

Of Remuant Existence

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to sketch out the conceptual possibility of what is given the name remuant existence. That is to say, a changeable, restless and fickle existence. The word remuant, no longer in common use in the English language, is an adjective. Its meaning offered here is used to designate what will be considered *the* qualifying attribute of existence, which is to make the point that existence *is* remuant existence. Existence is a common noun and thereby grammatically a universal but if it cannot *exist* without being remuant its nominal universality is of no significance. The universality of existence does not mean anything; only remuant existence has meaning. The articulation of this concept, and those which are concomitant with it, is primarily an untangling of the remuant from the critique of presence and the subject offered by Jacques Derrida, whose influence remains visitant throughout.

Keywords

Existence; philosophy; remuant; occursive; Derrida.

I here put into thy hands, what has been the diversion of some of my idle and heavy hours: if it has the good luck to prove so of any of thine, and thou hast but half so much pleasure in reading, as I had in writing it, thou wilt as little think thy money, as I do my pains, ill bestowed.¹

O fortune, fortune! All men call thee fickle.²

Introduction

This paper is an attempt to sketch out the conceptual possibility of what is given the name remuant existence. That is to say, a changeable, restless and fickle existence.³ The word remuant, no longer in common use in the English language, is an adjective. Its meaning offered here is used to designate what will be considered *the* qualifying attribute of existence, which is to make the point that existence *is* remuant existence. Existence is a common noun and thereby grammatically a universal but if it cannot *exist* without being remuant its nominal universality is of no significance. The universality of existence does not mean anything; only remuant existence has meaning. The articulation of this concept, and those which are concomitant with it, is primarily an untangling of the remuant from the critique of presence and the subject offered by Jacques Derrida, whose influence remains visitant throughout. However, it is also provoked by a comment made by Catherine Malabou in her book, *Changing Difference: The Feminine and the Question of Philosophy*, where she argues that the future of what she calls “philosophical creativity” and “invention” boils down to two choices: “either we recognize that deconstruction is dead and repeat that this is the case, or we accept the new change of modification, in other words, a change of difference. If the second option carries the day, then philosophical invention consists in refusing to repeat or pastiche a gesture that can no longer produce difference.”⁴ While it may be an overstatement to suggest that deconstruction is dead, a certain idiom associated with it has certainly passed its creative zenith, proving Malabou correct in suggesting that it is in need of change of modification and difference. Malabou’s minimally essentialist suggestion for how this can be achieved is rooted in her concept of plasticity and the idea that those who are different from one another also transform one another. This approach, even with all its emphasis on mutability, necessitates a return to the subject and to form (which, as Derrida makes clear in

“Form and Meaning,” is both presence and self-evidence).⁵ Offering an alternative, the change of difference outlined in this paper is a rethinking of existence as the play of occursive differences.

After the deconstruction of presence and the subject that Derrida performed, the word ‘deconstruction’ has itself become the principle inheritance that his work has provided, seemingly setting to one side the “play of differences and quantities” that he found in Nietzsche.⁶ An idiom has been instituted wherein deconstruction is always already occurring from the inside of all concepts and conceivable structure and although Derrida’s writings should be seen as exemplary of the traits of remnant existence, they do not consistently prioritise concepts which articulate existence beyond the logic of presence and the subject. Although Derrida is not held hostage by presence it still haunts his writings because, in terms of deconstruction, as Samir Haddad articulates in his rebuttal of the one-sidedness of Martin Hagglund’s ‘radical atheism’, “there cannot be a *purely* descriptive level of analysis because of the inherited nature of language.”⁷ Haddad shows how constative statements are part of performative incidences which contain norms and values, including as well the very notion(s) of norms and values.⁸ This is why, even though Derrida practiced the play of differences stylistically in his writing, his most re-iterated texts or concepts (or graphemes, such as the *a* in *différance*) focus on deconstructing the inheritance of presence (and its concomitants such as time and space)⁹ rather than rejecting it and moving on from its contexts.

Unlike Hagglund’s ‘radical atheism,’ the emphasis on the remnant developed here does not attempt to (re)determine or (re)define the purpose or “role of deconstruction.”¹⁰ Instead of deconstructing presence and the subject, remnant existence gives it no place. Philosophical language after deconstruction must be faced with the necessity of rejecting any classical notion of presence, experience and the subject, and therefore it is not enough to suggest that these concepts and their functions are always already deconstructable or auto-

immune. To do so only complicates their usage for those who care to think in the deconstructive idiom, whether it be Haddad's, Hagglund's or Derrida's. This is a useful practice in and of itself but, as Malabou suggests, to simply repeat these gestures runs the risk of paralysing the production of difference in philosophy.

