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INTRODUCTION

## The Legacy of Jacques Derrida

Michael A. Peters<sup>a</sup> and Elizabeth M. Grierson<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; <sup>b</sup>RMIT University Melbourne

In October 2004 the French philosopher Jacques Derrida died. He was 74. Born to a Jewish family on July 15, 1930, in El Blair, French Algeria, Derrida moved to Paris at the age of 19, there to study at *Ecole Normale Supérieure* in the tutelage of the Hegel scholar, Jean Hyppolite. Greatly influenced by encounters with the scholarship of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Levinas (amongst many others) Derrida's work invoked the mutability of language and flawed assumptions of philosophy. Heralded as 'the father of deconstruction', even 'the embodiment of the philosopher-rebel', Derrida's oeuvre was seen by his supporters as the most significant work of philosophy, politics, education, and cultural criticism of our contemporary times and by his detractors as frivolous, subversive, even dangerous.<sup>1</sup>

This introduction examines the 'politics of death' focusing on both the vilification and memorialisation of Jacques Derrida following his death in October, 2004. It adds to this discourse by profiling Derrida as a teacher and it emphasises a deceptively simple proposition – 'Derrida's pedagogy is political in the sense that it teaches us to read and write *differently*'. This can be unpacked by reference to a history of the concept 'différance'. As such Derrida's pedagogy calls into question the 'hard core' of metaphysical assumptions protecting the Western institutions of reading and writing, not just the written word but also extra-textual practices of speaking and acting (insofar as they are historically tied to notions of freedom and still open to definition within international law). This pedagogy is a process that allows us to interrogate the institution of literature, of publishing and writing in relation to both the subject and the citizen, and beyond that, to new forms of communication and media, and to the concept of democracy itself.

This collection engages with these fields of concern. The various encounters with Derrida's work are particularly timely in the broader context of the 'knowledge age' with its radically diverse archives. As fast as discourses of interdisciplinarity and multi-vocality are propagated, corresponding instrumentalist strategies serve and wait to regulate difference and close debate. New forms of protectionism arise as knowledge is framed and reframed through global information transfer, and political enterprises link innovation and knowledge with the economic outputs of industry. The works of Jacques Derrida, and the commentaries and media constructions surrounding him in life and death, open the archives of Derrida for further discursive enquiry.

### Memorialising Jacques Derrida: The politics of death<sup>2</sup>

Derrida's death on Friday, October 8, 2004, spawned the same journalistic insouciance and caustic xenophobia on both sides of the Atlantic that occasioned his work when he was alive. The *New York Times* (October 10, 2004) published a scurrilous front-page obituary with the headline: "Jacques Derrida, Abstruse Theorist, Dies in Paris at 74", written by Jonathan Kandell, that recalled the culture wars of the 1980s and prompted outrage from his American 'friends'. Kandell refueling the 'de Man affair' and emphasising Heidegger's influence on Derrida's thought, poured scorn on deconstruction and revived the conservative critique mounted by the likes of Roger Kimball and

Allan Bloom. Samuel Weber and Kenneth Reinhard (October 13, 2004) responded by describing Kandell's obituary as "mean-spirited and uninformed" and went on to argue that far from "undermining many of the traditional standards of classical education", as Kandell maintained, Derrida in fact "wrestled with central works of the Western tradition, including Plato, Shakespeare, and the Declaration of Independence – none of which he slighted". They sparked an avalanche: their joint letter gathered so many signatures (some 4,455 as of early March, 2005) that The School of Humanities at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), where Derrida had taught for many years, hosted a memorial web site.<sup>3</sup> The letter from UCI faculty, students and staff to the *New York Times*, published on this web site, accused Kandell of having "shabbily misrepresented the life and achievements of a great thinker, a most generous teacher, and a courteous human being". The letter goes on to list the eleven honorary degrees and other honours bestowed upon Derrida, the 70 books and 420 speaking engagements he had given over forty years active service around the globe. It also quashed the rumour that at Irvine he was paid 'hefty fees'.

Karen Lawrence and Andrzej Warminski's (Dean of Humanities and Head of English at UCI) joint statement on *Remembering Jacques Derrida* (October, 2004) speaks palpably and unambiguously as a testament to Derrida foremost as a teacher. It is important to state this in full:

Those who know 'Derrida' only as the world's most famous contemporary philosopher or as an international 'celebrity' might be surprised to learn that his teaching activity made an invaluable and indelible contribution to the intellectual life of UCI. Starting in 1987, he taught a regular seminar in the spring quarter that, for five weeks, consisted of two two-hour lectures open to the public and one two-hour discussion session for the graduate students enrolled in the course for credit. The opening lectures of each seminar would usually draw a crowd of around 150 students and faculty, as well as some curiosity seekers, from all over California. This number would settle down to 80 or so serious participants once it quickly became clear that the seminar was not going to be just a spectacle but rather a rigorous inquiry into a difficult (and often timely) topic. But however difficult the problem addressed and however rigorous Derrida's working through it, evident to all was Derrida's genuine pedagogical gift. A true 'philosopher' in the ancient Greek sense, Derrida was always, and first of all, a teacher.

