qu'elle témoigne de la présence de l'humain"[32]. Throughout *Jane Eyre*, a poetic sovereignty challenges all discourses of mastery, discourses of political sovereignty most often (Brocklehurst, Rochester, Rivers) embodied by phallic men. A poetic majesty, a visionary majesty, a majesty of poetry, of visionary reading, a majesty of poetic reading that for masters, for certain phallic teaching masters, would be punished as misreading much as the curls of girls will be shorn in acts of excision and castration, speaks in the red room, like the poem speaks in the room of its reading.

68. The Red-room initiates a spread-out equivalent, the centrifugal displacement of the centripetal condensation of the room of the red dread, "try to say that minimal palindrome so close to 'dead' perhaps lisped from the start with that skip in view: 'dad'"[33], into the *moor* of the spreading "moor" (used in the red-room passage, "moor", 11, again in chapter 14), as the "Marston Moor" (26), and then disseminated in "moor" that is repeated some twenty five times between Chapter 28 and 37 (the widespread "moor", "Moor House", *et al*.). If, thanks in part to Helen Burns, Jane Eyre is ejected from the confining space of real and symbolic "*red-rooms*", to the exotic "*moors*" of the later part of *Jane Eyre*, she is Charlotte Brontë's re-reading and re-writing of Mary Shelley's Ellen Burnet, from her 1829 published story "The Mourner", Ellen Burnet whose imminent suicide draws out of their "*room*" the two men who are in search of her (reversing their planned direction to Ireland, as they must, palindromically, backtrack into England) and back out

32 J. Derrida, *La Bête et le souverain*, tome 1, 307.
33 N. Royle, *Quilt*, 25.

onto "the wide-spread *moor*"[34] where the story ends.

69. To read is to a misreader what to re-read is to a dare-read-er(r). To read is to change directions: "Pour ce que je l'aime encore, je préviens alors l'impatience du mauvais lecteur. […] Il est *mauvais*, lecteur, de ne plus aimer à revenir en arrière"[35].

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34 M. Shelley, "The Mourner", *Collected Stories of Mary Shelley*, 97.
35 J. Derrida, *La Carte postale*, 8.

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