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문학석사 학위논문

**Writing as *Mise-en-Scène*:**

**Derrida, Signification, and the Work of Art**

미장센으로서의 글쓰기:

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## Abstract

### Writing as *Mise-en-Scène*: Derrida, Signification, and the Work of Art

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How does meaning come into being? Before answering, this question might appear questionable, especially if one conceives of meaning as something that *is*, rather than something that *comes into being*. This thesis seeks to elucidate what Derrida calls “*mise-en-scène*” as the condition of signification and to maintain the argument that meaning is fabricated and generated, rather than simply revealed and communicated the way it is. In particular, we investigate signification as *mise-en-scène* with regard to the realm of art and to writings on art. By doing so, we aim to say that any attempt to write on a work of art does not simply reveal the presupposed meaning of the work but continues to contribute to the generation of new meaning.

We find the clue of such a claim in Derrida’s invocation of the term *mise-en-scène* in his text “Freud and the Scene of Writing.” In that text, Derrida translates Freud’s German terminology of ‘*Darstellung*’ into the French translation of ‘*mise-en-scène*,’ instead of the more conventional translation of ‘*représentation*’ or its English translation, ‘representation’. While ‘representation’ implies a reinstatement of something already ‘present,’ *mise-en-scène*, which usually means the production of a work of performative art, implies the production of something that is not already given. We maintain that Derrida’s unconventional translation takes issue with the conventional notion that something is meaningful in itself and invites us to think of meaning as something that is produced.

We try to figure signification as *mise-en-scène*, first in the realm of semiology and linguistics in Chapter 1, then in the realm of psychology in Chapter 2, and finally in those of art

and writing on art in Chapter 3. We proceed in this order, so as to follow Derrida's argument, which takes issue with the conventional stratification of the psyche, speech, and writing with regard to signification. The most common-sense model of signification is to assume that we have something meaningful in mind and then express it via speech or writing. According to Derrida, this seemingly common-sense notion takes its support from the metaphysical tradition that has prioritized the value of presence. Under this tradition, meaning 'as such' is immediately 'present' to the psyche when one thinks and then is 're-presented,' first by the spoken sign and then only secondarily by the written sign. Representation by sign has been relegated to the function that is secondary to the presence of meaning and such relegation is inseparably related to the debasement of writing. While speech is considered to be the primary sign that refers directly to the supposed presence of meaning in the psyche, writing has been regarded as the mere trace that writes down the spoken signs, and therefore as "the sign of a sign." However, Derrida argues that it is a general law of the sign that it operates only so long as it is in relation to other signs. In other words, any sign, whether spoken, written or even "thought," indefinitely refers to another sign, not to meaning 'itself,' and is therefore always "the sign of a sign."

Furthermore, Derrida's reading of Freud reveals that this is also the case for the psyche. It seems common-sense that reality, when perceived, is immediately present to the psyche and then either fades into memory or develops into thinking of a higher order. However, following Derrida, we argue that both perception and thinking are possible only by virtue of differing and deferring, not of presence. According to the Derridean reading of Freud, the psyche operates like a machine, the differentiated parts of which produce signs and particularly a type of a written sign. Further, we find the source of Derrida's invocation of the term '*mise-en-scène*' in Freud's analysis of an event called the "primal scene." In Derrida's view, Freud's observation of the "primal scene" suggests that anything that the psyche experiences is meaningful not in itself but only in relation with other events and is no less "the sign of a sign." The relation between events are mutual. Even what Freud calls the "primal scene" triggers a series of later events while itself is also affected by those later events and is belatedly constituted as something meaningful in particular ways. In that the "primal scene" is not meaningful in itself, we can say that what is "primal" is not the single scene but the work of *mise-en-scène* that relates the scene with other scenes.

Insofar as meaning is not simply present and represented, but produced, *mise-en-scène* is always at work insofar as something appears meaningful. We delve into two instances that best acknowledge *mise-en-scène* as its condition of meaning and thus elucidate the possibility of signification other than representation. The two instances are respectively *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, a film about Derrida, and *Tourner les Mots*, a text about the film, co-written by Derrida and the director of the film, Fathy. On the one hand, the film does not seek to represent Derrida. The images of Derrida in the film do not and cannot point at Derrida 'as such.' They are only the "sign of a sign" of Derrida. Neither does the text reveal the final presence of meaning of Derrida or of the intention of the director of the film. However, we see that the text nevertheless reframes the film and opens new possibilities for meaning, which was not and never will be simply present in the film. By taking a detailed analysis of how the text stages the film it writes about, we see that the text does not converge into a single interpretation but shows that writing on a work of art diverges into indefinite possibilities of interpretation.

In conclusion, this thesis seeks to suggest that *Tourner les Mots* is one among indefinite possible *mise-en-scène*'s of a work of art. Any writing on a work of art, be it art history, art theory, or critique, if it were to acknowledge *mise-en-scène* as its condition of signification, can no longer purport to be simply a representation of an artwork, reducing the artwork to the supposed presence of meaning in the work itself, the intention of an artist, or to reality. Rather, writing as *mise-en-scène* will endeavor to produce the work of art anew, opening up indefinite possibilities of further interpretation.

**Keywords:** Jacques Derrida, *mise-en-scène*, sign, Sigmund Freud, *Nachträglichkeit*, film, writing

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## List of Abbreviations

The following is a list of major works used throughout this thesis. All other references appear in the footnotes, and all works are reproduced in the bibliography.

### Works by Derrida:

- CG “Cinema and its Ghosts.” Trans. Peggy Kamuf. *Discourse*. Vol. 37. Issue 1-2, 2015, 22-39.
- MP *Margins of Philosophy*, Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- OG *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- S “Sending: On Representation.” Trans. Peter Caws & Mary Ann Caws. *Social Research*. Vol. 49. Issue 2. 1982. Summer. 294-326
- TM *Tourner les Mots*. Paris: Éditions Galilée/Arte Éditions, 2005.
- WD *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge, 2001.

### Others

- Ency Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the ‘Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences’ (1830)*. Trans. William Wallace & A. V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- GL Saussure, Ferdinand. *Course in General Linguistics*. Trans. Wade Baskin. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.
- P Plato. *Phaedrus*. Trans. Alexander Nehamas & Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995.
- I Freud, Sigmund. *(1886-99) Pre-Psychoanalytic Publications and Unpublished Drafts. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Ed.

- James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1961. Vol. 1.
- II --, (1893-95) *Studies on Hysteria by Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* Ed. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1961. Vol. 2
- IV --, (1900) *The Interpretations of Dreams (I). The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Ed. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1968. Vol. 4.
- V --, (1900-01) *The Interpretations of Dreams (2). The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Ed. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1968. Vol. 5.
- XVIII --, (1920-22) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Ed. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1968. Vol. 18.
- XIX --, (1923-25) *The Ego and The Id and Other Works. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Ed. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1968. Vol. 19.

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## Introduction

In Derrida's early work, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," while quoting Freud's text, Derrida chooses to translate the German '*Darstellung*,' which is normally translated as '*représentation*' in French or 'representation' in English, as '*mise-en-scène*.' We can see that this translation particularly resonates with Freud's analysis of what he calls the "primal scene" and the formation of dreams, one of which Freud describes as taking its source from this "primal scene." Nonetheless, we find the translation unusual, because *mise-en-scène*, literally translated as 'putting on the scene,' is most often understood as a technical term in the field of performative art, while representation is a concept with a philosophical as well as aesthetical implications. Even when representation is used with regard to a specific work of art, what it suggests seems to depart from the operative mechanism of *mise-en-scène*. Representation implies a certain correspondence between the representation and the object of its representation. If we take an example from theatre, when speaking of a theatrical *representation* of *Hamlet*, one habitually thinks of realizing the script written by Shakespeare, following his direction as to the order of acts, when the actor should enter and exit, and other components of the script. As such, representation is understood as "the sensory illustration of a text already written [script], thought [author's intention], or lived outside the stage [life, real world]" (WD 299). On the other hand, *mise-en-scène* encompasses everything required for a play to come into being, even what the author could not prescribe: stage setting, casting, costume, props, orchestra, and even the drawing up and down of the curtain are all part of *mise-en-scène*. What's more, while the script

of *Hamlet* may remain identical to what Shakespeare wrote down centuries ago, its *mise-en-scène* differs, depending on the spatio-temporal, cultural, and linguistic contexts.

While introducing this unconventional translation, Derrida does not give much qualification as to what he means by *mise-en-scène*. His remarks on the term ‘*mise-en-scène*’ are only scattered in other texts (*Tourner les Mots*, “The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation”), interviews (“Cinema and Its Ghosts,” Derrida & Calle-Gruber, “Scène des Difference [Scene of Difference]”), and presentations (“Sending”). Nor has the term received much attention in the secondary literature. Among the few articles pertaining to Derrida’s such remarks, Burchill’s piece (“Jacques Derrida”) gives a rare glimpse of Derrida’s actual usage of the term ‘*mise-en-scène*’. Burchill also covers some of the themes that are of importance to this thesis, such as the value of presence, psychoanalysis, and cinema. However, the article eventually departs from the focus of this thesis, in that it revolves largely around Derrida’s relation with Husserlian phenomenology, rather than around individual works of art or text. Thematically, Weber’s book, *Theatricality as Medium*, and an article by Kisiel, “Apostrophe and Apocalypse,” are more affinitive. Both speak of scene, while pertaining to the theatricality and performativity of Derrida’s style of writing. There are also a few other articles that invoke the term ‘scene,’ often together with staging, and theatre, as they question the binary opposition between the original presence and the theatrical representation (see Bannet, “The Scene of Translation” and Carreres, “The Scene of Babel”).

In contrast to the preceding research, this thesis focuses primarily on *mise-en-scène* as Derridean notion throughout. Consequently, we will aim particularly to understand what Derrida calls ‘*mise-en-scène*’ as suggestive of the production of the meaning of an artwork, which would

be more than a mere audio-visual representation of any prescribed meaning. We will be able to find an instance of such *mise-en-scène* in the book Derrida wrote with Safaa Fathy called *Tourner les Mots*. *Tourner les Mots* is devoted to a film called *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, which is directed by Fathy, is about Derrida and it has Derrida appearing as himself.<sup>1</sup> Being a film about a real person, the usual expectation is that *D'ailleurs, Derrida* would cinematically represent who the person is in reality. However, the film does not provide us with any factual knowledge about Derrida, nor does it put together the images it presents of Derrida in a way that conforms to the normal conventions of documentary films—i.e., Derrida's life from his birth until the present. Instead, in the film, we see Derrida talking about subjects that do not necessarily seem relevant to himself or to one another. The images of a cat, a market, and a desert, all of which seem to have been taken indiscriminately near the filming site, protrude between the sequences featuring Derrida. One might resort to *Tourner les Mots* for explanations on the film. However, the text complicates the picture of representation even further. One might expect the text to represent at least two things—the film *D'ailleurs, Derrida* and Derrida himself, which the film is also expected to represent. However, it represents nothing. *Tourner les Mots* does not contain anything about writings on a work of art would normally describe: it does not describe the film, address the artist's intention or biography, or refer to preexisting cinematic theory or philosophical discourse. Instead, Derrida writes long paragraphs on the scenes, in which he recognizes something obviously significant, but those which were hardly noticeable in the film, elliptically leaping from one motif to another. What's more, he organizes the motifs and the

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<sup>1</sup> *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, directed by Safaa Fathy, Gloria Films, 1999. The English subtitled version is called "*Derrida's Elsewhere*."

paragraphs on them in alphabetical order, which seems arbitrary and therefore defies the expectation that *Tourner les Mots* would finally give order to the abstruse film.

Extraordinary as it is, both the film and the text have hardly been thematized within the literature on Derrida or in the discussion of film theory in general.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, there are a few articles that cite *Tourner les Mots* along with the themes, some of which are also relevant to this thesis, such as the inextricability of the presence and the time and space of representation (Pelgreffi, “Il Corpo-Teatro [The Body-Theater]”), “film as writing” (Wills, “Screen Replays,” p. 74), and “the *cinematicism* of [Derrida’s writing]” (Ibid., p. 80, Wills’ italic). However, considerable development of the themes and close reading of *Tourner les Mots* are wanting. Contrary to Derrida’s other works in which it seems that he delves into more serious and academic subjects, such as linguistics, religion, and politics, *Tourner les Mots*, without solid theme or argument, seems to be regarded as marginal to Derrida’s overall corpus. However, this thesis will demonstrate that the non-representation of the film and the text cannot be reducible to any sheer incompetence, on the part of Derrida or Fathy, of delivering any meaningful content in a meaningful way. Especially, since Derrida, the author of *Tourner les Mots*, the subject of *D’ailleurs, Derrida*, and the philosopher that the film captures, should be in the most privileged position to write a book on the film about himself, we begin to suspect that *Tourner les Mots* might not have failed to represent something, but rather tried to do something other than representation. While not simply representing anything given, *Tourner les Mots*, as if changing the stage setting of the film, puts forward what seem to be marginal elements of various scenes

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of other Derridean themes studied in film or media theory, see Leo & Holland, “Double Exposures,” p. 15).

and situates the film in a variety of different contexts. As a consequence, the film is construed to have more than one meaning. As we announced earlier, if this thesis can clarify what Derrida calls *mise-en-scène* as the production of an artwork, even in its meaning, we will be able to say that *Tourner les Mots* frames a type of *mise-en-scène* on *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, instead of merely representing the film.

Furthermore, we may take *Tourner les Mots* as permitting the rethinking of the convention that has been imposed on writings on art in general. Any writing on art, be it criticism, art theory or art history, as a rule takes the subject work of art as the point of reference and tries to represent it in a way that makes it easier to understand or suitable to academic discourse. In order to do so, writings on art have to leave out elements that are not considered to be central to the 'essence' of the work. However, *Tourner les Mots* does not stop at simply not represent anything but raises the question of how the undisputed expectation that works of art and writings on the artworks would represent something is formed. As we will go on to see, such expectation is not invented out of contingency but imposed by what Derrida calls "the metaphysics of presence," which inescapably molds the way of thoughts, predetermining what is considered to be 'essential,' 'relevant,' or 'marginal' in our experience and thoughts in general. Without considerations on the metaphysical basis of representation, even writings with unconventional, non-representational style risk remaining metaphysical in this sense, by appearing to be a contingent deviation from the norm. By demonstrating that the non-representational style of *Tourner les Mots* is not solely due to the choice of Derrida but to an act of representation that is "always already" in the state of undoing itself, we will be able to think

of *Tourner les Mots* as showing the impossibility of representation in the strict sense, but also as opening up rich and diverse new possibilities for relating with a work of art.<sup>3</sup>

In order to pursue this argument, this thesis will be developed as described below. Since Derrida uses ‘*mise-en-scène*’ instead of ‘representation,’ in Chapter 1, we will examine how he conceives representation and ask whether such conception can be the reason that he chooses a different translation. As Derrida sees it, the term representation, no matter how natural or neutral it appears in usage, is an integral part of a certain metaphysical tradition. As we will see, the Western tradition of thought, which Derrida calls “the metaphysics of presence,” has always assumed an original and primary presence anterior to representation and has considered representation to be derivative and secondary. The distinction between presence and representation functions as the touchstone for the value of meaning, the sign, and signification in general. In “the metaphysics of presence,” the sign is considered to be a means of representing the presence of the thing or meaning itself. Against such metaphysical backdrop, it seems common-sensical and undisputable that one should first have meaningful content in mind in order to speak it out or write it down. Derrida explains the treatment of the sign in the presence-centric metaphysical tradition in terms of what he calls the “trace.” While the spoken sign seems to deliver the message and thereafter leave no material trace, the written sign has been treated like a visible trace that is no more than a mere representation of the spoken signs. The spoken sign is seen as directly referring to meaning itself, while the written sign refers to the spoken

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Always already,’ which is an expression to be repeated throughout the thesis, is not just a rhetoric but a particularly Derridean expression. Derrida borrows the expression from Heidegger’s text *Being and Time* and uses it to show something that is at work without an identifiable start or end.

sign. In other words, the written sign supposedly only refers to yet another sign and cannot arrive directly at meaning itself. Thus, the written sign has been treated as the “sign of a sign.”

However, Derrida’s logic of the trace is not merely a metaphorical analogy of the discrimination of the written sign. He argues that the sign, which includes the spoken sign, is generally governed by the logic of the trace and that therefore speech itself is not exempt from such attributes as a “trace.” It too, then, is incapable of arriving at meaning in its supposedly full presence. Drawing inspiration from Saussurean linguistics, Derrida says that the sign functions not by representing any anterior presence but by being in relation with other signs. In other words, any sign takes on meaning only because it bears the trace of non-present signs. In this sense, every sign is the “sign of a sign” that functions by indefinitely referring to different signs. Accordingly, the presence of meaning, which is distinguished from the sign, is indefinitely deferred. Derrida sets forth the idea that all significations base their possibility on the movement of deferring and differing, not on invariable presence and its representation. Since Derrida questions the representational model of signification, we can infer that what he calls *mise-en-scène* would be a type of signification distinct from representation. Tentatively, by the end of Chapter 1, we will draw an analogy between *mise-en-scène* in the usual sense of the word, which is associated with the staging or the production of a particular kind of art, and the logic of the trace and of the differing-deferring movement that Derrida will call “*différance*.”

While Saussure gives Derrida an important clue to think of signification as something other than representation, such Saussurean inspiration is to be further clarified as applicable outside the linguistic system, and as capable of repeatedly producing meanings. Keeping this task in mind, in Chapter 2, we will conduct a detailed analysis of Derrida’s text, “Freud and the

Scene of Writing.” Here, we will have a closer look at the context in which Derrida uses the term *mise-en-scène* in place of Freud’s *Darstellung*. In this text, we will see that the logic of the trace and the movement of differing and deferring is not confined to language but is at work even in the human psyche. In the metaphysical tradition we are discussing here, which we will see exemplified by such philosophers as Aristotle and Hegel, it has generally been considered that the psyche, rather than the sign, is where meaning itself is immediately present. However, Derrida notes that according to Freud, even the contents of the psyche turn out to depend on the logic of the trace or *différance*. We can find a relevant example in Freud’s analysis of what he calls the “primal scene” as mentioned above. The “‘primal scene’ refers to the scene of sexual intercourse between the parents, which is observed, or inferred by the child, in this case by the patient nicknamed ‘Wolf Man’ as a child.”<sup>4</sup> According to Freud, the “primal scene” triggered the patient’s strange dream about wolf and the wolf-phobic neurotic symptom. Nonetheless, he notes that the “primal scene” acquires a meaningful identity as the cause of the symptom only after the manifestation of the effect. Derrida develops the term “*Nachträglichkeit*” (belatedness), which Freud uses to describe the deferral in understanding that is witnessed empirically, into a kind of logic that governs signification in general, which has a certain resonance with the logic of the trace or *différance*. He points out that not only does the dream come to take on a certain signification in terms of the “primal scene,” but that the “primal scene” did not have any significance in itself but takes on meaning only in relation with other events, such as the dream and the symptom. In this sense, there is no “primal” event, in which the meaning of the series of subsequent events is simply present. Any event that the psyche experiences is the “sign of a

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<sup>4</sup> Laplanche & Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-analysis*, p. 335.

sign” that only takes on meaning by referring to yet another event. In the mutual dependence of different events, the final analysis of a single event is indefinitely deferred.

From Derrida’s conception of “*Nachträglichkeit*” (belatedness) and its application to the “primal scene” analysis, we can infer the logic of what he calls *mise-en-scène*. The “primal scene,” which is undetermined in its meaning, necessarily calls for the supplementary work that stages the scene by framing it in a meaningful way. In the analysis, scenes from the patient’s life are picked out and strung together with the “primal scene” to explain the symptom with probable narrative, as if cutting and pasting scenes of a film while editing. Further, we can think of different *mise-en-scène* of the identical scene. Other psychological approaches than Freudian psychoanalysis might regard such things as the patient’s dream or the perception of his parents having sex not meaningful and could have focused on different scenes to explain the symptom. In this regard, we can say that Freudian psychoanalysis itself plays the role of a form of critical discourse, which influences the production and the appreciation of a work of art. As such, the “primal scene” appears to be meaningful by virtue of certain *mise-en-scène*, which, in this case, consists of analyzing the elements within the scene, situating the scene within a larger frame, such as the series of other scenes in the patient’s life or psychoanalytic discourse. Hence, we can infer that what Derrida calls *mise-en-scène* designates the essential staging that makes a single scene, or a single element within the scene, appear meaningful.

Taking the Derridean *mise-en-scène* as clarified so far as a guiding thread to understand Derridean notion of signification, in chapter 3, we will be able to revisit the film *D’ailleurs*, *Derrida* and *Tourner les Mots* and find such works performing such *mise-en-scène* in the realm of art. Since *mise-en-scène* is a technical term designating specific methods of filmmaking, such

as shooting, editing, and projection, every film is, of course, the result of *mise-en-scène*. Nonetheless, *D'ailleurs, Derrida* seems to be particularly interested in revealing the *mise-en-scène* that is constantly in-process, rather than seamless scenes as the final product. Far from closely representing Derrida's presence to himself to the extent possible, as if to say that the editing is still ongoing, the images of Derrida in the film are juxtaposed without ostensible narrative. They are only "the sign of a sign" of Derrida, which do not arrive at Derrida 'as such.' No less in *Tourner les Mots*, Derrida does not try to put an end to the cinematic representation of himself and disclose either Derrida or the film 'as such.' Rather, he writes on seemingly marginal and irrelevant motifs of the film, one after another. It is as if the text engages itself in the incomplete editing of the film, cutting and pasting the scenes, and produces a different version of *D'ailleurs, Derrida*. The altered dynamics between the elements that are put forward or aside in different manners changes the way the *D'ailleurs, Derrida* is conceived. Consequently, *Tourner les Mots* endows a meaning to the film. Through the detour to *Tourner les Mots*, a variety of scenes in *D'ailleurs, Derrida* belatedly becomes visible in a meaningful way. In other words, not only is the writing on art framed by its subject matter, the artwork itself is also framed by the writing. The film is not a primary departure point from which the signification begins but rather it is itself a part of the network of elements which take on meaning from the mutual interplay and exchange.

Nonetheless, what the *mise-en-scène* of *Tourner les Mots* shows is not accidental; instead, it is no less than an exceptional way of signification apart from representation. *Mise-en-scène* is the possibility of any signification on art. Rather than presenting a single correct answer to a work of art, *Tourner les Mots* raises a fundamental question on meaning, whether certain

elements are primary *versus* secondary, central *versus* marginal, or visible *versus* invisible, in signification with regard to art. As we will see, such evaluation is a by-product of *mise-en-scène* and is varied by the renewed mechanism of *mise-en-scène*. In this light, we will be able to consider *Tourner les Mots* as allowing us to rethink the relation between a work of art and the writing thereon. The text tells us that artwork is not the primary event in the chain of events that constitute the signification surrounding a work of art. No element in the network of events is inherently central or visible but only appears to be so by virtue of certain *mise-en-scène*. Writing on an artwork, especially the way *Tourner les Mots* does it, is one among many possible ways of staging an artwork. By showing that an artwork is “always already” open to a variety of possibilities of *mise-en-scène*, *Tourner les Mots*, instead of putting an end to the signification, invites future audience or readers to engage in the *mise-en-scène* of a film or of a book that can never be closed.

