

Plastic Materialities

POLITICS, LEGALITY, AND METAMORPHOSIS

IN THE WORK OF CATHERINE MALABOU

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“Go Wonder”: Plasticity, Dissemination,
and (the Mirage of) Revolution

Silvana Carotenuto

I do not know any more . . . these words belong to an idiom, which I am not sure any more of being able to understand . . . in order to let one understand, in this idiom, my own incomprehension, a certain increasing and stubborn non-intelligence, on this stubbornness precisely, of an idiom, of more than one idiom, perhaps, at the crossroads of the Greek and of its other, go wonder . . .

—Jacques Derrida

■ In the following pages I “wonder”¹ at two of the most significant traits of contemporary thought: an emphasis on or a return to Hegelian philosophy and the resistance of deconstruction to dialectical thought.² After the “queering” of Hegel by Judith Butler, it is the French philosopher Catherine Malabou who today interprets the revaluation of the Hegelian speculative system.³ I read the origin of Malabou’s “return” in *The Future of Hegel*, originally her doctoral thesis, then published with a preface by Jacques Derrida, “A Time for Farewells.”

The relationship between Catherine Malabou and Jacques Derrida started with his supervision of her research for this work, then continues in *Counterpath*, and returns in various essays where Malabou critically interacts with deconstruction, particularly concentrating on Derrida’s insistence on “writing.”⁴ Malabou maintains that today deconstruction is experiencing a definitive decline; writing inscribes itself in its unavoidable “dusk,” “twilight,” or “death”; the grapheme does not characterize our epoch any longer. We must go back to the thought—according to Malabou, a real and proper “philosophy”—of dialectics in its “plasticized” form: “plasticity” is the future of philosophy, the future “in” Hegel

and “of” Hegel and the future tout court. Derrida, in his turn, has left the philosophical scene well aware of the necessity of thinking and practicing deconstruction in the future-to-come. At the end of his career, he insistently asked, does “postdeconstruction” exist? Will our epochal transition require the recuperation of ontology? Is it necessary to insist on the demise of dialectics as inscribed in the histories of culture, politics, and institutions and as advocated by the Hegelian system in its dedication to Absolute Knowledge?⁵ In deconstruction’s future-to-come, is it not the system of the philosophical question—“What is it?”—and the right to question—“Who interrogates whom?” or “Who interrogates for what?”—to be deconstructed and, in so doing, opened up to the call of the other, who arrives—if and when she arrives—to break with any sovereignty of expectation, appropriation, and interpretation, freed from all absolutistic pretenses of (the system of) philosophical thinking and from the order of history in its controlling “succession” and its “force of law”?

The writing here presented shares these deconstructive perplexities. If it is true that writing is the trait overcome by our epoch, it still remains relevant in a system—the graphosphere—that lasts and will last for a period that remains to be defined, inscribing its “dissemination” or the “survival” of its philosophical and political reflection on the present and on its *à-venir*. The “return” of dialectics and its radical “dissemination”: these are the two traits that I want to countersign with my intervention in the debate. They represent two interpretations of subjectivity, two conceptions of the critical energy that supports them, two positions in the face of philosophical systematicity. They are the assumptions that involve, in the reflection carried out by Malabou, an attention on the “work of the negative” and, differently, in the work by Derrida, the infinite affirmation of life (*Learning to Live Finally* was his last intervention before his death in 2004).⁶ From these two assumptions follow an emphasis on a “plastic mourning” on one side and on “laughter” on the other side, a “laughter” that does not avoid death but knows how to illuminate its coming with a different “intimacy.”⁷ In one case, at the core of the philosophical circle, the translation of dialectics into plasticity appears; in the other case, dissemination is precisely interested in the critique of dialectic. In one case, *kenosis* assumes the destinies of plasticity; in the other, there is an emphasis on the uncontrollable inscription of the trace.

“*The trace will never pierce the figure*”: the confrontation between plasticity’s “return” to Hegel and the resistance of deconstruction are here framed in a “project” and a “program.” Catherine Malabou develops her “invention” of plasticity in Hegel by making its concept traverse Continental philosophy and Western sciences, with a determination to “trans-form” the system of philosophy itself. The “ject” of her speculative energy is directed, it takes place, it explicates itself in favor—a “pro-tension” (121)—of plasticity, in its established meaning of “giving and receiving” form, “reforming,” “exploding” (the plastic) and “transforming” that same system.⁸ Her critical interventions seem to again expose philosophy to its own “death”; in this mortal face-to-face, “plastic mourning” offers philosophy a fluidized and mobile self-defining process—one that is able to absorb, appropriate, incorporate, and at the same time unify both tradition and change. This process implies the act of kenosis (“without” is a key word in Malabou, who asserts that we must philosophize “without identity” and “without difference”)⁹ and of the Eucharistic, which together celebrate philosophy’s final *relève*.¹⁰ Malabou would say that this implies *voir venir* the speculative automatism, the “self-less” of the Hegelian—desired, announced and realized—“plastic reading.” For Derrida, though, what appears at the center of the practice of deconstruction is not the “trans-formation” of the philosophical system but its “deferment”—dis-location, dis-adherence, post-ponement—capable of bringing “elsewhere”/*ailleurs* all instances of vital affirmation and their surviving ghosts. Without intending any “before” or “after” the political engagement of deconstruction, the legacy left by Derrida becomes a “pro-gram” produced while practicing the survival of writing, along the axis of its resistance, in the historical shadow of its *survie*.

