

## L BEFORE K

...and before the epigraphs to this introduction, the acknowledgment. In the course of an analysis of the book you have in your hands, Samuel Weber has very happily spoken of the "owing at the heart of knowing," and of the "peculiar indebtedness at the very core of psychoanalytical thinking." So, to use the vocabulary which I will attempt to introduce here, the translator acknowledges that he owes an unpayable debt to the author for his help (his help? his gift? "his" "time"?) with the translation of "Envois. I thank Jacques Derrida for his generous assistance: I regard this translation as a particularly provisional one, but without Derrida's help it would not have been possible at all.

By placing this acknowledgment before the epigraphs, I am deliberately playing with the usual sequence of the translator's introduction. This too is part of my acknowledgment. One of the major concerns of *The Post Card* is the possible subversion of what is usually taken as a fixed sequence—e.g. Socrates before Plato, the passing of an inheritance from a prior generation to a succeeding one, the death of the old before the young. What if the usual and seemingly fixed sequence were reversible? What if each term of the sequence contained within itself the principle that subverts the usual progression? What could there be between each term and itself that would operate this subversion?

For example, it usually goes without saying that the translator makes his acknowledgments at the *end* of his introduction. My gesture here is to put the acknowledgment *between* the title and epigraphs I have chosen for this introduction. But to position the translator's acknowledgment between title and epigraph has a formal analogy with the usual position of the translator's name. Often, the translator's name too comes between title and epigraph on the title page of a translation—e.g. "Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Translated and edited by James Strachey. *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo*." I am making this "formal" point in order to juxtapose the indebtedness at the core of analytic thinking with the indebtedness at the core of translation. If the translator and the analyst share an indebtedness, as the etymological sameness of transference and translation, *Übertragung*, indicates, why is this indebtedness usually acknowledged only at "the end"? Is there something at the "core" that the one or the other would prefer not to think about?

This question too, is part of my acknowledgment, for Derrida asks it many times throughout *The Post Card*. Why does a "translator," Freud, for example, often have such difficulty making acknowledgments? Who gave Freud his time, his help, his gift, with the "translation"? Nietzsche? Heidegger? And who relayed the gift? Socrates? Plato? Hopefully, such questions will be more meaningful after you have read *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Nor are such questions without relation to the place of the translator's name between title and epigraph, and to the "location" of the indebted "core" of psychoanalytic thinking. As Derrida points out elsewhere, the original text is also indebted to the translation for its survival. What we call a text always implies supplementary, unpayable debts. Author and translator name the signers/spenders of an other's debt, the contract for insolvency signed on the title page, underlined by title and epigraphs. Psychoanalysis, as "theory" or "therapy," is a meditation on translation: it also implies such a contract.

The epigraphs, then. From Freud, Heidegger, and Derrida.

*Dec. 9*—Cheerful, is falling in love with the girl—talkative—a dream with a neologism, general staff map of WLK (Polish word). We must go into this tomorrow...

*Dec. 10*—He told me the whole dream, but understands nothing about it; on the other hand he gave me a few associations to WLK... The K corresponds to the "vielka" [pronounced as English "vee-el-ka"] = "old." It also reminded him of his anxiety when at school the letter K [i.e. boys whose name began with a K] was being examined, since it meant that his L was getting very near. It would thus correspond to a wish that K should come after L...

—Freud, "Original Record of the 'Rat Man' Case" (Editor's interpolations in brackets), Standard Edition 10: 294-95.

In the beginning of Western thinking, Being is thought, but not the "It gives" (*es gibt*) as such. The latter withdraws in favor of the gift which It gives. That gift is thought and conceptualized from then on exclusively as Being with regard to beings.

A giving which gives only its gift, but in the giving holds itself back and withdraws, such a giving we call *sending*. According to the meaning of giving which is to be thought in this way, Being—that which It gives—is what is sent. Each of its transformations remains destined in this manner. What is historical in the history of Being is determined by what is sent forth in destining, not by an indeterminately thought up occurrence.