## Chapter One

### The Repression and Return of Writing

In order to clarify what Derrida meant when he translated ‘*Darstellung*’ into *mise-en-scène*,’ rather than ‘representation,’ this chapter will first examine the term, ‘representation’ to understand the interpretation of ‘*Darstellung*’ Derrida is resisting. Even if one is not acquainted with the long history and complex layers of ‘representation’ as a philosophical concept, anyone with the slightest sense of word formation process in the Romance languages and meaning of the prefix ‘re-’ would understand the word ‘representation’ as re-presentation of anterior presence. According to Derrida, the term ‘representation,’ even when allegedly used in the ‘neutral’ and ‘colloquial’ sense, is always already colluding with the entire tradition of Western metaphysics that distinguishes the originary presence from a representation that is derivative of presence. In section 1.1, we will see that the debasement of representation as a derivative concept is linked systematically and historically with the repression of writing. From Aristotle to Hegel, and even to Saussure, “the author considered as the founder of the first great project of general and scientific semiology” (MP 75), writing has been considered the exterior representation of the natural and proximate presence of meaning in relation to speech.<sup>5</sup> However, in section 1.2, we will see that according to Derrida, writing is only repressed, which is to say that it cannot be excluded. As we follow Derrida demonstrating that the characteristics that have been attributed to writing alone are applicable to any sign, writing will be no longer thinkable in the “modified form of presence” (OG

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<sup>5</sup> Though this thesis tries to reconstitute the presence-centric history of Western semiology principally with three authors, it should nevertheless be acknowledged that Derrida’s reading of his predecessors with regard to presence-centrism covers much more extensive works by other philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Rousseau, as well as linguists, writers of literature, and others.

70), as a representation of the provisional absence of presence. Rather, writing will turn out to be the condition of the sign and signification in general. This designates a break in the notion of presence, the indefinite deferral of the presence of meaning. From such non-representational notion of writing, we will also be able to draw a rough sketch of what Derrida calls ‘*mise-en-scène*,’ before delving into a further inquiry into it in more detail in chapter 2.

### **1.1 Presence-Centrism and Writing as Re-Presentation**

As Derrida views it, the conception of the word ‘representation’ always depends on the uncritical premise that representation is preceded by an originary presence, be it spatial or temporal, and “the content represented, (...) a meaning, thing, and so on (...) would be a presence and not a representation” (S 303). For example, when one says that a portrait represents the late, it is to say that what is represented is the presence of the person, which is spatially not coexisting with the portrait and temporally preceding the painting of the portrait. The distinction between presence and representation is “not the effect of an accidental prejudice, a theoretical fault or a manner of thinking, (...) which came about one day and of which we could rid ourselves by a decision when the time comes” (S 304). According to Derrida, the entire tradition of Western thinking, though irreducible to one another, has been built around the notion of ‘presence’ and he calls such tradition or habit of thinking “the metaphysics of presence”—metaphysics because the notion that there is origin, invariable principle or structure molds the way one experiences the world, makes judgement and thinks, while it transcends (*meta*) physical phenomena (*physics*).

Derrida argues that, before “knowing how and what to translate by ‘representation,’ (...) the concept of translation and of language (...) is [already] dominated by the concept of representation” (S 302). The notions of translation and of language depend on the notion of representation in all senses of the word: representation “in the sense of the delegation of presence, of reiteration rendering present once again, in substituting a presentation for another *in absentia* and so on” (S 303). For example, one who translates the German ‘*Darstellung*’ into the French ‘*représentation*’ or English ‘representation’ might also assert that “*Darstellung* play[s] the role of German representation[] [representation in the sense of being representative] of French (or more generally Latin) [word] representation or vice versa” (S 297). To translate something is to replace one sign for another across different systems of language. Usually, one would not equate translating a text with writing a new text. It is because one regards the language, as Derrida would put it, the “system of representation” (S 304), which represents the invariable, identical semantic kernel that is present anterior to and indifferent to the variable, different linguistic systems. Accordingly, the shift of linguistic system would not affect the essence of the text. At best, translation repeats the same meaning, while it is also easy to mistranslate, namely, to misrepresent. Moreover, what is at stake is not only “interlinguistic translation [between languages, but also] intralinguistic (within a single language) [and] even (...) intersemiotic translation (between discursive and nondiscursive languages, art for example)” (S 302). Thus, the notion of not only the linguistic sign but of the sign and signification in general is always already dominated by the metaphysical backdrop of representation. Derrida states: “the sign is usually said to be put in the place of the thing itself, the present thing, ‘thing’ here standing equally for meaning or referent. The sign represents the present in its absence. (...)”

When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the *detour* of the sign. (...) The sign, in this sense, is *deferred* presence” (MP 9, emphasis by author) —italicized are the terms that will occupy us soon. “The substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both *secondary* and *provisional*: secondary due to an original and lost presence from which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final and missing presence toward which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation (*ibid*, emphasis by Derrida). As such, the metaphysics of presence “could treat the *sign* only as (...) transition, the bridge between two moments of full-presence, (...) between an original presence [*archē*; origin] and its circular reappropriation in a final presence [*telos*; end]” (MP 71). Signification is always related to the notion of such reappropriation, the moment when the presence no longer has to be represented after coming back to itself in the lucidity of self-presence: presence of the addresser's message to the addressee, meaning to mind, subject to consciousness, reality to perception.

Nevertheless, we can easily think of examples in which signification seems to be enriched by the very fact that meaning or referent does not present itself immediately: a portrait can be appreciated over generations as a classic, by people who do not even know who the portrait represents, metaphors in epistolary literature are invented because one cannot put into words one's love directly, the rhymes in poetry might merely repeat the same pronunciation in a slightly different manner but provides the artwork with harmonious ring. However, the traditional metaphysics of presence might find such signs as portrait, literary metaphor or rhyme beautiful but so as a mere décor. The metaphysics of presence, which Derrida states is “indistinguishable from (...) [the] treatment of sign” (MP 71) as secondary and provisional,

regards anything between the original and final presence to be, essentially, either in anticipation of or deviating from presence. Either case is thought to be transition or imperfection that is derivative of the originary presence. Based on such distinction between the originary and the derivative, a series of conceptual binaries are compiled: “presence as against absence, the inside as against the outside, the soul against the body, meaning as against its sign, the spirit as against the letter, the clear as against the obscure, the literal as against the figural, the rational as against the irrational, the serious as against the non-serious, and so on, indefinitely.”<sup>6</sup> According to the principle of identity, nothing can be both present and absent, inside and outside, etc. One side of the dichotomy is thinkable only in the absence of the other. Nevertheless, the pairs are far from symmetrical. The former articles have always been prioritized as originary and primary, while the latter is considered to be derivative and secondary. Such preference is thrust so deeply not only into philosophical but also seemingly neutral, mundane thinking, that one assumes without question that “meaning is logically prior, and ontologically superior, to its linguistic expression, or that serious literal speech is logically prior, and ontologically superior, to jokes or fiction.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in the Western tradition of thinking, things are evaluated in relation to presence. The metaphysics of presence that posits the sign between two presences also stratifies various types of signs proportional to their distance from the presence. As Derrida views it, the traditional discussions of the sign have been governed by the tripartite hierarchy of the psychic, phonic, and the graphic: the idea is allegedly first present to the human soul (*psyche*). When one expresses such preconceived idea, the phonic signs such as voice are prioritized since when one

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<sup>6</sup> Bennington, *Interrupting Derrida*, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

speaks, one produces one's own means of expression from within. On the other hand, when one writes, one has to borrow external material, such as the ink to dip the nib of the fountain pen and the piece of paper to write on. Accordingly, the graphic signs such as writing have been repressed, relegated to an exterior and secondary technique with regard to the purportedly immediate and natural presence of the meaning to the speech, at third remove from the idea.<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, for example, is one of the earliest thinkers to state such hierarchy of the psychic, phonic, and the graphic. He “developed his interpretation of the voice in a treatise *Peri Psukēs* [On the Soul], and (...), in *Peri Hermeneias* [On Interpretation], defined signs, symbols, speech and writings on the basis of the *pathēmata tēs psukhēs* [mental experiences], the states, affections or passions of the soul” (MP 75). Aristotle opens *Peri Hermeneias* with the description that “spoken words (*ta en tēi phōnēi*) are the symbols of mental experience (*pathēmata tēs psukhēs*) and written words are the symbols of spoken words. Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but mental experiences, of which these [spoken words] are the *primary symbols* (*sēmeia protōs*), are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images.”<sup>9</sup>

This hierarchy is yet more systemized in Hegel, who, according to Derrida, “*summed up* the entire philosophy (...) [and] assembled all the delimitations of philosophy as presence” (OG 24, emphasis by Derrida). In *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Hegel places his semiology in the third part of the work, “Philosophy of Spirit,” claiming Aristotle as its model (Ency §378). Again, within “Philosophy of Spirit,” the theory of the sign belongs to psychology.

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<sup>8</sup> An article suggests to note that “‘technology’ and ‘text’ are cognate terms” (Kim, “데리다의 텍스트 [Derrida and Text],” p. 95).

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 16a, 3.

Here, some of the important principles of classical semiology are outlined, which we will see in the later part of this chapter, and are at once inherited and radicalized by Saussure. First of all, the sign, situated between intuition and thinking, is comprised of an intuitable, material part and an intelligible, conceptual part. The material part of the sign is not a content passively given but an exteriority willfully chosen by intelligence, intelligence's self-externalization and production of its own intuition (Ency §457). That is to say, secondly, that the link between the conceptual and material faces of the sign is not natural but arbitrary. For example, if one only recognizes the furry animal with the mane as a lion, the animal itself, the lion, is not yet a sign, no less than when one takes it as a symbol of, for example, strength and courage, which is still bound up with the natural and physical determination of the lion. However, if one relates the roaring lion with the opening sequence of any film produced by the MGM film studio, the lion is now a sign of MGM, the link between the conceptual and the material part is not natural but arbitrary, invented by the intelligence. As such, the sign is "the product of intelligence for manifesting its ideas in an external medium" (Ency §459). Lastly, out of all signs, Hegel praises the linguistic signs as the prime model of intelligent and arbitrary sign. This is the case since, in non-linguistic signs, such as the lion that represents the MGM film studio, the match between the conceptual and the material part is arbitrary but the material part is still given from without. However, the linguistic sign is the pure invention of intelligence, since the material part too is not passively given from nature but is produced by human society and its culture. However, Hegel's preference for the linguistic sign stops at the graphic sign and he seeks to chase the graphic sign off "to the rank of an accessory question, treat[] [it] in an appendix, (...) in a certain sense of the word, as a supplement" (MP 94). With regard to the material of language, Hegel seeks to exclude writing

and argues, just like Aristotle, that “it is especially *sounds* which evoke in us a corresponding mood. This is chiefly true of the human voice; for this is the principal way in which a person discloses his inner nature” (Ency §401, Hegel’s italic). After defining spoken language as the original language, Hegel writes: “we may touch, only in passing, upon written language—a further development in the particular sphere of language which borrows the help of an externally practical activity” (Ency §459).

Correspondingly, as Derrida observes it, within writing, different systems of writing are stratified, proportional to the proximity or the docility to the voice, with the gradual and continuous decrease of naturalness and the increase of arbitrariness. The ‘same’ gestural and phonic discourse is first and most ‘naturally’ represented by drawing. The system of notation then continuously progresses into pictogram, hieroglyph, ideograph and finally phonetic writing (MP 312-313)—for the moment, we can only touch in passing here on the fact that there is a hierarchy within graphism between the image and the letter, which will be put into play in Chapter 3. Here, the debasement of writing stops at phonetic writing, or more precisely, alphabetic writing. Phonetic writing is furthest away from the natural, perceptible presence of the thing but it is at the same time the writing that best performs the role that has been given to it; the representation of the voice, and accordingly of the universal idea, rather than the portrayal of a particular thing. According to Hegel, it “leads the mind from the sensibly concrete image to the more formal structure of the vocal word and its abstract elements[.] (...) In alphabetic writing[,] (...) the visible language is related to the vocal only as a sign, and intelligence expresses itself immediately (...) by speaking” (Ency §459).

Such a gesture, which represses writing to the bottom of the hierarchy, stretches before

and after Hegelianism, even to the so-called human sciences of structuralism, the dominant current of thinking in France during Derrida's time, "those who believe that the scientificity of their work begins where metaphysics ends" (OG 13). Here, the term 'science,' from Hegel's *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science* to structuralist human sciences and Freud's *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, covered in Chapter 2 below, becomes problematic. Even though science generally claims to disabuse itself of metaphysical prejudices, according to Derrida's reading, the authors that claim the scientificity of their works turn out to remain captive of the traditional metaphysics of presence, so long as they refer to the uncritical notion that meaning is primarily and naturally present in relation to speech. Ranging from linguistics to psychology and anthropology, "most of the (...) researches that dominate the field of thought today, whether due to their own results or to the regulatory model that they find themselves acknowledging everywhere, refer genealogically to Saussure (...) as their common inaugurator" (MP 10). Saussure's exemplarity, however, is not due to innovation *ex nihilo*, but to the inheritance and radicalization of a metaphysical tradition from which he unknowingly draws. In the wake of Hegel, Saussure's linguistics defines the linguistic sign as the arbitrary coupling of a conceptual part and a sensory part, naming them respectively the "signified" and the "signifier." Nonetheless, by signifier, Saussure only refers to what he calls the "sound-image" (GL 66), not the graphic signifiers. In a sense, he continues to subscribe to the stratification of the psyche, the phonie and the graphie, while also complicating the relationship between the meaning and the sound by claiming that the "sound-image" is not the sound in the physical world, but the "psychological imprint" (GL 66)—Even though the relation between them is not causal, we might consult the figurative image of a mental trace, as if the physical sound leaves it upon the

psyche, or of a mental image of a sound before vocalization. Then, Saussure too excludes writing from the subject of linguistics as external to the linguistic sign which represents meaning and sound combined: “Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second *exists for the sole purpose of representing the first*” (OG 30, Derrida’s italic; see GL 23). Therefore, Saussure too distinguishes systems of writing into two: one is the phonetic system that represents sound, just as alphabetic writing does, in which a single sign is “based on the irreducible elements of speech” (GL 26). The other is the non-phonetic system that represents a thing or an idea, as would the Chinese ideogram, in which “a single sign (...) is unrelated to the component of sounds of the word itself” (GL 25)

From the perspective of Derrida, the tradition of presence-centrism has been chasing off writing to the border since it considers writing to be the sign whose function is conditioned by absence, not presence: the absence of the signified, the addressee, and even the addresser. Let us begin with the absence of the signified. Traditionally, writing has been regarded as the unexhausted mark that is distributed in space, as opposed to the sound that desirably volatilizes in time. Derrida uses the term ‘trace’ to designate the logic by which writing in general is governed. The French word ‘*trace*’ carries along the implications of footprint, track, mark, imprint, all of which is thinkable only on the basis of the distinction between the anterior presence and the graphic representation—the term will continue to matter to us: in this section, it will help us outline the classical characteristics that have been attributed to writing while we will see in the next section how Derrida “wrench[es] the concept of the trace from the classical scheme” (OG 61). According to Saussure, there is a “natural bond” (GL 25) between meaning and sound, whereas the link that relates the graphic sign to the allegedly natural unity of the

meaning and the sound is only “superficial” (*ibid*). Therefore, in the case of the graphic sign, the thing itself is “not *signified* but represented [*représenté*]” (OG 32, Derrida’s italic). The signified is not primarily and immediately present to the graphic sign but to the sign in which the meaning and the sound is united. Since it refers not directly to the “primary signified” (OG 19; see also 23, 301), but to yet another sign, the graphic sign is the “direct sign of nothing”, but the “sign of a sign” (see Ency §459).<sup>10</sup> Writing is like a trace that “presents itself as the mark of an anterior presence, origin” (OG 7). “Half of it is ‘not there’ and the other half always ‘not that.’”<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, the unexhausted aspect of writing is related to the absence of either addressee or addresser. It seems that the voice transfers the message from the sender to the receiver and then vaporizes, thus prohibiting the message from being confiscated and misunderstood by a third party. As such, spoken discourse has been considered the most ideal way of communication, due to the alleged presence of meaning in the voice. For instance, according to Plato, since spoken discourse is “written down (...) in the soul of the listener[,] it can defend itself, (...) knows for whom it should speak and for whom it should remain silent” (P 276a). In contrast, writing is merely an “image” (*ibid*) that transcribes speech in the absence of an addresser or an addressee. For the written words “stand there as if they are alive, (...) [one]’d think they were speaking (...) but if [one] question[s] anything (...) to learn more, [they] continue[] to signify just that very same thing forever” (P 275d-e). To put it in a Derridean way of description, writing has been regarded to be incapable of containing the full-presence of meaning for it lets go of the essential liveliness of spoken discourse, such as question and

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<sup>10</sup> Spivak, “Translator’s Preface,” p. xxiii.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

answer, intonation, and accent. Namely, it is only “a mark which remains” (MP 317), the dead graphism abandoned by the “living, breathing discourse” (P 276a). Such a binary of life and death will appear repeatedly throughout this thesis; classically, the former has always been attributed to the presence of the subject to consciousness, while the graphic has been associated with death or unconsciousness, namely to the absence of living, conscious subjectivity.

Lastly, writing can survive even the absence of an addresser as well as an addressee. The possibility of the absence of an addresser is related to writing’s repeatability. It designates the necessity of writing that comes hand in hand with its danger. Here, the absence is not only empirical absence or death but “nonpresence in general, for example the nonpresence of my meaning, of my intention-to-signify, of my wanting-to-communicate-this, from the emission or production of the mark” (MP 316). It is to say that writing that has outlived the addresser can be repeated in various contexts that go beyond the addresser’s ‘original’ intention, expectation and control. In a sense, writing’s repeatability is the possibility of being alienated from the ‘singular’ ‘identity’ of the ‘original’ context. In this regard, Derrida uses the word “iterability (*itérabilité*).” Generally, ‘to iterate’ is clarified as the synonym for ‘to repeat.’ Nonetheless, Derrida notes that the radix, ‘iter,’ comes from Sanskrit ‘*itara*,’ which means ‘other,’ and plays on it to exploit “the logic which links repetition to alterity” (MP 315). In *Phaedrus*, Plato says that writing, “can do [nothing] more than remind those who already know what the writing is about” (P 275d). On the other hand, those who do not understand what the writing means cannot ‘question anything (...) [even if they] want to learn more, [since the writing] continues to signify just that very same thing forever,” “remain[ing] most solemnly silent” (*ibid*). Such writing “rolls about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with

it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not" (P 275e). Writing thus re-iterated in the contexts that the 'original' participants of the spoken discourse could not foresee, is open to both reinterpretation and misinterpretation.

## 1.2 Writing as *Différance*

Thus far, we have explained writing as a type of sign that has following characteristics: inexhaustibility, spacing, and repeatability-iterability. The repression of writing is thus the resistance to such circumstances in which the communication of meaning is not immediate but deferred and therefore a trace goes on to persist in the absence of the expected addresser and addressee, differentiating from the intended meaning in uncontrollable contexts. Thus, by repressing writing, the metaphysics of presence has sought to return the deferral to immediate presence, the differentiation to identity. However, according to Derrida, such attempt is destined to fail. To put it in a Freudian way, which will be further elucidated later in Chapter 2, what is repressed does not disappear but always returns. Moreover, repression is not a pathological symptom but indispensable for 'normal' psychic life, since otherwise inadequate thoughts or desires would protrude at any unexpected moment. Similarly, the metaphysics of presence cannot dispense with what it represses. In the course of this section, we will examine how Derrida demonstrates that the logic of writing governs the logic of the sign in general. In addition to that, the trace that we mentioned earlier to outline the classical conception of writing can also said to be the logic that governs not only writing but any signifying unit.

In the previous section, we saw that, traditionally, writing has been associated with

absence, that is to say the absence of the signified, the addressee, and the addresser. As Derrida sees it, such absence is the condition of signification in general. Let us first start with the absence of the signified. While writing has been said to be the “sign of the sign” that represents the presence of the inner thoughts to the sound, Derrida will claim that there is no such thing as what Saussure calls the “natural bond,” even between the meaning and the sound. As was clarified in the semiological scheme of Hegel, the sign, by definition, cannot have a ‘natural’ relationship, such as resemblance or figuration, with what it signifies. Saussure puts “the thesis of arbitrariness” at the very heart of the science of the sign (MP 10). As Derrida rightly notes, Saussure’s thesis of arbitrariness has as its indispensable and foundational correlative “the thesis of *difference*” (OG 52, emphasis by Derrida; see GL 118). We mentioned earlier that Saussure states that the signifier is the “psychological imprint” of sound, the “sound-image” that is distinguished from the physical, sensible plenitude of sound. According to the thesis of arbitrariness, no signifier is predetermined in its essence as adequate to be coupled with any certain signified. It is only by being distinguished from other signifiers that a signifier means something, namely refers to a signified, and consequently the sign appears as the unity of the signified and the signifier. For example, when the English language puts the letter, ‘s,’ at the end of a noun to make the plural form, it is not because ‘s’ has in its essence the attributes of plurality but because by doing so it distinguishes the noun from the singular form. In a sense, “there can be arbitrariness only because the system of signs is constituted solely by the differences in terms, and not by their plenitude” (MP 10). Thus, the difference that is at the heart of Saussurean linguistics is not the difference that is derivative of plenitude. Rather, it is the condition for the supposed sensible plenitude to make sense—not merely in an idiomatic way that the sensible

plenitude that already *has* meaning is understood as such, but in a literal way that the difference *produces* the meaning. The signifieds too are “purely differential and defined not by their positive content but (...) by their relations with the other terms of the [linguistic] system” (GL 117). For example, French makes conceptual distinctions with the words ‘*emporter*’ (to bring a thing from here to somewhere else), ‘*apporter*’ (to bring a thing from somewhere else to here), ‘*emmener*’ (to bring a person from here to somewhere else), ‘*amener*’ (to bring a person from somewhere else to here). On the other hand, in English, the word ‘bring’ is incapable of making such conceptual differentiation, unless it is supplemented by other linguistic signs such as ‘something,’ ‘somebody,’ ‘here,’ and ‘there.’ Saussure states that “language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system” (GL 120). This is where Saussure departs from the tradition that assumes already present meaning that is waiting to be vocalized through speech. As such, Saussure, who is on the one hand criticized by Derrida for sharing in the undisputed metaphysical presupposition that writing is exterior to the atomic unity of meaning and sound, also guides Derrida to think of a difference that is anterior to plenitude.