To take Derrida's fate down a different path, the articulation of remuant existence takes seriously what he defines as the "possibility of extraction and of citational grafting which belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written."¹¹ It attempts to elaborate on and regraft the concept of existence that deconstruction has made possible to the concept of the remuant (and its concomitants such as the occursive, the visitant and incidence) rather than to *différance*. This is ultimately to do greater justice to "one of the definitions of what is called deconstruction," which he argues would be "to pay the sharpest and broadest attention possible to context, and thus to an incessant movement of recontextualization."¹² This 'incessant move of recontextualisation' is at once somewhat analogous to the subject of an analysis of existence as remuant and also the rationale for introducing its terms to philosophical discussion. However, because, as Derrida writes, "there is nothing outside context,"¹³ remuant existence takes context and recontextualisation for granted as conditions of existence and focuses more explicitly on incessant movement of the play of differences and its consequences.

Gilles Deleuze and Jean-Luc Nancy offer two ways of thinking existence after the Cartesian subject and outside or after deconstruction. Deleuze's conception of 'a life' goes in the other direction to Malabou's explicit return to form and posits an "a-subjective, pre-reflexive impersonal consciousness, a qualitative duration of a consciousness without a self."¹⁴ Remuant existence does not prioritise consciousness of any kind in the same way. Consciousness (with or without a self) is instead perceived as one of many occursive aspects of existence. Even though Deleuze makes clear that he is moving beyond the subject and the

object, what he conceives of as singularities are still ostensibly objects conceived by and constitutive of a conscious subject (even if it is “a consciousness without a self”). His examples of singularities which might define “a singular life” are “a smile, a gesture, a funny face,” which he correctly assures us are “not subjective qualities.”¹⁵ However, they *are* objective qualities which are necessarily conceived by “an absolute immediate consciousness whose very activity no longer refers to a being but is ceaselessly posed in a life.”¹⁶ ‘A life,’ then, seems simply to be another concept for the primacy of the individual subject’s existence - and its present and immediate consciousness - for which certain of its qualities are objective and not created consciously.

Using similar terminology, Jean-Luc Nancy’s ontology is conceived primarily in terms of what he calls singularities. By this he means distinctive subjects or objects defined “first of all in the distributive or disseminative sense of the nonsubstitutable unicity of each singular one (be it, for example, a rock or a man named Peter [*pierre ou Pierre*]).”¹⁷ This ‘nonsubstitutable unicity’ recalls not only classical conceptions of form but also religious notions of soul. Remuant existence does not prioritise this form of subjectively designated singularity in this way. Occursions are singular but they are already implied in great numbers, for example, in the existence of “a man named Pierre.” Pierre would not be a singularity in terms of remuant existence although it is possible to conceive of him as being constituted as a part of the singular incidence of occursions, despite the fact that he would in no way be prioritised in this incidence. Nancy’s fundamental axiom for his concept of ‘being singular plural’ is that “there is no “self” except by virtue of a “with,” which, in fact, structures it. This would have to be the axiom of any analytic that is to be called coexistential.”¹⁸ As such, it fundamentally seems to articulate our conception of individuality as being determined through our difference in relation to others and, therefore still prioritises - like Deleuze and despite its emphasis on the plural – the primacy of the subject by another name. Even if this

is not the case, the concepts of a “singular life” or a “non-substitutable unicity” are not sufficiently changeable, restless and fickle enough for remuant existence.

To conceive of remuant existence is to continue to prioritise the production of difference. To serve this purpose adequately, remuant, the adjective, must have a secondary function wherein it behaves almost as if it were a common noun. The remuant must take the place of the subject. That is not merely to say (as Malabou might in terms of plasticity) that the subject is remuant: there is no subject. Instead, the changeable, restless and fickle become understood as the condition of any existence as much as they are the condition of all existence. This is not a move to re-instate the Heideggerian ontico-ontological difference that Derrida erases¹⁹ but rather to allow for a plurality of incidences *of* existence which do not coincide. Every incidence of existence is remuant. An incidence is not an event because it does not happen *at a time* it rather happens *in and as* existence. What *happens* is the incidence of the occursive and it happens as a part of the changeable, restless and fickle qualifying attribute of existence. Occursive is the name given to that which happens or occurs incidentally, which means that it is either subordinate to ‘a main event’ or casual. The emphasis here is on the casual, precisely because, in terms of existence, there is no ‘main event’ and therefore nothing to be subordinate to, however, this aspect of the meaning is still useful in illustrating exactly that point.