However, Derrida's pedagogy was not confined to classroom instruction. He generously served on graduate students' Ph.D. qualifying examinations, turning them into intellectual events. Always unstinting in his praise of good work, Derrida would never fail to point out, delicately and politely, what the student (or the faculty member serving on the committee!) had not yet thought through, how he or she could and should go further and ask more questions before hurrying to premature answers. Equally generous and equally unsparing, Derrida's extensive comments on students' papers became collectors' items. They arrived in the summer in the form of two- or three- or four-page letters written by hand in Derrida's distinctive handwriting. Derrida's dedication to his teaching was also clear in the six hours (and more) a week he devoted to office hours. Every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday a passerby would see a line of students outside the door of Derrida's office in Humanities Hall – with every student getting the time needed to discuss his or her paper topic. ([http://www.humanities.uci.edu/remembering\\_jd/lawrence\\_warminski.htm](http://www.humanities.uci.edu/remembering_jd/lawrence_warminski.htm))

The allusion to Socrates and the Socratic tradition has been mentioned by a number of commentators, who, in addition, have written powerfully of Derrida in relation to the Socratic vocation of philosophy as a kind of dying, linking him not only to trumped-up charges about the corruption of youth, but also to the trope on 'the death of the author', *hauntology*, ghosts and spectres. Derrida, who actively explored death and deconstruction as the work of mourning, held, following Heidegger and Levinas, that giving one's life for the other is the purest demonstration of individuality. In *The Gift of Death*, which was originally presented at Royaumont, December 1990, in a conference entitled 'The Ethics of the Gift', Derrida explored self-sacrifice as grounded upon its status as radically individualistic gift. Here the notion of the gift is an ineffable horizon that conditions political, philosophical, ethical and religious tradition yet transcends all conceptualisation. As some critics have also commented some of Derrida's most powerful meditations on friends and colleagues who were his contemporaries, such as Foucault, Levinas, de Man, Deleuze, Lyotard, come down to us in the form of eulogies and memorials. This 'attitude

towards death' was also to elicit cheap jokes. John J. Miller and Mark Molesky, writing in *The National Review* began their piece with the following one-liner: "It is tempting to say that Jacques Derrida's death has been greatly exaggerated. The French philosopher was so closely associated with nihilism and metaphysical absence that it's perhaps worth wondering whether he ever lived at all".<sup>4</sup>

Derrida's death was received in the UK in very similar ways. It was almost a replay ... Roger Scruton dismissed Derrida as an "anything goes" philosopher and *The Times* (Thursday, November 18, 2004) claimed that Derrida "carried on the demolition [of objective truth and traditional morality] where Nietzsche left off". *The Economist* (October 21, 2004) wrote: "The inventor of deconstruction—an ill-defined habit of dismantling texts by revealing their assumptions and contradictions—was indeed, and unfortunately, one of the most cited modern scholars in the humanities". It was up to Terry Eagleton, writing in *The Guardian* (Friday, October 15, 2004) with characteristic gusto to bemoan: "English philistinism" suggesting, "our home-grown intelligentsia gave a set of bemused, bone-headed responses to the death of Jacques Derrida. Either they hadn't read him, or they believed his work was to do with words not meaning what you think they do. Or it was just a pile of garbage". And he went on to say:

The man was regarded by the stuffed shirts as a subversive nihilist who believed that words could mean anything you liked, that truth was a fiction, and that there was nothing in the world but writing. In their eyes, he was a dangerous mixture of anarchist, poet and jester...

He was one of a lineage of anti-philosophers, from Kierkegaard to Wittgenstein, who invented a new style of philosophical writing. He understood that official thought turns on rigorously exclusive oppositions: inside/outside, man/woman, good/evil. He loosened up such paranoid antitheses by the flair and brio of his writing, and in doing so spoke up for the voiceless, from whose ranks he had emerged (<http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,6109,1328214,00.html>).

In media spaces the bloggers were stretched for comment too. Where one blog more cautiously ended his largely acrimonious posting with: "I regret Derrida's death. I welcome the death of deconstructionism"; another clearly displayed its bias and anger: "Pretentious Asshole: Carefully Crafted Trashademic Thoughts".<sup>5</sup> Rather poignantly and insightfully *Bat020* wrote:

Derrida's death comes at a time when the constant ritual denunciations of his work have taken on a particularly ugly and strident tone. It is not difficult to see why. His patient, unyielding disassembly of the 'white mythology' of Western metaphysics was bound to enrage our contemporary crusaders, those who would wish to squander the legacy of the European enlightenment by pressing it into the service of an obnoxious triumphalist imperial ideology (<http://bat.blogspot.com/>).