Based on the discussions above, we can describe components constituting a sign is the *trace* of other signs that are not present. Here, the term trace, which designated the empirical mark of the written sign in the previous section, is used in what might be called a “quasi-transcendental” sense and names the logic that is applicable to all the signs.<sup>12</sup> The logic of trace

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<sup>12</sup> Evocative of what Derrida writes “pseudo-transcendental” as in his text *Glas*, “quasi-transcendental” is the term coined by commentators such as Bennington and Gasché, not by Derrida himself. The following part of the paragraph resorts to Bennington’s explanation, which provides us with food for thought to reconsider the binary distinction between the transcendental and the empirical.

is rather transcendental than empirical, as the question it tries to answer is not ‘what is the sign’ but ‘how is the sign possible.’ However, it is “quasi” transcendental because the logic of the trace is a movement that is reduced neither to the purely transcendental nor the empirical plane. The trace is not sheer materiality, no less than “another transcendental present, (...) *another* origin” (OG 47, emphasis by Derrida) beyond the empirical, material face of the sign. The trace that makes the sign figure the relation *between* the signs, “the nonpresence of the other inscribed within the sense of the present” (OG 71). Therefore, the trace is not thinkable in the form of presence. The sign is the synthesis of traces, rather than that of the signified and the signifier, the “synthesis in which the completely other is announced as such—without any simplicity, any identity, any resemblance or continuity” (OG 47). If the sign can only function to the extent it relates to what it is not and bears the trace of the absent other, the quasi-transcendental logic of the trace shows the “complicity (...) between conditions of possibility and conditions of impossibility, (...) the *necessary possibility* of the failure, compromise or contamination” of the pure sign that functions on its own.<sup>13</sup> Governed by the logic of the trace, no sign is either complete presence or complete absence but “presence-absence” (OG 71) and thus is not thinkable in terms of the metaphysics of presence. We will take a detailed analysis of this enigmatic logic by demonstrating that the classical characteristics of writing as Derrida outlines—spacing, inexhaustibility and repeatability (iterability) (see MP 317)—are applicable to the sign in general.

Let us begin with what Derrida calls “spacing.” Speaking of the relation that a sign necessarily holds with the absent other in order to signify, Derrida takes Saussure’s thesis of

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<sup>13</sup> Bennington, *Interrupting Derrida*, p. 41, Bennington’s italic.

difference yet further. Unlike Saussure, whose prime concern is the linguistic sign, the other of a sign that Derrida talks about encompasses not only other signs but also, at one level, things such as blank space, ellipsis, punctuations, etc., which the classical linguistics and semiology often ignored in favor the ‘positive’ notion of the sign. To name this blind spot of the classical linguistics, which has been considered to be the mere absence of meaning, Derrida invokes the term “spacing.” Spacing is not just a static space that is negatively determined as the absence of meaningful entity. The naming emphasizes that the fine line between the ‘present’ element and the other elements that are at once absent and constitutive of the ‘present’ element remains constantly unfixed. The elements that are separated by space are not only in relation to but also irreducible to one another. To borrow Saussure’s words, the spaced elements “are *presented* in succession; they form a chain” (GL 70, my italic). Saussure opposes the “auditory signifiers” (*ibid*) to the “graphic signifiers” (*ibid*); the former succeeds in time, while the latter “*represent[s]*” (*ibid*, emphasis by author) the former as “the spatial line of graphic marks” (*ibid*). According to Derrida, while the sign in general is not ‘presented’ all at once but ‘presented’ in the form similar to a chain, the temporal and the spatial aspects of the ‘presentation’ are inseparable. For example, one does not know what the letter ‘I’ signifies, unless one reads till the end of the word or the sentence. There is always a certain delay between the perception and the comprehension of the spaced graphic mark. Namely, not only do the spatially distributed signs *take space*, they always *take time* to be understood. In a sense, Derrida says that spacing is the “becoming-time of space” (OG 68) and the “becoming-space of time” (*ibid*).

The same goes for phonic signs. One usually does not consider the phonic signs as spatially distributed; instead, the phonic signs seem to be perceived and comprehended

simultaneously.<sup>14</sup> Here, we might remind ourselves that Saussure distinguishes the auditory signifier, which he also calls the “psychological imprint” or the “sound-image,” from the physical sound. Nonetheless, he says that the signifier is “material” (GL 66), in comparison to the more conceptual side of the sign that is the signified. Indeed, the phonic sign too, should not be completely cancelled out in its materiality in order to signify. Otherwise, if we do not remember what we just heard by the time we hear the following syllable, we would comprehend nothing more than meaningless sound. For the signification to be possible, the supposed ‘present’ element should retain in itself the past trace that the preceding sound left and already anticipate the future trace to be inscribed. The signifiers of the spoken discourse too are imaginarily distributed in space, and it equally takes time for such an array of signifiers to be recognized as a meaningful signifying unit. As such, the delay in signification does not *happen* because signification is temporarily impossible. On the contrary, the spatialization-temporization conditions the very possibility of signification from the outset.

The sign, described to be presented like a chain, a link that is once part of a concatenation can also be lifted from the interlocking links and be grafted to another chain. In a sense, though Saussure spoke only of succession as regards a chain, Derrida argues that spacing is also the possibility of a sign to be separated from other signs “of the internal contextual chain” (MP 317). Moreover, the spacing splits a sign from within, tearing the signifier off from the signified. As seen in the previous paragraph, the ‘presentation’ of the sign is inevitably spatialized-temporized. It means that no signification happens in an immediate fashion: there is

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<sup>14</sup> In French, the word ‘*entendre*’ means both ‘to hear’ and ‘to understand.’ On that note, Derrida regards the scheme of “hearing-oneself-speak [*s’entendre-parler*]” (OG 98) to best summarize the notion of the ideal self-presence of meaning, in which the signifier is emitted by the subject from within and then immediately interiorized as the signified.

always delay in the desired presence of the signified to the signifier. While Saussure shows that the functioning of a sign depends on the external relation with other signs, he does not doubt the internal unity of sign, in which he says the signified and the signifier are inseparable like two sides of “a sheet of paper” (GL 113). However, according to the thesis of difference, a sign, in order to function, cannot simply refer to itself but always refers to something other than itself in the network of differentiated signs. This is to say that there is no primary signified that is “present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself” (MP 11). Rather, “the signified always already functions as a signifier,” as the “signifier of the signifier” (OG 7). As the very result of Saussure’s thesis of arbitrariness and of difference, Derrida demonstrates that meaning is no longer conceivable on the basis of presence. The presence of the signified to the signifier, concept to material, idea to sense, which constitutes the habitual conception of the sign, is indefinitely deferred within the chain of differing elements. As such, the absence of the signified is the attribute of not only the written sign but the sign in general. For example, when it comes to non-linguistic sign such as painting, even though there is no terminological or conceptual equivalent for the word, letter, morpheme, etc., a painting too does not immediately present itself as something meaningful; it requires a form of ‘reading’ process from one point of the painting to another so as to appreciate the figure, colors, and composition of a painting and eventually think about what they mean. Such differentiation within a sign and the essential delay in signification elucidates not the impossibility but the dynamic character of signification. There is no invariable border that determines the indivisible identity of a signifying unit.

We will continue to demonstrate that the absence of addressee/addresser is indispensable to signification in general. We discussed in section 1.1 that writing is “a mark which remains.” It

is “not exhausted in the present [moment] of inscription” (MP 317) and thus has been disparaged for its vulnerability to misunderstanding in the absence of an addressee and even of an addresser. Akin to how Derrida extends the term, ‘trace,’ out of sheer empirical dimension, what is inexhaustible is not merely the indelible stain of the mark on the empirical level. The meaning that the trace would have intended to designate does not and should not be exhausted. If the functioning of a sign depends on the network of differentiated signs, it means that such function of a sign does not depend on the individual speaker and his or her conscious intention to signify. In the previous paragraph, we saw that the sign functions only in relation with other signs. Nonetheless, in order to communicate with other signs, it should not immediately get exhausted at the supposed moment of inscription. Furthermore, that the functioning of the sign is conditioned by the network of signs tells us that the signification does not depend on the individual speaker, his or her conscious intention to signify and to communicate. Not that there is no conscious activity of signification at all, it is rather to say that the function of a sign rests on the possibility that it does not stop working in the absence of the addressee/addresser. The sign in general is always already immune to the absence of empirically determined addressee/addresser as well as the conscious, signifying subjectivity. In a sense, the sign is “a kind of *machine* that is in turn productive, that my future disappearance in principle will not prevent from functioning” (MP 316, emphasis by author)—the word, ‘machine,’ is italicized in order to highlight the non-subjective, non-human characteristic that is at the heart of signification, a theme that is to be further developed in Chapters 2 and 3. In section 1.1, we also mentioned that writing’s vulnerability to misunderstanding is, put differently, its possibility of being repeated in the contexts that the addresser did not intend, expect, or control. As we saw in the previous

paragraph, a sign does not exhaust its meaning in the moment of inscription, which consequently “give[s] rise to an iteration both in the absence and beyond the presence of the empirically determined subject who, in a given context, has emitted or produced it” (MP 317). Here, context can first of all be the external context such as “the presence of the scribe in what he has written, the entire environment and horizon of his experience, (...) the intention” (*ibid*). For example, “writing is by definition destined to be read in a context different from that of the act of inscription.”<sup>15</sup> Secondly, also in the internal, semiotic layer, one can always lift a written word from the interlocking chains of words and inscribe or graft it into other chains. Spoken signs no less than written signs function on the basis of repeatability-iterability. In order for the sound to make sense “across empirical variations of tone, of voice, (...) of a certain accent, for example, one must be able to recognize the identity (...) of a signifying form” (MP 318). The identifiable form of sign, however, is at once appropriation and expropriation of such sign’s identity. A sign that is recognized in its identical form is necessarily recognizable as such in the repeated usages in heterogeneous contexts. Even non-linguistic signs such as mathematical or monetary signs, if they cannot be repeated in alterity and consequently cannot be transmitted, one would have to invent and come to consensus upon a sign every time. Finally, even if one imagines a sign “idiomatic enough to have been founded and known, as a secret cipher, only by two ‘subjects’” (MP 315), the third party can still take advantage of the sign in the absence of the supposed addressee and the addresser, so long as the sign is identifiable, repeatable and transmittable.

So far, we have examined how Derrida demonstrates that the classical characteristics of writing condition all significations. Any signification shares the characteristics of writing. In

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<sup>15</sup> Bennington, “Derridabase,” pp. 85-86.

other words, anyone or anybody signifies by making a signifying unit, which survives and continues to function in the absence of the designated signified, addresser, and addressee, at the risk of deferring or differing meaning. In order to distinguish such writing in the generalized sense, whose characteristics are shared by the sign in general, from the one in the narrow sense, to which alone such characteristics have been attached, Derrida invokes the term “arche-trace” or “arche-writing.” The fact that writing is put in the place of origin (*archē*) does not lead to the claim that writing is the origin in the traditional sense, not to the extent that the term carries with it the notion of presence. Rather, Derrida attempts to show that the notion of origin is only possible through writing, through what the metaphysics of presence has always debased as secondary, in that origin “was never constituted except reciprocally by a non-origin, the trace” (*ibid*).

Such arche-writing, the writing that can no longer be thought as representation, as derivation of presence, follows the logic of what Derrida calls *différance*. *Différance* is a neologism, or, more precisely, a “neographism” (MP 3) that Derrida introduces. It is neither word nor concept. Rather, any word or concept depends on *différance*. Derrida intentionally violates orthography, according to which the French equivalent for the English ‘*difference*’ would be ‘*différence*’ with an ‘e.’ By doing so, he leads us to ponder about the word, ‘*différance*,’ other than in the popular sense of the word. The ‘a’ of *différance* is the protrusion of what the metaphysics of presence could only repress but could not get rid of. In French, the pronunciation of ‘*différence*’ and ‘*différance*’ is identical. The difference is not spoken but only written. As such, Derrida plays on the fact that the difference between *différance* and *différence* is “unheard of”—unheard in a sense that the difference is only written or read, not spoken, and therefore not

conceivable within the metaphysics of presence. Further, even though he chooses to write ‘*différance*’ with an ‘a,’ *différance* is not merely a concept less than a word that Derrida or anybody invented from scratch. In French, the verb ‘*différer*’ means both to differ and to defer. To defer and to differ interwoven in *différance* are also respectively the spatial and the temporal axes of spacing, which is the “becoming-time of space” and the “becoming-space of time.” *Différance* being the nominalized form of the present participle (*différant*) of ‘*différer*,’ the ‘a’ that distinguishes *différance* from *différence* carries along with it the undertone of movement, in which time and space are not thought separately. We said in section 1.1 that the metaphysics of presence puts the presence at “both origin and end [as] the founding principle (*archē*) (...) toward which one moves (*telos* [...]).”<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, the movement and the change that happens between the beginning and the end have been thought to be either derivative of or deviative of an unmodified, static presence. However, Derrida says he “strategically nickname[s] *trace* (...) or *différance*” the “unnameable movement of *difference-itself*” (OG 93, emphasis by Derrida). He goes on to say that “it is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called ‘present’ element (...) is related to something other than itself, (...) keeping within itself the mark (...), [the] trace [that is] related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not” (MP 13). As such, *différance*, rather than being difference as modified presence or deferral as provisional absence of presence, is the “movement that ‘produces’” (MP 11) as its effect *différence* with an ‘e,’ which is difference in the popular sense, the static difference between two identities. It is the process of differentiation, the pacification of

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<sup>16</sup> Bass, “Translator’s Note,” p. 9.

which is indefinitely deferred.

### 1.3 Writing and the Scene of Presence

Derrida describes the “‘present’ element,” explained in the previous paragraph as being constituted the essential relation with the other, as the “element[] [that] appear[s] on the *scene* of presence” (MP 13, emphasis by author). Here, underlining what Derrida calls “the *scene* of presence,” we will try drawing a rough sketch of what he means by *mise-en-scène* in comparison to the logic of *différance*, arche-writing and arche-trace that we have hitherto elaborated, before inquiring further into it in the following chapters. Let us rephrase the citation at the end of the previous paragraph. Derrida says that only so long as the “‘present’ element,” namely the element on the scene of presence, is constituted in relation with “what is not,” is “the movement of signification” possible and that such is “because of *différance*.” Thus, we might begin by supposing that *mise-en-scène* is “the movement of signification,” which is to be understood together with what Derrida calls *différance*. Taking as a point of departure the usual sense of the word, *mise-en-scène* generally refers to the staging or audio-visual realization of a theatrical piece or a film. Since Derrida uses arche-writing “to designate not only the (...) literal pictographic inscription, but also (...) inscription in general, (...) even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of voice[,] such as cinemato-graphy, choreo-graphy” (OG 9, translation modified), we can understand a theater or a film as a kind of writing taken in the broad sense. As a type of writing, a play or a film shares the characteristics of writing in general, which we have summarized as spacing, inexhaustibility and repeatability-iterability. A play or a film inscribes dance, movement, light, etc. and produces a sign, instead of professing to exhaust

meaning immediately. Presentation of a play or a film is spaced: it is at once spatialized and temporized, which correspond to ‘differ’ and ‘defer,’ the two strands that consist the movement of *différance*. *Mise-en-scène* concerns the signification of a performative art in a spatial as well as temporal manner. First, temporally, the ‘present’ performance of an actor, for instance, is always in communication with the performance, which had been or will be on the stage, namely with the performance that are not present. Here, the performance points not only at the performance in the narrow sense by an actor, but also at the performance in the broad sense by a director, scriptwriter, set designer, lighting engineer, and so on, which stretches beyond the beginning and the end of a play. Moreover, spatially, even when a play or a film seems to be taking place in an identical and homogeneous space, the space of *mise-en-scène* is differentiated into “the scene of presence” and behind the scene. The stage of the theater that the audience sees is only a part of the entire *mise-en-scène*, the major part of which is happening behind the scene, invisibly. Both spatially and temporally, a scene is constituted by *mise-en-scène*, which makes the element not only present but also absent from the scene. In other words, “the scene of presence” depends not only on what is thinkable in the form of presence—be it what is presently on the scene, or the idea of the play, which is supposedly present to the conscious mind of the individual scriptwriter or director and would then be visually manifested, unaltered in its essence—but also on the trace of what is absent from the scene. A play goes on by virtue of the machinery of *mise-en-scène* that presents the elements like a spatio-temporal panorama, for which the human (actors, staffs, directors, etc.) and non-human (set, prop, light, etc.) factors alike work together like the parts of an apparatus. Moreover, since such *mise-en-scène* always relates an element to other, differentiated elements, the signification of a scene is never

immediate. There is always a delay in perception and comprehension of a scene. If such deferral and differentiation are indispensable in order for a scene to signify, we can say that the meaning and the identity of a scene is at once constituted and dismantled.

In that it is constituted by the elements that are inextricably interwoven, a work of performative art is a text in the old-fashioned sense of the word.<sup>17</sup> If we were to pursue the metaphor of text yet further, the warps and woofs that weave a textile are inextricable but discernible. Likewise, the internal and external elements that are essentially in relation with “the scene of presence” are nonetheless not reducible to the present element. On that note, Derrida says that the difference between elements is insoluble and that “an interval must separate the present [element] from what it is not in order for the present to be itself” (MP 13). According to him, spacing is nothing other than the capacity of “making interval[s].”<sup>18</sup> For example, we can think of the intervals in a text in the narrow sense, such as punctuation, blank space, ellipsis, etc., which, within the traditional linguistics, have been regarded to actively contribute to the meaning. Earlier, in this section, we explained that we know what the letter ‘I’ signifies once we read the entire sentence or the paragraph, in which the letter is situated. However, had the letters and words not been separated by such intervals, all the elements would have been written on top of one another and the sentence would have been neither legible nor comprehensible. As such, the signification of a positive content depends on the interval, which has been considered to be a “simple negativity of a lack” (MP 317). A text, which appears to be a simple, indivisible

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<sup>17</sup> The word, ‘text,’ comes from the Greek radix “*teks-*,” which means ‘to weave,’ or ‘to fabricate’ things like clothes. (Kim, “데리다의 텍스트 (Derrida and Text),” p. 95).

<sup>18</sup> Mortley, *French Philosophers in Conversation*, p. 100.

signifying unit, is permeated with such intervals. Before we speak of the interval *between* elements, there is always already the interval *within* an element. The “interval[, which] separates the present [element] from what it is not[,] (...) must, by the same token, divide the present [element] in and of itself” (MP 13). Since a text signifies to the extent the elements within a text, which are separated by intervals, contextualize each other, there is no text before or after context. Not confining ourselves to linguistics, we can also think of the interval in performative art. To begin with, temporally, there are intervals between theatrical acts, or the imperceptible intervals between cinematic sequences. Moreover, spatially, a stage is conceived as “the scene of presence” by virtue of being separated by rest of the theater by certain interval, for instance by proscenium. Like the frame of a painting, a proscenium is itself not ‘present’ on the stage but frames the stage, contextualizes the framed space as where a show is to be presented.

The interval lets an element be contextualized not only by adjacent but also distant elements. For example, while a blank space between words interrelates neighboring elements, ellipsis put together elements that are far removed. Moreover, quotation mark assembles elements that used to belong to different texts, or, which is the same thing, to different contexts. As such, the interval comes hand in hand with the shift of context. Also, in performative art, major changes of set-design are made during intervals in a play and in a film, after interval, a sequence can take a leap into completely different spatio-temporal setting. According to Derrida, any sign “carries with it a force of breaking with its context” (MP 317), the possibility of being lifted from the adjacent interlocking links and being grafted onto another chain. When we look at a film reel, for instance, we realize that a film, which is usually conceived as a continuous entity, is composed of discontinuous succession of still cuts. The border between frames of the cuts that

are visible in a film reel is where the analogue film editing takes place, cutting the scenes and pasting them to another concatenation of scenes. A film is thus a text weaved by ellipsis and quotations. Due to this structural design, a scene can go on to be quoted outside the film. Documentary films re-frame the scenes that are gathered from various external sources such as news reels, interview clips, etc. and let them be conceived in a new meaning, within a new context. As such, the documentary film exemplifies well the repeatability-iterability that already resides a 'singular,' 'identical' scene. The re-contextualization of a scene can go on endlessly: a scene of a film can be repeated in works of art of different genres, or even beyond the conventional boundary of art. Ranging from the physical frame such as the proscenium of a theater or the frame of a still cut to the various other contexts that can also frame a scene conceptually, a scene acquires a meaningful identity within such framing, namely a certain *mise-en-scène*. Nonetheless, the variability of the frame does not stop the signifying unit from functioning. Rather, "one may recognize other such possibilities [of signification] (...) by inscribing or *grafting* [the signifying unit] into another chains [of signs]" (MP 317, emphasis by Derrida). Thus, the infinite possibility of staging at once expropriates a scene from the given concatenation of scenes and gives rise to the exponential re-appropriation of the meaning of the scene.

Derrida explains that *différance* or the trace is "called writing only (...) within the limits of [certain] science and philosophy" (OG 93). However, the science of language that we have hitherto examined, be it that of Saussure no less than of Hegel or Aristotle, does not let us exhaust the notion of arche-writing or arche-trace as *différance* and therefore of *mise-en-scène*. Despite the crucial inspiration it gave to Derrida's *différance* as the systematic play of difference,

for Saussure, the difference between the signifieds and the signifiers is effective insofar as it is within the system. While Derrida argues that *différance* is “the *production* of a system of differences,”, Saussure cannot explain the generation of the system itself.<sup>19</sup> A few paragraphs above, while demonstrating that there is no signified anterior to the signifier, we discussed that, according to Saussure, “language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system.” He explains that “language is necessary for speech to be intelligible and to produce all its effects” (GL 18). However, his logic is circulatory: “but speech is necessary for language to be established; historically, the fact of speech always comes first” (*ibid*). Whereas Saussure carefully distinguished linguistics from “other sciences [that] work with objects that are given in advance” (GL 8) in the beginning of his *Course in General Linguistics*, at the very moment when he has to elucidate the *causa sine qua non* of his science, he appeals to the given, historical fact that speech comes first. From such tautology in Saussure’s text that results from the inability to account for the ‘origin’ of meaning neither in the fact of speech nor linguistic system, this thesis shall proceed to Chapter 2, to Derrida’s reading of Freudian psychology. The precedence of speech is metaphysical no less than historical, which colludes with the notion of the natural and proximate presence of the meaning to the speech. We’ve seen in section 1.1 that semiology has always been placed under the jurisdiction of psychology; Aristotle discusses voice in *Peri Psukēs* and the stratification of the psychic, the phonic and the graphic in *Peri Hermeneias*, and Hegel, in the wake of Aristotle, posited his theory of the sign within psychology. Saussure too is not exempt from this tradition. We saw that he uses the term “signifier” for the “sound-image,” the

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<sup>19</sup> Derrida, *Positions*, p. 28.