The occursive has duration, even if it is just the duration of the closing and opening of an eye.²⁰ Different occurrences with different durations play different parts in incidence. This concept of duration is not like Bergson’s because for him duration “implies consciousness; and we place consciousness at the heart of things for the very reason that we credit them with a time that endures.”²¹ While, in remuant existence there is nothing at the heart of things, although what passes for consciousness is not without occursive meaning and duration itself. For Deleuze’s Bergson “duration is that which differs or that which changes nature, quality,

heterogeneity, what differs from itself. The being of the sugar cube will be defined by a duration, by a certain manner of persisting, by a certain relaxation or tension of duration.”²²

This is likewise the converse of the way in which duration is formulated in terms of incidences of the occursive and remuant existence. It is the occursive itself which has duration: incidences are *the incidences* of different durations. Time has no place in remuant existence. There is no time, there is only duration. The occursive have duration (for the blink of an eye or the burning out of a sun) because they exist.

Incidences are implied by their occursive parts and in this way are also the inversion of the concept of ‘assemblage’ introduced by Deleuze and Guatarri. The word assemblage comes from the French, ‘agencement,’ an arrangement or layout, itself from ‘agencer’ which means to arrange, lay out or piece together. However, unlike the word incidence, ‘assemblage’ implies an agent or agents to make it possible, thereby deprioritising the casual or incidental. For Deleuze “an assemblage is first and foremost what keeps very heterogeneous elements together: e.g. a sound, a gesture, a position, etc., both natural and artificial elements.”²³ An incidence, on the other hand, does not keep anything together, it is rather an arbitrary and ever remuant location of occurrences. The incidence of rain or sun and a growing tree is no less of an incidence than its use as an analogy in this text. The longer an occursive aspect of incidence(s) endures or is repeated, the more appropriate it becomes to define it by another name: the visitant. The visitant is a casual or temporary aspect of incidences and is itself remuant. As its name indicates, it is never at home in incidence and yet its occursive frequency or prolonged temporary duration can give that illusion. It can always leave but it may also return.

This brief formal introduction will now give way to three incidences intended to further elaborate these ideas in terms of concept and context. Previous occurrences of the relevant words in other texts will be re-iterated here, partly to conserve and partly to produce

difference in their meaning. The examples given are chosen for their appropriateness at articulating the concepts in question.

First Incidence: The Remuant

In his essay, “Of Fortune,” Francis Bacon mistakenly writes that ‘remuant’ is the French word for ‘remover’, itself an obsolete word, meaning a ‘restless person.’ He does this in one of the many distinctions he makes in the essay, that, “An hasty fortune maketh an enterpriser and remover (the French hath it better, *entreprenant*, or *remuant*); but the exercised fortune maketh the able man.”²⁴ Despite these differences, there is no doubt for him that “chiefly, the mould of a man’s fortune is in his own hands”²⁵ and that “when a man placeth his thoughts without himself, he goeth not his own way.”²⁶ The *remuant*, in its proper adjectival meaning, erases this latter distinction of inside and outside, own and not own, but for Bacon, fortune is either primarily (although never completely) in one’s own hands or else placed, as if tied to one’s thoughts, without oneself. The hands represent the means by which to secure the self-present will, while also being a metaphor *for* that self-present will in its moulding of one’s fate. The hands are the means and measure of the will, allowing one’s fate to be embodied and somewhat knowable. If a man moulds himself to be a remover or a ‘remuant’, his hasty fortune will to a great extent be foreseeable. But could able hands mould a remover? Or, more crucially, if it is, as Bacon seems to think, the moulding rather than innate nature or God’s will which dictates one’s fortune, would the hands themselves not need moulding? There is no way of perceiving these several pairs of hands without leading to an infinite regress of hands. On the other hand, or, without the hands, without oneself, thoughts become misleading for Bacon, which is why “extreme lovers of their country or masters were never fortunate, neither can they be.”²⁷ These lovers go the way of their country or masters rather

than their own way. Their thoughts are not their own (in their ‘own hands’) but in another place. But does that very placing not require the will of the hands? Or is fortune so fickle and changeable, so restless, that it may never leave the hands for fear of another influence becoming primary in its moulding?

