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Styling Nietzsche: A Review Essay of Jacques Derrida *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*

Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 165 pp. \$ 8.95.

Any examination of a text by Derrida challenges us to begin with an inquiry into its style.

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"The Question of Style" was in fact the originally announced title of this essay which Derrida has since changed to *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles (Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche)*.¹ Style is often regarded as a somewhat extraneous aspect of the philosophical enterprise; it is thought to be a variable form or container which may obstruct our comprehension of the matter or spirit of philosophical communication. Now it is well known that Derrida's whole enterprise involves a challenge to the "logocentric" tradition of philosophy according to which thought is primary and its expressions in speech or writing are thought to be secondary. On this view, whose self-evidence Derrida has indeed rendered questionable, the primacy of thought, the genuine *logos*, is based, first, upon its alleged ability to give us direct access to the real by means of intuition or insight; or thought may, as in the tradition from Descartes to Hegel, be regarded as *itself* the real whose genuine structure can be unfolded through its own activity. From these logocentric perspectives, spoken language is then regarded as a sign or indication of thought and written language as a sign of the spoken sign; writing and its characteristic effects are at a third remove from the truth, as Socrates describes art in the *Republic*.

Like Derrida's other works (with the possible exception of *Of Grammatology*), *Spurs* does not argue for this position. To argue against the primacy of thought or for the primacy of writing in direct fashion would, as Derrida shrewdly recognizes, involve him in the use of criteria and standards rooted in the logocentric tradition.² In fact, Derrida is willing to admit that this tradition lives on as a kind of infection in his own work despite his vigorous opposition. At times he describes his enterprise as a progressive war against logocentrism which may at best only asymptotically approach its goal of completely eliminating that habit of thought.³ In this respect Derrida's work is above all else a *praxis* or activity which may bear some comparison (one which he has occasionally countenanced) with Wittgensteinian therapy or the Austinian project of analysis. More specifically, however, Derrida's *praxis* is connected with the maneuvers of classical skepticism which refuses to make claims of its own but offers an internal refutation or *reductio* of any cognitivist claims. Now what Derrida offers in place of such internal refutations or *reductios* is the *deconstruction* of the texts of the logocentric tradition or of those texts which have been appropriated or stand in danger of being appropriated by that tradition. Deconstruction will show that no text – least of all those of such logocentric stars as Plato or Hegel – will consistently support a logocentric reading. Instead one finds, according to Derrida, problematic, multivalent words, images, or metaphors just at those points where logocentrism ought to be establishing itself. Such is his reading of Plato's talk of writing as a *pharmakon* (medicine or poison or ...) which opens up into a veritable pharmacy of possible alternative prescriptions for the proper relating or healing of the relations among thought, speech, and writing. And such is his account of Hegel's apparently bizarre turn to the figures of the well and the pyramid in those passages of the *Encyclopedia* which are meant to defend the *naturalness* and transparency of alphabetical writing against the obliquity and fecundity of symbolic and hieroglyphic script.

Nietzsche, however, would seem to be too easy a case to be handled in the same way. In fact, one may doubt whether the present essay, which could have been titled "On the Concept of Style or Woman, With Constant Reference to Nietzsche" is really centrally *about* Nietzsche or his writings, at all. It also offers rather obvious parodies of or confrontations with Heidegger, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacán, Michel Leiris and a number of others. In fact, Nietzsche has come to play a role in French philosophy not unlike that played by Aristotle in scholastic philosophy; the confrontations and the energy are to be found disguised in the form of commentary. "Disguised" we would say – and Derrida would agree, so long as we were ready to give up any belief that a naked truth could exist behind the mask or disguise. For an anti-logocentric, the traditional relation of subordination between primary text and commentary is suspect on just the same grounds which lead him to suspect the hierarchical relation of thought, speech, and writing.

Why Nietzsche? Perhaps most obviously because Heidegger has given a reading of Nietzsche which makes him the last genuine heir of Plato and therefore a part of that meta-

physical tradition which Heidegger would rethink or (taking a suggestion from Nietzsche) creatively forget. And in Heidegger's reading, Nietzsche's fragmentary and aphoristic writings are to be arranged and understood in terms of his thought of the will to power, conceived as the concluding thought of the metaphysical or philosophical tradition. For Derrida, Nietzsche is already *outside* this tradition – but, then, so is Plato. To suggest Nietzsche's exteriority, Derrida will try to show the extravagance and incommensurability of the fragmentary texture of Nietzsche's writing. He will show that this is its *style* and he will have us abandon our prejudice about the secondary status of style.