“psychological imprint” of sound. He goes on to say that since “language (...) is a system of signs in which the only essential thing is the union of meanings and sound-images, and in which both parts of the sign are psychological[,] (...) to determine the exact place of semiology is the task of the psychologist” (GL 15-16). According to Derrida, “the primacy granted to psychology and the privilege granted to the sonorous or phonic (...) go together” (MP 76). Freud’s psychology, however, will turn out to be at once captive of and productive of the presence-centric binaries. By detouring Derrida’s conception of “belatedness (*après coup*),” the peculiar notion of Freudian psychology, according to which the effect belatedly constitutes the cause, will enable us to understand what Derrida means when he says that Saussurean difference within the linguistic system is the “produced effect[.]” (MP 11) of *différance* and at the same time “an effect without a cause” (MP 12). Accordingly, we will also be able to further develop the logic of arche-writing and *mise-en-scène* as productive of meaning, that writing is not only repressed but also constitutes the primacy and the privilege of presence as “a mythological effect of return” (OG 37).

## Chapter Two

### After the Event: The Psyche as *Mise-en-Scène*

In the previous chapter, we tried to sketch the approximate logic of *mise-en-scène* in comparison with the logic of trace, arche-writing, and *différance*. As a consequence, we were able to conclude that a work of performative art can be taken as writing in the broad sense. Accordingly, *mise-en-scène*, which is a production and a making-sense of the scene in a play or a film, could be understood as the mechanism of signification consisting of non-exhaustion, spacing, and repetition-iteration, by virtue of which a play or a film signifies, just like writing in the narrow sense. However, the short analogy between the everyday understanding of *mise-en-scène* and Derrida's use of the term risks not sufficiently problematizing the habitual belief that a work of art, or anything that appears to be meaningful, is a representation of something already meaningful. Earlier, we saw how Saussure prompts Derrida to think of meaning as something that is not simply present but indefinitely deferred and differed. However, the Saussurean inspiration is yet to be clarified as applicable outside the linguistic system. Moreover, Saussure's linguistics still seeks its origin in psychology and therefore does not problematize "the primacy granted to psychology and the privilege granted to the sonorous or phonic" with regard to signification. In this regard, this chapter will demonstrate that the psyche too makes sense of the perceived reality in general as it writes and reads a kind of psychical writing, with recourse to Derrida's text "Freud and the Scene of Writing," where Derrida takes a detailed analysis on Freud's psychology. Thereby *mise-en-scène* as a Derridean term will turn out to designate that meaning is always already staged, in the sense of being produced rather than given. The metaphysics of presence has regarded the meaning to be primarily and immediately present to

the psyche. However, according to the way Derrida reads Freud, the presence of meaning to conscious perception is necessarily deferred and such deferral is possible by the differentiation of the psyche into conscious perception and mnemic system, which is clarified as a system of psychical writing. Derrida pays attention to Freud's term '*nachträglich*,' which means belated or supplementary.<sup>20</sup> Freud observes in the course of psychotherapy that the memory of past experience is often belatedly constituted by patients as decisive event that had caused the present mental illness. He calls such extraordinary logic '*nachträglich*,' whereby the cause (traumatic past experience) comes after the effect (symptom): "we invariably find that a memory is repressed which has become a trauma only belatedly [*nachträglich*]" (I 356, translation modified). However, Freud regarded that the inversion of the cause and the effect is eventually redressed with linear causal relationship via analytic reconstitution. In contrast, according to Derrida, the logic of belatedness, instead of confining itself to pathological symptom, governs signification in general. He argues that meaning always comes later than the mere experienced fact, and the delay between perception and understanding of an event is inevitable. Furthermore, Derrida notes that German '*Nachtrag*' as a noun designates a short, additional writing that comes after the body of the text such as an "appendix, codicil, postscript" (WD 266) and that Freud indeed describes memory as a kind of psychical writing, as the traces that the experience leaves

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<sup>20</sup> While Derrida sticks to the usual French translation, '*après-coup*,' this thesis will mainly translate the German '*Nachträglichkeit*' and the French '*après coup*' into 'belatedness,' for the flexibility of the conjugation. From time to time, other equivalents of the term will be used, coupled with German or French if necessary. On the translation of '*Nachträglichkeit*,' see House, "The Ongoing Rediscovery of *Après-Coup*," pp. 776-779. Laplanche and Pontalis point out that Lacan was the first to acknowledge '*Nachträglichkeit*' as a concept. In 1953 Rome Discourse, Lacan suggested '*après coup*' for the French translation of the term. Hyphenated form '*après-coup*' was used as standard translation for both franco- and anglophone societies and translated into 'after the fact' by Bruce Fink as he translated *Écrit* into English. Various translations have been suggested, such as "afterwardness (Laplanche)," "deferred action (Standard Edition)."

in the psyche. According to the way Derrida conceives of Freud's term, '*Nachträglichkeit*,' we can go on to say that reality and meaning are not presented in a simple, immutable unity but are endlessly complicated by the supplementary writing that is added later—be it memory-trace, as we will see in this chapter, or writing in the narrow sense or even writing such as cinematography, which we will inquire into in Chapter 3. Thus, this chapter will elaborate on the workings of the psyche as production of meaning through a *mise-en-scène*, which is at work in the psychical level by virtue of a type of writing in the psyche. In section 2.1, we will show that conscious perception is like a stage in the psyche, on which the received reality is staged. While the stage is only thing that is known to us, the object of conscious perception can be taken as something meaningful thanks to the unconscious memory, which is at work behind the scene, making reserve of the reality in the form of permanent memory-traces (inexhaustibility) and putting them on the stage panoramically, and not all at once (spacing). In section 2.2, we will see that the interval between the perception and the recollection, in which memory-trace does not break surface of consciousness is comparable to the interval in a play. The psychic interval isolates the memory-trace from its neutral or natural context of perception and repeats it in a different context (repetition-iteration), as a consequence of which the meaning of an experience either strikes belatedly or multiplies.

## **2.1 Perception: Putting onto the Scene**

Let us recall that within the metaphysics of presence, writing has been regarded to be exterior to the presence of meaning to soul. In *Phaedrus*, Plato says that writing “will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory

because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. (...) [Writing is] not (...) a potion for remembering, but for reminding” (P 275a). However, as Derrida sees it, the psyche essentially depends on writing and the forgetfulness it introduces, so as to conceive something as meaningful. To begin by an example of writing in the narrow sense, if we could not write down in a notepad list of things to buy when going to the groceries or list of tasks for tomorrow, and ultimately forget about them for the moment, we would be occupied with all the banalities throughout the day and would not be able to undertake tasks constantly given to us. While one thinks that one takes note in order to remember, it turns out that one does so only to forget. Moreover, it is only by forgetting, namely by not being conscious of what had been written down, that one becomes conscious of the ‘present’ reality.

At the end of the previous chapter, we explained that the ‘present’ element is the element that is put onto “the scene of presence” as the result of certain *mise-en-scène* that presents the elements not immediately but over span of time and space like a panorama. Imagine a work of human eye or of camera lens taking panoramic view. Since the panorama cannot be contained at a single glance, either our eyes or lens shift gaze from one part of the panorama to another. The parts of panorama enter and then exit the frame of human eye or camera, like performers waiting behind the scene, walking in and out of the stage. The reality in general is like a panorama that the psyche cannot overview simultaneously and what we pay attention to here and now the piece of reality brought under the limelight on the stage of the psyche. While the ‘present’ reality is meaningful in relation with other scenes of reality, the panoramic view of reality is possible because the reality that is not dealt with has not disappeared but put on reserve. In this section,

we will elucidate such making of reserve as consisting of one of the two central axes of *mise-en-scène*. In the example above, the tasks in real life are reserved in the form of writing in the narrow sense. Nevertheless, as we will see, before the psyche makes use of exterior writing, the reserve of writing inhabits the interiority of the psyche. Thus, we will be able to say that the psyche, far from being exempt from writing, is governed by the logic of arche-writing. Moreover, as long as one conceives of reality in a meaningful way by virtue of making reserve, *mise-en-scène* is always already at work in the psyche.

Derrida notes that the psyche as Freud explains it already has within it a function similar to a notepad, the reserve of writing. According to Freud, the psyche is not a simple entity but a complex structure consisting of different parts working together like a machine and consciousness is only a part of the psyche. He says that the mental apparatus has an “unusual capacity (...) to be divided between two different systems (...). According to this view, we possess a system *Pcpt-Cs*. [Perception-Consciousness] which receives perceptions but retains no permanent *trace* of them, so that it can react like a clean sheet to every new perception; while the permanent traces of the excitations which have been received are preserved in [the] ‘mnemic system[]’ [*Mnem.*] lying behind the perceptual system” (XIX 228, my italic). Derrida notes that Freud illustrates memory as “trace” and finds what Freud calls “memory trace” resonating with the logic of “arche-trace” or “arche-writing”: not only in a sense that memory trace is a kind of writing engraved upon the mind, like a name is carved upon a memorial, but because memory-trace as Freud clarifies alludes to, whether wittingly or not, the impossibility of any signification anterior to the psyche’s possibility of making reserve of and reiterating memory-traces.

At first appearance, Freud seems to ascribe to the mnemic system, the system of

memory-traces, only a secondary place in the psyche. In the excerpt given above, the mnemic system topographically “[lies] behind the perceptual system” and the generation of the trace seems to be temporally or logically secondary to the primarily “receive[d] perception.” Here, memory-trace is a ‘*Nachtrag*’ in the usual sense of the word: a supplementary text that reads only after the main text, attached at the bottom or the end of the page, which one can either refer to any time or do without. Moreover, in the early and unpublished *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Freud manifestly calls the prototype of perception and memory respectively “primary function” and “secondary function.” In this text, which belongs to his neurological period before the full-swing development into his psychoanalytical period, Freud seeks to “furnish a psychology that shall be a natural *science*” (I 295, my italic) and therefore to “represent psychical processes as quantitatively determined states of specifiable material particles” (*ibid*). Thus, the ‘reality’ supposedly present to the psyche is described in terms of received stimuli and the psyche as system of neurons. Here, he argues that the primary function of neurons is to divest themselves of the quantity of stimuli generated by the excitation from within or without and go back to a peaceful status (I 296). The neurons that perform the primary function allow an excitation “to pass through (...) and (...) accordingly, after each passage of excitation are in the same state as before” (I 299). Thus, such neurons, which retain no trace of impression, “serve perception” (I 300). However, as the complexity of the organism increases, there arise stimuli that urge satisfaction of specific conditions that keep an organism alive. For example, hunger is stimuli that generate from within the organism itself and only ceases to exist by an action that satisfies the need for nourishment. The nervous system cannot simply get rid of such stimuli by evading them, since, if so, the organism could die. Therefore, “in order to

accomplish such an action (...) the nervous system is obliged to abandon its *original* trend to inertia (...). It must put up with (...) a store of [quantity of stimuli] sufficient to meet the demand for a specific action” (I 297, emphasis by author). As a consequence, the nervous system develops what Freud calls its “secondary function.” As “the same (...) [but] *modified*” (*ibid*, emphasis by author) primary function, the secondary function of the neurons retains a certain amount of excitation but seeks “to keep the [the quantity of excitation] as low as possible and to guard against any increase of it” (*ibid*). So that the received stimuli neither increase nor get exhausted completely, nervous system differentiates into two systems: while one system carries out primary function and the other secondary function. The former system extract sample of small amount of stimuli to identify what it is and then defer the whole of received stimuli to the latter system, which keeps reserve of them in the form of unconscious memory, in order that they are not invested with psychic energy by becoming conscious. The former system of neurons corresponds to perception that initially receives perception but does not retain trace of them. On the other hand, the latter system of neurons that performs the secondary function make the stimuli “pass with difficulty or partially” (I 299). Therefore, “after each excitation, [the neurons will be] in a different state from before.” The “permanently altered” (*ibid*) state of neurons are what Freud calls “memory trace” and the system of those neurons thus correspond to memory, which retains permanent trace of impression.

So far, memory-trace as Freud described it seems to be nothing more than writing in a classical sense. First of all, he argues that perception is the psyche’s “original trend” and memory the modification of perception. Then memory trace as he clarifies it is “a mark of an anterior presence, origin,” which is in this case the presence of reality to perception. It is “a mark which

remains,” represented by an immutably altered state of material particle that is a neuron. Not exhausted in the moment of inscription, memory-trace is left in unconscious, unattended by conscious subject. Such description also does not seem to disturb habitual understanding of memory or of writing. Even when memory is recollected and becomes conscious again, one does not expect it to do more than repeat what was perceived. What is worse, memory, whose reanimation consists of repetition in circumstances alien to the moment to inscription, is prone to distortion and might tell less or even incorrect narration about the perceived fact. Freud explicitly says that memory-trace “afford[s] a *possibility of representing [darzustellen] memory*” (I 299, Freud’s italic). Nevertheless, quoting this sentence for the first time in “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” Derrida suggests translating ‘*Darstellung*’ into ‘*mise-en-scène*,’ instead of ‘representation’ as in the standard edition of Freud’s work. Derrida rewrites immediately after: “this is the (...) representation, the (...) staging [*mise-en-scène*] of memory” (WD 252). Though the standard translation ‘representation’ might appear neutral and appropriate, it is always already colluding with the metaphysical distinction between presence and representation, namely the immediate presence of reality to perception and the “mark which remains” in re-presentation of such presence as memory-trace. If so, Freud’s psychology would not have taken a single step out of metaphysics, despite his ‘*Project for Scientific Psychology*.’ However, by translating ‘*Darstellung*’ into ‘*mise-en-scène*’ instead of ‘representation,’ Derrida seems to invite us to think of memory-trace, the psychical writing, as something other than representation of an anterior presence. In Derrida’s view, Freud himself could not consider the trace and writing as mere representation that can be reinstated in its full-presence at any time. To begin with, what Freud informs us with what he calls “primary” and “secondary” functions, i.e., the elementary

disposition of the psyche is to remove or at least to minimize the received stimuli, thereby not embracing their ‘full-presence.’ Moreover, Derrida notes that the ‘full-presence’ of impression is deferred not provisionally but indefinitely. According to the *Project*, the psyche had to develop the secondary function, make reserve of the received stimuli in order to cope with the stimuli that are inevitable for the life of an organism, such as hunger. In a sense, Freud says that the psyche differentiates itself into primary and secondary system out of the “exigencies of life” (I 301). Later, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud says that the energies that fill up the external world are menacing and an organism “would be killed by the stimulation emanating from these” (XVIII 27). Therefore, the stimuli should never be fully present for an organism to live. In other words, the psyche has to economize the stimuli.<sup>21</sup> The usual sense of the term ‘economization’ is to not exhaust the limited resources at once and put them in reserve to be used over a span of time. For example, in order to manage a sane economic life, one has to save up his or her income and not spend it in a day. Consisting of putting off and putting in reserve, economization carries along with it both temporal and spatial undertone. In the wake of what Derrida calls spacing, we

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<sup>21</sup> Borrowing from Bataille, Derrida uses the term, “economy,” in a specialized sense. Following Bataille’s lead, in the text “From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism Without Reserve” (WD 317-350), Derrida notes that Hegel considers the condition of the emergence of free-consciousness to be taking risk of its death, of “showing that it is fettered to no determinate existence, (...) not bound (...) by the particularity (...) [that is] characteristic of existence as such, (...) not tied up with life” (Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Mind*, p. 232). At the same time, Hegel acknowledges “the necessity of [the consciousness] retaining the life that [it] exposes to risk” (WD 322), so as to enjoy what it has won by the risk of its life, which is the recognition as the master of death, without which the risk would have been meaningless. This suggests to Bataille and Derrida that Hegel has a restricted, economic view of death, of the possibility of “the absolute loss of meaning” (WD 322), and thus turns the risk into investment for a profit, for an anticipated, meaningful return. In the face of “restricted economy” (of meaning,) Bataille calls “general economy” certain excess that “cannot be utilized (...), can only be lost without the slightest aim, consequently without any meaning (...) the useless, senseless loss” (Bataille, *L’Expérience Intérieure*, p. 233) of meaning. As we will see, according to this view, economization of the stimuli at work in the psyche as Freud explains it would not be that of restricted economy, since investment and withdrawal of psychic energy risks the absolute loss of meaning, since perception might put to reserve in the form of memory and never become conscious again. Even if it does, it might not signify the same thing it would have had at the supposed time and space it was ‘initially’ ‘present’ to the psyche.

can understand economization as temporization as well as spatialization.<sup>22</sup> The functioning of the psyche bases itself on the possibility of such economization, namely of differentiation-deferral. It is unconscious memory that enables the economization. Not because unconscious memory stopped being the dead writing, which the metaphysics of presence debases as secondary and derivative, but because the very characteristics of writing, which have been traditionally ascribed to it, gives rise to the delay and differentiation of the psyche's functioning, without which an organism cannot go on to live: as long as received stimuli are reserved in the form of unconscious memory, an organism does not completely rid itself of the stimuli and yet saves its psychic energy for the smaller amount of stimuli that becomes conscious. As such, "life protects itself by (...) *différance*. But (...) there is no life present *at first* which would *then* come to protect, postpone, or reserve itself in *différance*. The latter constitutes the essence of life" (WD 254-255, emphasis by Derrida). Before one puts to use 'external,' 'auxiliary' writing devices, at the heart of the 'living' psyche is 'dead' writing, which is memory-trace.<sup>23</sup> Thus, we can say that

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<sup>22</sup> However, one should be careful not to mistake Freudian model of the psyche for the anatomical localization of brain, according to which each brain lobe occupies actual and invariable space is responsible for different psychological procedure. Freud argues: rather than "a mental grouping in one locality has been brought to an end and replaced by a fresh one in one locality (...) [a] particular mental grouping has had an investment of energy attached to it or withdrawn from it, so that the structure in question has come under the sway of a particular agency or been withdrawn from it. What we are doing here is (...) to replace a topographical way of representing things by a dynamic one. What we regard as mobile is not the psychical structure itself but its innervation" (V 610-611). Derrida says that the psyche as Freud explains it instigates "the necessity not of abandoning but of rethinking the space or topology of (...) writing" (WD 267) as something dynamic and variable than static and homogeneous.

<sup>23</sup> Traditionally, the distinctions between nature and institution, animal and man, as well as instinct and intelligence have been associated with the disposition of writing in the narrow sense. However, in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida notes that French paleontologist and paleoanthropologist Leroi-Gourhan "describes the unity of man (...) as a stage or an articulation in the history of life[,] (...) as the history of the *grammè* [the written]" (OG 84). According to Leroi-Gourhan's definition of *grammè* as the "liberation of memory" (*Ibid.*), even before one could, for example, write on a piece of paper and to some extent exteriorize its memory, the "exteriorization [of writing has] always already begun" (OG 84). In a sense, human memory, classical devices such as notepad, electronic machines such as external hard disk are all in line with each other. They only "enlarge [] *différance* and the possibility of putting in reserve: [they] at once (...) constitute[] and efface[] the so-called conscious subjectivity" (*Ibid.*).

the psyche is governed by the logic of arche-writing as well as *différance*. Furthermore, the psyche is governed by the logic of belatedness, since what has habitually been thought to come first turns out to always already rest on the possibility of what follows: one usually thinks there is *first* a “clean sheet” and *then* a writing. Similarly, it seems that reality is *first* present to perception and *then* becomes trace of memory. Such Freudian jargon as the “primary function” and the “secondary function,” which is respectively for perception and memory, seemed to reinforce such mundane conception of the psyche’s functioning. After all, the common-sensical notion of the first and the second, primary and the secondary, is reduced to the presence-centric notion that there must be *first* a certain original, virgin state and *then* alteration. However, according to nobody else than Freud, the psyche cannot but differentiate the stimuli that are to be taken up now from those not and resultingly differentiate itself into two systems that process the stimuli in respective manner. Otherwise, if the stimuli are present to the psyche without delay and without reserve, the psyche would not be able to make sense of it at all or, at worst, an organism could even die. In this sense, Derrida argues that “to defer (...) cannot mean to retard a present possibility, (...) to put off a perception already now possible” (WD 255). Even when something seems to be perceived and understood simultaneously, the psyche should already be able to defer later to the desired immediate presence as such—the presence of reality to perception and subject to consciousness—in the form of unconscious memory. Conscious perception is thus intertwined with unconscious memory. We can go so far as to say that what is “primary” is not the “primary function” itself but the differentiation into the “primary” and the “secondary function,” and the indefinite deferral of the ‘full-presence’ of impression. Guiding us into such conclusion, Freud, who seemed to start out by borrowing from the metaphysical

conceptual binaries as origin *versus* derivation, primary *versus* secondary, etc., end up attesting to the inextricability of the binary poles as he “recognize[es] *différance* at origin and at the same time cross[es] out the concept of *primariness*” (*ibid*, emphasis by Derrida).

Before the reality is ‘primarily’ perceived and then reserved as memory-trace ‘secondarily,’ the supposed initial perception of reality is always already conditioned by memory. In other words, even before the element appears on “the scene of presence,” its supposedly first appearance on the scene is conditioned by the *machinery* of a certain *mise-en-scène* that is happening behind the scene. On the one hand, even though the human psyche and machines such as computers do share common features in that they both have a reserve of writing, be it memory or data, Freud cannot completely assimilate the functioning of the psyche to that of a machine. According to Freud, writing machines lack spontaneity. For example, notepad or a slate, unless external agency intervenes, cannot reproduce writing from within, whereas the human psyche recollects a memory voluntarily. On the other hand, Freud cannot rid himself of the doubt that conscious perception of the human psyche too might not be an utterly autonomous system that has the entire memory at its disposal. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud says that “little enough is known (...) [about] the origin of consciousness” (XVIII 25) and suggests an enigmatic hypothesis: “that *consciousness arises instead of a memory-trace*” (*ibid*, emphasis by Freud). Later, in “A Note Upon Mystic Writing Pad,” he reminds himself of this incomplete proposition and radicalizes the notion of the impossibility of the primary, independent *Pcpt.-Cs.* Freud says that the *Pcpt.-Cs.* functions as if the investment of psychic energy is “sent out and withdrawn from within [from the ‘unconscious mnemic system[.]’] into the completely pervious system *Pcpt.-Cs.*” (XIX 231). He goes so far as to say that “it is as

though the unconscious [mnemic system] stretches out feelers, *through the medium of* the system *Pcpt.-Cs.*, towards the external world and hastily withdraws them as soon as they have sampled the excitations coming from it” (*ibid*, emphasis by author). As soon as the virtual feeler of the unconscious mnemic system is withdrawn from *Pcpt.-Cs.*, “the consciousness is extinguished and the functioning of the system comes to a standstill” (*ibid*). Namely, *Pcpt.-Cs.* functions as if it is switched on and off by the system of unconscious memory, like a machine, which needs external help in order to operate. Nevertheless, as Derrida sees it, *Pcpt.-Cs.* is the “medium,” the representative “sent out” by the unconscious archive of memory-traces in a non-hypothetical sense. The perceived material is considered meaningful, namely worth the attention of consciousness, depending on the potential danger it poses to the psyche. Without memory, which keeps record of past experiences, *Pcpt.-Cs.* would not have any criteria whatsoever to determine whether the ‘present’ stimuli are harmful or not. Not only on account of whether something is simply harmful or not, the memory trace is the prerequisite of any kind of determination that are made in psychic activities in general. An article on the Derridean conception of Freud’s ‘*Nachträglichkeit*’ provides us with an interesting and relevant example. In Thomas Mann’s novel *The Magic Mountain*, the protagonist Hans Castorp falls in love with Madame Clawdia Chauchat, whom he encounters every morning in the restaurant of the sanatorium in which they both stay. At first, the reason why Castorp loves that specific woman among the many others that come to the restaurant is obscure. It turns out that the emotion of love toward Madame Chauchat is foreshadowed by Castorp’s memory of his schoolmate Pribislav Hippe, whom Castorp was attracted to when he was thirteen. Even though Castorp met Hippe only once and could not remember him until long after he met Madame Chauchat, the similarity between Madame

Chauchat and Hippe made Castorp pay attention to her and eventually love her. To put it in a Derridean way, Castorp's perception of Madame Chauchat as a romantic object has not arrived purely from her presence but was only possible to the extent it was mediated by the memory of Hippe.<sup>24</sup> Namely, the significance of Madame Chauchat's supposed first appearance is conditioned by memory of something that happened long before her appearance. In this sense, Derrida writes that the "writing supplements perception before perception even appears to itself [is conscious of itself]. 'Memory' or writing is the opening of that process of appearance itself. The 'perceived' may be read only in the past, beneath perception and after it" (WD 282). Nonetheless, one should be wary not to understand unconscious memory as another form of origin, which is "*present elsewhere* (...) to be transposed or transported" (WD 265) to consciousness. When Castorp saw Hippe, Castorp did not even conceive it as a memorable event. Castorp's fascination of Hippe comes to take on a certain meaning only on the occasion of the later encounter with Madame Chauchat. Hippe, as well as Madame Chauchat, was never experienced in a purely present tense. On that note, Derrida claims that the unconscious memory "is (...) a weave of pure traces [with no anterior presence], (...) archives (...) of a meaning which was never present, whose signified presence is always reconstituted by deferral, *nachträglich*, belatedly, *supplementarily*" (WD 265-266, emphasis by Derrida).

