

Before Anticipation

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The possibility of any recognition of “access”, as such, would be constituted in the future anterior, what I would retrospectively encounter, or encounter again, as that which marks or constitutes a threshold or opening. The temporality of “access” may be understood via terms we encounter in phenomenology’s understanding of “presencing”: anticipation and recollection, or “thrownness” and “futurity”. We may consider the notion of “journal” as an inscribing-presencing, as that which accounts for the “day” as such, a temporalising of accessibility according to the peculiar notion that every encountered is necessarily a re-encounter, whose “time” is that of an already happened. This paper engages these notions in order to question the journal, and the phenomenon of access, in terms of what grounds an ethics of the future anterior and what constitutes the movement from ethics to politics in journal practices. Key to this discussion will be two texts by Jacques Derrida from *Acts of Literature: Before the law* (1992a), in Derrida’s discussion of Kafka’s understanding of the Law of the “gate”, and *The Law of Genres* (1992b), particularly Derrida’s discussion of Maurice Blanchot’s *Madness of the Day* (1999).

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Access: critical perspectives on communication, cultural and policy studies—What if it was all fiction: fictitious? But for all that, written in truth, faithfully, faithful, written with fidelity. All fiction, then, all of it? Or, perhaps, an obligation? He will have obliged me to access these things, a command, of sorts; an invocation. We run here against the hard grain of writing, the hard grain of its genres, its laws and the Law of its laws. Would there be perspectives on that, viewpoints in the plural? Would the law of its laws, the law of writing’s polyvalence, law of perspectivalism, have points of view? But, then, who would name that law, and in whose language, in what writing, would it be written? Perhaps, the law of perspectivalism could go by the name “access”, accessibility as such, openness-to-what-is, disclosure, unconcealing, sensible sun, shortest shadow, noon. Noon’s lighting on communication, on culture, on policy, polis, what is most question-worthy. Noon’s glare, daylight: showing the political as question of communicability and culture, belonging. But, then, it may well go by the name “nihilism”. Or, rather, access amounts to the same thing, nihilism. Critical perspectives, were they to be other than fictions, would be anything but perspectives, viewpoints. But, then, that supposes we understand how we cross a threshold between fiction and its others. And that we understand, in the first place, what that word “fiction” names.

Three lines of thinking are converging in a consideration of asking how the scholarly journal becomes a problem for access, or how the journal, ACCESS enables a disclosing questioning of scholarship’s writing practices. Those lines include the two mentioned above, Jacques Derrida’s deconstructions of the binary separation of logos and mythos, law and story, fiction and its others, as well as Derrida’s encounter with Maurice Blanchot’s story of the brutal finality of all possible story, again deconstructing a Law that constitutes the law of writing’s genres. The third, I think, has always

already secreted itself somewhere in that deconstruction that goes by the name Derrida and is concealed, for all that, in Derrida's writing on the Law of writing. It would be Heidegger's Nietzsche in the guise of Nietzsche's "Word", God is Dead (Heidegger, 1977). Nietzsche's guise, *geist*, specter and, for Derrida, his women, Nietzsche's women, semblances, masks, seducers-at-a-distance, show, point to a Law of genre that would, more primordially, more acutely, be a law of gender, writing's sexual differences or sexual difference's trace-structure.¹ It would not be as if this was missed with Blanchot, or overlooked with Kafka. Hence we begin to build on the stakes of this question of access, scholarship, scholarship and writing, daily practices, journal practices, communication, culture and policy: writing's genres, writing's genders.