Most perceptively perhaps, Rachel Nigro (2005: 1) in 'Derrida's Last Conference' wrote with great precision rising above the mire to comment on the symptoms of the discourse surrounding Derrida's death:

Philosophy, strictly speaking, has been resistant to Derrida. This is a sign or a symptom that should be analyzed. Such rejection can be seen as a symptom of a disease that has been contaminating all manner of western academic discourse. There is a resistance [sic] to what is new, to what is unknown; the bureaucracy of thought that threatens all kinds of institutions and confines the capacity of thought in our time. This is what Derrida calls closure. (<http://www.germanlawjournal.com/article.php?id=535>).

Nigro is right enough about this to hint at an epidemiology of Western philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Remember the 'Derrida affair', which Derrida prefers to call the 'Cambridge affair', on the occasion of his being awarded an honorary doctorate?

In May 1992 some twenty analytic philosophers from ten countries wrote a letter to the editor of *The Times* (published 9 May) to protest and to intervene in a debate that occurred at Cambridge University over whether Jacques Derrida should be allowed to receive an honorary degree.<sup>7</sup> The signatories, none of whom were faculty at Cambridge, laid two very serious charges against Derrida:

that his work “does not meet accepted standards of clarity and rigour” and that he is not a philosopher. In elaborating these two charges, they argued, first, that while Derrida has shown “considerable originality” (based upon a number of ‘tricks’ and ‘gimmicks’) he has, at the same time, stretched “the normal forms of academic scholarship beyond recognition”, employed “a written style that defies comprehension”, brought contemporary French philosophy into disrepute, and offered nothing but assertions that are either “false or trivial” in a series of “attacks upon the values of reason, truth and scholarship”.<sup>8</sup> Second, they submitted that the influence of Derrida’s work has been “almost entirely in fields outside philosophy”, to give sufficient grounds for casting doubt on his suitability as a candidate for an honorary degree in philosophy. This affair constitutes an event of some significance for it is unusual for philosophers from outside a university to attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of another university by organising opposition to the granting of an honorary degree, and to mount this opposition through the news media.

What Derrida called ‘the Cambridge Affair’ demonstrates the extent to which questions of style are at centre stage in contemporary philosophy and how battle-lines have been drawn over the issue of philosophy as both a form of discourse and a kind of writing.<sup>9</sup> On one side are a group of prominent and, indeed, internationally well-respected analytic philosophers who, in their joint attack upon Derrida, want to occlude questions of style. Driven by a conception of ‘scientific’ philosophy wedded to a distinct method of analyticity, they are deeply concerned for the future of their discipline. The possibility that the institution of modern philosophy might come to accept as important the notion of style in philosophical writing, for them, leaves open the door to the enemies of rigour and clarity: persuasion, rhetoric, and metaphor.

Derrida’s (1992: 134) response to ‘the Cambridge Affair’ was to focus upon the ‘journalistic’ style of the letter itself and to understand it as “another demonstration of [philosophical] nationalism”, which violates the very principles of “reason, truth and scholarship” that it claims to represent. He suggests that his inquisitors “confuse philosophy with what they have been taught to *reproduce* in the tradition and style of a particular institution” (135), and in response to a question concerning the Parisian location of his own work, he comments: “One never writes just anywhere, out of a context and without trying to aim or privilege a certain readership, even if one can’t and shouldn’t limit oneself to this” (137). Perhaps, more than any philosopher before him, and from his earliest beginnings,<sup>10</sup> Jacques Derrida (1995: 218) has called attention to the *form* of “philosophical discourse” — its “modes of composition, its rhetoric, its metaphors, its language, its fictions” (218) — not in order to assimilate philosophy to literature but rather to recognise the complex links between the two and to investigate the ways in which the institutional authority of academic philosophy, and the autonomy it claims, rests upon a “disavowal with relation to its own language”. The question of philosophical styles, he maintains, is, itself, a philosophical question.<sup>11</sup>

The question of Derrida’s legacy is a complex one. Perhaps, we are too close to him yet to be able to judge effectively. Derrida has changed the face of continental philosophy and has had a significant impact on literary theory. His influence is evident across the humanities and social sciences, as well as in international law and clearly anchored in a range of new ‘studies’ that began to emerge during the 1970s. His work is strongly referenced in analytic philosophy and across a wide range of academic specialities, such as philosophy of religion, psychoanalysis, feminist studies, postcolonial studies and so on. In short his impact of the disciplines referred to as ‘the Humanities’ has been immense and there is little doubt that this influence will wane. Rather, scholars in all fields, such as education and communication studies, cultural and visual studies, are coming to appreciate Derrida’s thought and to follow, develop, modify, adapt and adopt both his ideas and his style.