I here try to read “plastically” the interview “Paper or Me” that Derrida gave *Les Cahiers de Médiologie* (1997) by untying some of its nuclei of attention in their impossible relevance to Malabou’s plasticity.¹¹ For Derrida, time is now and the future cannot be anticipated because calculation would negate its promise and, consequently, its “advent” or “event.”¹² “Now,” beyond any plastic progress of the *substance-subject*, what we are witnessing is a “seismic earthquake” of the very system of “subjectedness” carried out by writing itself. In its advanced technological outcome, the “force of law” of writing continues to provoke, in its contemporary “withdrawal,” some important effects and affects (Derrida speaks of “symptoms”). For example—and “exemplarity” is here

the question—the authoritarian incorporation of the “paper principle” is causing global discrimination toward people who do not comply with its parameters of identification, the ones who do not possess the “base” of any certification on “paper”: the “*sans-papiers*.” Today this displaced community emerges on the “scene” (here the word is not metaphorical but implies the real—theatrical—scene of necessary encounters and dialogues)¹³ of the political agenda, necessarily claiming “true” forms of hospitality, actions of collective engagement, and common denotations of words—in other terms, “a program of the baseless.”

“The project of plasticity” / “The program of the baseless”: I conclude my “wonder” inside the philosophies and practices of present-day critical thought with a reference to the contemporary work taking place within the “plastic” art par excellence: the “sculptures” of the transnational performer Zoulikha Bouabdellah. I let myself wonder at this work because her brief but intense productions seem to indicate a “return” to plasticity, countersigned by an insistence on some deconstructive assumptions. Beyond any “transformation” or “dis-semination” of the system, Z.B. is determined to “deviate”; in particular, her artistic attention is focused on the cultural motif of “eros.” Her experimentation is not inscribed with any dialectics of negativity and/or affirmation, death and/or life; it is vindicated as a wholly other “birth,” experienced in geographic and identity displacement and tainted by childish, infantile, and “soft” transgressions of both plasticity and deconstruction. Z.B.’s art “softens” the performative screen and, by operating an infinite “jet” of ironic inscriptions, manages to pierce the surface of her figures. It is the contradictory rendering of plastic philosophy marking the birth of “chance”: from the “holes” practiced on her *subjectile*, the twinkling of an eye might induce belief that we are “seeing coming” a new epoch, another history. In truth, the simulacrum of the traversed surface merely produces “mirages”—for example, the *Mirage*, the title and content of one of Z.B.’s last performances: of the ongoing Arab revolutions. Here the Hegelian sentence “God is dead,” Malabou’s conviction that “writing is dead,” and the Derridean resistance of their cinders recall another death: “Marx is dead.” Z.B.’s art keeps questioning the veracity of “Marx is dead”; her reply is that only the future-to-come will respond to the “dis-order” of history, without expectation or calculation, affirming life in the next collective actions and resting open to the promises of alterity, “incalculable” and “ungraspable” beyond any plastic “project” or deconstructive “program” . . .

... if God is dead, is it an accident? Is he dead by accident? If by accident, would he have seen it, and seen it coming—or not? Would or could he have seen it come in this sense (foresight) or in this other sense (unexpectedness) of the plasticity inherent to the expression "to see (what is) coming"? If this accident becomes essential, the expression "to see (what is) coming" would be the future anterior of some sort of providence or theodicy . . . : no more explosive surprise, no more letting come, farewell to the future! For the future to have a future—and becoming God himself remains still to come—should not his death, if it has ever taken place, be *purely* accidental? Absolutely unpredictable and never reappropriable, never re-essentializable, not even by some endless work of mourning, not even, above all, by God himself? A god who would have, without ever seeing it come, let an infinite bomb explode in his hands, a god dead by some hopeless accident, hopeless of any salvation or redemption, without essentializing *sublation*, without any work of mourning and without any possible return or refund, would that be the condition of a future, if there must be such a thing called the future? The very condition for something to come, even another God, an absolute other God?¹⁴

Catherine Malabou appears in the milieu of contemporary philosophy with a "project" to realize: the rethinking, the thinking anew, or the thinking *otherwise* of the Hegelian system. The emphasis, the energy, the "jet" of her determination is itself systematic and precise, strategic and schematic: Malabou vindicates the marginal element of "plasticity" in Hegelian philosophy, translating it as the comprehensive element of the whole, able to produce a different comprehension of—the necessary return to—Hegel in the present and for the projection of his system into the future. Plasticity is actually cited by Hegel as that character of Greek sculpture that emerges in the "forward march of spirit" when Man gives himself a face, supported by the work of "habit" liberating him from the structural pathology of his "inside," his self-feeling and (his)torical self-determination. For Malabou, "plasticity" becomes the fluidification of dialectics, a necessary force that establishes the dynamism by which Man interacts with the negativity that is himself, in his constitutive encounter with the "alterity" that is in the world and that reflects itself in Man's self-feeling, the structure that "anticipates" heterogeneity and that knows how to transform itself—dialectically, plastically—into a

force of advancement, the progress of history, the “jet” toward the new conditions of existence. For Hegel, this dialectical achievement marks the final acquisition of the speculative; for Malabou, it means *voir venir* plasticity as the future in/of Hegel and for the future in general.¹⁵

“Negativity programmes substance.”¹⁶ At the center of Hegelian thought and, conversely, in the philosophy of Malabou, there is a specific interest: the passage, the elevation of the *substance*-subject to the *substance-subject*, the coming out from vital organicity in its progressive movement toward philosophical speculation, passing through teleological modernity, and concentrating on the “negativity” in the human (and the vegetal and animal) kingdom.¹⁷ Initially, negativity constitutes the incapability of Man to erect himself as the example of the species, due to an internal “alienation” that can verge on idiotic pathology (the concentration on one’s own incapability) or on madness, the mental illness or the heterogeneous presence assumed as an incurable “split” in subjectivity. In the historical origin of this process, the Greek moment, the remedy to such alienation, is provided by “habit,” the appropriation of one’s self, that adapts, exercises, practices continuity and change, producing the adaptability, the reproducibility, and the connivance of Man with his own species. Man feels negativity, alienation, and heterogeneity “within” him and, by fluidizing, plastifying, acquiring the habit to the new conditions of existence, knows how to project himself in his historical progress, in the overcoming or *relève* of his own structure of temporalization. Subjectivity anticipates alterity, and by “possessing” and “appropriating” it—if the etymological meaning of “habit” lies in *habere*—it sends itself in advance of time, in “excess” over time, towards the future: “the same project: how to characterize the subject as a structure of anticipation, and, by the same token, a structure of temporalization” (130).