As such, the functioning of conscious perception is conditioned by unconscious memory-traces, which the metaphysics of presence could only think to be secondary to the desired primariness of perception, like the postscript to the main text. "The text we call present may be deciphered only at the bottom of the page, in a footnote or postscript. (...) The present is

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<sup>24</sup> Seo, "프로이트 '사후성의 논리' 의 상속자들 (The Inheritors of Freud's '*Nachträglichkeit*')," p. 153.

only the call for a footnote” (WD 266). In this regard, we are able to understand the title of the Derrida’s text, “Freud and the Scene of Writing.” *Pcpt.-Cs.* is the “scene of writing,” firstly in a sense that *Pcpt.-Cs.* is where the memory-trace, or the psychical writing, appears, that is to say, where the memory trace or the psychical writing becomes conscious. Secondly, what appears on the scene of *Pcpt.-Cs.* is conceived as something meaningful not due to its purportedly immediate and full presence, but to certain *mise-en-scène*. Such *mise-en-scène* consists of a certain framing, by which certain elements are included, whereas others are excluded, kept out of the frame and put in reserve. There is no element that is in itself meaningful in which the frame is only added to it. Things in general acquire whatever meaning once they are in the frame, that is to say put onto the scene. That what we experience is always already the result of certain *mise-en-scène* in the psychical level will guide us to better understand that any signifying unit is a scene, which is essentially constituted in relation with the absent.

## **2.2 Recollection: Putting Back onto the Scene**

So far, we have seen that the object of ‘present’ conscious perception acquires significance by virtue of the psyche’s ability to economize conscious perception and make the reserve of unconscious memories, which remain invariable even while one is not conscious of it. Subsequently, the question that this section tries to answer is as follows: if the memory-trace and moreover writing in general remain unaltered, is the meaning of the inscription also invariable? Freud argues that “the rich multiplicity (...) of the phenomena of life” (XXIII 243) can only be explained by “the concurrent or mutually opposing action” (*ibid*) of psychical forces. Spivak, the translator and the commentator of Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, explains that what Freud calls

“the concurrent or mutually opposing action” is nothing other than what Derrida calls economy (OG xlii). As she puts it, “economy is a metaphor of energy[,] where (...) opposed forces playing against each other constitute the so-called identity of a phenomenon” (*ibid*). For example, the value of money, which is the sign circulated in the economy in the narrow sense of the word, is determined by the dynamics between different power groups in which the sign is situated. Monetary sign is exchanged between concerned parties as a promise for the presence of absent things—money for commodity, check for cash, which is yet another sign. The promise and what the promise equals to constitutes the identity of the sign. However, promise necessarily entails deferral of presence and spatio-temporal difference between promise and the performance of the promise. Therefore, the credibility of promise fluctuates with circumstances: not only is the monetary sign affected by the determined commodities (the signified) or the concerned parties between which the sign is exchanged (addresser/addressee); further, for instance, when the power of the state or bank that issued money appears to weaken, money might still be used but it might not be able to have the same value as it used to. While what is printed on a piece of paper or impressed on a metal remains invariable, what such inscription means changes as the context in which it is consumed changes. What is worth notice is that the value of monetary sign at the moment it is traded is necessarily dependent on the interval, during which it was not traded. For example, after certain interval of time, a stock can be sold at a much higher price than the time it was bought. For there to be change of value, the interval, during which the stock was kept in reserve and not liquidated, is essential. Such interval is not only temporal, since the reservation necessarily requires storage space, be it actual space of vault or virtual space of bank account. At any rate, spatio-temporal interval is indispensable for the qualification and disqualification of a

monetary sign and, as we will go on to see, sign in general. Thus, Spivak adequately writes that “economy is not a reconciliation of opposites, but rather a maintaining of disjunction” (OG xlii), namely of interval.

The psychic economization, which puts in reserve the acquired stimuli so that they can be taken up later, is nothing other than making intervals between becoming-conscious of the stimuli. In this section, we will demonstrate that such making intervals consists of the second central axis of *mise-en-scène*. Let us recall that the metaphysics of presence regarded the meaning to be primarily and immediately present to the psyche. However, in the previous section, we have seen that Freud suggests in a hypothetical manner that conscious perception functions as if its switch is turned on and off by the unconscious mnemonic system. He refers this hypothesis as the theory of “discontinuous (...) functioning of the system *Pcpt.-Cs.*” (XIX 231). In Derrida’s view, the functioning of the psyche is discontinuous and is essentially conditioned by the possibility of making intervals. Comparable to such things as spaces, parentheses, quotation marks, or ellipses in a text in the narrow sense, psychic interval assembles and disassembles memory-traces. Freud says that the memory-trace, a kind of writing that the psyche keeps within it, is permanent. Not having disappeared, a memory always has a possibility of being recollected. Imagine that a banal routine of having breakfast with one’s father is recollected as a special, nostalgic memory after his death. When the reserved memory-trace is thus recollected and becomes conscious again, an interval is generated between the perception and recollection, and anything in between is omitted, as if by ellipsis. At the same time, the memory-trace is lifted from “the set of presences which organize the moment of its inscription” (MP 317) upon the psyche and grafted onto a new context. It is as if the memory-trace, which is

a sort of psychological writing, is being quoted in a new text. To put it in a Derridean way, the memory-trace, the psychological writing that was not exhausted in the moment of inscription, is repeatable-iterable, namely capable of being repeated in different contexts. A memory-trace takes on new meaning every time it is repeated in different contexts. Earlier, we have observed conscious perception, the 'initial' reception of reality, as already having recourse to memory, even when the memory has not yet become conscious. Nevertheless, it does not mean that 'what it is' is pre-determined by the naïve sum of memory, namely by what has happened. While conscious perception is indeed a text that takes meaning from a context, which is weaved out of memory-traces, the context is reduced neither to the totality of the memory-traces, nor to the synthesis of adjacent present past or present to come. By virtue of the elliptical functioning of the psyche, conscious perception can communicate with memory-traces that are considerably far removed from the 'present': the context is diversified. As such, the interval, in which the memory-trace is not conscious, does not prohibit the memory-trace from signifying, but rather gives rise to the variation of meaning of the invariable memory-trace. Not only does theatrical or cinematic *mise-en-scène* strives to stage banal object or gestures invar a meaningful way, the psyche no less stages the given reality, in the sense that it incessantly seeks to omit, rewrite the history composed of the memory-traces.

Making interval is not a function of an independent psychic system, especially not that of consciousness. Often, consciousness cannot control which memory-trace one becomes conscious of or not, and how certain memory-trace becomes conscious is unknown to the system *Pcpt.-Cs*. Further, at times, we cannot consciously rid our minds of painful or embarrassing memories, nor remind ourselves of something we eagerly want to remember. The content of

conscious perception being a kind of text weaved out of memory-traces and system *Pcpt.-Cs.* “the scene of writing” on which the text is put onto, conscious perception nevertheless does not have a full control over what is put onto the scene. In a sense, making interval, which becoming conscious of memory-trace and the composition of psychical text depend on, is a kind of mechanism, the whole of which is not graspable to consciousness, rather than a conscious activity of a subject. However, we must be wary of the formulation that *Pcpt.-Cs.* simply represents the memory-trace that is “written and present elsewhere” (WD 265)—indeed, the English translation of the German ‘*Umschrift*’ into ‘transcription’ permits one to automatically suppose the original that is not a transcription. In the previous section, we demonstrated that *Pcpt.-Cs.* is “the scene of writing,” where the memory-trace appears. Behind the scene of *Pcpt.-Cs.*, on which the memory-trace seems to be simply re-presented, multiple psychic systems are at work. In “Letter 52,” Freud illustrates the psychic systems as the agencies of writing or re-writing: “the material present in the form of memory-traces (...) [is] subjected from time to time to a *re-arrangement* in accordance with fresh circumstances—to a *re-transcription* [*Umschrift*]. Thus (...) memory is present not once but several times over, (...) laid down [*niederlegt*] in various species of indications [*Zeichen*, lit. signs]” (I 234, emphasis by Freud). What is noteworthy is that Freud explains the treatment of the memory-trace not as the mere transposition of an identical memory-trace but as a new writing other than the memory-trace in question—just like a text, even when it only quotes and annotates, is related to but distinguished from the ‘original’ text, where the quotation is coming from. Moreover, he argues that *Ucs.* is not the only psychic system that may dispose of a memory-trace. Each psychic system has different way of writing down memory-trace. Freud explains: “I cannot say how many of these

registrations there are: at least three, probably more” (I 233-234). The three registrations referred by Freud are as follows: the “first registration [*Niederschrift*; lit. writing down]” (I 234) is the memory-trace, which “writes down” perception. “The second registration” (*ibid*) is what Freud calls the unconsciousness. While the memories are “in themselves unconscious” (V 539), they can become conscious again when invested with enough psychological energy. The psychic system that decides whether to invest the psychological energy sufficient to catch the attention of consciousness is the preconscious system (*Pcs.*), where “the third transcription” (I 235) of perception is generated. *Pcs.* exercises censorship over whether certain memory-traces are adequate for goal-oriented train of thoughts or movement and, consequently, for being presented to *Cs.* While Freud’s enumeration of the “first,” “second,” “third” “or probably more” transcriptions implies that the irreducibility of transcriptions, it nevertheless does not mean that each agency of transcription is independent in its functioning. Just as was the case with *Pcpt.* and *Mnem.*, *Ucs.* and *Pcs.* are inextricable in their functioning. The two systems do not always work harmoniously. A certain memory that *Ucs.* finds pleasurable might be regarded as unpleasurable by *Pcs.* Such “*transformation of affect [from pleasure to unpleasure and vice versa] (...)* constitutes the essence of what [Freud] term[s] ‘repression’” (V 604, emphasis by Freud). What eventually gains access to conscious perception is the weave of memory-traces, which is the result of a temporary consensus between two heterogeneous systems that are *Pcs.* and *Ucs.*

Just like a play or a film comes into being after incessant amendment, discussion and dispute among concerned parties of production, beneath the conscious perception, all one is conscious of, is a perennial dispute between *Pcs.* and *Ucs.*, as a consequence of which the interval between the becoming-conscious of certain memory is generated. As such, repression is

not a pathological symptom but designates the dynamics between psychic systems, which is always already happening as the conscious text is constituted. In this regard, Derrida says that “writing is unthinkable without repression” (WD 285). Before writing is hindered by exterior censorship, the repression of the psyche “refers to an essential censorship which binds the writer to his own writing” (*ibid*). The changing dynamics between the two systems generates a psychological text that is put onto *Pcpt.-Cs.*, namely on “the scene of writing,” which is habitually conceived to be the simple presence of feeling, thinking and will of a conscious subject. There is no memory that is prescribed to becoming conscious or being repressed before the interaction between *Ucs.* and *Pcs.* For example, when the preconscious censorship weakens and *Ucs.* overwhelms during sleep, the unconscious memories, which would not have passed the muster of the vigilant preconscious censorship during the day, becomes conscious, producing psychic phenomena in the form of a dream or other similar manifestations. Though it might look illogical and abnormal compared to the perception during the awoken state, the psychic systems that stage the daily conscious perception is always already at work behind the scene of a dream. *Ucs.* invests psychic energy to the materials that were perceived but were neglected by *Pcs.* In disguise of the residues of memories perceived during daytime, which are neutral in themselves, the unconscious thoughts or desires gain access to the scene of *Pcpt.-Cs.*

Even though Freud explains the becoming-conscious of the memory-trace as dynamic procedure, in which *Ucs.* and *Pcs.* are interrelated, the term “re-transcription” carries along with it an implication that there might be an original text, whose presence is indifferent to the transcriptions. Indeed, while discussing the methods of analyzing dreams, Freud contends as if dream is a sign in a classical sense, composed of the conceptual and the sensory part; the

unconscious being the semantic kernel of the dream and the residues of waking memory being the deceiving mask that allows the dream to be perceptual and thus become the object of the consciousness. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud makes distinction between “latent dream-thought,” the unconscious desire or thought, and the “manifest dream-content,” which is dream-thought combined with the memory of the perceived materials while awake. He goes on to say that “the dream-thoughts and the dream-content (the latent and manifest) are presented to us like two versions of the same subject-matter in two different languages. Or, more appropriately, the dream content appears to be a transcript of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression, whose characters and syntactic laws it is our business to discover by comparing “the *original* and the *translation*” (IV 277, emphasis by author). Here, Freud seems to invoke the habitual notion of translation, according to which the signifiers are exchanged between systems, in a manner exterior to the signified that remains unaltered regardless. As if to suggest the law of decoding through which the intuited, illogical images of the dream can be boiled down to the intelligent, logical discourse of consciousness, he goes on to list the major methods of dream formation such as “considerations of representability (*Darstellbarkeit*),” “displacement,” “condensation,” “second revision,” etc.

While quoting excerpts from *The Interpretation of Dreams* above, Derrida uses the term “*mise-en-scène*” once again. Whereas the English standard edition translates Freud’s German “*Darstellbarkeit*” into “considerations of representability,” Derrida writes “*aptitude à la mise-en-scène* [aptitude for *mise-en-scène*]” (WD 275) instead.<sup>25</sup> If “*Darstellbarkeit*” is translated into

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<sup>25</sup> Though Derrida does not tell us whether he refers to particular edition of Freud’s works in French, Laplanche and Pontalis say that the German ‘*Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit*,’ is usually translated into ‘*prise en consideration de la*

“representability,” the methods such as “displacement,” “condensation” and “second revision” would be methods of representation. Hence, it would also be the methods of decoding, of distilling the meaning of a dream that is present beyond the obscure and incomprehensible images of a dream. However, by translating “*Darstellbarkeit*” into ‘aptitude for *mise-en-scène*,’ Derrida seems to invite us to think the meaning of a dream, or further, of memory-trace in general that became conscious again, not as a static presence to be discovered but as the result of dynamic staging. Such *mise-en-scène* is not the mere visual re-presentation of the already meaningful material, which has been present in the unconsciousness. According to Derrida, the significance of the dream is not contained in the oneiric sign itself but generated in relation to other elements. We can find an interesting and relevant example with regard to the deferred understanding of the perceived material in Freud’s text. The title of the text, “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” from which we have hitherto examined Derrida’s reading of Freud, is understood in light of the famous analysis of dreams in the case of the “Wolf Man” in *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* and the “primal scene,” the alleged perception of which is the material of the dream. Wolf Man is one of Freud’s patients, who suffered neurotic symptoms of wolf-phobia as a young boy; he would become frightened just by seeing a picture of a wolf. In the course of psychotherapy with Freud, the Wolf Man pulled out a guess that his symptom might have derived from a dream he had by the age of four. In the dream, he was looking out the window at six or seven wolves sitting still on the tree, staring at him. The young boy wakes up

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*figurabilité*’ in French, while by ‘considerations of representability’ in English (Laplanche & Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-analysis*, p. 389).

It is also notable that Lacan, in *Écrits*, which was published in France in 1966, shortly before Derrida’s *L’écriture et la Différance (Writing and Difference)* was published in France in 1967, quotes the same part from Freud’s text and says that “*Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit*, (...) must be translated as ‘considerations of the means of staging [*mise-en-scène*]” (Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 425).

with lively fear that the wolves might eat him. As he and Freud were trying to figure out what the dream signifies, the Wolf Man reminds himself of various events from his infancy that might be relevant. One of them is the “primal scene,” the scene he maintains to have witnessed by the age of one and a half, in which his parents were copulating in front of him. The existence of primal scene seemed to render much sense to the analysis of the dream, setting clear cause-and-effect relationship among the primal scene, Wolf Man’s childhood dream and current symptom. If one continues to translate ‘*Darstellung*’ into ‘representation’ and thus seeks to decode the dream, one might interpret Wolf Man’s dream as follows: after witnessing the primal scene, young Wolf Man develops an unconscious desire to be afforded with sexual satisfaction from his father, just as his mother did, which forms the gist of the dream-thought. However, such incestuous wish cannot pass the preconscious censorship and thus has to be displaced to wolves, to the neutral images that derive from memories during daytime, such as the tale of a wolf that his grandfather had told him. The wolves constitute the dream-content. Wolves’ standing straight is representative of the upright posture of his father in the primal scene and their white color of his parent’s bed- and underclothes (XVII 43). However, for Wolf Man, sexual relation with his father meant unpleasure as well as pleasure, since it implies identification with his mother but her naked body without penis poses a threat of castration. Therefore, the longing for his father, together with fear, is displaced to wolves and results in wolf-phobia.

However, what Derrida notes in the analysis is that neither the primal scene nor the Wolf Man’s dream was experienced as a significant event at the time and space it was supposedly happening. Not only would the meaning of the dream have remained incomprehensible without the recollection of the primal scene later on, the primal scene would not have appeared

significant had it not been revisited as the cause of Wolf Man's pathological symptom. Nonetheless, it does not mean that before, the reality or meaning of the primal scene was presented obscurely and then later disclosed in bright light. The primal scene acquires new meaning as the cause of the wolf dream or of wolf-phobia that the adult Wolf Man is suffering, the meaning that "has never been *perceived*, (...) never been lived in the present, i.e., has never been lived consciously" (WD 269, emphasis by Derrida). As Derrida sees it, what is really peculiar about the logic of belatedness is such essential delay between perception and understanding. The primal scene begins to mean something only as it appears after certain interval, which at once disjoins the perception and the comprehension of the primal scene and conjoins the scene with the dream of wolves and Wolf Man's current symptom, all of which are events far removed from the primal scene. The significance of the primal scene is achieved not by the correspondence between the dream-thought and the dream-content but by the relation between the distant events and moreover by the interval that both separates and interrelates the events.

On the one hand, Freud does not take issue with the necessary interval between what is habitually called the cause and the effect of a trauma in Wolf Man case. Even though he writes that a repressed memory becomes a trauma only belatedly, as long as the analysis linearly reconstitutes the cause and the effect, the relation between two events is unilateral. On the other hand, however, Freud also seems to acknowledge the essential interdependence of distant events. In an early work on hysteria, written before the analysis of Wolf Man's dream, Freud distinguishes the "traumatic moment," in which the event happened but "had no manifest effect," and the "auxiliary" moment that the symptom take effect and produce hysterical

phenomena (II 123). Here, he says that the determination of either “traumatic” or “auxiliary” event does not depend on the event in itself but on the separation of the events by certain gap and calls such gap the “incubation period.” According to him, “the *scene* of discovery, which we have described as ‘auxiliary,’ deserves equally to be called ‘traumatic’ [since] it was operative on account of its own content and not merely as something that revived previous traumatic experiences. (...) The production of the hysterical phenomena, d[oes] not occur immediately (...) but after an *interval* of incubation” (II 134, emphasis by author).

An interval can no longer be negatively defined as a bridge between positive content of scenes. Earlier, in section 1.2, we said that what Derrida calls *différance* is the movement of differentiation and deferral, which produces as its effect the static notion of difference, which is habitually conceived to be between two identities. Likewise, *mise-en-scène* differentiates the meaning of a scene, deferring the final analysis. Scene comes into being as the stage of *mise-en-scène*—stage in all sense of the word, both as the space where the work of *mise-en-scène* is put onto, and the temporary phase of incessant *mise-en-scène*. Correspondingly, an interval too is no longer negatively defined as the bridge between the positive content of scenes, since *mise-en-scène* is at work even in the interval, its beginning or end not designated by the drawing up and down of a curtain. On that note, back to the analysis of Wolf Man, even the meaning of what Freud names the “primal scene” is not primarily given to the psyche but constituted as a decisive event by the supplementary work of *mise-en-scène*. Such *mise-en-scène* is governed by the logic of belatedness: first, the “primal scene” deserves its name in the linkage to the events that happened after it, such as Wolf Man's dream, the manifestation of wolf-phobic symptom, and recollection. Moreover, the interrelation of the events is possible by virtue of interval, which is

habitually conceived to be secondary to the primariness of the positive content of the scene. Whereas the metaphysics of presence would regard that nothing is happening during the interval, “a mole-like progression, (...) the subterranean toil of impression” (*ibid*), is always at work. While the “primal scene” might indeed come at first in the linear timeline, for its meaning is undetermined in itself and therefore has to be supplemented by the belated *mise-en-scène*, as Derrida puts it, it is “the call of the supplement [that] is primary” (WD 266).<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, supplementing the “primal scene” is not preparing for the last scene, which discloses the foregone conclusion of the “primal scene.” Rather than bringing an end to a scenario in the presence of the meaning of the “primal scene” to the last scene, *mise-en-scène* endlessly diverts a scene to the other scenes, which the “primal scene” never saw coming. The unpredictability of the supplementary scenes, the lack of control that the “primal scene” has over the scene is the very threat that writing poses to the intention to signify and the message that wishes to be delivered from one individual or a system to another. According to what we have hitherto demonstrated, the belated *mise-en-scène* of the psyche is carried out in the form of writing, of postscript, which is a writing either beneath or after the supposed primary text. Since, according to Freud, perceived reality in general is put into reserve in the form of unconscious memory-traces, namely as a kind of psychical writing, the *mise-en-scène*, which dissociates the memory from the context it was perceived and repeats it in another context of perception in association

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<sup>26</sup> So far, this thesis has examined that Derrida uses the word ‘supplement’ as he describes writing (p. 13, 16) and *Nachträglichkeit* (p. 41, 53). In the traditional metaphysics of presence, both writing and *Nachträglichkeit* are considered to be supplementary, in the sense of being “added (...) to a plenitude” (WD 266). However, we have seen that Derrida demonstrates writing and *Nachträglichkeit* as the condition of signification in general. In this regard, ‘supplement’ as a Derridean term plays with the fact that to supplement also means to “compensate[] for a lack” (*ibid*) and that such lack is essential and indispensable.

with other memory-traces that are also cropped out from its 'original' context, is nothing other than writing a new text whilst omitting and making quotations. Moreover, the memory-trace that is once recollected, namely repeated in a different context, can be repeated in contexts that are theoretically infinite in its number of cases. There is neither 'no context' nor full saturation of context. "No context can enclose" (MP 317) the text irreversibly. Situated in the indefinitely changing backdrops, the meaning of "the scene of writing" is hardly pinned down.