The peculiarity of the "Journal" is its seriality. On the one hand, this repetitious frequency (or infrequency), this regularity and rhythmic annularity, return of things to their proper, presents no real problem. Day follows night. Order-ability is construed on there being, in advance, a proper to which something or someone returns, a day, date, repetition of a name or names, titles and so on. Things, in general, are assimilable, accessible on the basis of such repetitions, repetition-compulsion order-ability itself. But, for all that, and on the other hand, it is precisely this repetition-compulsion of an orderability-coming-before, in order that what is to come can have its return before it leaves-to-arrive that makes seriality peculiar. In this sense, "access" opens to the unknown as an already knowable, hence assimilable, repeatable and returnable thing. If I mentioned above its curious temporality of a future anterior, what in a future I will have come to understand as the already understood, this means what I encounter for a "first time" must be encounterable as the retrieving of what I had already known. Every thing is re-covered, or never encounterable as such, accessed again, or oblivious. But we need to understand this curious temporality perhaps in the way that Derrida, elsewhere than in his writing on the Law of genres and genders, engages the serial, or what he calls *sériature*, in the writing of Emmanuel Levinas, and for all that no less concerned with writing's sexual differences.² We would need to approach the *sériature* of the journal in the way Levinas understands interruption. And in this, the way he understands ethics. We return to this ethics, and its passage from communicability, acculturation and polity, from politics, as concluding remarks.

The *posse* grows, *posse*, from the Latin for power as potentiality, for what is possible; already we have a handful: Derrida, Kafka, Blanchot, Heidegger, Nietzsche and now Levinas.³ Enough to fill a volume: many. We need to gather them, find something generic, a genus that would have made their mention cohere. But this would, as *posse*, as potential, to already be before the law, and it is this "before" that is to become the question, a question of Law as possibility and its "before" as the im/possible. The implacable undecidability at stake is that we can supposedly decide between the *posse*, potential, possibility and the im/*posse*, the *impasse*, the imposter, the one who feigns genuine *posse*, power-to-be. Access would not then, with the *impasse*, be a question of lighting a way, pointing or showing, but of breaking into and thereby further contaminating what feigns and feigns its feign. Derrida engages this break-in technique in *Before the Law*, with respect to a question as to what genre we would use to consign Kafka's short parable:

What then decided that *Before the Law* belongs to what we think we understand under the name of literature? And who decides? Who judges? To focus these questions (what and who), I ought to stress that neither of them will be privileged and that they concern literature rather than belles-lettres, poetry or discursive art in general, although these distinctions remain highly problematical.

The double question, then, would be as follows: "Who decides, who judges, and according to what criteria, that this relation belongs to literature?" (Derrida, 1992a: 187)

This story recounts the narrative of a "man from the country" who comes for admittance to the Law. Admittance is by way of a doorkeeper who is before the Law. The first sentence of Kafka's story reads: "Before the Law stands a doorkeeper" (183). The doorkeeper is "before" though in a sense quite different to the man from the country. There are already two "befores", a doorkeeper before the Law who does not seek admittance but who is the (initial) one who grants admittance. Before the doorkeeper is the man from the country. Two times, two temporalities that cannot quite coincide

although they seem to be re-countable in simultaneity or at least in the co-present space of a scene. Is admittance access, though? Is seeking and granting admittance coincident with something essential to a question of access? Would these two “befores”, each in its singularity and a Law that obliges both, be the stakes of “access”? The doorkeeper suggests that admittance is possible, but not for now, not at this moment, now. This moment, now, is denied—only to be recounted in a future that is indeterminate. The gate is open. Nothing prohibits entry, save for the doorkeeper’s escalation of posse, his posse in increasing degrees of power, other doorkeepers beyond this gate, at other gates (indeed, not unlike the posse of increasing powers I have posted above, as guardians of this text in its here and now). Before the Law then becomes the posse, possibility of infinite delays with infinite gates, ever increasing degrees of power that impose, infinitely impose, make impotent and construe the Law as an impossible.

The Law’s power resides essentially in its before, in the temporalisation of antecedence as such, gatekeepers in advance, in anticipation of arriving there. The Law is precisely what can never be arrived at, never is. The man from the country delays his entry, always impossibly possible, until the end. At that end he asks the doorkeeper why no one other than he has come this way to gain access to the Law. The doorkeeper explains simply: “No one else could ever be admitted here, since this gate was made only for you. I am now going to shut it” (184). Derrida reads the Kafka text as opening to text- production in general. The doorkeeper may well be the place of yet another posse: “critics, academics, literary theorists, writers, philosophers. They all have to appeal to a law and appear before it, at once to watch over it and be watched by it. They all interrogate it naively on the singular and the universal, and none receive an answer that does not involve *différance*: (no) more law and (no) more literature” (215).