The strength of the “negative,” however, is not arrested here. Malabou advances her project by noticing that “Habit murders man . . . it is also a force of death which, once the aim is achieved, puts the individual to death” (76). The plastic thrust of Man towards the new era, his project after his death: it is the second and central “step” by which we move from the Greek moment to modernity. “God is dead” here marks the scandal of reason in establishing the advancement, the evolution, and the progress of the “project” of subjectivity. God divides himself in the triad of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; God “incarnates” in Christ, accepting the negativity inside him; he then sacrifices himself on the

cross, to finally resurrect in the Spirit. This passage is the apotheosis of plasticity: God assumes to himself the pain and suffering of the human, plastifying himself in Man; from Man he receives the form, giving it to Christ, who in his turn incarnates human destiny in a "representation" that puts "at a distance" the assumption of negativity, death, and sacrifice. The evil that determines God's sacrificial death turns into the motif of his resurrection. If God represents himself in Christ, Christ is then produced by kenosis (the emptying out of God's divine attributes, his absolute spoliation, his assumption of the "without" of divine traits, which will plastically resolve into his resurrection) and, even more strategically, in the "Incorporation," the "Eucharistic," as the final assimilation of God by the believers (who then become God himself) and by the community of cult, which knows how to appropriate God's death and, in so doing, projects itself towards the advent of a new history.

It is now time for the third "step" of the "forward march of the spirit," the one it accomplishes in traversing, fluidifying, and appropriating its limits and its own negativity. If initially the accidental becomes essential and if in a second moment the essential becomes accidental, now, on the stage of human progress, the *substance-subject* opens to the Speculative. By constituting the definitive *relève* of the past and the present, the systemic automatism, which can do "without" identity, difference, and heterogeneity, announces its sheer and pure future: the transcendental imagination, Absolute Knowledge, the end of history, and the coming of the new epoch. By taking place as the synthesis of the Greek moment and the modern moment, it establishes the new era of plasticity. In its absolute form, the form of the system, the completion of the subject's self-determination now becomes the self-thinking idea, the absolute freedom of thinking-for-itself: "I think" gets established in the *eidos*, freed from all attachment or alienation, finally capable of self-feeling, self-determining, self-causing, self-distributing, self-regulating. In this last passage, the project of plasticity reaches its "resting place" (of the Spirit): the event of the abandonment of the "I" of all its internal fracturations in order to place itself in the speculative automatism. The Hegelian scheme is in place (and time); for Malabou, it functions as the "outline" of her own project in favor of plasticity: the production of the discursive conditions for the advent of Absolute Knowledge and the emergence of the Philosopher, who can finally form his own idiom, the formal expression of the Spirit, the discipline of "plastic" reading that gives and receives form by deforming, exploding, reforming, and

transforming philosophical thinking along the line of its absolute continuity and change. . . .

Malabou's discourse is not abstract or metaphorical. The energy she assumes from the thought of Hegel, *from the future in/of Hegel and for the future in general*; the "outline" or "overarching structure" of his system turns, precisely, historically, plastically, into Malabou's project of her plastic writing.¹⁸ After *The Future of Hegel*, the author starts the mirroring of what she has discovered (in fact, it was already there, like a "purloined letter") in the German philosopher into a series of passages, "steps," or "trials"—leading to a closure, a circular composition, the final *relève*—that are foundational of her philosophical elaboration.¹⁹ The following text, *Le change Heidegger. Du fantastique en philosophie* (2004), plasticizes the Heideggerian thought of imagination into plastic "metamorphosis." In *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction* (2010), she vindicates the "end" or "death" of the grapheme as the end of an epoch which "sees coming" the emergence of plasticity as the historical future of thought. In *Que faire de notre cerveau?* (2004), in an important move toward neurosciences, Malabou acquires the "representability" of the cerebral synapsis in order to *voir venir* the plastic liberation of the brain itself. In *Les nouveaux blessés: De Freud à la neurologie, penser les traumatismes contemporains* (2007), the kenosis of Hegelian inspiration finds its exemplary form in the Alzheimer patient, in total emptiness, the absolute loss of memory, the traumatic, painful, and "human too human" indifference to the world. In "The Eternal Return and the Phantom of Difference" (2010), Malabou plastically reads the intervention of Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida on the "eternal return" in Nietzsche against any principle of difference, *seeing coming* the philosophical future in the task of thinking "without" identity and "without" difference.