The word ‘remuant’ is not at home in Bacon’s hands, not only because the meaning he gives to it is incorrect but because the remuant erases the distinction between fortune either being moulded within (one’s hands) or without. Or perhaps it is Bacon’s hands which are not safe because remuant existence does not recognise ‘own-ness’, except as a socio-linguistic function. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida (who also writes extensively on philosophers’ hands²⁸) shows how insides and outsides are functions of language rather than existential differences. In his reading of Rousseau’s Second Discourse,²⁹ Derrida describes Rousseau’s understanding of language in a way which is useful in the articulation of the remuant: “Language in its entirety then, plunges into that breach between the proper and common nouns (leading to pronoun and adjective), between the infinitive present and the multiplicity of modes and tenses. All language will substitute itself for that living self-presence of the proper, which, as language, already supplanted things in themselves. Language *adds itself* to presence and supplants it, defers it within the indestructible desire to rejoin it.”³⁰ The remuant erases this implicit relationship that language has with presence and the noun. Language does not add itself to presence because there is no such thing. Nevertheless, it would be possible to say that it is *unsubtractable* from existence because without it existence would have no meaning. What this means for how both language and existence become conceivable is based on the assumption that language and the rest of existence is adjectival, which is just as much the case in languages without adjectives. Through his reading of Rousseau Derrida articulates language as existing in a ‘breach’, wherein presence is supplanted and deferred. It is partly through this reading that his concepts

of deconstruction, *différance* and trace were developed. The problem is that these terms were developed amongst the structures of a logos of presence, therefore still playing a part in obscuring what they have also helped to make possible: the articulation of a language *without presence*. This is why it is no longer useful or necessary to speak of presence but also, precisely because of the success of his endeavour, it is also no longer useful or necessary to speak of *différance* or the trace except in incidences where structure is not understood as being a function and is for some reason still considered to be present to itself. *Différance* and trace pave the way to remuant existence but run short of being helpful in articulating its traits.

The traits of remuant existence are most clearly occursive, at least initially, in their more extreme incidences. These traits draw the attention of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in Act III Scene II, just after their murder of King Duncan:

LADY MACBETH

Nought's had, all's spent,

Where our desire is got without content:

'Tis safer to be that which we destroy

Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

[Enter MACBETH]

How now, my lord! why do you keep alone,

Of sorriest fancies your companions making,

Using those thoughts which should indeed have died

With them they think on? Things without all remedy

Should be without regard: what's done is done.

MACBETH

We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it:

She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice
 Remains in danger of her former tooth.
 But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
 Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep
 In the affliction of these terrible dreams
 That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,
 Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
 Than on the torture of the mind to lie
 In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;
 After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
 Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
 Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
 Can touch him further.³¹

The only peace from restlessness is death and it would be “better to be with the dead” because it alone is absent of “life’s fitful fever.” Existence does not cease to be remnant unless it ceases to exist. Desire itself is fickle and even after its end is got it offers no contentment, at best “doubtful joy.” Before Macbeth’s entrance Lady Macbeth entertains exactly these thoughts but on his arrival she performs another role; one which (reminiscent of Bacon) seeks to resist the remnant and take hold of one’s fortune by taking possession of one’s thoughts. “Why think them on?/Things without all remedy/Should be without regard: what's done is done.” But it is clear that neither she nor he are able to unthink these thoughts and are instead subject to “restless ecstasy.” This experience does not conform to Bacon’s arguments. They have not allied themselves to nation or master, their thoughts are rather the result of taking fortune into their own hands and the actions they have committed with those

same, or other, hands. When subject to these kinds of incidences of remuant existence it may well “be safer to be that which we destroy.” The thoughts come to both Lady Macbeth and Macbeth occursively, like the teeth of a snake, an affliction of terrible dreams, or torture. These thoughts cannot be controlled and yet seem to offer up the definition for these incidences of their existence. These occursive thoughts becomes visitant in the incidences of their existence and inform the (also visitant, yet here of diminished significance) conception of their subjectivity. Existence is remuant: they have learned this the hard way.

This theme of wanting to put an end to the remuant is continued by Richard Knolles, in his *The Turkish History from the Original of that Nation to the Growth of the Ottoman Empire with the Lives and Conquests of their Princes and Emperors* (1687), which recounts the story of the strangling of a Polish prince, quite possibly because of his “remuant Nature”:

The Seventeenth of *June* [1622] in the Morning, the Prince *Coreskie*, one of the Lords of *Poland*, taken Prisoner in the late War, recommended by his Majesty of *Great Britain*, who had formerly made an escape from the Turks Captivity, was strangled in the Prison, after two years of durance. This put all into murmure, and deep consideration, for what politick end should be done, even when they themselves desired a Peace with the *Pole*, and yet did that which might utterly break the same; but it seemed they were at that time either carried with a brutish Fury, or that the Prince was betrayed from home, by intimation that his remuant Nature would never suffer the Peace long to continue between the Crown of *Poland* and the Grand Seignior.³²