Derrida was close to Louis Althusser, one of the great French Marxist philosophers and epistemologists, and one of the very few people to meet him regularly after Althusser was incarcerated and undergoing treatment, even though they did not talk about Marxism. In his memoir *The Future Lasts Forever*, Louis Althusser regarded Derrida as the greatest living philosopher of the twentieth century. These estimations do not mean much and we ought to refrain from

philosophical league tables—nothing is more foreign to the spirit of philosophy—yet it is the case that Derrida’s ‘legacy’—his body of work (*corpus*), his style, his forms of philosophical writing and its institutions, his personal networks, his pedagogy and, above all, his questions—will mark him out as a ‘great’ philosopher in the Western philosophical canon.

### Writing with, about, alongside and through Derrida

The articles in this volume highlight Derrida’s ways of thinking and lines of influence. They engage with issues to do with philosophy and communication, constitution and democracy, knowledge and pedagogy, in a range of dispositions responding to questions posed by Derrida.

Asking the question of death: “If we could speak again with Derrida what language would we speak?” Elizabeth Grierson moves to the dilemma of saying *Adieu* to a friend and the inadequacy of language in the face of death. “What do we speak when we speak of death?” Grierson asks as she brings death into proximity with the communicative spaces that both surround it and avoid it. The form of address is from the other and to the other as it seeks without question the word *à-Dieu* that the death of a significant scholar demands, and the death of Other accords when “we meet death in the face of the Other” (Derrida, 1999: 120). Rippling through this discussion are echoes of Heidegger, *there is no time like death*, and Levinas ... “*this word à-Dieu, which in a certain sense, I get from him*” (Derrida). We are reminded that we do not speak singly and there is always the possibility of wreathing the headstones of history with poetic texts and soothing with metaphor the gravity of well-rehearsed language.

“Dedicated to Our Sons”, Grierson’s article is deeply personal – unavoidably so, and at the same time reverberating with questions of philosophy and being: “If death is our remembering, we face the terror of forgetting”. Echoes of Heidegger trace through the text. Separations and reparations mark the impossible crossing of death in an attempt to “grasp its edges”, as Grierson puts it, and we are left with the inadequacy of the public address and the reluctant necessity of the “work of mourning” (Derrida, 1999: 2). This necessity is brought forth through a series of reflections, which reveal the inadequacy of language and of time, ‘proper’ time, when reason defies its own logic and philosophy its authority. Grierson posits the dilemma: “I am writing to go beyond myself; but what anguish if I succeed” ... She calls here on H  l  ne Cixous to express the risks of going beyond the limits of the known in language while facing the impossibility of reason in the death of Other.

Judith Pryor takes this interrogation of foundational limits and principles to draw out the implications of “Declarations of Independence” as forms of constitutional authority. In light of Derrida’s writing on constitutional texts and his deconstruction of the opposition between speech and writing, Pryor’s discussion rests specifically on Aotearoa New Zealand’s *Treaty of Waitangi* (1840), the United States’ *Declaration of Independence* (1776) and the supposedly unwritten British constitution. Pryor intervenes in what she calls the “messianic notion of revelation” that might surround Derrida as a scholar and thinker, by asserting: “Derrida’s insights must *actively* be put to work in order to analyse the process by which meanings are constructed”. Pryor’s method is to put Derrida’s work to work in her post-colonial engagements that “draw on Derrida’s reflections on writing, law and origins to problematise the notion of the origins or foundations in constitutional texts, especially in relation to prior indigenous claims”. It is the activation of difference through the reading of constitutional texts that Pryor seeks; and in so doing she is showing that: “An origin, simultaneously a non-origin, never appears as it *is*, but is always already a repetition”.

This is particularly pertinent for the globalised world of today, where the limits of the ‘nation’ and assumptions of ‘people’ as categorisations are constantly shifting in the multiple layers of meaning that they discursively produce. External impositions and internal politics are continually at work; and when their limits become blurred, and consensual guarantees of meaning can no longer hold, then difference is activated as a political procedure. Finite and self-evident reifications of meaning might be deliberately and conventionally called upon by political rhetoric, but the

relations of difference demand other responses, be the constitution written or unwritten. The refusal to close down assumed meanings enables Pryor to call forth the Derridean “activation of difference” in her discussion, which ultimately addresses “what, if anything, *the nation might be*”.

Educational philosophy and theory is the sustaining issue of Janet Mansfield’s article, which, as she states, “draws on Jacques Derrida’s philosophy as a methodological tool for examining the notion of ‘difference’”. What singles out Mansfield’s discussion is her focus on the creative arts, particularly visual arts and music, fields too often overlooked in educational research and analysis. Mansfield urges that singularity, when operated as an ideology, be avoided: “Derrida’s philosophy of difference works to legitimate space for the partial, the messy, the unfinished, the tentative, to make space for functional and utilitarian art, to challenge and step outside the binary of what is and is not art, to challenge the ranking of one culture’s art over another’s”.