This brings us back to that question of style which Derrida had apparently canceled for the sake of the subject of woman; yet as he also remarks, "one might wonder whether that doesn't really amount to the same thing – or is it to the other" (37). For Derrida, style is above all a *question* because talk about its relative importance, its significance, its illumination or obstruction of the matter always leads us back to the questionable supposition that one can in fact make a clear distinction between style and matter or style and content. And like Heidegger in dealing with similar questions, it is the questionability of these human all too human thoughts which is the focus of inquiry. Derrida has undertaken a similar radical questioning of the nature of metaphor – not its proper analysis but the distinction between the metaphorical and the literal itself. What Derrida does in "White Mythology" is to undercut discussions concerning the value or priority of metaphorical language by suggesting that the concept of metaphor as a transference of properties from one subject matter to another depends upon an acceptance of the sort of categorical scheme appropriate to the metaphysical tradition. Therefore it is self-defeating to attempt to challenge that tradition by employing a notion which presupposes the basis distinctions and operations of that tradition. Perhaps the question of style is similar:

In the question of style there is always the weight or *examen* of some pointed object. At times this object might be only a quill or a stylus. But it could just as easily be a stiletto, or even a rapier. Such objects might be used in a vicious attack against what philosophy appeals to in the name of matter or matrix, an attack whose thrust could not but leave its mark, could not but inscribe there some imprint or form. But they might also be used as protection against the threat of such an attack, in order to keep it at a distance, to repel it ... (37)

The stylist may be a bit suspect in the world of philosophy. He wields a sharp and sometimes dangerous instrument which might deface the matter of philosophy, that which Hegel refers to with some ambiguity and wit as *die Sache selbst*. Certainly this is a frequent response to Nietzsche. But a philosopher who has a style, strong and recognizable, may be using it for the purpose of conceptual analysis and categorial articulation. One might think here of the prose of Hobbes or Hume or Quine. The philosophical stylist is an ambiguous figure. By raising the *question* of style, Derrida impels us to ask whether style has a univocal function. The alternative to the matter of thought at the heart of the logocentric tradition is not stylization: I may stylize simply in order to cut a path or a clearing for that which I have to say. When we are impressed by the style of a philosophical piece we ought not to be under the illusion that it is to be compared with a non-stylized version, but with one of a more traditional or more banal or conventional style. So that we have come to detach the matter of their thought from Hume or Kant so adroitly that we are sometimes shocked by a look at the actual text and texture that they have written. Perhaps, in time, Derrida's style will also become a matter of little concern as we learn to discuss the issues which cluster around the concept of logocentrism. Which raises for us the question of whether Derrida *does* have a style. In fact, Derrida is unrelenting in his attempt to render style questionable and worthy of being questioned. In this text, style is first made questionable in Nietzsche's case. Derrida suggests that the sentence

"I forgot my umbrella" which appears in quotations in Nietzsche's *Nachlass* is undecidable in meaning, frustrating all hermeneutic attempts at explanation. It lacks style. On a much more general level he suggests (in a manner whose tentativeness should not be obscured) that all of Nietzsche's writing, published and unpublished, is of this sort. And the most radical suggestion he will make is that *Spurs*, the very text which we are reading, is itself of such an undecidable, unstylized type. Like one of Heidegger's late essays, *Spurs* becomes an enactment or performance of what it is about. In fact, there appears to be a quite rigorous parallelism (by way of parody) between Heidegger's hypnotic repetition of *die Sprache spricht* with the implicit "writing writes" of Derrida's text. In each case what seems to be a statement within the text or one statement among others turns out to be an act which we are witnessing. The crucial distinction, of course, is that Heidegger's *die Sprache spricht* is the voice of the logocentric tradition, enriched and expanded as it is by the assimilation of thinking and poetizing through the suppression of philosophy; while "writing writes" is the antipodes of any central speaker or speaker-surrogate (even one as impersonal as Being).