These hands around the neck of the remuant Prince, killing him because of his manifestation of this quality of existence, might as well be the hands of Francis Bacon attempting to hold on to his own fortune. The remuant must be destroyed so that peace may survive but this is

not possible because 'remuant' is not just one adjective among many which somehow supplements existence: existence *is* remuant. There is no possible or originary peaceful existence - such as in Locke³³ - which would sometimes, and sometimes not, be supplemented by the remuant. But neither is it the case, as in Hobbes,³⁴ that war of all against all is the originary condition of existence. It would be truer to say that peace is as remuant as war and neither will exist for a moment longer than the duration of their occurrences. Knolles' story describes the murder of a remuant subject while Shakespeare's illustrates the potentially tortuous conditions of remuant existence. These examples run the risk of giving the false impression that remuant existence is somehow 'negative' or 'bad.' This is not the case. It is rather that historically the remuant, and that which is associated with it, has been given a 'bad name.' The 'good' is associated with presence of that which has been desired, contentment, fulfilment, peace, and so on; all of which are immunised against the remuant by the language of presence that Derrida deconstructs. Remuant existence does not attempt to offer another deconstruction of these or any concepts but rather emphasises the changeable, restless and fickle quality of all existence. It is not just, as Don Quixote says, that "for the vanquished good turns to ill, and ill turns to worse,"³⁵ to think the remuant means that the vanquished could occursively become the victor, and ill, because it is itself fickle, could always turn to good.

Second Incidence: The Occursive

In his attack on Thomas Nashe, *Pierce's Supererogation, or a New Prayse of the Old Asse* (1593), Gabriel Harvey satirically sings the praises of his other enemy Andrew Perne, "Of him I learned to know him, to know my enemies, to know my friends, to know myself, to know the world, to know fortune, to know the mutability of times, and slipperiness of

occasions, an inestimable knowledge...³⁶ This double-edged admiration or begrudging respect for Perne's sensitivity towards the remnant and the occursive goes on for several extremely rich pages and is elaborated in terms of their ability to overturn certainty. "It is not the threatener, but the underminer, that worketh the mischief; not the open assault, but the privy surprise, that terrifieth the old soldier; not the surging flood, but the low water, that affrayeth the expert pilot; not the high, but the hidden, rock, that endangereth the skilful mariner; not the busy pragmatist, but the close politician, that supplanteth the puissant state; not proclaimed war, but pretended peace, that striketh the deadly stroke."³⁷ What these examples illustrate is that sensitivity towards the remnant and occursive is not only necessary in being able to understand existence but also in increasing one's ability to continue to exist. The most definitive and influential features of existence, as learned by Harvey from Perne, are not those which are obvious but rather those which seem incidental. In further praise for the incidental, he writes:

No power like the unlikely assault, nor any mischief so peremptory as the unlooked for affliction. He that warneth me, armeth me, and it is much that a prepared mind and body may endure, but unsuspected accidents are hardly remedied, and in the fairest weather of security, to offer the foulest play of hostility is an incredible advantage. So Caesar Borgia, the sovereign type of Machiavel's prince, won the dukedom of Urbin in one day. So the Emperor Charles the Fifth's army, passing through Rome, occursively sacked the city, and enriched themselves exceedingly...nothing is cunning that is apparent. The fox preacheth Pax vobis to the capons and geese, and never worse intended, than when the best pretended. Horaces, or rather, Borgias.³⁸

When some incidences become conceptually shut off from further excursion, their very self-certainty can be their downfall. Not even Charles V expected his army to sack Rome, which is perhaps precisely why they were able to do so. The obvious or seemingly essential aspects

of an incidence give the illusion that they are not themselves occursive, whereas it is specifically their 'essentiality' which is incidental. That something is perceived to be the definitive feature of an incidence is itself one of the many possible symptoms of the occursive. As such, the incidences of the occursive that Harvey describes show a profound sensitivity to remnant existence.

In Derrida's essay, "Structure, sign and play in the Human Sciences" from *Writing and Difference*, a route is made possible into thinking remnant existence and the occursive alongside what he calls "Nietzschean affirmation." For Derrida it "determines the noncenter otherwise than as loss of the center. And it plays without security. For there is a *sure* play: that which is limited to the *substitution* of *given* and *existing, present*, pieces. In absolute chance, affirmation also surrenders itself to genetic indetermination, to the *seminal* adventure of the trace."³⁹ This kind of affirmational play is indicative of what Nietzsche calls *amor fati* or the love of fate.⁴⁰ However, affirmation is more like the description of an attitude towards existence than an interpretation of its conditions. Even when Derrida attempts to separate the 'I' from primacy in saying yes, the language he uses is still the language of agency, for example the 'promise' and even the 'saying yes' itself: "The 'I' does not pre-exist this movement, nor does the subject: they are instituted in it. I ('I') can only say yes (yes-I) by promising to keep the memory of the *yes* and to confirm it immediately. Promise of memory and memory of promise. This 'second' *yes* is a *priori* enveloped in the 'first.'"⁴¹ This same structure, formulated in terms of the occursive, would be rid of the language of presence and agency, wherein there is no need for this promising, memory and confirmation. There is no 'I' or first yes, there is only the second yes which is confirmed in its occursive incidence. It is possible to say yes without agency, where that yes is of the shortest duration but does not come from and is not held within any occursively constituted subject. Derrida's articulation is absolutely correct in terms of complicating already existing notions of agency and the subject