Mansfield relates her discussion of art and education to the uncertainty of knowledge in these globalised times of changed epistemological, political and technological contexts, which she tables as “an historical moment when governments and professional bodies seek to circumscribe teachers’ attitudes, skills, competencies and ‘behaviour’ with a ‘will to certainty’, a ‘will to truth’ (see Grierson & Mansfield, 2004)”. Thus she draws attention to the complex relations of technological expansions and the tendencies to political circumscription of our sites of knowledge.

Mansfield engages with deconstructive procedures of the subject of authority in her discussions of the *philosophy of difference*, pointing out that Derrida’s work in this arena may “be regarded as part of the diagnosis of limits and limitations to the modern project”. This is an important point for, in many respects, “the modern project” defines the scope of other articles in this volume, as it is the authority of the modern and the structural that Derrida’s work displaces and deconstructs. Questions of identity are implicit within this procedure. Calling for a “celebration of the play of difference”, Mansfield poses an argument for the substantiation of difference and the need for education to understand its own part in the construction of the subject. Mansfield’s work reminds us to ask: “whose knowledge and which knowledge will have status” in the knowledge investments of education in these globalised times.

Status implied by the ‘proper name’ is the focus of the next article by Mark Jackson. Working closely with Derrida in a way that might be called a Derridean style, Jackson seeks to uncover what is meant by the Derridean text and its status. He asks, where lies the ‘living on’ of a name, a proper name, one we call in this instance ‘Derrida’; and “what is *filiation* such that we might have even commenced with writing on or with or for Derrida”? Working through the Derridean text *Glas* (1990), Jackson problematises this notion of naming or calling the text, Derridean.

Just as *Glas* is a text arranged in parallel columns, engaging the German philosopher, GWF Hegel on the one hand, and the French novelist Jean Genet on the other, so Jackson is working across different styles and signatures. Jackson’s stylus carves out the questions implicit in the act of gifting this volume to “The Legacy of Jacques Derrida” – as though we can name Derrida and his project. “Could one say, in good faith and in truth, anything that came to mind, *anything*, when one is concerned of Derrida, thinking about him?” And Jackson takes that question further in “a more general question ... of what it means to write about ‘X’ ... and what the name names”. In other words, what does it mean to identify a work by a signature? What does a signature signify when the signifier and meaning are unhinged? Laws of legitimation are at stake when one seeks to inscribe the name in a way that is outside or beyond the propriety of the metaphysical.

Through Jackson’s writing we feel, at least in part, that we are working through a process of scanning, seeking reception yet facing non-reception, coming together yet acknowledging the separations until we might reach a point of disclosure between Hegel and Genet, between philosophy and literature, that “is barely a question at all” and we are left at *glas*, the death-knell, asking still “a question of the name”. This article works across a complex engagement by Derrida on the movement of a name from its ‘nature’ as familial bond to its becoming concept. There we face the *filiation* in the proper name as “a movement towards ethical order in education”. And we are

reminded of Derrida's words: "Against what is rearing (*une élève*) practiced? To what is it answerable [*De quoi relève-t-elle*]? What does it relieve?" (Derrida, 1990: 15).

From this challenge of style and naming, we move to art and the artist's project. Pamela Clements takes the work of Derrida on the "undecidable" towards Deleuze, the "un-thought within thought". She argues that undecidability is a characteristic in visual arts when the artist is working through concepts that cannot be externalised to the unity of the state and singular meaning, but which form a series of displacements acting as a slippage between two values. Clement poses that an artist, rather than deliberately working with the concept of undecidables, may work to create an artwork that might anticipate aspects of slippage incorporating elements such as undecidables. These are derived from opposites but cannot be fully included in one or the other. Somewhere in-between they hover, and thus previously closed systems of meaning-making open to numerous possibilities.

Putting this condition to the test Clements creates artworks whereby seemingly unrelated parts might be made into a whole via the perception of the viewer. The challenge is not to provide meaning but to explore where meaning may or may not originate in an artwork. Visual manifestations of spatial and temporal situations oscillate between actual and virtual and the viewer is left to find a path through the meaning-making maze. In the disjunctions between sound, image, movement and time, there is a game play at work whereby the "disjunctions could put thought into contact with the unthought" as a Deleuzian procedure.

What Clements is proposing may have implications for pedagogy. When confronted with the unexpected or indecipherable, disruption or dislocation, says Clements, we experience vibrations to create new forms of thought – or as Deleuze (1994: 147) said: "To think is to create – there is no other creation – but to create is first of all to engender 'thinking' in thought." Thus, through the processes of art as a pedagogical procedure, Clements is claiming that we may encounter thinking in new ways beyond the already known, the habitual and the conventional.