"Writing writes" is the enactment or performance of writing as non-centered and undecidable. The *cogito* is, we are to suppose, attenuated here to a new degree, even if it is not altogether obscured. Kant began the process of attenuation by deflating the rationalist self-consciousness to an "I think which must be able to accompany all of my representations" while a speech-act theorist like Searle will reduce this to an "I say" which must be able to accompany all of my verbal utterances. The first "I" which appears in Derrida's text is also emblematic. It is the "Je découpe" of "I cut out the bits and pieces of an erratic exergue from this [Nietzsche's] letter" (35).⁴ Here, then, we should see the "I cut" which must be able to accompany all writing. Derrida's "I cut" is an editorial *cogito* (analogous to the editorial "we") which has a richly allusive set of relations. It signals his aggressive attitude toward the text and his opposition to any hermeneutical insistence on the text's integrity. One may very well wonder whether Derrida's practice will even allow the existence of any indivisible unit of text, a *texteme* (by analogy with phoneme) and one suspects that cutting is for Derrida an infinite operation, the reader's version of one side of a Kantian antinomy. The bit of text with which Derrida cuts the widest swathe here is "I forgot my umbrella," but his procedure is clearly such that he has no reason to give any special priority to sentential forms and might have proceeded to cut or deconstruct down to the bone of words, letters or punctuation marks. In fact, some of Derrida's most illuminating comments have to do with Nietzsche's bracketing use of quotation marks and his fragmenting use of the dash. But cutting is also castration, a major theme of *Spurs*, or perhaps it is the Dionysian joy in destruction which is consequent upon the dissipation of the threat of castration. As a device of reading and writing, this cutting seems to allude to Roland Barthes's *S/Z* in which Barthes fragments Balzac's short story *Sarrasine* into 561 segments which he comments upon separately. *S/Z*, like *Spurs*, is a meditation upon castration, sexual identity, and style, and offers a program for a reading freed from the apparent continuity of the text. The plot of *Sarrasine* revolves around a castrato star of the opera who is taken to be a woman by her would-be lover; and on another level it deals with the (castrating) frustration encountered by the narrator of the story which frames the story of the castrato. The narrator fails in his effort to exchange the story for a sexual tryst with a beautiful woman. In part, then, *Spurs* generalizes and grounds the thematics and procedures of Barthes's work, finding undecidability, both textual and sexual, at the core of Nietzsche's ostensibly imposing and masculine text.

In choosing to concentrate this cutting operation upon the idea of style, Derrida is also taking issue with Heidegger. For despite Heidegger's own fragmentation of Nietzsche's text, which ultimately serves the interest of ascribing him a definite place in *Seinsgeschichte*, he takes some of Nietzsche's remarks on *der grosse Stil* (the grand style) to be essential to Nietzsche's aesthetics if not to his own literary practice. On the last subject, Heidegger's silence is as enigmatic and surprising as is the silence which Derrida documents in Heidegger on Nietzsche and woman. Derrida alludes to the chapter on *der grosse Stil* in Heidegger's *Nietzsche*. Heidegger

had earlier set the tone for this chapter by explicating Nietzsche's fragment (from *The Will to Power*) which begins "Our aesthetics heretofore has been a woman's aesthetics. . . ." Despite his penchant for deep readings which reverse the conventional meanings of the text, Heidegger sees no ambiguity here, for he glosses Nietzsche's text straightforwardly:

Philosophy of art means "aesthetics" for Nietzsche too – but masculine aesthetics, not feminine aesthetics. The question of art is the question of the artist as the productive, creative one; *his* experiences of what is beautiful must provide the standard.⁵

In the chapter on "The Grand Style," Heidegger, like Derrida, acknowledges initially the *questionability* of the notion of style: "As is typical for the realm of art, everything named in the word 'style' belongs to what is most obscure."⁶ And, setting the stage for Derrida, Heidegger reminds us that inquiries into Nietzsche's views of art are also inquiries into Nietzsche's first philosophy, because "for Nietzsche art is the essential way in which beings are made to be beings."⁷ For Heidegger, then, *der grosse Stil* becomes a crucial component of Nietzsche's aesthetic ontology. His interpretation revolves around the following theses:

What Nietzsche calls the grand style is most closely approximated by the rigorous style, the classical style.⁸