But what would a reading of Nietzsche give that would refuse to turn difference into its guiding thread? With this question I end this text, leaving open the possibility of a new understanding of the eternal return—that is to say also, of life—that would substitute synthesis for difference and the equally unsettling figure of the *clone* for that of the phantom. I thus state very simply, in the form of an announcement, the possibility of reading the doctrine of *the eternal return as a thought of ontological cloning*. And what if, in the end, everything were to redouble, if all the ontological knots were to reduplicate, without being different but without returning to the same either? What if the philosophical chal-

lence of our epoch, prefigured by Nietzsche, was precisely to come to think without identity and without difference?²⁰

It is, however, in *Sois mon corps* (2010), the dialogue with Judith Butler on Hegel's "Domination and Servitude," that Malabou finally turns to the absolute, pure, and simple vindication of the philosophical system, claiming the Hegelian "absolute detachment": "Plasticity acquires its definitive meaning . . . The form of 'self' explodes . . . This explosive detachment is presented by Hegel as an 'Aufheben,' an 'abandon.' This 'Aufheben' is not exactly a *relève* but a free abandon."²¹

"WRITING IS DEAD": THE "PROJECT OF THE BASELESS"

I have learned words,
They have taught me things.
In my turn I teach them a new way to act
—Antonin Artaud

The Hegelian scheme—its *betwixt* and *between*—"anticipates" and "advances" plastic thought; Malabou's project vindicates it in the emergence of its sheer automatism by drawing the "outline" of a new philosophy corresponding to a new epoch, which is in fact the same epoch but rethought, to be thought *otherwise*. Still, the "wonder" would question precisely what happens if the (Hegelian) system—the *substance-subject*, the order of history that produces it, the negativity that inhabits it, the plastic mourning that incorporates it, and the *relève* that resolves it—comes to be exposed to a series of "seismic shake-ups" that no plastic structure might ever contain, absorb, or return to itself? Here, the "outline" of a reply can be provided by the "interview" "Paper or Me" that Jacques Derrida gave *Les Cahiers de la Médiologie* (1997), in an issue devoted to *pouvoirs du papier*, where he offers a radical "other" perspective in the face of plasticity.²² Positioning his reasoning neither in the subject's "anticipation" nor in the "excess" of time over time, Derrida concentrates on "a period of history of a technology and in the history of humanity" where critical attention is on today's specific condition of the *substance-subject* par excellence: the contemporary destinies of "paper," the support, the *being-beneath*, "the submission or subjectedness of subjectivity in general" (42–43).

This too has a history: "a technological or material history," "a symbolic history of projections and interpretations, a history tangled up

with the invention of the human body and of hominization." This history, however, is not tainted with negativity, death, or dusk; the energy of a constant "affirmation" supports it, affirming not the actual decline or *demise* of paper but its resisting *resistance*. Today, by being exposed to a series of "telluric earthquakes," paper is not dying in order to transform itself into something else, even in its "plastic" otherness, but it survives in its "getting small," "shrinking," "reduction," or "withdrawal"—if we are witnessing the announcement of its "loss" or "end," the *substance-subject* of paper continues to hold us, now and for a stretch of incalculable time, through every sense and every fantasy, "with the interest, investment and economy it will continue to mobilize for a long time to come" (42): "Paper is the support not only for marks but for a complex 'operation'—spatial and temporal; visible, tangible, and often sonorous; active but also passive (something other than an 'operation' then, the becoming-opus or the archive of operative work) . . ." (42). The survival operation of paper constitutes the radical deconstruction of all the dialectical efforts that still labor in trying to control paper's dynamism, producing the dominant conventions that still want to appropriate the historical economy of the backing of the paper's surface. Always and already exposed to its unstable hierarchy ("fine paper" can easily be delivered to abasement; its immaculate virginity, together with its sacred, safe, and indemnified value, can always verge on discredit; its valorization turns into depreciation), paper is what allows the disseminating trace to appear on the "stage" of the deconstruction of dialectics and plastic mourning. On this stage paper, beneath its surface, holds a volume in reserve, a series of folds, the enigmatic drawings of infinite labyrinths. Its reserve is provided by the body that experiences its inscription on the *subjectile*: the hands, the eyes, the voice, the ears, the traces inscribed in the paper's withdrawal. They are the ones that carry out the breaking of all typographical habits (simultaneity, synopsis, and synchrony) and the disturbance of the idea of a flat, transparent, and reflective surface by failing it, occupying it, reinventing its formatting devices, its "unilinear" continuum and "monorhythmical" line. Instead of habit, appropriation, and possession, these bodily traces affirm their work of "disadherence," the opening up of "hollows," "gaps," and "holes" on the withering support of paper, through which the task of ethical responsibility is to insist on reading the incalculability, dissemination, *restance*, and *retrait* of its "order":

Thus the order of the page, even as a bare survival, will prolong the afterlife of paper—far beyond its disappearance or its withdrawal.

I always prefer to say its withdrawal (*retrait*) since this word can mark the limit of a structural or even structuring, modelling hegemony, without that implying a death of paper, only a *reduction*. (46)

The “reduction” of paper—without end or death, “an endless murmur, the underlying existence, the bottomless depth”²³—signifies a specific double bind: if paper remains a constraint, it will continue to provoke the permanent desire of transgressing it; at the same time, the technological mutation or reduction experienced by paper does not liberate the strategy of a plastic reading but, instead, provokes a retrospective interpretation, the anterior future of the past resources of paper itself. In this case, there will be no kenosis, the emptying out or the “without” of paper’s graphospheric traits, but rather the interrogation of the superimpositions, overimprintings, overwritings, and overinterpretations of the remains of paper; the concepts and fantasies, the projections, cathexes, and desires inscribed on its *beneath*; the inhibitions, the symptoms and the anxiety, the abandon and the arrest, sedimented on its material surface.²⁴ What is important to note is that this incalculable and infinite interrogation is necessarily governed by a deconstructive anamnesis, which will never produce any *relève*, *dénouement*, or untying of a new posthistorical era but will keep insisting on the “remains” of the present time:

Another epoch, then: but isn’t an *epoch* always the suspension of prohibition, an organization of withdrawal or retention? This new epoch, this other reduction, would also correspond to an original displacement, already, of the body in displacement—to what some might perhaps be quick to call another body, even another unconscious . . . the eroticization of fingers, feet, hands, and legs. While it is tied to the “paper” system (just a few centuries, a second in regard to the history of humanity), this furtive eroticization also belongs to the very long time of some process of hominization. Do tele-sex or internet sex alter anything in this? A program with no base. A program of the baseless. (54–55)

The “program of the baseless” is, for Derrida, not only a hint towards a future-to-come; it is a task urged by the present state of things. By turning the metaphoric progress of the *substance-subject* into its materiality,

the philosopher again constructs the difference of his philosophy from the Hegelian scheme in a very specific way. If in Hegel, as read by Malabou, "God is dead" in order to be sublated in the arrival of the Speculative, which marks its assimilation, digestion, and incorporation by his community of cult, then in "Paper or Me" Derrida focuses on "Incorporation" as a real "force of law" of the subject of the paper-substance. If paper is withdrawing—at a scandalous speed—then the modes of its appropriation are not disappearing; on the contrary, they are becoming "spectral," virtualizing, fantasizing, undergoing a process of abstraction that make them more operative because they've become "incorporated schemata," ghost members, supplements of a structuring prosthesis. If paper once protected subjectivity, providing the "resting place" of the self's appropriation, the certification of the construction and institution of its identity by means of the autograph, the signature, the identity document, then the shrinking of paper, its substitution by electronic supports, cards, and numeral codes, provokes a series of anxieties due to which "a certain legitimating authority of paper still remains intact" (57). This authority does not represent the responsibility of the Philosopher in view of the advent of the "Speculative"; it presents the urgent move to "the essence of politics and its link with the culture of paper" (61). It is what moves public attention, for example, to the question of the *sans-papiers*, the community of "baseless people" or undocumented immigrants who struggle to get identity papers throughout the worlds of their exiles or migrations. In truth, this "well-determined category of people subjected to an un-admissible discrimination" announces a "program" to the public space: the urgency of a "new legal imminent age," a "new economy," a "new international and national law," and a "new politics." It is, indeed, a "common" program, because the incorporation of paper, turned into its force of law," affects the *sans-papiers* and, at the same time, humanity in its whole, producing the awareness that "we are all baseless people": "there are processes of technological transition at work: the recording of marks of identification and signature is computerized. Computerized but, as we were saying, via the inherited norms of paper that continue to haunt electronic media. It is computerized for citizens and their citizen status (consider what happens at passport controls), but it can also be computerized for the physical-genetic identification of any individual in general (digital photography and genetic imprints). In this, we are all, already, paperless people" (61).²⁵

One of the most striking sculptors involved is Giuseppe Penone, whose work is devoted to forming the trace, as if the trace were the raw material of an *ultrametaphysical development of the concept of form* and hence an *ultrametaphysical development of the understanding of sculpture*: "a trace formed by the images I have on hand."

—Catherine Malabou

Do you know Richard Long's sculptures? He lays down the archive, so to speak, of certain trajectories, often with stones or even with dried mud that draws a circle in a landscape literally sculptured by the artist's memory—and what rests of the *oeuvre-in-progress* is then exposed, the journey makes *oeuvre*.

—Jacques Derrida, referring to Long's "A Walk of Ten Days in High Sierra California 1995," "Asia Circle Stones," "Gobi Desert Circle," and "White Mud Circle"

"God is dead" and paper is dying: what will take place in the future?²⁶ Derrida closes the "outline" of his interview with an interrogation and a chance of reply:

Writing, literature, even philosophy . . . would they survive beyond paper? Survive beyond a world dominated by paper? Survive the time of paper? These inexhaustible questions . . . would stay that way, impossible to deal with, as theoretical questions, on a horizon of knowledge—on a horizon, quite simply.

The response will come from what future decisions and events, from what the writing of a future that cannot be anticipated, will make of it, from what it will do for literature and for philosophy, from what it will do to them. (64)

Let me finish the "outline" of my own (plastic?) reading with some of the "decisions," "events," and "actions" that belong to contemporary plasticity par excellence: the sculptures animating the performance art of Zoulikha Bouabdellah, the artist who, in her brief but intense career, has worked to translate the philosophical reading of plastic "subjectivity" and the political dissemination of the "subjectedness" of paper into the investigation of the "subject" of plasticity in art, its communicative potentiality when inscribed on the screen of her performances. In her artistic position, Z.B. is not aiming at "trans-forming" the Hegelian system nor at "de-constructing" the "force of law" of the graphosphere; she wants

to “de-viate” a specific motif of today’s cultural system, that is, the rigid codification of eros, especially for women in the Muslim world. She wants to “plastify” this cultural motif by transgressing it in a “soft” fashion: “Deviation for deviation, I proceed by transgressing things in a noninvasive or judgmental way. I push limits in accordance with a positive rhythm by going from one element to another, from one structure to another, from one shape or from one concept to another. . . . Despite the paradox, my transgression actually aims to reconnect links. A transgressive dynamics that reflects the world’s biological and historical mutations or a connection between beliefs and values, subjects, symbols, stereotypes, genres and sexes.”²⁷

Soft Transgression is the title of the text that “outlines” the force of Z.B.’s experiments. “Soft transgression” is also what allows the artist to “see coming” the interaction of the philosophy of plasticity with the incisive strength of deconstruction: her work seems to directly face Malabou’s assumption that “the grapheme will never pierce the figure,” giving her own interpretation of the philosopher’s conviction. By refusing to position herself either in death and “negativity” or in the “survival” mode of existence, Z.B. “receives and gives” form to her art in the instance of a new birth, her own “birth” diasporically displaced in Russia: “I imagine: she would scream her state of woman in pain in French? In Arab? Would the midwife give her advice in Russian? I have been unconsciously marked by the cultural boilings that filled the room . . . there must have surely been Ukrainian, Georgian, Lithuanian nurses.”²⁸ This birth assigns the story to her mother while designating the task of “imagination” to the artist herself. The form taken by Z.B.’s imagination is the “deviation”—*l’écart* allied to women since Scheherazade²⁹—of the limits of representation. In her imaginative practice, formal transversality is what realizes the link *betwixt/between* elements, structures, concepts, beliefs, values, symbols, genders, and sexes: “. . . the plasticity of form involved in its process of formation.”³⁰