## Chapter Three

### After the Event of the Work of Art: Writing via the Detour of Film

Thus far, we have demonstrated that meaning is immediately present neither in speech nor in the psyche. We find something meaningful only via certain *mise-en-scène* that consists of making reserve and iteration in repetition. Even though *mise-en-scène* is always already happening in the psychical level, *mise-en-scène* is not a form in the conventional sense that can be indiscriminately applied to any raw material alike. Thus, in this chapter, we will inquire into how *mise-en-scène* is carried out in any signifying unit but differently in disparate media, works of art and by right in every incidence of making reserve and repetition-iteration. In order to do so, we will resort to Derrida's text *Tourner les Mots*. As mentioned earlier in the introduction of this thesis, *Tourner les Mots* is a text that is co-written by Derrida and Safaa Fathy, the director of the film *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, in which Derrida appears as himself. While *Tourner les Mots* writes about the film *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, we will go on to see how the text signifies, not simply by representing the film but by virtue of the *mise-en-scène* that is irreducible to that of the film. In section 3.1, we will examine the peculiarity of cinematic *mise-en-scène* as Derrida understands it, which is the possibility of cinema in general, but is particularly well sketched in *D'ailleurs, Derrida* and *Tourner les Mots*. Meaning is put onto the stage of cinema under conditions that are drastically different from that of conventional media or of any colloquial, face-to-face communication. By virtue of technological breakthrough, cinema, the state-of-the-art media of Derrida's time, can, by right, infinitely reproduce an artwork and simultaneously send it to group of audience that are heterogeneous and far away. Thereby we will be able to see that meaning is conceived differently in different *mise-en-scène* and that *mise-en-scène* itself is

not a fixed method of signification but is incessantly modified. Subsequently, in section 3.2, we will try to show that *Tourner les Mots*, which is writing in the narrow sense, is prepared in a way that exhibits the influence by the cinematic *mise-en-scène* of *D'ailleurs, Derrida*. Derrida describes *Tourner les Mots* as “a kind of post-script to the cinematographic writing of Safaa Fathy” (TM 85). The term “post-script” resonates with the German word ‘*Nachtrag*,’ which means post-script, codicil, footnote, etc. Derrida’s peculiar conception of ‘*Nachträglichkeit*,’ which we examined in Chapter 2, prohibits us from expecting *Tourner les Mots* to simply represent the meaning that is already present in the film. In the preface, Derrida and Fathy says that *Tourner les Mots* is “a kind of short film after the fact [*après-coup*]” (TM 14) of the film, *D'ailleurs, Derrida*. First of all, by saying so, they are inviting us to think *Tourner les Mots* as a writing that is not secondary or derivative to the film it writes about but deserves an analysis of its own. Additionally, they hint at the way *Tourner les Mots* is written, as if it is filming with words. Through the experiment of scriptural *mise-en-scène*, *Tourner les Mots* belatedly generates meaning, which was never perceived in present tense while watching the film. Such *mise-en-scène* suggests that it is a means to relieve writing in the narrow sense as well as the writing of any type of the traditional duty to represent what they write about, and further opens up the possibility of advancing to generate new meaning with its irreducible way of staging.

### **3.1 Filming the Words: Film as *Mise-en-Scène***

The title of the *Tourner les Mots* is carefully chosen by the authors, with considerations given to multiple bearings of the French words ‘*tourner*’ and ‘*mots*’. Considering that *Tourner les Mots* is a writing about the film *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, ‘*tourner*’ can first of all be understood as a

technical term, which means to shoot a film, literally to turn (*tourner*) the camera (TM 19). At the end of Chapter 1, we said that a work of performative art, such as a play or a film, is a kind of writing, in that it inscribes sound, movement, light, etc. Thus, in the wake of Derrida, ‘*tourner*’ as filming can be understood as act of writing a cinematographic text. Then, ‘*mots*’ is usually translated into ‘words.’ Derrida says that from Plato to Aristotle to Saussure, “writing (...) was restricted to the model of phonetic script and the language of words [*mots*]. The word [*mot*] (*vox* [voice, speech]) is already a unity of sense and sound, of concept and voice, (...) of the signified and the signifier” (OG 30-31). In the given citation, Derrida writes “*mot*” in French and put in the parenthesis “*vox*,” which means voice or speech in Latin, as if to invite us to think them together. In section 1.1, we said that various types of signs are hierarchized, according to the proximity to the presence of meaning, hence the tripartite hierarchy of the psyche, speech and writing. Then, writing being taken in a generalized sense, various types of graphism are hierarchized according to proximity to speech: purportedly, the primeval and natural graphism such as drawing, which represents a thing but not voice, develops into more civilized and arbitrary forms, such as from pictograph, hieroglyph, ideograph and finally to phonetic writing, which represents voice, the way a thing is called, not the thing itself. Taking the above citation as a Rosetta stone, we will understand “*mots*” in the title of the text *Tourner les Mots* as certain linguistic signs that are supposedly closer to speech and therefore to meaning than other types of graphism and therefore better suited for such things as innermost monologue, predicative narration, and serious discourse. Especially in filmmaking, “words” would mean what professes to have achieved primarily the “self-referential unity of concept and material” (MP 11), to which audio-visual and kinetic aspects of film would be merely secondary and exterior. Our object of

inspection will thus include not only actual words consisting of letters, spoken as well as written, but anything that alleges to be meaningful in its simple presence: the presence of Derrida's words written before the shooting of the film or spoken in front of the camera, the presence of Derrida as the author, as someone who can claim authorship to those words, the presence of preconceived idea of the film to Fathy's mind, then her direction to the words of script, etc. If one understands '*tourner*' and '*mots*' within the metaphysical tradition, '*tourner*' would mean writing in a cinematographic sense but a mere audio-visual representation of the presence of preconceived idea to what Derrida writes "words," which carries along with it a representational undertone.

However, it is the very attempt to relegate the graphic to secondary and exterior representation that Derrida plays with. In order to think of 'shooting' or 'filming' the words as something other than 'representing' the words, we might try understanding '*tourner*' with recourse to '*mise-en-scène*,' the translation that Derrida invokes to avoid the representational interpretation of '*Darstellung*.' Indeed, in the history of film criticism, the term *mise-en-scène* has specifically been used to assert that a film is not a mere visual manifestation of pre-determined concept and to resuscitate the importance of the visualizing process of a film: "the meanings of the scene (...) [are] not contained in the script, but in the treatment. (...) It is the way in which the scene has been filmed that is significant."<sup>27</sup> Theoretically, every film has its own *mise-en-scène* in the sense of general method of audioization or visualization. However, the definition and qualification of the term vary among theorists, and some ascribe the narrow sense

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<sup>27</sup> Gibbs, *Mise-en-Scène*, pp. 59-60.

of the word.<sup>28</sup> In this chapter, instead of going through all the details and distinctions among film theorists, we will focus on how we should understand *mise-en-scène* in light of Derrida's philosophy.

According to Derrida, there is no word, be it his spoken or written word, or that of Fathy, which is simply waiting to be filmed; instead, the meaning is already present in it, unaltered by cinematic expression. Derrida says that there are no "sentences (...) already favorable for a cinematic frame" (CG 58). At this point, we might resort to the second meaning of 'tourner,' which is "to adjust" (TM 20). As soon as words are filmed, they should be adjusted for the cinematographic scene of writing:

the words had *either* to keep quiet and give up on themselves, in any case to resist the rhetorical temptation, *or else* place themselves at the service of a cinematographic

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<sup>28</sup> In the film theory, *mise-en-scène* is often used as the counterpart to montage, which is "the ordinary word for editing (...) in the romance languages" (Stam, *Film Theory*, p. 38). In that regard, there are two major group of film theorists, which comprise the debate on the essence of cinema: on the one hand, Soviet director-theorists in 1920s asserted that in cinema, meaning is generated dialectically by the synthesis of shots that do not have a fixed meaning in themselves. For example, Kuleshov tried to demonstrate that the shot of a guy indifferently looking at the camera can designate different sentiment when juxtaposed respectively with the shot of a baby in a coffin (grief), a woman (lust), a bowl of soup (hunger) (*Ibid.*, p. 55). On the contrary, the French film theorists after the World War II deplored the Soviet montage that it confines audience's interpretational freedom to the director's perspective. This group of theorists used the term *mise-en-scène* in a fairly narrow sense to refer to the film style that minimizes the interruption to the cinematic reality, such as casting of amateur actors, location shooting, long take and deep focus (cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-83).

However, the definition of *mise-en-scène* that this thesis seeks to provide identifies neither with that of Soviet formalism, nor of French realism. Even though the Soviet montage-theorists conceived of the chain of differentiated shots as generating meaning, the differences between the shots are reduced to the organic and harmonious whole of a film (cf. Oswald, "Cinema-graphia: Eisenstein, Derrida, and the Sign of Cinema," p. 252). On the other hand, for Bazin, one of the most prominent French realist theorists, the unprecedented realism of cinema has "its origins in photography" (*Ibid.*, p. 248). He argues that camera lens' mechanic, unprejudiced way of reproduction essentially forces one to accept as real "the former *presence* of the object before the camera" (*Ibid.*, p. 258, italics added). Though such claim shed light to the mechanic aspect of cinema, it cannot account for the dynamic aspect of cinematic media. As this thesis sees it, both Soviet and French conception of *mise-en-scène* are captive of the metaphysics of presence. The former reduces *mise-en-scène* to the subjectivity of a director that allegedly has full control over its meaning, while the latter simply transposes the "origin" of *mise-en-scène* to the 'immediate,' 'undisturbed' objectivity of the thing.

writing or even cinematographic rhetoric. They had to respectfully cede their place to such figures as are proper to ‘cinema,’ to this writing without precedent and without equivalent. Didactic speech, discursive assertiveness, even the continuity of narration or the self-indulgent insistence of confession, all of them had to be reduced to silence. Quiet, words [*les mots*], we’re rolling [*on tourne*]! (TM 20, emphasis by Derrida)<sup>29</sup>

Irreducible to conscious intention to signify, or to what Derrida expresses as “word”, we might venture to describe cinematic *mise-en-scène* as generating meaning in a mechanical way: not only because it involves actual machines such as the camera but the machinery of signification, as we explained at the end of Chapter 1, in which the human and the non-human elements function similar to parts in a machine. At the beginning of *D’ailleurs, Derrida*, there is a scene where we can see the film crew behind the camera, which Fathy let Derrida shoot with his handheld camera. It is as if she tries to let us acknowledge that the film that we watch comes into being by virtue of the staging, most of which is happening offscreen, by the staff and the filming apparatuses that we see around them. Later, Derrida writes in *Tourner les Mots* that “what counts in the image is not merely what is immediately visible, but also (...) the invisibility that determines the logic of the images” (CG 36). Keeping this in mind, in this chapter, the term, *mise-en-scène*, is not used to simply describe the visualized scene but the process of staging as a whole, which constitutes “the scene of presence”—in particular, with regard to the themes that

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<sup>29</sup> Derrida notices that dream formation, as framed by Freud, shows that similar process happens in the psyche. Derrida explains that “dream representation is irreconcilable with (...) pure verbal representations. The logical and ideal structure of conscious speech must thus submit to the dream (...) and become subordinate to it, like a part of its *machinery*. (...) It [speech] figures in dreams” (WD 274-274, emphasis by author). According to Freud, as quoted by Derrida, dreams “reproduce *logical connection by simultaneity in time*. Here they are acting like the painter who, in a picture of the school of Athens or of Parnassus, represents in one group all the philosophers or all the poets who were never, in fact, assembled in a single hall or on a single mountain top. (...) Dreams carry this mode of reproduction [*“mise-en-scène”*] down to details. Whenever they show us two elements close together, this guarantees that there is some specially intimate connection between what corresponds to them among the dream-thoughts” (IV 314, emphasis by Freud).

we dealt with in the previous chapter, such as making reserve of reality (the material surface of film reel), selecting, lifting and grafting of scenes (editing).

First, we will start with the cinematic apparatus, which puts into reserve the mechanically perceived reality in the form of an image. Just like a chisel that carves a wood block, or stimuli that engrave themselves on the psyche and permanently alter it, a camera too bases itself on the possibility of a certain kind of writing. In this case, the light is being inscribed on a chemically treated pellicle. A camera perceives the world with its mechanical eye, puts the received reality into reserve in the form of a film reel, so that it can be processed later. In “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” Derrida notes that Freud alludes to various optic machines such as “spectacles, photographic cameras, ear-trumpets” (XIX 228), in order to illustrate the functioning of the psyche (see WD 270-272, 428-429 n. 18). Just as internal or external excitation is inscribed, and leaves inalterable trace upon the psyche, “optical instruments *capture* light” (WD 271, emphasis by Derrida). However, we have already seen that Freud could not fully assimilate the psyche to a machine. In Freud’s view, both machine and the psyche stores writing but unlike the psyche, which recollects memories on its own, a machine cannot reproduce the writing it keeps from within. In a similar gesture, Freud regards that such machines as spectacles, cameras, and hearing-aids are “all (...) auxiliary apparatus[es] invented for the improvement or intensification of our sensory functions (...) [which are] buil[t] on the same model as the sense organs themselves or portions of them” (*ibid*). Namely, Freud refers to the optic machines as the metaphor of the psyche but considers them to be only prosthetic devices that add to the self-sufficient functioning of the psychic organism.

Nevertheless, as we've demonstrated in the previous chapter, machine does not simply add to the plenitude of the living psyche. The psyche is already a type of apparatus. It is not a unified agency but a cooperation of heterogeneous systems, which are supplemented by each other in their functioning. As Derrida sees it, Freud already acknowledges this as he compares psychic apparatus to optic apparatus. Freud's invocation of optic apparatus serves mainly to supplement topographical model of the psyche with the dynamic one. Freud says that "ideas, thoughts and psychical structures in general must never be regarded as localized in organic elements of the nervous system (...). Everything that can be an object of our internal perception is virtual" (V 611): virtual in a sense that reality is not simply transposed from the exteriority of world to the interiority of the psyche as something meaningful. It is just as when the light rays are cast into images by microscope or camera, the "place inside the apparatus at which one of the preliminary stages of an image comes into being[] (...) [are] regions in which no tangible component of the apparatus is situated" (V 536). Image comes into being not *in* a specific component but *between* components, where "a ray of light passes into a new medium" (V 611). Then, Freud goes on to say that the censorship between psychic systems is comparable to the refraction of light, which is at once accord and disaccord between disparate media. Thus, the stated citation suggests that both psychic phenomena and images, such as that of photography or film, are not given but produced out of interaction between elements, which at once accord and disaccord.

Not only is a psychic system supplemented by other systems within the psychic apparatus, the 'living' psyche, which is 'always already' working like a kind of machine, is also supplemented by 'exterior' machine—supplemented, not in a sense that a plenitude is added to a

plenitude but in that it is compensated for a lack (WD 266). Derrida illustrates an interesting example in this regard. The film *D'ailleurs, Derrida* visits cities related to Derrida, from his hometown to the city he spent his later years, as if to reconstitute Derrida's biography from birth to the present. However, Derrida could not go to El Biar, the city of his birth, for certain political reasons (TM 94). Therefore, Fathy was forced to head to the city alone with the rest of the film crew. Here, just as one uses a walking stick like an extended arm, Derrida dispatches Fathy and her camera to visit the places of his childhood in lieu of his personal visit (TM 94).

Consequently, Derrida's 'own' memory of his hometown and his childhood and his geological biography are built by the images perceived by a heterogeneous point of view. In this instance, Derrida is a subject in all sense of the word: at first, he seems to be the almighty subject of perception that can have the things presented in front of him as a representative image, even those beyond his empirical field of perception. Secondly, however, Derrida is also the subject of the film, in the sense of a kind of "raw material" (TM passim), which is subject to something else than him—not only of Fathy but of entire cinematic *mise-en-scène*, of which Fathy herself does not have full, authoritative control, and herself being only a part of all other factors that put on the show, such as film industry, the spectatorship, etc. In other words, the active subject, who is supposedly capable of summoning the traces of memory from within and without is at the same time subject to what is presented before him, to the images coming from the other. By sending out representative, Derrida is exposing himself to the possibility of someone else (mis)representing him by handing over the "right of control [*droit de regard*; lit. right of gaze]" (TM 125). Indeed, in the El Biar scenes, which Fathy and her camera perceived in place and on

behalf of Derrida, Derrida's voice-off overlaps, as if to (re)appropriate the images. However, the voice cannot rule over the images but is only superimposed on them (TM 95).

Moreover, though Freud dismissed the metaphor of optic apparatus such as camera for its incapability to reproduce what is recorded, cinematic production as a whole that operates like an apparatus is capable not only of recording (e.g. film reel, camera) but also of reproducing images (e.g. projector, film industry).<sup>30</sup> Just like any signifying unit, the reserved images generate meaning through repetition, every instance of which is unprecedented—unprecedented because there is no original image, as long as it is a manifestation of writing in a photographic or cinematographic sense, or a sign in general, for which meaning is already present and unaltered in repeated representation. Derridean belatedness, which we examined in Chapter 2, prohibits us from assuming that Derrida, while living in El Biar, could have already perceived what Fathy's camera captures as something meaningful and in a simple present tense. Fathy's film reel is a type of post-script, in a sense that it was inscribed after Derrida's life in El Biar and his memory of the place. Nevertheless, the film does not simply transcribe or revive the meaning, which is interior to Derrida or to the place itself. Though cinematic signification, just like any type of signification, involves making reserve, the cinematic reserve of images is not reducible to the psychic reserve of memories. Accordingly, the respective reproduction of Fathy's film reel and Derrida's memory generate different meanings, moreover in a way that they are mutually

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<sup>30</sup> Referring to Baudry, who had presented the description that “the cinematographic apparatus (...) encompass[es] all the various instruments and operations necessary to the production and projection of film (...) [and] functions as ‘substitutive psychical apparatus’ [Baudry, *L'Effet Cinéma*, p. 26]” (Burchill, “Jacques Derrida,” p. 173), Burchill rightly adds that the English ‘apparatus’ refers not only to the *machine*, “the technology and operations required to shoot, process, edit and project films, (...) [but also] to the set of perceptual, psychological, physiological and social *mechanisms*” (Ibid., p. 178, footnote 7, my italic).

constituted by each other. The topographical “backdrop [of the El Biar scene] (...) [that] remain[s], by design, unidentified in the film” (TM 23) is recognized as something meaningful to the extent we learn in *Tourner les Mots* that it is Derrida’s childhood home. Moreover, Derrida’s memory is belatedly affected by Fathy’s film. By being revisited via detour not of memory from within but of images brought to Derrida from without, El Biar is constituted in the meaning that was never present. In *D’ailleurs Derrida*, Derrida watches his house where he lived from 1934 to 1949 and kept revisiting until 1984. There, he notices something that he never paid attention to as a resident of the house. As “the Spectator,” Derrida says that the camera, “quickly scanning the tile (...), seems to stop, but for a very short moment, (...) at a kind of ‘flaw’” (TM 89), where one tile is laid upside down. The irregularity of the tile “was nothing” (TM 90) to him, while he was stepping on the tiled floor hundreds of times in El Biar. The “flawed” tile finally means something only in the moment of viewing, not by virtue of immediate presence of perception to consciousness but by being delivered to Derrida after so many years and “from so far away” (*ibid*). Derrida starts writing long, reflective paragraphs, his lines of thought flowing to everything that comes to his mind with regard to the tile, all the way from the interior of an Algerian household, which distinguishes itself from that of France (TM 94), to the unknown craftsman who must have laid the tile but was blind to the disjointment (TM 93), the time out of joint (TM 91) that Hamlet deplored (“The time is out of joint (...) I was borne to set it right”), and so much more.<sup>31</sup> None of the various possible meanings of the disjointed tile—from a “melancholic souvenir” (TM 91) from his childhood, to “the metonymy of every interrupted

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<sup>31</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act I, sc. 5. Derrida begins his book *Specters of Marx* with the same sentence (Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 1).

readjustment (...) of all that *goes wrong*” (TM 92, emphasis by Derrida)—was contained in the moment of perception, only to be disclosed later. The meaning is generated only belatedly, by detour of Fathy and the mechanical lens, or by anything that would look at El Biar from a different point of view than that of Derrida and situate El Biar in an alien context, after a considerable spatio-temporal gap.

Rendering Fathy as anonymous “Author,” Derrida says that not only his ‘own’ birthplace but also Derrida ‘himself’ “had been chosen by the Author who made very many choices [he] had to take into account” (CG 34). The Author does not let Derrida present himself the way he would have wanted to. For example, in *Tourner les Mots*, Derrida finds a space to write about the omitted scenes that could not make it to the final cut (e.g. an interview he had with two other colleagues [TM 90]), which he says were left out “for reasons of *economy*” (TM 16, emphasis by Derrida). Meanwhile, “the Author (...) made the decision to remove [Derrida] from [familiar] French space; (...) [to] *elsewhere* (...) [to] Algeria, [to] Spain, [to] the United States” (CG 34-35, emphasis by Derrida, translation modified). Derrida says he “acted blindly, eyes closed to an order that dictated to [him]” (TM 73). Reusing the word ‘blind,’ he says: “Fathy told me (...) that I was blind. (...) She treated me like a blind man. She repeated that I could not *see* the film and that all my incomprehension, impatience, my fits of anger, my nervous breakdowns derive from the fact that I see nothing, that I saw nothing, from the other side, from her point of view (...). She was right. I say to myself now, I saw nothing, I could not see what was awaiting us from the other side of the camera” (TM 86, emphasis by Derrida). Moreover, Fathy is not the only one who intervenes and makes decisions in the place of Derrida. There is also “the right of control [*droit de regard*] of the authorities of ARTE” (TM 125), the Franco-

German channel that co-produced *D'ailleurs, Derrida* together with the Gloria Films, and “all the [other] instances of power and decision” (*ibid*). Then there are anonymous spectators, who have the right of the gaze, or, similarly, the right of control (*droit de regard*) over Derrida, and choose from the film what they want to see about Derrida. Speaking of such “intrinsic plurality [that] divides or multiplies the film” (TM 125), Derrida concludes that “the decision” regarding what and how to represent about himself could never have been his (TM 73).