The grand style prevails wherever abundance restrains itself in simplicity.⁹

But whatever keeps its antithesis merely beneath it or even outside of it, as something to be battled and negated, cannot be great in the sense of the grand style, because it remains dependent upon, and lets itself be led by, what it repudiates. It remains reactive. On the contrary, in the grand style nascent law grows out of original action, which is itself the yoke. . . . The grand style is the active will to Being, which takes up Becoming into itself.¹⁰

Taking a cue from Barthes, Derrida is suggesting that Heidegger, like Sarrasine, the naive suitor of the castrato, or like the equally naive narrator of Sarrasine's story, has been taken in by the illusion of masculine power evoked in Nietzsche's description of *der grosse Stil*. Phallogocentrism here colludes with logocentrism to become phallogocentrism. Perhaps Heidegger has been misled by the masculine gender of *Stil* in German. In fact the word, appropriately enough, has a double origin and history which are reflected in variant spellings with an *i* or a *y* which suggest both phallic and vaginal variants.¹¹

Derrida aims to show that Nietzsche has styles, not a style, and that his apparent high valuation of *der grosse Stil* is undercut by his variant accounts of woman, and therefore of the duality of male and female. One of Derrida's obvious virtues is to bring to light the implicit but powerful associations of our usual and more philosophical ways of speaking and writing about speaking and writing. In *Spurs* he is showing that the ostensibly peripheral and feminine nature of style within the domain of philosophical discourse about discourse is something of a dodge, a substitution of the sort familiar from Freud's discussion of the dream. Yet the masculine sense of style which survives in Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche is answered by the "I cut" of Derrida's writing. As his translator notes, Heidegger's formulation of the grand style in terms of *Aufhebung* is among the most Hegelian passages in his work; beyond that it recalls Hegel's praise of the classical style in his own *Aesthetics* which centers around the integral, male, human body.¹² A similarly Hegelian and surprisingly masculine conception of style can be found in the writings of critics, art historians, and alleged "aesthetes" such as Walter Pater. Pater's much admired essay "Style" maintains that style must be subordinated to truth, that "the living authority which language needs lies, in truth, in its scholars," and asserts that the scholarly conscience which the writer both possesses and addresses is above all a "male conscience" (at least "under a system of education which still to so large an extent

limits real scholarship to men’’). Speaking of this literary artist with his male conscience, Pater says:

In his self-criticism, he supposes always that sort of reader who will go (full of eyes) warily, considerately, though without consideration for him, over the ground which the female conscience traverses so lightly, so amiably.¹³

As a good Hegelian, Pater knows that style is masculine, truth-oriented, and a matter of conscience, even though he glimpses the possibility of a feminine style which might differ from the masculine in an almost inconceivable manner. The light and amiable traversal of the ground by the female conscience recalls Nietzsche’s analogy of women and sailboats, gliding over the surface of existence and beckoning to men “to us” – from a distance. Derrida cites this passage toward the beginning of *Spurs* (43ff.).

Derrida would free Nietzsche’s text from this masculine and philosophical (phallogocentric) conception of style in a number of ways. One of the most striking is his critical reading of Heidegger’s forgetful reading of “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable: The History of an Error” in *Twilight of the Idols*. In the second of the six stages (or stage directions) sequenced there Nietzsche writes:

The true world – unattainable for now, but promised for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man (“for the sinner who repents”). (Progress of the idea: it becomes more subtle, insidious, incomprehensible – *it becomes female [es wird Weib]*, it becomes Christian.)

Derrida suggests that Heidegger can overlook “*es wird Weib*” only because he has accepted the negative valuation of woman which is only *one* of the strands of Nietzsche’s writing. But woman not only means many things in Nietzsche, it is that which escapes singleness and determinacy of meaning and truth:

The question of the woman suspends the decidable opposition of true and non-true and inaugurates the epochal regime of quotation marks which is to be enforced for every concept belonging to the system of philosophical decidability. The hermeneutic project which postulates a true sense of the text is disqualified under this regime. (107)