How can Z.B. establish such a “schema”? What “tactic” will she adopt? According to a plastic strategy, after her “different” birth, Z.B. wants to imagine a wholly other birth of art, an *otherwise* imagination of artistic birth, according to an obstetrics performed by a “forceps” that, beyond all dialectics of life and death, nature and culture, anticipation and excess, will practice a new act and a new “sense” (*forcenner* also means *hors sens*, to be gifted with “another” sense).³¹ Since 2002, in her residencies in South Africa, in America, in Palestine, in Syria, the “jet” of her

creations has been un/measuring itself against/with all possible matters, genders, and genres. Her projects include installations, anecdotes in the shape of brief videos and photographs, sheets of paper (in *Chéri*, 365 drawings are accompanied by written sentences in red lacquer), ink and acrylic, wood, transparent Plexiglas, gelled polyester, loudspeakers, nets (*Carre blanc sur fond noir*, 2006), even modified *couscoussières* that the artist entitles *Moresque, Marranos* (2006).³² In her performances, installations, and single pieces, she uses clay and gold leaf (*Autoportrait ou la pucelle*, 2008); lacquer iron, lacquer wood, resin, dust, neon lights, paillettes, lamps, mannequin busts, veils, bras, embroideries on velvet. Her works ex-scribe in triptychs or dioramas; they choose the color red, the blue monochrome, the white; they involve poetry, music, and cinema. These materials constitute the “outline” of Z.B.’s “subject” and “subjected” surface, the artistic matrix where to inscribe the *forcenned* “jet” of her writing (made, literally, of letters and words), softly transgressing.

To reconnect figurative representation and nonrepresentative representation raises the question of figuration and its opposite, the status of images, such as videographic images, and their intrinsic connection to light. It also raises the question of an “image’s opposite—and therefore light’s opposite—black.”³³

In her first *Écran* (the “screen” defined by Malabou as the “representation-stereotype or philosophical resistance to neuroscience and vice versa”),³⁴ Z.B.’s “deviation” takes place with/in a written gesture established on the threshold of light and darkness.³⁵ A woman, illuminated by the light that comes from a television showing the face of a man, covers the screen from high to low, her hand using a plastic substance. While the television light gets darker, the light allowing the shooting extinguishes; the scene stops existing when the whole screen is covered up. White and black, light and darkness, constitute the full and the emptied *écran*: the image, in order to reveal itself, needs light (solar, electric, internal, external), indissociable from it; its dialectical pair is darkness, marking the absence of images in the void. Darkness is what constitutes the bottom from where the image is born. It is within the richness of this black that the image-to-come exists, if only virtually. For Z.B. the “moving image” is the link between the opposites of light and darkness, where the act of transgression is realized by the woman’s hand performing a “caress” that recalls the ancient gesture of *Amadou*, the “softening” of the screen’s surface: “this substance whose Provençal

name designates the amorous behaviour of the *amador*, is used to rub and caress. Rubbing and caressing in order to enflame is done with the help of a colored substance known for its facility to set fire. To soften with *amadou*: to appease, domesticate, flatten, tame the other, seduce or win over the enemy by caressing, but also to burn, inflame, set fire to him . . . leave holes of fire in the page. Those were *working*.³⁶ The workings of plasticity and Z.B.'s own "soft" transgression are producing their creative actions.

In her next work, *Silence*, the artist stages another deviation—one that "propagates"³⁷—of the cultural motif of eros by presenting a praying carpet (in fact, many carpets!) with burnt "holes" inside which golden high-heeled shoes inscribe the female "hosts," the parasites, incubi and succubi of a religion that expels women's desire. If the matter of the screen's surface has been fluidized, softened, and plasticized, it now needs to be "traversed":

To probe: the probing element works by penetrating . . . perforating the surface and passing through to the other side—"I could probe" . . . means that: I could make the most intimate of moves, by transgressing a limit . . . a *mine* . . . I could probe to find out, to discover the truth under the subjectile, behind the veil or the screen . . . try to learn, to decipher the sign or the symptom of a truth . . . by refusing or exposing the inertia of a sick body is to prepare oneself to treat them for their good, starting with their own truth.

To cut: . . . with scalpels, scissors, shears, knives, needle tips, or feathers: cut, notch, diminution, castration. But to cut is also to regenerate, to strengthen by lopping off everything restraining the growth, to prune, thin, cut back; rejuvenate . . . in short, to save, physically or symbolically . . .

To scrape: . . . I could irritate the surface . . . In scraping I risk wounding . . . But in scraping I purify, I appease, I efface what is written to write again . . . accede to the other surface as it is hidden, asphyxiated, interred under the deposit.

To file: "I could . . . file," *break into* the figure . . . according to the obliqueness of the metal teeth, molar against millstones . . . but the aggression . . . is destined to polish, make delicate, adjust, inform, beautify . . .

To sew: I could . . . sew . . . make holes in the skin of the figure, but I can sew, and even suture and scar, in order to close the wound that I open in sewing . . .

To unsew: "I could . . . unsew," unmake, do the preceding operation in reverse, and it was already the reverse of itself. The link itself, like the link between these two operations that consists precisely in a certain treatment of linking and unlinking, the obligation of this ligature is a *double bind*, a double conjuncture. . . .