The history of Being means destiny of Being in whose *sendings* both the sending and the It which sends forth hold back with their self-manifestation. To hold back is, in Greek, *epoche*. Hence we speak of the epochs of the destiny of Being. Epoch does not mean here a span of time in occurrence, but rather the fundamental characteristic of sending, the actual holding-back of itself in favor of the discernibility of the gift, that is, of Being with regard to the grounding of beings. The sequence of epochs in the destiny of Being is not accidental, nor can it be calculated as necessary.

—Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, pp. 8—9; my italics.

...by means of a switch point I will send them elsewhere.

—Derrida, "Envois," one of the letters of February 1979.

The citations from Freud's notes on the Rat Man case, like the "Envois," are what remains of a dated series of supposedly private texts that are now public—like a published correspondence, or a series of intercepted post cards. Further, in French, the Rat Man's map is also a card, a *carte*. In a sense, the Rat Man put his return address on the *carte* in his dream. His name was Paul Lorenz, and in the section of the citation that I have elided, Freud says that he associated the I of "vielka" to Lorenz. The role of proper names in "private" texts is examined throughout the "Envois." There is another *carte* in the "public" version of the case, the of the route between a train station and a post office. Derrida refers to this *carte* in one of the letters of 7 September 1977—which is why I chose this epigraph. However, the passage raises many other questions that bear on the "Envois." For example, in the entry of 9 December, Freud does not tell us about the relation between falling in love and the *carte*: you will find much on this topic here. Further, I am intrigued by Freud's deduction that the dream represents a wish that K should come *after* L. Why? Why not L before K? In any event, why does Lorenz wish to change the order of the alphabet? To reduce the anxiety of waiting to be called upon to answer the examiner? And if this L comes before K, why the association with "old," with *vielka*, with a *military* (Lorenz was an officer) *carte* (and the military code is particularly important in "To Speculate—on 'Freud'"). What would

happen if L came before K on a *carte* (like Plato before Socrates on another *carte*)? What does psychoanalysis have to do with such a question, with the dream language that poses the question in terms of military maps, proper names, and alphabetical order? An entire reading of this book could be organized around Heidegger's sentence, "A giving which gives only its gift, but in the giving holds itself back and withdraws, such a giving we call sending." (See the letters of 5—6 September 1977; note that the Rat Man and *On Time and Being* are discussed on consecutive days in the "Envois," another reason for my choice of epigraphs.) The German translation of "Envois" is in fact called *Sendungen*, which is why I have underlined *sendings* in the citation. Recall that Heidegger is shifting his meditation on the relation between Being and time—or here, time and Being—via a shift of emphasis in the phrase *es gibt Sein*: the emphasis now is on the *es gibt*. In *The Post Card* Derrida radicalizes this shift. The examination of *es gibt*—it gives, there is—in terms of *sending*, and the principles operative in any "sending system" (e.g., the postal system), reveals a certain indeterminacy intrinsic to the concept of sending. This indeterminacy leads to questions about destiny—the destiny of "Being" —other than the ones Heidegger asks here. But the surprise, although we should perhaps no longer be surprised, is in the overlap between Heidegger and Freud on the topics of sending and destiny. A question that runs throughout *The Post Card* is, Why this inconceivable union, why the one always in back of the other (like Plato in back of Socrates on the *carte*)? Another paraphrase of Derrida: if Being is sent, then there must be a system that sorts, routes, and delivers it. What if this system necessarily contained a kink, so that despite the absolute authority of its usual sequences (like the absolute authority of alphabetical order), somewhere it contained the subversion and reversal of its own progression (L before K)? What would happen to the thought of *es gibt* as sending? To the destiny of Being?

And to the fate of love? The sending of love letters? The "Envois" are a performance and analysis of the irreducible twists in any sending system, and of the effects of these twists on what is supposedly most private within such a system—e.g. a love letter. The performance of these effects is particularly geared to the "switch points" mentioned in one of the letters dated February 1979. Or, as Derrida puts it in the letter of 9 September 1977, to "the delicate levers that pass between the legs of a word, between a word and itself." The glossary that follows is an attempt to explicate the deliberate reference to routes and to vehicles, i.e. *Übertragung*.) But this is not a definitive index. I hope that every reader will find omissions and mistakes.