It should be clear that Derrida is not concerned primarily with offering a better and *true* reading of “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable”; he offers only an alternative reading in order to suggest the sheer multiplicity and undecidability of Nietzsche’s text. From the moment that woman was introduced into Nietzschean thematics – and Derrida would say that she is “always already” there – the text must be read as indefinitely polysemous. Among other things this will mean that, as in the case of Nietzschean woman, in one of her guises, it will not be possible to distinguish surface and depth, appearance and reality. Parenthetical remarks, quotation marks, the setting off of material by dashes can no longer be viewed as semantic devices which indicate the hierarchical structure of meaning. Instead we are to see such apparent deviations from the expected normal and continuous flow of the text as constituting a play of possible meanings. In the passage in question, “True World” is already in quotation marks, indicating on a first reading that the allegedly true world, the metaphysical world behind the scenes, may not in fact be the true world. Such a reading subordinates the device of quotation to a narrative of truth. But the further stages of this narrative indicate that, as Derrida suggests, Nietzschean quotation marks are to be taken in a more radical sense:

The true world – we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! *With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one.*

Not a new hierarchy or determination of meaning is proposed by Derrida – such as Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche as the teacher of the will to power – but a deconstruction of hierarchy and determinacy. Accordingly, Derrida does well to focus on the peculiar fragment "I forgot my umbrella" (quotation marks in the original) which Nietzsche's editors have now reprinted. Although Derrida is happy to play with the phallic suggestions of the umbrella (and its forgetting or repression), and with its resemblance to the styles or instrument of the stylist, he avoids Freudian hermeneutics as well as the Heideggerian variety by stressing the quotation marks above all. The meaning of this notebook entry is in principle undecidable, despite the fact that we all know what the sentence within the quotation marks would mean if uttered on an appropriate occasion. It is undecidable because it is a piece of *writing* which has been subjected twice to the "I cut" which accompanies all writing: first to that practiced by its original author when he left it in its fragmentary form, rather than incorporating it within a book (for example) which would provide clues for the hermeneutic process of constructing a totalizing interpretation; and second, to Derrida's cutting which has highlighted its fragmentary, elusive and indefinitely suggestive character. Not content with this level of deconstruction, however, Derrida warns us against supposing that the process of fragmentation and ambiguity is to be limited to Nietzsche's writings, as if this were a special characteristic of a particular text. The very text which we are reading, he assures us, is itself non-referential and undecidable. Like "I forgot my umbrella," it may be part of a hermetic code or a random gesture, so that the temptations which were first raised in regard to a fragment from Nietzsche's *Nachlass* are now raised in regard to *Spurs*:

In other words, the text remains closed, at once open and closed, or each in turn, folded/unfolded, it is just an umbrella that you couldn't use. You might just as soon forget it, as if, over your head like that, you never heard tell of it. (137)

Forgetting, we are reminded, is an important Nietzschean concept. Creative forgetting, as both Nietzsche and Derrida tell us, is not so easy. If memory, as Nietzsche argues in the *Genealogy of Morals*, is an unnatural and painful act, it is an act which has become habitual and one which seems constitutive of the activity of reading and understanding texts. It is this activity as it takes form in that hybrid exercise of recollection or Hegelian *Erinnerung* which is the history of philosophy that is presupposed by Derrida's cutting and forgetting. In fact they are parasitic upon remembering, for if no one had remembered Nietzsche he could not be forgotten; if Heidegger had not written his meditative texts (or if we had forgotten them), there would be no point to Derrida's parodies. Derrida would, of course, say that it is just these painful acts of memory which give rise to the need for forgetting, and he would reject the conception of hierarchy which is implicit in the claim that one form of discourse is parasitic upon another. And he is right in his tantalizing suggestion that his own act of forgetting is itself difficult to forget. How then might we set about the operation of forgetting Derrida?

Such a project might proceed in a number of ways. One might begin by abstracting the general philosophical claims which seem to be implicit in Derrida's procedure. These would be claims about the undecidability of meaning and the elusiveness or womanly character of truth. On a second level, one might treat Derrida as an interpreter of Nietzsche and inquire to what extent his commentary illuminates or obscures Nietzsche's thought and writing.¹⁴ But if none of these operations is successful, one might have to resort to Derrida's own operations of cutting on the text or body in question.