To shred: . . . cut into pieces, into tatters or shreds, slash, hack, wound, mutilate the body with a cutting instrument . . . *Shredded* linen also names the old cloth (textile is always along with paper, the best paradigm of the subjectile) from which threads are taken to make bandages, generally in wars. The act of war would be perhaps purely aggressive and devoid of any repairing counterpath without this virtual allusion to the act of bandaging . . .

To stitch: . . . never to cease *covering with scars* . . . the body . . . covered with traces, the scars of blows and wounds. But to cover with scars may mean at the same time to multiply the bows and wounds and the gestures of reparation, sutures, and bandages, which belong to the moment of scarring. Surgery does both, successively or simultaneously.³⁸

Z.B.'s plastic and/or deconstructive action "pierces" the surface by "probing, cutting, scraping, filing, sewing and unsewing, shredding and stitching" the textile of the carpet; in the emptied hole of its surface, she inscribes the material fetish of female jouissance, the written marks of women's play, desire, and resistance. Is this the instance when, "inside-outside" sense, as a "soft" transgression, Z.B.'s perforating "jet" might allow one to perceive the other side of another epoch—"to see oneself on the other side of the target, already on the other side, and from the other side of the wall that I also am. I traverse the membrane, and my own skin?"³⁹ In truth, in envisioning the "traversal" of time, identity, and body, what matters is that the creative journey, its thrust and "jet," is always and already offering a "chance" to "chance": "But I do not traverse, or in doing so, I keep a trace of a traversal, even if the trace is in its turn subjected or promised to the trajectory that it recalls, which in truth it calls. . . . This *arrest* of the journey makes a work. I understand the arrest as the

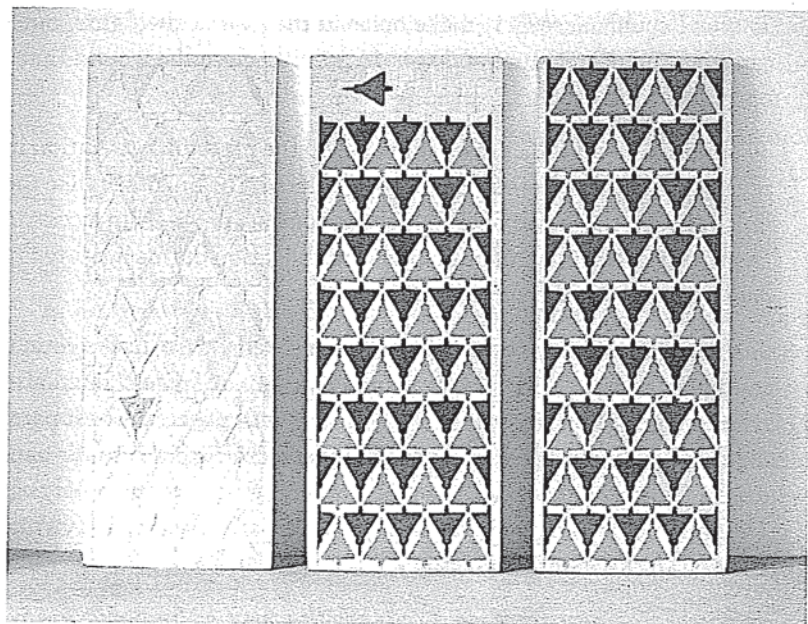


Figure 7.1. Zoulikha Bouabdellah, *Is your love darling just a mirage?*, 2011. Zellige ceramics, 100 × 120 cm. Ed. 2/3. Courtesy Sabrina Amrani Gallery and the artist.

sentence that makes the law, and as the interruption of thrust, the tonic immobilization of a would-be-lancer. Both giving birth to chance.”⁴⁰

Zoulikha’s jet “arrests” on her last work, *Mirage*, an installation that shows her artistic perspective on the events taking place in North Africa, the Arab “revolutions”: “In a few months, history has changed its side. It is now being written in the south, across the Mediterranean, where after Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, civil war in Libya and the rising of Syrian people, the spreading revolution has arrived to Bahrain and Yemen. And while Morocco launches unprecedented political reforms, Algeria is committed to strengthening the democratic process. How will all this end up? No one can say with certainty. . . .”⁴¹ To celebrate the structural “uncertainty” of the “revolution,” Zoulikha produces the picture of the Mirage aircraft of Gadhafi’s air force, shot down in flight by the rebel forces, with its beak pointing toward the Lebanese soil (see Figure 7.1).

The image resounds with Z.B.’s question: “Will the image inspire the continuation of the story or, agitated as a broken promise, will it remain

in the state of mirage?"⁴² *Mirage* takes the form of a geometric composition, inspired by a specific idiomatic repertoire: like the concepts underlining the tradition of Arabic tiles, the "unattainable" is inscribed inside a visual experience that exceeds contemplation in order to provoke interpretation, offering its "future" to *l'à-venir* of history. For Zoulikha, the forms of *Mirage*, by combining rhythmic movements that the eye cannot see accurately, are the "shapes that attract the brain with their lack of certainty that characterizes each revolutionary episode . . ." ⁴³ Is it still necessary to "comprehend" the (mirage of) revolution on the edge of its "plastic reading" and/or the "disseminative break" of its surface? In truth, art will have already produced her "inedited" events calling for another responsibility that, without certainty on the forms of their "resolutions," in the very caesura or derangement of the order of time, will promise the coming of the other. If the "revolution" breaks with subjectivity, history, and knowledge, art will have always already plasticized and deconstructed its "representation," offering its absolute hospitality—without "identity" and in "radical difference"—to *l'à-venir*, where the "unknown" can only be "wondered" at. "The inedited waits for us, there, we repeat, where we don't know any longer what waits for us . . ." ⁴⁴