Blanchot’s *Madness of the Day* more explicitly engages us with that double of the before, what Derrida will come to call the law of the law of genres, where that Law, like the step- not-taken by the man for the country, an infinite delay, a *pas* that is not, a beyond that is not, an im-posse-ability that construes the Law as nullity, as an essential nothing. In this story there are also guardians of the Law, those who oblige accountability, doctors, lawyers, the police; those who are before the Law in the sense of Kafka’s doorkeepers. Then there is the Law itself, whose access is encountered by the impossible, by the story of an impossible story, the re-coil of what remains in what cannot be said:

It is the *récit* of an impossible *récit* whose “production” occasions what happens, or rather, what remains; but the *récit* does not relate it, nor relate to it as to an outside reference, even if everything remains foreign to it and out of bounds. It is even less feasible for me to relate to you the story of *La folie du jour* which is staked precisely on the possibility and the impossibility of relating a story. (Derrida, 1992b: 234)

That impossibility? *La loi*. The Law—feminine affirmation—no longer representatives of the Law but the Law herself. She is not woman; rather a silhouette. The crucial passage in Blanchot’s text:

Behind their backs, I perceived the silhouette of the law. Not the familiar law, who is strict and not terribly agreeable: this one was different. Far from falling prey to her menace, I was the one who seemed to frighten her. According to her, my glance was lightning and my hands, grounds on which to perish. Moreover, she ridiculously attributed to me all kinds of power, she declared herself perpetually at my knee. But she let me demand nothing, and when she granted me the right to be in all places, that meant that I hadn’t a place anywhere. When she placed me above the authorities, that meant: you are authorized to do nothing. (Blanchot, 1999: 197)

Nowhere and nothing. The *jour*, day, its madness is the Law, mad law; not law of madness; there is no law of madness. Rather the law is mad. She at my knee, my *geneou*, my *je/nous*, my I/we, my being-in-common. That’s where this madness is, resides, in me, nowhere and authorising nothing. Communicability as such, acculturation as such, polity as such: a being-in-common whose Law of the together is madness and whose belonging is guarded by the representatives, menaces of the Law, watching and being watched. The *récit*, story of this story is unrecountable, impossible, without story, without *récit*. The posse never stops obliging me to recount. She, on the other hand, attributes to me all kinds of powers, above authority. This is silhouette, dark, obscure, a nullity: nihil.

Revaluation of the highest value. Overturning of the sensible sun, semblance, sensuality, appearance, becoming as the true world. God is dead. To be in all places: perspectivalism. No place secures the truth. I am anywhere that affords my value. I am above the authorities, authorised without authority, nullity of all authority, nothing any longer necessity: everything contingent, open, possible. Access is my perspective, from moment to moment, on what is at stake in communicability, acculturation, polity, anchored, fixed, certain to and of nothing and nowhere. Double affirmation. Yes to yes. Yes to the open, to the unsecured, the abyss, the leap.

Heidegger's long engagement with Nietzsche in his 1936-41 lecture courses has a kind of summary postscript in his essay, "The Word of Nietzsche: God is Dead" delivered on numerous occasions in 1943. We necessarily encounter the complex relations of the overturning of Platonism, death of God, nihilism and will-to-power as essence of the way in which will wills. The assertion of power, power above authority is the uniting of will and what will wills. Heidegger comments on Nietzsche's aphorism from *Genealogy of Morals*: "It (the will) will rather will Nothing, than not will" (Heidegger, 1977: 79). Heidegger comments:

"Willing Nothing" does not in the least mean willing the mere absence of everything real; rather it means precisely willing the real, yet willing the latter always and everywhere as a nullity and, through this, willing only annihilation. In such willing, power always further secures it itself the possibility of command and the ability-to-be-master. (79)