but it does not give the language to be able to show how a ‘yes’ can occur without an ‘I.’ It, as with so much of his writing, begins with the intention of complicating presence and the subject rather than with their annihilation.

Nietzsche, on the other hand, offers another way into thinking the occursive which explicitly annihilates the language of agency. In the third part of the section on *Thus Spake Zarathustra* from *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche describes what “poets of strong ages have called inspiration.”

If one had the slightest residue of superstition left in one’s system, one could hardly reject altogether the idea that one is merely incarnation, merely mouthpiece, merely a medium of overpowering forces. The concept of revelation—in the sense that suddenly, with indescribable certainty and subtlety, something becomes visible, audible, something that shakes one to the last depths and throws one down—that merely describes the facts. One hears, one does not seek; one accepts, one does not ask who gives; like lightning, a thought flashes up, with necessity, without hesitation regarding its form— I never had any choice.⁴²

While Nietzsche here offers up an excellent description for what is being defined as the occursive, it is perhaps not, as he implies, necessary to be superstitious to interpret things in this way. For him, revelation might well be revelation of Fate, whereas in the terms in use here it would simply be the occursiveness of remnant existence. It would be possible to say that what is called the subject is fated by the occursive in a purely logical sense but not that Fate somehow dictates the occursive. That Nietzsche is able to articulate a way of perceiving action normally ascribed to active subjective agency as entirely passive is crucial in beginning to think remnant existence through incidences of the occursive. The idea that “I never had any choice” goes even further than being subject to what Derrida calls the “passive

decision,” which only attempts to incorporate an element of vulnerability or non-sovereignty in the event of decision.⁴³ In Nietzsche’s description of inspiration, the ‘I’ is entirely absent of agency and becomes, at best, the “medium for overpowering forces.” That an incidence is possible *without* any sovereignty and without any decision, however passive, sets the scene for an articulation of concepts which do not merely attempt to problematize sovereignty and presence but rather totally reject them as any kind of ‘starting point.’ The logic of the occursive would suggest that even outside of the incidence of inspiration the ‘I’ itself – including its elaboration in terms of the power of agency and sovereign decision-making usually tied to it - is no more than an occursive aspect of incidence. However, to make sure that this reading cannot be accused of its own form of fatalism the concept of the visitant must be developed.

Third Incidence: The Visitant

The visitant is always existentially casual or temporary, even if it lasts more than a lifetime. Its duration is long enough to be able to think of it as a particular case of the occursive. The visitant can also change as well as go away and come back. It is just as changeable, fickle and restless as other occurrences. Natural phenomena are frequently described as visitant but objects can also be visitant, such as bodies or buildings; conceptual structures can be visitant as languages, moralities or methods; psychological states can be visitant as depression, contentment or anxiety. They are never visitant alone or in any pure sense, nor are they visitant *to or in a subject*. They are visitant in incidences of existence. They can endure, they can repeat, they can be annihilated or forgotten. Our understanding of them is conditioned by the absence of any notion of origin. Our ‘understanding’ is itself visitant and therefore remnant. The concept and function of the subject and the many different theoretical

articulations it has produced, and been produced by, is visitant. It is visitant but it is not able to become sovereign precisely because it is not at home. 'Home,' equally, is a visitant concept which serves different functions but it is *always* built on a foundation of sand.

In a letter to Sara Hennell, written on 22nd November, 1876, George Eliot wrote of the visitant. She does so explicitly in terms of psychological mood but also implicitly in terms of bodily infirmity and the inevitable:

Any one who knows from experience what bodily infirmity is – how it spoils life even for those who have no other trouble – gets a little impatient of healthy complainants, strong enough for extra work and ignorant of indigestion. I at least should be inclined to scold the discontented young people who tell me in one breath that they never have anything the matter with them, and that life is not worth having – if I did not remember my own young discontent. It is remarkable to me that I have entirely lost my *personal* melancholy. I often, of course, have melancholy thoughts about the destinies of my fellow creatures, but I am never in that *mood* of sadness which used to be my frequent visitant even in the midst of external happiness. And this, notwithstanding a very vivid sense that life is declining and death close at hand... Will you believe that an accomplished man some years ago said to me that he saw no place for the exercise of *resignation*, when there was no personal divine will contemplated as ordaining sorrow or privation. He is not yet aware that he is getting old, and needing that unembittered compliance of soul with the inevitable which seems to me a full enough meaning for the word 'resignation.'⁴⁴