The list itself consists of French words, many of which do not function as switch points or levers in English. Most of those words have been left in French somewhere in the text: thus, it is likely that if you find a French word in the text, you will find an entry on it here. Other words have not necessarily been left in French, but have seemed to require an entry. But no more than it is an index, the list is not a glossary exactly *keyed* to the text. Nor does it provide an exhaustive guide for a pleasant journey. (For example, you will find no entry on *key*, *la clef*: no secure backup here.) Where can you go, what is your fate, what comes back to you with certainty, if you put your name (e.g. Lorenz) on a *carte*, if you mark the return address, and then L comes before K? I hope you will refer to the list with such questions in mind.

## GLOSSARY

*a* (*à*) (*a-*): as the heading indicates, *a* has three major uses, all of them switching each other on and off. *A* as a verb is the third person singular of *avoir*, to have. The preposition *à* means "to" or "in." Note that capitalized vowels may lose their accent marks in French. Thus, the subheading of one of the divisions of

"Le facteur de la vérité" is LE TROP D'EVIDENCE OU LE MANQUE A SA PLACE; I refer to *Le facteur* ... note 10, for an explanation of the alternation between *a* ("the lack *has* its place") and *à* ("the lack *in* its place"). One of the letters dated 9 September 1977 tells us that *The Post Card* is "dedicated to 'to,' devoted to the dative." The dative, of course, is the case of the indirect object, as in "I write *to* you." A simple rule of French grammar, however, can make the case of a pronoun ambiguous: "I write to you" is *je t'écris*. The pronoun here can be read in either the dative or the accusative: I write *to* you, or I write you. The dative, one might say, is the case of sending, but the possible alternation of dative and accusative asks the question of whether indirection and sending are always operative. (Think of the English phrase "you send me.") A- in French and English is also the prefix of negation; thus Derrida's neologisms *adestination* for the structural lack of a certain destination in any postal system, and *athesis* for the lack of a definable thesis in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, a book that always takes another step forward no matter what point it reaches. There is also the important word *acheminer*, which does mean to send something on its way, to progress toward a certain destination. Derrida plays on the possible negation here, and I have tried to capture this play by translating *acheminer* as "to send something on its a-way." Finally—finally for this entry at least—*a* is one of the sounds of the *fort/da* scene: according to Freud, Ernst actually said "oooo—aaa." The same letter of 9 September 1977 tells us that *The Post Card* is dedicated also to drawling o and long a, especially in the word *dos* (pronounced like English "doe"; see below). Nor will you have forgotten that a is the "letter" of *différance*.

*accepter* means "to accept," with all the resonances of *reception* that are so important throughout. The problem is with *j'accepte* (I accept), which can also be heard as "*Jacques sept*" (Jacques seven). "*J'accepte*," says one of the narrative voices, 'is my signature.' This is a complex switch point. First, there is the play on Jacques, Derrida's first name, and on the seven letters of both Jacques and Derrida (see below, *sept*). Next, what is it that *Jacques sept accepte* (accepts)? "*J'accepte*," he says, *la* and *ta détermination*—determination in general, and *your* determination. On determination, see under *destin* (below).

*acquitter* means to fulfill an obligation, as in the archaic English sense of "to acquit," whence our expression "to be quits" for a debt that has been paid; it also means to exonerate, as in the modern English sense of "to acquit"; see also "To Speculate—on 'Freud'" (below), part 1, note 7. The legal sense of *acquitter* puts it into relation with *cause* (see below), and with the idea of truth as adequation, of being quits with a thing (*chose*; again see *cause*). If the concept of debt is more problematic than is generally thought, or if there is an irreducible effect of inadequation between "thing" (*cause, chose*) and truth, then one is never quits. Debt and gift supplement each other in the general economy.

*adresse*: fortunately, "address" has the same double meaning as the French, so I will leave it to you to meditate on the interplay of skillful execution or and delivery of a letter to its destination(address). I note further that in German a similar play exists between *Schick* (skill) and *schicken* (to send, to dispatch).