The essence of value positing, of perspective or point-of-view, is the preservation- enhancement of will-to-power. What is "permanent" is what for the moment holds to be true, what is set in place before, re-presented as such. The Law of its holding-together is madness, but precisely that madness of an originary kind, madness of the proper, return, annular circumference and restoration of the day. Inscription of that day, time of that day happens with the double binding constriction of the before and the before, before the before, before the Law and before that before of the Law. The laws of differences, genres, species, races, gens, life-preservation and enhancement, sexual differences and the Law of these laws, the law that infinitely withdraws into the effacement of being. Eternal return of the Same, unreality of the real, worklessness of the work, we would want to understand more carefully the temporalisation of this doubling of a "before" which produces the Work in its completion (the doorkeeper is able to shut the gate, complete the work as nothing) and the "work" in its affirmative annihilation, night, the impossibility of a story ever again.

We suggested, at the beginning, that Levinas offers an understanding of an ethics of return-as-interruption. Derrida engages the ethics Levinas recognises in interruption in terms of the future anterior of a Levinasian "he will have obliged me" (Derrida, 1991: 11). That obligation is infinite. It is responsibility for what comes, the infinitely strange, before the question of being's "what is" comes, before the before of, beyond, essence, beyond, before will, will-to-power, will-to-will. That future anterior of infinite obligation happens as interruption to being's mastery, for the sake of one's being. Two times, the synchrony of a totalising communicability in the Said, and a diachrony, a time infinitely before and infinitely futural, a time out of this continuous existence, interrupting, breaking it, but effaced in that break, disappearing into that break, that break re-tied, thread knotted, cut jointed. The trace-structure of the binds doubly mark that effacement of the said, present two times of a before. The binds, necessarily, are an otherwise said, not the pure-trace-structure of the Saying, impossibly said, but the double feigning of the feign of continuity, broken and retied, the mark of a before of an impossibly inscribed before of the before, the Law of an obligation that Derrida traces, in Levinas, in E.L., as the trace-structure of a radical feminine, *la loi* impossibly recounted. She will have obliged me, in truth, as primordial ethics, to the interruption to every serial return to the proper, the titled or titular sense of the communicable, the cultural, the political. For the rest, for all of the others to fiction, they rest, remain with the representatives of the Law, with their posses, possibilities, games of truth and errancy, critical perspectives and feigns of access, feigns of feigns of accessibility, binds and double bindings of knots of an otherwise Said.

Notes

1. See especially Derrida (1979) *Spurs: On Nietzsche's styles*. In this short text, Derrida engages in a sustained way the question of sexual difference in Nietzsche's writings, the polysemy of "woman" in Nietzsche's texts. *Spurs* also engages Heidegger, and Heidegger on Nietzsche (and hence Heidegger's styles, sexual difference in his texts), at one moment undecidably offering the "Nietzsche" of the title as the titular naming of Heidegger's "opus magnum", his four volumes on Nietzsche.
2. Derrida develops this notion of *sériature* in response to Levinas's major philosophical work, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1981). *Otherwise than Being* was itself a response to Derrida's deconstruction of Levinas's in "Violence and Metaphysics" (Derrida, 1978), where Derrida emphasised the necessity for Levinas to use all the resources of ontology in order to posit a Beyond. In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas attempts a writing style that, within the "Said" of ontology's constrictions, a "Saying" of an "otherwise" is traced. This trace-structure happens in interruption. Derrida's *sériature* is that trace-structure of a primordial though non-inscribable series of interruptions, which break with being's totalising continuity. Crucially, the time of continuity is synchronic. The time of interruption is diachronic.
3. Antonio Negri, with Michael Hardt (2001), has adopted the term "posse" in his Spinozist discussion of power, potentiality and the multitude. He is particularly interested in a notion of constitutive power as a power derived from a kind of permanent contestation of constituted authority (State power), a contestation that happens in ongoing assemblages that are themselves unstable. He mentions the romantic American West notion (perhaps more a fiction of cinema) of the posse that forms with spontaneity and for limited duration and then disbands, perhaps in order to form otherwise. See especially Hardt and Negri (2001: 407-411). This is how I see the posse constituting itself as representative of the Law. While the representatives are an unstable multitude, that Law by which they are constituted is the fiction of the permanent as such.

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