Just as Clements takes us beyond over-rationalised and habitual procedures of meaning-making, so Andrew Gibbons searches for spaces in early childhood education beyond the over-organised activities and the forms of response they elicit. Gibbons takes the notion of play to the question of early childhood education as he undertakes some serious analysis of 'organised' play, which he argues is too often a narrowly defined and over-rationalised activity of childhood. Working through Derrida he examines Derrida's encounters with Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1922), which, claims Gibbons, provide a different thinking of the revealing of the child's play. Underlying this article is a consideration of theoretical constructions of play, and the 'play expert', as a technique of constituting and governing the nature of the child subject. Play, perceived as the child's 'work' is subject to the theorist's gaze, and "in the discipline of child development theory play has indeed become an intensely observed, classified and prescribed phenomenon".

Gibbons draws from Derrida's play with deconstruction, *différance*, and Freud's play of *fort/da*, as it reveals the child as a particular player. Claiming that 'play' in early childhood education is a technology that governs both child and adult, Gibbons is showing that "Derrida's play disturbs a calm, calculated, measured gaze upon the child's play" to explore expressions of 'being' that are in contrast with the ordering of a performative and technologically oriented society. Ultimately, in a critique of techniques of classification and regulation, Gibbons takes us from the specifics of early childhood education, and the way child's 'play' may be ordered and theorised, to consider the way subjectivity is formed and categorised.

Nesta Devine takes questions of economic rationalism to public choice theory and our understandings of democracy, arguing that Derrida's 'democracy-to-come' holds radical and emancipatory possibilities for education. Through a series of questions and carefully worked discussions, Devine puts the assumptions of democracy – i.e. choice, accountability and the 'choosing subject' – to the test. She engages with the 'public choice' account of democracy from the writings of James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock to consider the kind of educational subject which

this account calls into being; and then sets this subject alongside the accounts of democracy, the subject, and pedagogic relations offered by writers like Derrida. Deconstructive procedures offer a rather more complex account of democracy-to-come, and the kind of pedagogic relation, which might be found in such a context.

Devine shows that writers like Buchanan and Tullock seek to recognise human difference through principles of 'choice', conflating 'choice' with 'freedom' and 'rationality'. In this process identity not difference is privileged as the democratic, rational, thinking-subject. Seeking a way to deconstruct this over-rationalised way of thinking 'democracy', Devine turns to the promotion of difference and demystification whereby Derrida offers a way of thinking democracy differently and applying this difference to education. However, Devine cautions us at the end of her article, that in terms of the subject and the role of education, we might heed "the degree of investment in 'fraternity', in 'choice' and the assemblage of beliefs ... which underlies the technicism of government policy".

Heather Devere brings democracy into alignment with friendship and justice in her article, which investigates some of Derrida's ideas on friendship, bringing forth important considerations for feminist thought. In particular she addresses Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*, which highlights the androcentrism of Western philosophical writings on friendship or brotherhood. Devere positions the *Politics of Friendship* as a genealogical survey of philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to Nietzsche and Levinas, which highlights the paradoxes involved in the concepts of friend/enemy and self/other revealed in the performative contradictions of the statement "O my friends, there is no friend." Derrida, who discusses the perennial question of what is the difference between love and friendship, sees friendship as a particularly illusive concept – not easy to define or to describe, as he draws attention to the recognition of the importance of separateness, distance, boundaries and caution in 'true' friendship. Hesitancy rather than certainty is called forth in the suggestion that it could be, perhaps, that friendship is so special, so rare, that naming it in some way demeans or negates it. In this Derrida is seeking to open up some other ways of thinking about and questioning our conventional ways of talking and writing – and he takes this to the field of political implication in naming and identifying. Devere points out that, in this procedure, Derrida is putting the privileging of 'fraternization' to the test. War, enmity and friendship are male-focused in that they are perennially described in male terms. Derrida exposes and contests the uncritical link between friendship and brotherhood as he unpacks the canonical tradition of considering friendship by questioning the male-centredness of the enquiry and the historical indistinctiveness of friendship, fraternity and politics.

In the equation of friendship and fraternity, women are neutralised and thus become invisible. Devere takes two of the examples Derrida uses to demonstrate the canon of philosophical writings in the Western tradition whereby women have been silenced, politically and historically. Montaigne and Aristotle illustrate two approaches, which are part of the 'fraternity' of writings about friendship in the classical canon, arguing that the highest form of friendship, perfect or true friendship, could not be engaged by women. Taking this question to philosophical enterprises of feminism, Devere engages with a number of key feminist writers to ask if Derrida is a friend of feminism? Ultimately we are persuaded that while Derrida's project is not a feminist one, "his work helps to explain some of the inconsistencies, paradoxes and anomalies which exist in feminist thought, and some of the difficulties which feminists face in their political quest for recognition and empowerment".

Rather than engage specifically with Derridean thematics, Charles Crothers' concern is to position Derrida's writings and describe their relative impact on sociology and Western intellectual life. He does this in relation to the broader array of 20th century theorists in sociology and in Continental philosophy. Agreeing that sociology's intellectual foundations were laid down with the work of the triumvirate of Marx, Weber and Durkheim, Crothers posits that Continental theorists became drivers of sociological theory and that amongst these influences that of Jacques Derrida



was significant. Crothers traces the threads of influence and describes the social matrix out of which the work of French theorists emanates.