To argue with Derrida's claims is fruitless. He does not make claims or arguments but

tantalizes his readers with claims that are almost but not quite made. To the extent that one can consider such claims, they are all vitiated by conventional requirements of self-referential consistency. That is, they are all variants of the skeptic's paradoxes, being of the form "there is no truth (or meaning) but this one" where the truth or meaning of the claim in question is without justification exempted from the general collapse of truth (or meaning). But like the classical skeptics (whose detailed presence in his work is worth investigating), Derrida knows better than to pronounce such flat-footed fallacies. In fact he is happy with the thought of the dissolution of his own text. Why then is it so difficult to forget? Perhaps because, as in the case of classical skepticism, we are presented here with a *praxis* rather than a doctrine. Derrida is exemplifying a certain way of questioning and taking apart the allegedly reliable and solid. Whereas the skeptics exercise their tropes on the apparent certainties of common sense and science, Derrida "tropes" or styles the monuments of Western philosophy. A monument is both solid and memorable, and the point of Derrida's operation is to deconstruct its solidity and render it forgettable. Style is a verb as well as a noun and Derrida is styling the tradition. As those who visit hair stylists know, styling can easily become an aggressive act designed to obliterate the traces or illusion of nature, so that one surrenders one's original appearance for the sheer multiplicity of stylistic possibilities.

Derrida offers an account of such a process in somewhat different terms in an essay on George Bataille "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism Without Reserve."¹⁵ There he shows himself sympathetic to Bataille's praise of sacrificial religion as an exercise of genuine sovereignty. By way of a gloss on Hegel's conception of mastery and slavery, Bataille and Derrida suggest that Hegelian mastery (which they tend to take as emblematic of the traditional philosophical enterprise) is really a kind of slavery to the "tyranny of meaning." Of course this is one of Hegel's typical points: the master cannot be successful without incorporating the work and negativity of the slave. But prior to the division into master and slave and the ensuing dialectic, Bataille and Derrida isolate a moment of *sovereignty*, of Nietzschean, seigniorial nonchalance, of just not caring what happens in the life and death struggle. Whereas death hovers over master and slave as a threat, sovereign man plays with death constantly and institutionalizes this play through sacrifice. By identifying with the sacrificial victim, sovereign man shows himself joyously at one with the process of destruction and fragmentation and so has no need to anxiously avoid it. Now the procedure which Derrida follows with the classical texts of philosophy and literature is a kind of sacrificial religion. Certainly it is traditional to see the humanistic scholar concerned with the tradition as a kind of priest. But is he properly a hierophantic or a sacrificial priest? Is his function to celebrate the mysteries in such a way as to suggest their eternal power or is it to destroy, eliminate and consume? Until recently the model adopted by humanists has unquestionably been the hierophantic one: their task in relation to the monumental texts has been preservation and reanimation. Much of Derrida's contempt for "the hermeneut" in *Spurs* seems to stem from a suspicion that the latter has neutered himself in the service of the tradition, thought of as an external and overwhelming power. The first scholars to call themselves humanists in Renaissance Florence were in fact, like Marsilio Ficino, hierophantic priests of a Platonic (or Neo-Platonic) religion. Deconstruction, as applied here to Nietzsche's text or elsewhere in Derrida's work to the texts of Plato or Hegel, is a sacrificial rite in which the priest and the sympathetic members of the community are relieved of the threat of the tyranny of meaning to which they would otherwise be subject. The "I cut" which accompanies all Derridean discourse is the artful cutting of the priest as he carves up the sacrificial beast. Just as the form of Derrida's Nietzsche essay is a "parodying graft" of Heidegger's discussions of early Greek philosophy and German poetry, so his sacrificial religion is a parody of and answer to the later Heidegger's resolute expectation of the latest *Seinsgeschick* and the appearance of new gods. Derrida seems to be asking why we must wait for external deliverance when we already have the possibility of sacrificial exaltation.

I have suggested, then, that Derrida's project is appropriately viewed against the back-

ground of Heidegger's effort to rethink the tradition and in terms of his own views of the nature of language and style. Style as excision, cutting, fragmentation is then both form and content of Derrida's work because his project is one of destruction through stylization. To this extent he has indeed overcome the usual apotropaic function of style in the philosophical text against which he warns at the beginning of *Spurs*. For his project is one in which style infects and overtakes that which would ordinarily be considered philosophical content or matter. On a psychosexual reading of philosophical strategy, style is the feminine disguise of masculine content. But when content is itself turned into style, form (or style in the more conventional sense) no longer sustains a proper contrast with content. Therefore stylization is not to be seen as a feminine operation but as the undercutting of the conventional opposition of male and female which, as Derrida suggests in another book, *Glas*, is at the heart of the Western tradition.