It is clear that the first two examples of the visitant (bodily infirmity and melancholy) do not require any conscious welcoming. It is rather the inability to refuse them which is noteworthy. They constitute the inescapable of the incidences of existence to which they are

visitant. The bodily infirmity which Eliot is referring to is analogised with the psychological infirmity of melancholy, wherein lies her empathy for the young melancholics. Incidences such as these are where life is spoiled or made “not worth having.” And yet, also visitant is Eliot’s “unembittered compliance of soul with the inevitable.” She, unlike the accomplished man, does not see resignation as the conscious ordination of sorrow or privation. Instead, because the idea of the soul is also visitant, as well as the capacity for negotiating its unembittered compliance, the exercise of resignation can occur. Presumably the idea of the soul might have been visitant to the accomplished man but the capacity for its compliance with the inevitable was not. Resignation would then be an occursive or visitant acknowledgement of other visitants which are only likely to depart when that life itself can no longer exist.

Affirmation and resignation are, in this way, surprisingly similar exercises or movements. The point is not, however, to suggest that their exercise is somehow the end product of a philosophy of remnant existence. They are in no way ‘foundational’ movements. They are rather themselves possible remnant visitants. Any privileged position they might be afforded in this thinking would be to do with thinking itself. Finding the capacities of affirmation or resignation visitant might help to make one more attentive and responsive to the remnant. Both with varying degrees of distinction ‘welcome’ the occursive and the visitant. In terms of the subject as function, they are, perhaps, an inversion of Derrida’s passive decision: the decided passivity. None of this is to say that they are ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ To be affirmative or resignatory is not ‘the right thing to do’ and certainly not a model for ethics. However, the desire to ‘do the right thing’ is clearly visitant in many incidences and would be better informed by an understanding of its conditions for existence as well as the conditions of existence more generally. Equally, the concept of the visitant itself might help to remind us, with Nietzsche, of the advantages our unconditional homelessness might afford us: “We

without homeland – yes! But let's exploit the advantages of our situation and, far from being ruined by it, draw full benefit of the open air and the magnificent abundance of light."⁴⁵ And, perhaps more crucially, remind us of the unconditional homelessness of any sense of (self-)certainty. Even our longest standing, most definitive, or 'basic human' traits are visitant. They are also subject to the remuant, even if they are or seem *less* changeable, *less* restless, *less* fickle, *less* remuant.

Ramifications

At the end of his passage on inspiration from *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche refers to his erstwhile visitant, Zarathustra, writing that what he is describing seems "to allude to something Zarathustra says, as if the things themselves approached and offered themselves as metaphors ('Here all things come caressingly to your discourse and flatter you; for they want to ride on your back. On every metaphor you ride to every truth.... Here the words and word-shrines of all being open up before you; here all being wishes to become word, all becoming wishes to learn from you how to speak')."⁴⁶ Words are things and things provoke words which are brought together occursively in incidences which also separate them and spread them through existence. The same is true for incidences which have nothing to do with words, which might, all the same, provoke visitant desires for speaking. All of this will require further elaboration, further incidences, because the play of the occursive, like the play of differences, will not stop while there is still existence to speak of. And because existence is remuant, while there *is* speaking there must be new ways of speaking.