Building on work by Michele Lamont (1987) who positioned Derrida's influence on sociological thought, Crothers teases out Derrida's contribution from the wider packaging of intellectual work of which his writings were a part, giving attention to the wider context of the writings of French social theorists. With this quest in mind, Crothers canvasses the positions of sociology today and shows the range of perspectives and agendas with which sociology is concerned; and it is from this standpoint that Derrida and his work is viewed and considered. The reception of Derrida's ideas "was (at least in part) a social process", says Crothers as he proceeds to discuss the "cultural markets" to which they responded and in which they found legitimation – by acclamation or derision. From the diffusion of Derrida's work in France to the reception amongst literary critics in the United States, Crothers suggests that Derrida's appeal is "to construct humanities scholarship as creative and appealing as the sciences", and that there were particular social influences and impacts at the time in the US that gave rise to Derrida's popularity amongst the Yale fraternity *et al.* Following these lines of thought Crothers canvasses the influence of the "French effect" in the 'home' market by tabling references of and to Derrida in the New Zealand National Library database and concluding that social factors much effect the positioning and influence of Derrida's intellectual work.

The final article comes to us in a style of writing that seems fitting for a conclusion to this compilation of thoughts and interventions about and towards Derrida. "What genre is this that seeks to illuminate something about a man known to us as Derrida, a man, a name, a trace, a text, of some kind?" asks Maria O'Connor as she engages with the questions of saying something "non-contradictory" about the man, any man. O'Connor's article is a textual performance unfolding like a dance across the surface of the page as it discloses the impossibility of "the law of institutional classifications". By writing across the laws of logical correspondence, O'Connor reminds us of the genre that takes us beyond the margins of philosophy: "We know Derrida has written much on the borders (boundaries, edges, margins, frontiers, limits, lines) of language to demarcate strategies (graphic, lexical, structural, methodological, self-reflexive) for questioning metaphysical closures of unity, wholeness, certainty and foundation". O'Connor's style of writing works with the Derridean genre of transforming philosophy's boundaries.

O'Connor displaces limits and demarcations as she textually performs her deconstructive strategies in this homage to Derrida, while at the same time questioning the perennial quest for homage and legacy, naming and claiming. O'Connor's strategy is to keep herself (her writing) one removed from making definitive declarations about the type of man Derrida was. She turns to film analysis. It is Marlene Dietrich's character in Orson Welles' 1957 film *Touch of Evil* who is pressed for an answer on the type of man her (freshly-killed) lover was (Hank Quinlan played by Welles), and "her answer is simple and yet excessively so" – "he was some kind of a man". O'Connor is questioning the excessive definitions of authority embodied in the act of witness, title and testimony. Yet in its style and genre this writing (a "borderline reading") acts as a testimony to Derrida, as we read between the borders of Derrida and Welles. Both men have been figured by "by women (or at least by the 'silhouette', the 'female element' within this text) as some kind of men" – and there the text performs its testimony to Derrida.

Then as a postscript "... you feminize my work", Elizabeth Presa forms her address as a fragmentary note. She tells of her encounter with Derrida at the publisher, Éditions Galilée, in the Rue Linné, Paris. It is perhaps a fitting way to leave this collection of writing through and about Derrida with Derrida's own words – "We will meet in the text" – as he farewells a friend.

## The legacy

And here we bid *à-Dieu*, as we hear Derrida's words in his *Adieu* to Emmanuel Levinas:

I knew that my voice would tremble at the moment of saying it, and especially saying it aloud, right here, before him, so close to him, pronouncing this word of *adieu*, this word *à-Dieu*, which in a certain sense, I get from him, a word that he will have taught me to think or to pronounce otherwise (1999: 1).<sup>12</sup>

Jacques Derrida leaves us a legacy in his corpus of textual engagements, exposures and deconstructions. Through his ways of working to displace the privileging of metaphysical narratives, systems and structures not only does Derrida invoke style in the form and writing of philosophy, but his deconstructive forms of writing allow linguistic spaces for the inexpressible to breathe. His textual genres illuminate the aporia, tracing the otherness of language and thought, giving voice to subjectivity and difference, and ultimately leaving meaning-making to the performative processes of text itself. His is a kind of writing that implicates institutional authorities as it teaches us to think and act differently.

For many centuries knowledge of past traditions in Western academies has found form in the certainties and rules of analytical thinking in the genre of philosophy. Within those walls propositions may be logically inscribed, monuments built and the laws of morality, ethics, and aesthetics policed. And then there was Derrida. Through play and dis-play, “a chain of possible substitutions” (Kamuf, 1991: 275) served to disrupt the sole authority of the master’s voice.