However, Derrida immediately adds: “assuming that it was the other time” (*ibid*). That is to say that, from the outset, there was no Derrida as the self-identified whole, which the ‘external’ agencies of decision can only partly represent or even misrepresent. In *Tourner les Mots*, Derrida refers to himself in multiple ways, “by saying sometimes *me*, *I*, and sometimes *he*, *the Actor*” (TM 74), as if to prohibit us from reducing the film and the text to the supposed authority and the identity of ‘Derrida.’ First, he speaks of “the divorce between (...) me and images of me, the visuals and the sound” (TM 75), “the divorce between the Actor and me, between the characters that I play and me, (...) between my ‘parts’ and me” (*ibid*), saying that he “had to play what was supposed to be (...) [his] own character, who is himself but one character[,] (...) [that] it was a matter for [him] of playing as Actor several of [his] characters” (CG 34). However, before there is any type of “seemingly *external* ‘constraints’” (TM 16, emphasis by Derrida), from the moment he tells something himself, whether or not in front of the camera, Derrida is also staging himself by selecting, excluding and making reserve. Derrida states: “when I talk about my past [in *D'ailleurs, Derrida*], whether voluntarily or not, I select, I inscribe, and I exclude” (CG 39). As he says at the very beginning of the film, “as soon as there is inscription there is necessarily selection, as a consequence, deletion, censorship, exclusion.”

Namely, even when Derrida writes as “I,” he is to a certain extent “he,” “the Actor,” in the sense that he performs the role of “I” who wrote *Tourner les Mots*, an identity that did not exist before or after the scene of writing. He goes on: the divorce “has begun in ‘me’ well before the film. (...) The shooting [*tournage*] has already begun, (...) before any decision of production was (...) made” (TM 74-76).

On that note, he says that his experience of the film “is organized, like in the physiology of the eye, starting from what was and what remains, a *blind spot* (...). One must *blind oneself* [to some degree] (...) to see what one in fact sees. (...) Thus[,] everything will depend on an economic organization of the field of blindness” (TM 77-79, emphasis by Derrida). The blind spot that is formed in the anatomical mechanism of seeing something upsets the naïve belief that sight is the simple presence of a thing to the eye. In other words, sight is no different from the chiasmus of the seen and the unseen, the visible and the invisible: sight is economized. Likewise, before camera, director, film industry, etc. choose what is to be seen or not, one’s optic organ has to select, make reserve and exclude, in order to see anything at all. The (re)presentation of Derrida of any kind involves not only what is (re)presented and seen but also what is not presented, absent and unseen. Since selection, exclusion, deletion, and censorship are always already happening *within* oneself, before *between* one and the others, there is no ‘true’ image of Derrida before staging. The “Derrida” that one wishes to see—in the film, in the text, in real life—is always already elsewhere.

The general condition of signification is brought to the limit in cinematic *mise-en-scène*: a film can capture scenes of time and place that are unreachable to human perception and edit the scenes by criteria much more pluralized and complicated. In addition to that, unlike human

memory, the lifespan of a cinematographic image outdoes life of an individual. Derrida explains: “an image can survive like a text. One could see these images (...) after my own death” (CG 37). As long as it is “a mark which remains,” a film too is inextricable from the possibility of repetition-iteration. From the moment of filming, the mere fact that something is recordable tears the recorded thing asunder, and further lets it be haunted by its double.

Recording (...) is in principle designed to be reactivated *after* the recorded event that was present[.] (...) In so far as it is recordable, the present relates to its (recorded) self in the future. (...) A part of the present (...) already relates to itself in the future (...). This can only mean that the present is divided from itself[.] (...) The so-called ‘present’ fails to be entirely present to itself; it is both deferred from itself and divided from itself into a ‘future.’<sup>32</sup>

Before the invention of cinematography, no media was so unfettered in reproduction; that is, for films, the original and the copy are indistinguishable. Moreover, the reproducibility of cinema, unlike photography, is essentially linked with the industrial aspect of the media, that is to say “tied into a worldwide market of gazes that (...) [allows] any reel of printed film to be reproduced in thousands of copies liable to touch millions of viewers throughout the world, and to do this quasi simultaneously, collectively” (CG 28). As a consequence, whereas only a limited amount of people can have access to a certain memory, a cinematographic inscription can be viewed by a group of people, which is incomparable in terms of number and heterogeneity.

Reproduced and distributed in an unprecedented manner, the interpretation of a film becomes all the more divergent. Just like a memory begets different meanings in different

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<sup>32</sup> Smith, “Deconstruction and Film,” pp. 121-122, emphasis by Smith.

circumstances of recollection, all of those who watch a film can, by right, have their own interpretation of the film. Nevertheless, a film more or less comes across as an irreversible fact, which imposes only a determined interpretation. On the one hand, as he watches the film that he starred in, now as “the Spectator,” who is no more privileged than other spectators, Derrida makes the following statement: “watching the film that is once edited, (...) I find, more and more each time, that its necessity is imposed in a much more undeniable and therefore irrefutable, inevitable manner” (TM 119). However, as we discussed at the end of Chapter 1, a film that looks like a seamless entity is penetrated by imperceptible marks of weaving, of cutting and pasting of scenes. A film lifts and grafts scenes in a way that no mode of writing could do: a film can juxtapose, for example, Derrida’s interview sequence in southern France right after his lecture sequence in Paris. Moreover, “the Author” is not the one who can claim the authentic version of editing. Derrida and Fathy explain that they wanted to make “a film without authority” (TM 15). In *D’ailleurs, Derrida*, we repeatedly see short, furtive scenes, such as that of a blind man, a cat, ruins, etc., which seem irrelevant to the supposed subject of the film, Derrida. It is as if Fathy tries to make clear that the film that one sees at a given present moment is the result of editing and that the editing is not complete. On that note, Derrida explains, on the other hand, that the seemingly irreversible fact of film also “releases (...) contrary evidence” (TM 119) to any single, possible version of the film. He goes on: “with the same ‘content,’ the same ‘materials,’ (...) one could have made (written, ‘edited’) a totally different film” (*ibid*). There can be “an indefinite number of other films” (TM 78). Derrida is not confining the possibility of “other films” to films in the narrow sense, which would be made by a professional film director

or an editing engineer. How such rewriting of a film is possible will be dealt in the following section.

### 3.2 Returning to the Words: Writing as *Mise-en-Scène*

In the previous section, we examined two different meanings of “*Tourner les Mots*”: while a) *filming* “the words,” or, generally speaking, filming such things as didactic speech, discourses and confessional narratives, and all that professes to simply and immediately express the interior or anterior meaning, one has to b) *adjust* them to the syntax of cinematic *mise-en-scène*. While being filmed and being adjusted to cinema, “the words” have to give up their privileged place. At this point, we will be able to introduce the third meaning of “*Tourner les Mots*,” by adjusting the words to the cinematic scene, which is heterogeneous to the conventional scene in which words appear, such as discourse, confession, etc., one risks “going around [*contourner*], avoiding, overtaking, exceeding, [and] transgressing” (TM 19) the words. However, “the words” that a film goes around are only put into reserve, rather than disappearing—here, it is sufficient to say that such a reserving of words is to be understood in association with one of the conceptual threads of *différance*, which is “to defer as detour, relay, reserve, *temporization*.” In a sense, Derrida and Fathy go on to explain that “going around [or] ‘turning about [*tourner autour*]’ [the words] (...) suggests almost the opposite: obsessional insistence, fascination, *returning [re-tourner]*” (TM 19-20) of words. In this respect, the words that had to be set aside in the film *D’ailleurs, Derrida*, for example, always have the possibility of returning. We might as well say that *Tourner les Mots*, the text written with words, is one of many scenarios, according to which the reserved words find their way back to a scene of writing

other than the scene of *D'ailleurs, Derrida*. On that note, Derrida and Fathy say that *Tourner les Mots* is where they have “returned to the scene of the film” (TM 13). In order to better understand what precisely is at stake in such a statement, the question shall be formulated as follows: what difference is there, if any, between simply writing with the words and coming back to the words via the detour of a film?

In an interview given shortly after the release of *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, Derrida explains that he learned a lot of things during the shooting of *D'ailleurs, Derrida* (CG 34). However, he does not clarify what exactly he learned. On the one hand, one might habitually say having learned something from a film when he or she succeeded in extracting a meaningful message that the cinematic media delivers. Here, simple distinctions between media and message as well as between form and content linger on. In this case, Derrida’s lesson seems to make less sense, since the major part of the ‘content’ of the film *D'ailleurs, Derrida* is Derrida; his life, his philosophy, the meaning of which must be clearer to Derrida than to anyone else. On the other hand, we have to ponder upon the possibility of learning something new, even about oneself, in the repetition of the ‘same’ ‘content,’ or, to couch in other terms, in the return of the same—which takes us to another conceptual thread of *différance*, which is “to differ as discernibility, distinction.” In fact, Derrida says that what interests him about writing “is less, as one might say, the ‘content’ than the ‘form’ [but] the composition, the rhythm, the sketch of a particular narrativity[,] (...) [namely] *mise-en-scène*, whether that be through writing in books or through speech” (CG 34). Taking these quotes as a foundation, this thesis finds it justifiable to assume that the lesson that Derrida derived from *D'ailleurs, Derrida* is the way the supposed

‘content’ is staged in a manner specific to cinema, rather than the ‘content’ itself, nor the ‘form,’ both of which has static implication.

Rather than representing the film—representing in the sense of reinstating the invariable presence of meaning—Derrida seeks to put on the scene of writing in the narrow sense what he learned from film production. Derrida explains: “I don’t believe it’s an exaggeration to say that (...) when I write a text I ‘project’ a sort of film. (...) Even if, in my case, the work is more artisanal” (CG 33-34). “I write (...) in order to avoid the camera, the cinema (...). Not in order to get away from or to blame *the* machine, but *these* machines in the current state of their operation. I prefer to them, provisionally, the tempo of another writing machine, another scene of writing, even another ‘cinematography’” (TM 106). In other words, Derrida aims to write a text as one shoots a film and yet in a way irreducible to cinematic *mise-en-scène*. We will begin by looking at how the cinematic machine of writing, or rather machinery of writing, influences the writing of *Tourner les Mots*. What catches attention of someone who opens and reads a book from the beginning is that the preface of *Tourner les Mots* is written by both Derrida and Fathy, and that they are speaking by turns, without letting the reader know who is speaking what. It is written like a script of a play or a film, but without assignment of the lines to each character. Whereas rest of the book consists of chapters that are respectively read under the signature of Derrida or of Fathy, the mixed voices in the preface of *Tourner les Mots* bring to the foreground not only the multiplicity but also the inextricability of the agencies involved in any writing—however, we have already seen in the previous section that in his chapter, Derrida refers to himself in multiple ways, “sometimes *me*, *I*, and sometimes *he*, *the Actor*” (TM 74). By doing so, Derrida is staging his chapter as “the scene of writing:” the scene of multiple voices

that are not reduced to one, simple Derrida, rather than of monologue. Furthermore, if one nevertheless seeks to attribute each line in the preface to a single author or character, the discussion over who's saying what should be further carried out, and so indefinitely, without any assurance from the text itself. As such, the setting of the preface makes known that *mise-en-scène* is, rather than being an invariable form, an ongoing process, always already a call for supplement.

With the role of “the Author” as conscious subject moved off to the background, the syntax of *Tourner les Mots* is governed by a setting, which comes across as rather non-human, mechanical and arbitrary. As a rule, a play consists of acts and the intervals in between, and a film, similarly, of sequences, shots and scenes and the imperceptible intervals in between. *Tourner les Mots* visualizes the intervals of the performative art and thereby brings to the fore the irreducibility of interval in any text. In the preface, we see that every line of Derrida's or of Fathy's is spaced from one another by an empty line. Derrida's chapter too is composed of 26 articles separated by a blank line. Each article has a heading in alphabetical order. For example, the heading of the first article is the blind man (*aveugle*), which in French begins with letter 'a.' Then, Derrida continues to write about the letterbox (*boîte aux lettres*), the floor tile (*carrelage*), and so on until letter 'z.' Formulated as such, the chapter resembles a dictionary or an encyclopedia, or an appendix that one finds at the end of an author's collected works. In such texts in alphabetical order, an author's unique style of writing loses prominence. One resorts to them as secondary texts, which clarify the meaning of the main text, in the most 'objective' way possible.

The articles being parallel to the sequences in film, as Derrida's interviewer of *Cahier du Cinéma* suggests that *Tourner les Mots* "redistributes the film in (...) a different order" (CG 35). However, the alphabetical order of *Tourner les Mots* does not prescribe any inner necessity to the unfolding of the text. In section 1.2, we have seen that alphabetic writing has been prioritized for docilely transcribing the speech, the natural unit of the ideal and the material. We might also recharacterize the alphabetical order as the order of voice that governs the written. Nonetheless, the alphabet that opens each article of *Tourner les Mots* does not write down any preconceived notion. Dictionary, encyclopedia or appendix selects concepts, which are of certain importance or appear frequently in the main text, and then sorts them in alphabetical order. On the contrary, *Tourner les Mots* begins from the alphabetical order itself, from an order prescribed to the text before the supposed presence of meaningful raw material. Derrida does not start writing about the blind man because it has intrinsic significance while others do not. He explains that he also "could have started with ARTE (...)[,] AILLEURS, ARCHIVES, AUTEUR [author], ANIMAUX [animals]—or with AUTOMOBILE" (TM 86). From the heading of the blind man, which seems to be chosen purely arbitrarily, readers can hardly fathom what the article is going to say, if not wondering if there was actually a blind man in the film at all. However, *Tourner les Mot's* alphabetical order is not characterized by an utter disorder. The blind man, whose appearance was only fleeting in the film, belatedly starts to signify something when Derrida writes about it. The blind man is an anonymous figure captured by Fathy's camera, as he was sitting outside in the street of Toledo on a sunny day (TM 77). Derrida writes the longest article in his chapter of *Tourner les Mots* on this fleeting figure of a blind man, whose appearance he describes as being "almost subconscious" (TM 88), as if recollecting a memory—

a memory stored in the film reel. It is as if a camera blows up the object. By simply zooming the camera in and out of an object, which was already in the frame, the object is separated from the context that made it look natural or neutral, thereby bringing about a totally different sensation. Namely, one looks at the object from different angle. For example, the object that fills up the whole frame would designate its significance or uncanniness. On the other hand, relatively small size of the object shows its unimportance or weakness with regard to the vast environment that surrounds it: “blowing up the detail is something both the movie camera and psychoanalysis do. (...) [It] is (...) something else besides enlarging it (...). One accedes to another space, to a heterogeneous time” (CG 38-39).

In the article, Derrida writes that he did not notice the blind man while he, as an actor, was present at the shooting. As he watches the edited and projected film as a spectator, he sees the man for the first time (TM 82). Derrida is surprised at the fact that he is surprised by a film about himself. Then, he makes a decisive figure out of this blind man. He writes that he shares the blindness with the man (TM 80). With his eyes wide open, Derrida did not notice the blind man coming, nor was he vigilant at his ‘own’ film. The meaning, which *Tourner les Mots* gives to the blind man, is not reduced to the disclosure of the meaning that was already contained in *D’ailleurs, Derrida*. The blind man was never perceived in his ‘full,’ ‘living,’ presence by Derrida, no less than by Fathy or by most of the audience. The seemingly marginal figure comes to disrupt and re-signify the scene or the film, or even *Tourner les Mots* itself, through a certain close-up, which is part of the scriptural *mise-en-scène* that Derrida experiments. After having read this long article on the blind man, readers get to start thinking that the blind man could have been a key figure with sub-textual importance. In a sense, alphabetical order of *Tourner les Mots*

is an “order in a disorder” (TM 85), an order that is constituted rather than given. It shows at once that a scene is not meaningful in itself and that any scene can appear to mean something through a certain *mise-en-scène*, not only that of an actual film production, but also that of a writing in the narrow sense, which supplements the film belatedly.

In *Tourner les Mots*, the essential order or reading, not only that of writing, is also wanting. Ironic as it may sound, texts written in alphabetical order are hardly read in alphabetical order, or, in other words, in linear order. Conventionally, it is because alphabetical texts are not itself the main text, which one usually reads from beginning to end. In case of dictionary, for example, one refers to an article that explains an unclear word or concept in the text being read. A good dictionary makes the unclear clear, in a way that the reader does not have to turn to yet another source for elucidation. To put it in a Derridean way, though what a dictionary presents is not precisely the meaning but rather more signs, a dictionary aims to elucidate meaning by bringing end to the reference. On the contrary, in *Tourner les Mots*, the reference goes on endlessly. One might read *Tourner les Mots*, hoping that it explains the meaning of *D’ailleurs*, *Derrida*. However, Derrida’s alphabetical text makes the seemingly neutral word or image appear unnatural. For example, instead of providing the reader with self-contained definition or explanation, the article on the blind man refers to yet another text of Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*.<sup>33</sup> For those who have already read *Memoirs of the Blind*, the motif of the blind man, which Derrida touches upon in *Tourner les Mots*, is inevitably read in relation with *Memoirs of the Blind*. Moreover, within *Tourner les Mots*, the article on the blind man is weaved into the referential relation with other articles. Derrida states: “what I have just

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<sup>33</sup> Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*.

remarked about the blind man (...) could be referred to other metonymies of the film” (TM 82). The later articles all resonate with the first one. The article under the heading of “letterbox” writes about a scene in *D’ailleurs, Derrida*, as fleeting as the blind man scene, in which Derrida drops an envelope in a letterbox standing at the street of Toledo. Just like the reason why the blind man was sitting there, of all places, at the very day of shooting is unknown to us, the letterbox too closes on itself the secret that is the postcard that Derrida threw in, not giving away to anyone what the postcard is about and where it is being sent to. As such, Derrida makes out of the blind man and the letterbox a kind of metonymy of secret. Then, there is the floor tile scene that we talked about in section 3.1. In this scene, Derrida reflects on the unpredictability that the wrong tile seems to symbolize, which is no less shared by the unexpected intrusion of the scene of the blind man, the cat, the ruin, and possibly all other short scenes that come across as digressive to the overall plot of the film. As such, the way Derrida writes *Tourner les Mots* permits the reader regard the blind man as a decisive figure, which illustrates the major concept of Derridean philosophy and is repeated throughout the chapter. It is the pure repetition without any represented original meaning that produces such significance of the blind man. Not only is the meaning of the blind man supplemented in the following articles, the keywords that the following articles write about are also supplemented by the first article on the blind man. As such, the meaning of each motif in *Tourner les Mots* is generated in the mutual interdependence of the articles, not by the linear unfolding of a single fundamental concept, which builds up to conclusion. One can begin reading *Tourner les Mots* from anywhere from cover to cover without feeling the need to refer back to the earlier pages. Therefore, each reader can, by right, read the book in a different order and reconstitute a different version of the text.

The motif of the blind man recurs in other motifs throughout *Tourner les Mots* and structures the text in a rhythm that is irreducible to *D'ailleurs, Derrida*. As such, the blind man is “the metonymy among metonymies” (TM 82), the metonymy “*once and for all*” (*ibid*, emphasis by Derrida). However, Derrida states that “it must be possible to say this about all metonymies (...) the blind man [is at once a figure] *once and for all* and [a figure] among others” (*ibid*, emphasis by Derrida). By definition, metonymy is a rhetorical structure that substitutes one term for another, on the basis of association between the terms (e.g. ‘the White House says ...’ instead of ‘the American president says ...’). In *Tourner les Mots*, Derrida seems to focus on the specific type of metonymy that is synecdoche, in which substitution of the terms are carried out based on whole-part relation (e.g. ‘America lost by two goals’ instead of ‘American soccer team lost by two goals’): “metonymy cuts up a corpus or a body, (...) plays between the whole and the part, the latter detaching from the former in order to take its place either by delegation or substitution” (TM 82). However, metonymies in *Tourner les Mots*, such as the blind man, the upside-down floor tile, letterbox, etc., do not depend on any conventional conceptual association. Rather than partaking in a pre-established law of signification, they gain meaning in a referential network of metonymies, in which no metonymy is pre-determined to be more significant than the other. On the one hand, the blind man sitting outside at the very day of shooting is an irreversible fact that happened only “*once*,” a “unique event [that] will not happen again. It’s over[,] (...) bygone without return” (TM 83). However, once the blind man is filmed, he becomes infinitely repeatable. Not only in Fathy’s film: the figure of the blind man is also repeated again and again in *Tourner les Mots*. The repetition of this figure is irreducibly different in each instance of repetition: once, it stands for Derrida, the other time for secret, then for predictability, and so on

indefinitely. Thus, on the other hand, as the “*for all*” part of the idiomatic expression “once and for all” tells us, the singular, irreversible fact always already “stands (...) for all the others” (*ibid*). The possibility of repetition “replaces [the singular, irreversible event] in advance, (...) replacing, reversing, returning, representing, reproducing [it]” (*ibid*).

The blind man, which seems to be a fact simply presented in the film *D’ailleurs, Derrida*, gains meaning as it is repeated in alterity—be it in different motifs or in the different scene of writing in general, which *Tourner les Mots* stages. Repeating the scenes that were reserved in the film differently, *Tourner les Mots* does not simply represent *D’ailleurs, Derrida*. As a text “at once connected [to] (...) and radically independent” (CG 35) of the film it writes about, *Tourner les Mots* plays with the film (*ibid*). In Chapter 1, we began with Derrida’s translation of ‘*Darstellung*’ into ‘*mise-en-scène*’ instead of ‘representation.’ Then we continued on by explaining that translation concerns not only inter- or intralinguistic translation but also intersemiotic translation between discursive and nondiscursive signs. Re-invoking three types of translation, in *Tourner les Mots*, Derrida speaks of “the untranslatability between cinematographic art and an art dominated by the verbal” (TM 19). When he says ‘untranslatable,’ however, Derrida is not denying the possibility of translation at all. He goes on to elaborate that “one can always translate, (...) recuperate all the *meaning*, but not the same economy” (TM 84, emphasis by Derrida).

While one might imagine translation as the simple substitution of one word for another, there is always a certain aspect of meaning that is marginalized as it is transposed from one semiotic system to another. Take the French word ‘*tourner*,’ whose multiple meanings have been explored in this chapter: a) to shoot, b) to adjust, c) to go around or to return. Depending on

context, one has to choose a suitable translation and simultaneously exclude other possibilities, since listing all possible translations would hinder the word from signifying at all. Rather than disappearing, other possibilities of translations are put into reserve, so that when ‘*tourner*’ appears in a different context, the same word would be translated differently. Any signification consists of such making reserve and differences in repetition. On that note, Derrida and Fathy subtitle *Tourner les Mots* as “at the margin of the film.” That the meaning is necessarily marginalized to certain extent does not prohibit either *D’ailleurs, Derrida* or *Tourner les Mots* from signifying. If *D’ailleurs, Derrida* could have portrayed everything without reserve—be it Derrida’s biography, his philosophy, the blind man, etc.—*Tourner les Mots* would not have been able to justify itself as other than mere transcription of the film. Since meaning is not exhausted in the desired immediate presentation, signification goes on indefinitely. *Tourner les Mots* repeats what had to be reserved and never ‘fully-present’ in *D’ailleurs, Derrida* and thereby stages the film differently.