Philosophical readers will find themselves feeling uneasy, one presumes, with a number of aspects of Derrida's praxis. A responsible criticism, however, cannot be limited to pointing out alleged simple fallacies in Derrida's reasoning but must confront his rather ambitious project. Whatever one may ultimately think about the end of deconstruction, it is necessary to gain some perspective on its appeal to contemporary humanists or, perhaps one should say, to the sometimes ungrateful heirs of the humanistic tradition. For what Derrida offers is not simply the extreme of an atheistic and irreligious philosophy, as his rhetoric of decentering and deconstruction might suggest. Derrida and his sympathetic expositors often say that the decentering of the text and the destruction of the privileged ego which is the presupposition of speech are simply the ultimate consequences of the death of God, whose radical consequences were sensed at first by Nietzsche and are only now being made explicit. Yet Zarathustra has his honey sacrifice and his ass festival (see *Zarathustra*, Part IV) as well as his message about the death of God. There is an element of sacrificial religion in Nietzsche, too, which emphasizes the constant necessity of killing God; the madman who brings the message that "God is dead" (in the *Gay Science*) also says that we have killed him. But this death of God and of all of his images, even that last simulacrum, the allegedly integral text, is a sacrifice to be performed consciously and explicitly. Perhaps this is why, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche distinguished his positive *Zarathustra* from his negative works thereafter, beginning with *Beyond Good and Evil*. Both, he held, were essential to his activity. It is in his carrying out of Nietzschean sacrifice that Derrida is closest to his spirit, even if he professes to believe in the letter (or writing) and not the spirit. The appeal of such sacrificial religion will quite properly (and not only pejoratively) be the appeal of the cult. The celebratory and hierophantic religion of the philosophers and the philosophical humanists has always been a somewhat cold and austere devotion. Those dissatisfied with this austerity have often sought an actual community centered around an activity in this world as a substitute for its otherworldliness. Zarathustra, often thought to be the prophet of a new religion, is also, as Nietzsche points out in *The Antichrist*, a skeptic. Derrida's praxis suggests the equal validity and reciprocal interdependence of these two sides of Zarathustra. And it may be that the skeptics' cult will offer a tempting alternative to those who have been educated by Hegel, Nietzsche, or Heidegger to think of philosophy as having already completed its world-historical mission. As Nietzsche says, that which is falling must be given a push. The question remains for the future what metamorphosis such thought might take upon finding itself successful, that is, *after* the "twilight of the idols."

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NOTES

1. All page references in the text are to the edition under review.

2. For a suggestive attempt oriented toward *Spurs* to argue with Derrida from the standpoint of hermeneutics (and so of logocentrism), see David Hoy, "Forgetting the Text: Derrida's Critique of Heidegger" in *Boundary 2* (Fall 1979). The same issue of that journal contains a more sympathetic reading of *Spurs* by David Allison "Destruktion/Deconstruction in the Text of Nietzsche."
3. See "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: the Structuralist Controversy*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), pp. 247-65.
4. See Allison's essay (cited n. 2) for an account of Derrida's cutting of the letter through a comparison with the uncut text.
5. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volume One*, translated by David Ferrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 70.
6. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, p. 124.
7. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, p. 131.
8. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, p. 8.
9. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, p. 9.
10. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, pp. 134-35.
11. See the entry under "Style" in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.
12. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, p. 135 n. See Hegel's chapter "The Ideal of the Classical Form of Art" in his *Aesthetics*.
13. Walter Pater, "Style," in *Appreciations* (London: Macmillan, 1889), p. 8.
14. I have attempted some readings of Nietzsche's texts which argue for a greater determinacy than Derrida believes possible. See "The Rhetoric of Nietzsche's Zarathustra" in *Boundary 2* (Winter 1980) [also in *Philosophical Style*, ed. Berel Lang (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1980), pp. 347-85; "Zarathustra's Hermeneutics Lesson," *Mosaic* (1980); "Nietzsche's Graffito: A Reading of *The Antichrist*," *Boundary 2* (Winter 1981) (Nietzsche issue)].
15. In *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 251-77.