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- ¹ “The Epistle to the Reader” from John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in John Locke, *The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes: Volume 1*, (London: Rivington, 1824), xlvii.
- ² William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. Gary Taylor, ed. Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 3.5.59.
- ³ “† remuant, adj. Forms: 16 remuant, 16 remuent, 18 rémuant. Etymology: < French remuant changeable, restless, use as adjective of present participle of remuer remue v. Obs. rare after 17th cent. Restless, changeable; fickle.” OED Online. June 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/162328?redirectedFrom=remuant&> (accessed July 26, 2014).
- ⁴ Catherine Malabou, *Changing Difference: The Feminine and the Question of Philosophy*, trans. Carolyn Shread (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), 66.
- ⁵ “Form and Meaning: A Note on the Phenomenology of Language” in Jacques Derrida, (trans.) *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (London: The Harvester Press 1982), 172.
- ⁶ “Différance” in Derrida, *Margins*, 17.
- ⁷ Samir Haddad, *Derrida and the Inheritance of Democracy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 160.
- ⁸ Haddad, *Inheritance*, 99.
- ⁹ See “Ousia and Gramme: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*,” in Derrida, *Margins*, 67. and “Différance” in Derrida, *Margins*, 13.
- ¹⁰ “The role of deconstruction is not to ground anything but to think through the implications of the unconditional exposition to time.” in Martin Hagglund, “The Challenge of Radical Atheism: A Response” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 9, no 1 (2009): 227-252, 237.
- ¹¹ “Signature, Event, Context” in Derrida, *Margins*, 320.
- ¹² Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 136.
- ¹³ Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, 136. This is of course a reference to (and corrective to misinterpretations of) the famous dictum that ‘there is nothing outside the text.’
- ¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Immanence: A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 25.
- ¹⁵ Deleuze, *Immanence*, 30.
- ¹⁶ Deleuze, *Immanence*, 27.
- ¹⁷ Jean Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey S. Librett (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 68.
- ¹⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O’Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 94.
- ¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 24.
- ²⁰ “There is duration to the blink of an eye and duration closes the eye.” in Jacques Derrida, *Voice and Phenomena*, trans. Leonard Lawlor (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 56.
- ²¹ Henri Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity*, trans. Robin Durie, trans. Mark Lewis (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 1999), 33.

- ²² Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and other texts*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Mike Taormina (London: Semiotext(e), 2004), 26.
- ²³ Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness: texts and interviews, 1975-1995*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Ames Hodges, trans. Mike Taormina (London: Semiotext(e), 2006), 179. See also Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3-4.
- ²⁴ Francis Bacon, *The Essays* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 186.
- ²⁵ Bacon, *Essays*, 184.
- ²⁶ Bacon, *Essays*, 186.
- ²⁷ Bacon, *Essays*, 186.
- ²⁸ See Jacques Derrida, *On Touching-Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 135-262. And Jacques Derrida, "Heidegger's Hand (*Geschlecht II*)" in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other Volume II*, ed. Peggy Kamuf, ed. Elizabeth Rosenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 27-62.
- ²⁹ 'Discourse on the Origin of Inequality' in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987). Herein Rousseau also offers implicit and explicit critiques of the texts cited in footnotes 25 and 26.
- ³⁰ Derrida, *Grammatology*, 280.
- ³¹ Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 3.2.6-29.
- ³² Richard Knolles, *The Turkish history from the original of that nation, to the growth of the Ottoman empire with the lives and conquests of their princes and emperors, with a continuation to this present year MDCLXXXVII ; whereunto is added, The present state of the Ottoman empire, by Sir Paul Rycaut*, 6th edition, Vol. 1 (London: Thomas Basset, 1687), 974.
- ³³ See John Locke, "Chapter II: Of the State of Nature," *Second Treatise on Government* in John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- ³⁴ See Thomas Hobbes, "Chapter XIV: Of the First and Second Natural Laws, and Of Contracts," in Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- ³⁵ Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The Achievements of the Ingenius Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha: Volume II*, trans. John Gibson Lockhart (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882), 503.
- ³⁶ Gabriel Harvey, *Pierce's Supererogation, or a New Prayse of the Old Asse* (London: John Wolfe, 1593), 191.
- ³⁷ Harvey, *Supererogation*, 196-7.
- ³⁸ Harvey, *Supererogation*, 198.
- ³⁹ "Structure, sign and play in the Human Sciences" in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), 292.
- ⁴⁰ Nietzsche wrote in what are now described as his posthumous fragments that "Höchster Zustand, den ein Philosoph erreichen kann: dionysisch zum Dasein stehn —: meine Formel dafür ist amor fati...[The highest state that a philosopher can reach: a Dionysian stand for existence -: my formula for this is amor fati...]" in eKGWB/NF-1888, 16 [32] - Posthumous Fragments spring-summer, 1888. Amor fati is morality of loving what is necessary, "'Liebe das, was nothwendig ist' — amor fati dies wäre meine Moral," in eKGWB/NF-1881, 15 [20] - Posthumous fragments fall 1881.
- ⁴¹ Jacques Derrida, "A Number of Yes (Nombre de oui)," trans. Avital Ronnell, trans. Brian Holmes *Qui Parle*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (Fall 1988), 118-133, 131.
- ⁴² Friedrich Nietzsche, Hollingdale, R.J. (trans.), Kauffman, W. (ed. & trans.), *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage, 1969), 300.
- ⁴³ Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 2005), 68-69.
- ⁴⁴ Letter to Miss Sara Hennell, 22nd Nov, 1876. In Eliot, G., Cross, J.W. (ed.), *George Eliot's Life, as Related in Her Letters and Journals: Volume 3: Sunset* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 296-297.
- ⁴⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. Rudiger Bittner, trans. Kate Sturge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 97.
- ⁴⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 300-301.