*D’ailleurs, Derrida* will not be meaningful in an identical manner next time it is brought to yet another scene of writing, be it writing in the narrow sense, cinematographic writing, etc. Signification neither starts nor ends in a designated moment. *D’ailleurs, Derrida*, which *Tourner les Mots* writes about, is in turn belatedly writing about Derrida, who has always been writing in communication with his philosophical precedents. Instead of suggesting one, authoritative interpretation of the film, Derrida is abusing his prestigious status as “the Author” or “the Actor,” or what one expects to be ‘Derrida himself,’ to show that what he iterates about film and himself is always already in relation with other texts. As such, *Tourner les Mots* is not a declaration of a convergent perspective but an invitation to a writing of a divergent type:

divergence to the scene that was never paid attention to, to the reading that was not intended nor expected, to the writing that invites yet another writing as well as reading, to reference to yet another text, to another media, namely to another scene of writing, and to another *mise-en-scène*.

## Conclusion

This thesis has sought to understand what Derrida calls *mise-en-scène* in terms of the production of an artwork's meaning, as opposed to seeing meaning as produced by a more or less accurate act of representation. We started out wondering what Derrida means when he chooses the term *mise-en-scène* over representation when he translates the German *Darstellung*. In the course of our research, we have found that *mise-en-scène* can be qualified as one of the names that Derrida uses in order to figure the transcendental logic of signification, along with figures such as “‘écriture [writing],’ ‘trace,’ ‘différance,’ and ‘supplement,’” the list of which he says “can never be closed.”<sup>34</sup> These words are at once irreducible and related to one another. Derrida explains that each word, “like all other words, acquires its value only from its inscription in a chain of possible substitutions, (...) only within a certain context, where it replaces and lets itself be determined by (...) other words.”<sup>35</sup> He goes on to claim that even when he cites only names “for reasons of economy,” they should be supplemented by “the sentences and the interlinking of sentences which in their turn determine these names in some of [his] texts.”<sup>36</sup> Taking this as another guideline, we can perhaps now say that we have conducted a kind of *mise-en-scène* of the term *mise-en-scène* itself: we played in variation the question of ‘what is *mise-en-scène*?’ and tried to answer this question with the help of other, perhaps better known, Derridean figures such as writing, trace, *différance*, and *Nachträglichkeit*, each of which can be said to supplement the term ‘*mise-en-scène*.’ By examining the variations of questions and the relation that *mise-en-*

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<sup>34</sup> Derrida, “Letter to a Japanese Friend,” p. 275.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

*scène* holds to other elements on the map of Derridean thought, we will be able to recapitulate and proceed to the ramifications of our research.

Though *mise-en-scène* appears as a way of figuring the act of signification in general, this thesis has sought to stay focused on the particular realm of art. We found the instance of such *mise-en-scène* in Derrida's text *Tourner les Mots*, which takes the film *D'ailleurs, Derrida* as its occasion to write. In the Introduction, we said that *Tourner les Mots* does not purport to answer the question of 'what is' primary *versus* secondary, central *versus* marginal, visible *versus* invisible in a work of art but rather asks 'how' one gets to make such determination. Such distinction constitutes the determination of what is meaningful. The metaphysics of presence, which inescapably governs the way one thinks, has regarded values such as 'primary' or 'central' to be original and values such as 'secondary,' or 'marginal' to be either the absence of or the representation of those values. Since representation is the term over which Derrida chooses *mise-en-scène*, in Chapter 1, we first asked 'what is representation?', so as to situate the term *mise-en-scène* against the backdrop of the metaphysics of presence. Taking Derrida's lead, we have observed that representation in the strict sense of the term is impossible. The values that are considered to be primary are themselves the byproduct of the movement that differentiates elements. An element, which is in itself undetermined in its value, acquires whatever value it has in the network of elements, so long as it bears the trace of the other elements of that network. In the mutual interplay of elements, the final determination of the value of a single element is indefinitely deferred, while it is always already haunted by the trace of its others. Derrida explains that the movement of deferring and differing and what he calls the trace are those that give rise to the distinction between presence and representation and the corresponding

evaluations, such as primary *versus* secondary, central *versus* marginal, and so on. We were thus able to re-situate the constellation of the names he gives to the transcendental logic of signification, such as *différance* and the trace, around what he calls writing, and take it as a context to understand how *mise-en-scène* might be working in Derrida's own texts. We can thus now see that *Tourner les Mots* is writing in a twofold sense: On the one hand, it is writing in the narrow sense, which consists of written linguistic signs. As we have seen, the metaphysics of presence has relegated such writing to a secondary function, considering it to be the mere representation of meaning 'itself.' On the other hand, *Tourner les Mots* is, just like any signifying element, governed by the logic of arche-writing and therefore does not simply represent something but itself functions as a signifying element in relation with other elements. This is to say that the relation that *Tourner les Mots* holds with the film it writes about cannot be unilateral. *D'ailleurs, Derrida*, which is itself a signifying element, is in mutual relation with the writing that writes about it.

However, we have not yet had a tool to understand how the writing, which is empirically written after a work of art, can affect the artwork. In Chapter 2, we were able to find a clue to this unsolved problem in another Derridean term, this one taken from Freud: *Nachträglichkeit*, which shows how the value of the primary and the secondary comes into being in a mutual constitution. In Freud's analysis of the "primal scene," which he would describe as arriving belatedly, the "primal scene" comes at first in the linear timeline that consists of subsequent events that are the wolf dream and the wolf-phobic symptom. However, Derrida adapts Freudian *Nachträglichkeit* to his own ends to point at the transcendental logic of the "primal scene," which not only can be read as influencing subsequent events, but also as itself influenced by those

events, even though they temporally happened later than the perception of the “primal scene.” In Chapter 1, we saw that Derrida rigorously makes a distinction between the transcendental and the empirical, as in the logic of the trace and the trace as the empirical, graphic mark, difference and *différance*, writing and arche-writing. The transcendental being the answer to ‘how it is possible,’ the empirical to ‘what it is,’ Derrida tries to reveal the former as the possibility of the latter, while the transcendental in the Derridean sense would rather be called quasi-transcendental, in that Derrida even regards the strict distinction between the empirical and the transcendental as questionable, and that the so-called empirical and the transcendental are no less in mutual relation with one another. In light of such repeated gesture of Derrida, we were able to infer that what he calls *mise-en-scène* refers to a kind of behind-the-scene movement, as a consequence of which the visible scene comes into being, staged in a meaningful manner. Such *mise-en-scène* is what is “primary,” not a single scene such as the “primal scene.” For instance, we saw in Freud’s analysis of the wolf dream that the “primal scene” is not an undisturbed unity in which meaning is simply present. In order to claim its primacy in the series of events, Freud had to break the scene into subunits, which he says correspond to the subunits that constitute the dream. Furthermore, the “primal scene” as a whole also had to communicate with other events. The “primal scene,” wolf dream, and the wolf-phobic symptom are cropped out of the series of the scenes that constitute the Wolf Man’s life and grafted on to one another to explain the symptom with a plausible narrative, which is not reduced to a single scene that constitutes it. It is also notable that the Wolf Man himself was not a conscious subject of signification, who can reach the source of his dream and of his symptom on his own. With the external help from Freud and the psychoanalytic discourse employed, such scenes as the dream and the perception of his

parents' copulation, which were reserved in the Wolf Man's unconsciousness, were able to become conscious and play a central role in the analysis.

As such, we saw that the "primal scene" takes on meaning, by the essential supplement by what it is not, such as by the detailed analysis of its elements or by recourse to critical discourse. We regarded such *mise-en-scène* in the psychoanalytical scene as applicable to the possibility of the artistic scene and proceeded to Chapter 3, to delve into the operation of *mise-en-scène* in the field of art. In the Derridean sense of the term, *mise-en-scène* designates that, no less in artistic signification than elsewhere, meaning neither begins nor ends in a purportedly primary, present point, be it a work of art, its subject material, the intention of the artist, and so on. We saw, for example, that the film *D'ailleurs, Derrida* cannot be understood on the basis of the picture of presence and its representation. As the title suggests, the film is all about sending Derrida "elsewhere (*d'ailleurs*)," showing the constant non-presence of Derrida. The film removes Derrida from the context in which the audience would recognize him most naturally, such as his library or lecture hall in France. The film, as if changing the backdrop, constantly sends Derrida elsewhere, to the United States, Algeria, Spain, which makes explicit that the so-called self-presence of Derrida always already depends on certain contexts, namely on others.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the film does not try to organize the scenes taken from heterogeneous spatio-temporal contexts into a continuous narrative through editing. Rather, *D'ailleurs, Derrida* comes across as hardly edited at all. As a consequence, the scenes seem to interrupt one another, as if saying "by the way (*d'ailleurs*)," not "therefore" or "in conclusion." As a result, not only does the film not

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<sup>37</sup> "This film, (...) most of [its] images were 'taken [*tournées*]' outside France, in United States, in Algeria, and in Spain (...)" (TM 101).

present Derrida “as such,” *D’ailleurs Derrida* is also not interested in presenting the film itself as a seamless, final product, but rather in showing us the *mise-en-scène*, which gives rise to the film and which nevertheless cannot be said to be final.

On the one hand, *Tourner les Mots* is one among many other possible instances of taking part in the incomplete *mise-en-scène* of the film. On the other hand, it is by virtue of *Tourner les Mots* that it becomes explicit that both *D’ailleurs, Derrida* and *Tourner les Mots*—and moreover any artwork and any writing on an artwork—are part of the network of signifying elements that stage, not represent, one another. To begin with, we saw that *Tourner les Mots* redistributes the scenes of the film in a different order. With its alphabetical structure, the text takes on the role of a kind of dictionary for decrypting *D’ailleurs, Derrida*. Nonetheless, it plays with the expectation that the text will finally bring order to the abstruse film. The alphabetical order shows that any writing comes into being by a certain organization and that the order of such organization can be as arbitrary as that of an alphabet. The motifs that *Tourner les Mots* writes about seem to be substitutable by any other, and the alphabetical order almost appears to be a disorder. However, Derrida does not argue for the utter impossibility of signification. Like Freud did with the “primal scene,” Derrida analyzes the scenes in detail, associates them with other scenes in the film, and supplements them with contexts outside the film, such as his memory or other texts. The resonance between the elements that structure meaning is most clear in the article on the floor tile. In the conventional documentary, the sequences of one’s childhood would have occupied a primary position or the equivalent, so that further narrative could be developed with a genesis. However, when in the El Biar scenes, Derrida is once again absent, in this case literally. Nonetheless, what underlies his empirical absence in his hometown, which

risks appearing to be accidental, is the quasi-transcendental impossibility of presence in the strict sense. It was only with the help of Fathy and her camera that Derrida was able to reach the place and the memory of his childhood. Just like the Wolf Man, Derrida could not be the sole, conscious agent in recollection, even when he writes about the motifs of his “own” childhood. Derrida pays attention to a certain element in the El Biar sequence that is the wrong floor tile, which was significant neither to Fathy, who filmed it, nor to most of the audience, nor even to Derrida as a child. Derrida furnishes the scene of the reversed tile with supplementary context from other scenes in the film and from other texts. By doing so, he stages the motifs in the text, *as if* the motifs, which seemed marginal in the film, have intrinsic meaning or are governed by intrinsic order of association, and shows that the order of writing, or of signification in general, is not given but generated.

After having explored the logic of Derridean *mise-en-scène* and various of its instances, perhaps we can end this thesis by asking still another question: “what can we do with *mise-en-scène*?” We have argued that *mise-en-scène* points to the mutual constitution of signifying elements, and that correspondingly there is neither an identifiable beginning nor end of the signifying movement. If we were to acknowledge *mise-en-scène*, which is ‘always already’ at work, as the logic of signification, especially that of writing in the narrow sense, we can no longer purport to exhaust all meaning in one text. Nonetheless, this is not to say that one cannot but fail to signify. The point is that every instance of *mise-en-scène* is different, producing different meanings, and that any text is an invitation to indefinitely more texts. Such a circumstance necessarily calls for an engagement from the reader’s side. For instance, the order of sequences in *D’ailleurs, Derrida*, which lacks ostensible narrative, and the alphabetical order

of *Tourner les Mots* call for further organization, namely for further *mise-en-scène*. As we said above, this thesis can itself be said to be an instance of such *mise-en-scène*, which resituates *D'ailleurs*, *Derrida* and *Tourner les Mots* around the term *mise-en-scène*, together with other texts, which are written both by Derrida and by other authors. By doing so, this thesis attempted to perform one among many possible readings of *Tourner les Mots*. If further research were to write on the same film and text, its staging can as well focus on other motifs, such as blindness or dis-adjustment. Such practice of *mise-en-scène* can be done not only to *D'ailleurs*, *Derrida* and *Tourner les Mots*, but to other texts of Derrida, and to any signifying element, all of which can be analogized to a dictionary, calling for further supplement by other signs.

Then, more specifically, what would writing on art be like, if it acknowledges, as perhaps it must, a certain *mise-en-scène* as its possibility? Not only is the act of writing on the artwork framed by the artwork, but any writing on an artwork, be it criticism, compilation of art history or art theory, also constantly reframes the artwork. The task of writing as *mise-en-scène* would thus not be to manifest the author or the artist's intention, supposedly only latent in the artwork, or the 'original' context in which the work of art is conceived most naturally. Rather, writing as *mise-en-scène* will constantly try to reframe the artwork, for example by putting forward the elements in the work that seem marginal, at times putting aside what is undisputedly considered to be central, re-situating the work in a variety of backdrops. The value of presence can no longer rule out such possibilities of writing for not representing the supposed anterior presence of the author's intention, the thing itself, or the artwork. However, this thesis does not argue that the representational model of writing should necessarily be replaced. Earlier, we said that one cannot escape the metaphysics of presence. Nonetheless, we have tried to push off the

limits of the metaphysics by bringing *mise-en-scène* to the fore, which is ‘always already’ the possibility of what is called presence and its representation. Even before one speaks of the replacement and its necessity, *mise-en-scène* is always already happening and cannot not take place if anything like ‘presentation’ or ‘representation’ are to be possible. Therefore, if this thesis ends only provisionally by suggesting one among many instances of possible *mise-en-scène* of Derrida’s—or any other—works, this would be an inevitable result of what we have strived to show, namely, to invite more works that would explore the possibilities of *mise-en-scène*.

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## 국문 초록

의미는 어떻게 가능한가? 본고는 자크 데리다(Jacques Derrida)가 “미장센(*mise-en-scène*)” 이라 부르는 것을 의미의 가능 조건으로서 규명하고자 한다. 미장센으로서의 의미 작용은 본래부터 어딘가에 있는 의미를 표현 또는 전달하는 것이 아니라 의미를 꾸며내고 생성한다. 나아가 본고는 의미의 생성으로서의 의미 작용을 예술 작품과 그에 대한 글쓰기의 측면에 집중해 고찰한다. 이로써 본고는 예술 작품에 대한 글쓰기가 작품의 의미를 다양한 방식으로 부단히 생산해 낼 수 있음을 말하고자 한다.

본고는 이와 같은 주장의 단초를 데리다의 텍스트 「프로이트와 글쓰기 무대」로부터 발견한다. 해당 텍스트에서 데리다는 지그문트 프로이트(Sigmund Freud)의 텍스트를 인용하는 과정에서 프로이트가 독일어로 ‘*Darstellung*’이라 적는 것을 무언가를 무대에 올리고 연출한다는 뜻의 프랑스어 ‘*mise-en-scène*’으로 옮긴다. 이러한 번역은 ‘*Darstellung*’을 ‘*représentation*’ 또는 ‘*representation*’이라 옮기는 프랑스어 또는 영어 프로이트 전집의 번역을 의도적으로 비껴가는 것이다. ‘*représentation*’이나 ‘*representation*’은 모두 한국어로는 ‘재현’ 이라 번역되는 것으로서, ‘현전(*present*)’ 하는 무언가를 표상 또는 대리한다는 함축을 갖는다. 반면 ‘*mise-en-scène*’은 연극이나 영화와 같은 공연 예술의 분야에서의 시청각적 연출을 의미하는 단어로서, 스크립트 등에 미리서부터 주어지지 않은 무언가를 꾸며내고 만들어낸다는 함축을 가진다.

통상적이지도 않고 개념적으로도 이질적인 번역어를 채택하면서 데리다는 그 이유에 대한 충분한 설명을 하고 있지 않다. 이에 본고는 데리다가 ‘재현’ 이라는 번역어를 ‘미장센’ 으로 대체함으로써 의미가 어딘가에 본래부터 ‘현전’ 하고 있는 것이라는 관념을 문제 삼으면서 의미란 생산되는 것임을 말하고 있다고 본다. 본고는 미장센으로서의 의미작용을 1 장에서는 기호학 및 언어학적 측면에서, 2 장에서는 심리학적 측면에서, 그리고 3 장에서는 예술 작품과 그에 대한 담론의 측면에서 고찰한다.

먼저 언어학적 측면에서 우리는 의미 있는 내용을 먼저 마음 속에 가지고 있어서 이를 말이나 글로 표현한다고 여긴다. 데리다에 따르면 이러한 일견 상식적인 견해는 정신-말-글을 위계화하는 형이상학적인 사유의 틀에 근거한다. ‘현전’ 의 관념을 특권화 해온 서구 사유의 전통에 따르면 의미 ‘그 자체’ 는 먼저 정신에 직접적으로 ‘현전’ 하고

말이나 글과 같은 기호(sign)로 표현된다. 이때 말이 의미 ‘그 자체’를 가리키는 일차적인 기호라면 글은 그러한 말을 받아 적는 기호로서, 의미 ‘그 자체’가 아니라 말이라는 또 다른 기호를 가리키는 “기호의 기호”이며 따라서 이차적이고 파생적인 것으로 취급된다. 그런데 데리다에 따르면 의미 ‘그 자체’의 순수한 현전은 불가능하고 따라서 엄밀한 의미에서의 ‘재현’ 역시 성립하지 않는다. 모든 기호는 의미 ‘그 자체’를 지시함으로써가 아니라 또 다른 기호와의 관계 속에서만 작동하며 그런 한에서 기호 일반은 “기호의 기호”다.

이는 정신에 대해서도 마찬가지다. 현전중심주의적 전통에 따르면 외적, 혹은 내적 현실은 지각 당시에 직접적으로 정신에 현전한다. 그리고 지각된 바는 이후 기억으로 바래져가거나 고차원적 사고로 발전해 나간다. 그런데 데리다가 보기에 지각이나 사고는 모두 현전이 아니라 분화와 지연을 그 가능 조건으로 가진다. 이러한 주장은 그의 프로이트 독해로부터 연유한다. 프로이트는 정신을 분화된 체계들로 이루어진 기계와 같이 작동한다고 말했다. 데리다에 따르면 그러한 기계로서의 정신은 기호를, 그것도 일종의 문자 기호를 생산해낸다. 나아가 우리는 “원초적 장면(primal scene)”에 대한 프로이트 분석에서 데리다가 사용하는 ‘미장센’이라는 번역어의 출처를 짐작할 수 있게 된다. 데리다가 보기에 정신이 경험하는 바 일반은 그 자체로 의미가 있는 것이 아니라 이후, 또는 이전에 발생한 다른 사건들과의 관계 속에서만 의미를 가진다. 그 점에서 정신적 경험은 역시 “기호의 기호”다. 이때 사건들 간의 상관관계는 상호적이어서, 프로이트가 “원초적 장면”이라고 이름 붙인 사건은 이후에 발생하는 일련의 사건들에 영향을 줄뿐만 아니라 그 자체 이후의 사건들의 영향을 받아 오직 사후적으로만 결정적 장면으로서 재구성된다. 이로부터 우리는 사건의 이해에 있어서 실로 “원초적”인 것은 단일한 장면이 아니라 하나의 장면을 다른 사건들과 관계시키는 연출, 그러니까 미장센이라 할 수 있을 것이다.

의미가 단순히 현전하거나 재현되는 것이 아니라 만들어져 나가는 것이라는 점에서 미장센은 언제나 무대 뒤 편에서 진행중에 있다. 우리는 이러한 미장센을 그 가능조건으로 잘 드러내는 사례를 데리다가 출연한 영화 <*D’ailleurs, Derrida* (Derrida’s Elsewhere)>, 그리고 그가 감독 사파 파티(Safaa Fathy)와 함께 해당 영화에 대해 쓴 텍스트 『*Tourner les Mots* (Turning the Words)』에서 발견할 수 있었다. 이에 대한 분석을 통해 우리는 예술 작품과 그에 대한 글 각각을 기존의 관념이나 현실을 단순히 재현하는 것으로서가 아니라 의미를

발생시키는 것으로서 바라볼 수 있게 된다. 먼저 <D'ailleurs, Derrida>는 데리다에 관한 영화인데, 실존 인물에 대한 영화인만큼 더더욱 데리다의 삶이나 그의 철학과 같이 이미 존재하는 무언가에 대한 재현일 것이라는 기대 또는 요구로부터 자유롭지 못하다. 그런데 영화 속 데리다의 이미지들은 데리다 ‘그 자체’로 수렴하지 않는, 데리다에 대한 “기호의 기호” 들에 불과하다. 이 점에서 영화의 미장센은 완결되지 않은 듯 보인다.

『*Tourner les Mots*』는 이러한 미완의 미장센을 이어나간다. 그렇다고 해서 『*Tourner les Mots*』에서 데리다나 감독이 마침내 데리다 ‘그 자체’나 영화의 의미 ‘그 자체’를 드러내 주는 것도 아니다. 해당 텍스트에서 데리다는 완결되지 않은 영화의 미장센을 계속해 나가려는 듯, 영화 속 장면들을 이리저리 배열해 이어 붙인다. 그런데 이러한 미장센을 통해 영화 속에서는 별다른 의미를 지니지 않던 장면들은 사후적으로 마치 결정적 의미를 담고있는 장면인 것처럼 연출된다.

미장센은 특정 작품에 국한되지 않고 영화, 연극, 회화, 문학 등 장르를 불문하고 모든 예술작품, 그리고 그에 대한 글쓰기, 가령 예술사, 예술 이론, 비평 등에서 언제나 진행중이다. 이때 미장센을 그 의미작용의 조건으로 인지하는 글쓰기는 작품을 작가의 의도, 시대 배경, 이론과 같은 소위 단일하고 본래적인 의미에 귀속시키기보다 작품 내에서 주변적인 것처럼 보이는 요소들을 전경에 배치해 보는가 하면 작품을 생각지도 못한 맥락 속에 위치시켜 봄으로써 작품의 의미를 끊임없이 작품의 생산해 나가는, 끝나지 않는 과정으로서의 글쓰기가 될 것이다.

**주요어:** 자크 데리다, 미장센, 의미, 기호, 프로이트, 사후성, 영화, 글쓰기

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