Thus, and for good reason, this collection does not eulogise the man as a voice of authority, nor does it seek to inscribe his written word in the gravity of a monument. It does however give honour to Jacques Derrida and his life as it marks the significant oeuvre of Derrida the scholar, engaging with his work in a range of ways. Derrida has left a vast archive of books, chapters, articles, lectures, letters, responses, conversations and notes, and the writers in this collection are part of an expansive community of scholars whose lives and works have been touched, even changed in some ways by engaging with Derrida.

The aim of this collection was to call together perspectives from different fields of study and to activate different ways of putting Derrida’s work to work. It is to be hoped that the articles will go some way towards framing a future for knowledge and the academy via the repositories of personal and political interventions arising from Derrida’s work. Ultimately they seek to go beyond the ‘techno’ ends that research and scholarship are increasingly tied to as they take us beyond the borders of the already known to think and act differently.

## Notes

1. ‘Jacques Derrida’, News Telegraph, October 11, 2004. Retrieved October 11, 2005, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.opinion.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/10/11/>
2. This section is based on a seminar delivered by Michael Peters at the Center for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths College, University of London, March 9, 2005, under the title ‘Derrida’s Political Pedagogy’ and will also appear as part of the article, ‘The Promise of Politics and Pedagogy in Derrida’ in *The Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies*.
3. Jacques Derrida in Memoriam can be found at [http://www.humanities.uci.edu/remembering\\_jd/index.php](http://www.humanities.uci.edu/remembering_jd/index.php). The web page contains a selection of letters from Derrida’s admirers from scholars like Butler, Spivak, and Hollier, as well as additional statements.
4. See [http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/miller\\_molesky200410130841.asp](http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/miller_molesky200410130841.asp)
5. See [http://www.flynnfiles.com/archives/culture2004/jacques\\_derrida\\_rip.html](http://www.flynnfiles.com/archives/culture2004/jacques_derrida_rip.html) and <http://www.twonotesolo.com/blogs/2004/10/future-perfect-pie-in-face.html>, respectively.
6. Wittgenstein, strongly influenced by Freud in this regard, openly talked of philosophy as a disease (dis-ease) that could only be cured by doing more. He also suggested that his new way of doing philosophy (in the Investigations) was therapeutic. More precisely, we can talk perhaps about the way in which philosophy as an institution, like many other disciplines, polices its borders, disciplines its

students, controls its members, prevents its intellectual crises in the shift of paradigms, treats its outcasts, and protects its 'core'.

7. See <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/elljwp/againststdsdegree.htm>. Barry Smith (Editor, *The Monist*) instigated the letter. The signatories were: Hans Albert, David Armstrong, Ruth Barcan Marcus, Keith Campbell, Richard Glauser, Rudolf Haller, Massimo Mugnai, Kevin Mulligan, Lorenzo Pena, Willard van Orman Quine, Wolfgang Rod, Edmund Runggaldier, Karl Schuhmann, Daniel Schulthess, Peter Simons, Rene Thom, Dallas Willard, Jan Wolenski.
8. In this context it is interesting to note that Ruth Barcan Marcus, the Halleck Professor of Philosophy at Yale, wrote to the French government (Ministry of Research and Technology) on March 12, 1984, to protest Derrida's nomination to the position of Director of the International College of Philosophy, citing Foucault's alleged description of Derrida as practicing "obscurantisme terroriste". Derrida was teaching at Yale at the time. He remarks upon this affair in a footnote to 'Afterword: Toward an Ethic of Discussion' in *Limited Inc* (Derrida, 1988: 158-159) in relation to the exchange with John Searle, who used the same epithet as Marcus in an article published in the *New York Review of Books*. In relation to Searle's usage, Derrida remarks: "I just want to raise the question of what precisely a philosopher is doing when, in a newspaper with a large circulation, he finds himself compelled to cite private and unverifiable insults of another philosopher in order to authorise himself to insult in turn and to practice what in French is called a *jugement d'autorite*, that is, the method and preferred practice of all dogmatism" (158). He comments upon the "Marcus affair" in the same footnote in the following terms: "I have cited these facts in order better to delimit certain concepts: in such cases, we are certainly confronted with chains of repressive practices and with the police in its basest form, on the border between alleged academic freedom, the press, and state power" (159).
9. 'Philosophy as a Kind of Writing' is the title of an essay by Richard Rorty, which appears in his *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Brighton, Harvester Press, 1982: 90-109.
10. See Derrida's essay 'The Time of the Thesis: Punctuations' (1983) where he reflects upon his preoccupations of (at that point) the last twenty-five years of scholarship, beginning with his 1957 thesis 'The Ideality of the Literary Object'. The essay itself is a reflection upon the philosophical form of the 'thesis'.
11. See Peter's essay 'Wittgenstein/Styles/Pedagogy' (with Nick Burbules) in Peters & Marshall (1999) on which this paper draws from the discussion of the 'Cambridge Affair'.
12. This quote from *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (Derrida, 1999) is cited in Elizabeth Grierson's article in this volume, 'If We Could Speak Again With Derrida'.

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