NOTES

1. Derrida, "Time for Farewells," xl. This preface, first published as Derrida, "Le temps des adieux," appeared in Italian as a single text entitled *Il tempo degli addii*. In "go wonder . . .," the translation proposed by Joseph D. Cohen for the Derridean "*allez savoir*," there is an echo of the expression "*voir venir*" that Malabou invents for "the coming of plasticity." In my reading, "go wonder" associates with Derrida, "Quelqu'un s'avance et dit" (in Derrida, Guillaume, and Vincent, *Marx en jeu*, dedicated to the play *Karl Marx*, in *Théâtre inédit*, by Jeanne-Pierre Vincent), on the "scene" of politics and to his "faire arriver quelque chose" ("Marx, c'est quelqu'un," 21) to speculative "dialectics." For the question of "translation" in Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk*, cf. Martinon, *On Futurity*.

2. In *Plasticity at the Dusk*, Malabou remarks that Derrida's "Time for Farewells" ("a very subtle and generous response to my book") "clearly presents his philosophical resistance to plasticity," 74.

3. See Butler, *Psychic Life*.

4. Malabou and Derrida, *La contre-allée*; Malabou, *Counterpath*.

5. See esp. Derrida, "Marx & Sons," where, in replying to Negri, "Specter's Smile," Derrida wonders why, in the aftermath of deconstruction, what can

be labeled “postdeconstruction,” “ontology” is to come back on the scene of a future philosophy, providing “restoration of order”: “I agree, I agree about everything with the exception of one word, ‘ontology’; why do you cling to that word? Why do you want to put forward a new ontology, after having duly noted the transformation that renders the Marxist paradigm of ontology obsolete? Why do you want to re-ontologize at all costs, at the risk of restoring everything to order, to the grand order, but to order?,” 257.

6. Derrida, *Learning to Live Finally*.

7. Derrida, “Marx & Sons.” “First of all, I believe, and have often emphatically stated, that deconstruction, which is affirmative right down to this conception of the messianic without messianism, is anything but a negative movement of nostalgia and melancholy . . . it is true that this has not prevented me from reflecting, just as insistently, on the work of mourning . . . without therefore relinquishing a certain gaiety of affirmative thinking,” 259–61. See also Derrida, “Restricted to General Economy,” devoted to the “laughter” (poetry, ecstasy) of George Bataille in the face of Hegel’s “Absolute Knowledge.”

8. For plasticity as “plasticage,” see Malabou, *Plasticité*. In reference to the “difference” of plasticity from capitalistic “flexibility,” Proctor, “Neuronal Ideologies,” reads Catherine Malabou, together with Žižek, *Parallax View*, by affirming, “Contemporary capitalism might be characterized as a network society in which power is distributed across numerous nodes, but countering this model by advocating atomization, separation and extrication is surely not a viable political strategy. The process of healing need not equate to a forced reintegration into the existing status quo, but through the process of forging new connections, as the synapses are capable of doing, new languages and subjectivities may emerge that challenge the dominant political structures, creating alternative collective networks rather than leaving individuals stranded in hopeless isolation . . . Although her insistence on the potential explosivity of plasticity might differentiate it from flexibility, this annihilation of form results in profound alienation,” 9, 10.

9. Cf. Malabou, “Eternal Return,” 29.

10. The concept of *relève* plays a central role in setting the difference between plasticity and deconstruction: Malabou, *Plasticité*, refers to the translation, proposed by Derrida, of the Hegelian *Aufhebung* into *relève*—“*maître du processus dialectique, qui signifie à la fois suppression et conservation*” (10); but according to Derrida, from “Restricted to General Economy,” “The notion of *Aufhebung* . . . signifies the *busy*ing of a discourse losing its breath as it appropriates all negativity for itself, as it works the ‘putting at stake’ into an *investment*, as it *amortizes* absolute expenditure,” 257.

11. Derrida, “Paper or Me.” For the work of the “im-possibility” in deconstruction, I refer to the special issue of *darkmatter* (8, 2012) devoted to “Impossible Derrida: Works of Invention.”

12. The "guarantee" or "calculation" of the future is an undercurrent trait of the debate between Malabou and Derrida. In "Time for Farewells," Derrida thinks that, in interpreting the notion of future in Hegel, Malabou moves "from one farewell to the other. There is always more than a farewell, more than one adieu, in the farewell or the adieu; one renounces the future, the other hopes or promises, but the more it is assured or given (as the salutation inherent to salvation), the more the promise becomes a calculation, that is the more it is lost—as future," xl.

13. Derrida, "Marx, c'est quelqu'un," interprets Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: the play within the play (in dramatic terms and as *jeu*), in folding upon itself, brings the theatrical scene "outside" [*au dehors*] itself, towards the politics of our times; with this scene the French-Algerian philosopher associates, in its "essence," the ethical responsibility against all discriminatory acts of the other.

14. Derrida, "Time for Farewells," xlvii.

15. The question of "dialectic" is often emphasized by recent critics of Malabou. Patricia Pisters, "Plasticity and the Neuro-Image," who is appreciative of Malabou's work, notes: "Considering this trajectory of the concept of plasticity and its implication for the concept of difference, it seems to me that the consequence has to be that also dialectics is exploding. Yet, at other moments in Malabou's texts there remains a strong resistance to letting go of dialectics. In any case, one can wonder if difference as internal, immanent difference, and as salamander-like plasticity, is still a dialectical one." Galloway, "Catherine Malabou," who confesses his lack of "comprehension" of some plastic readings—"Like her Heidegger, I will admit that Malabou's Deleuze is not a Deleuze that I recognize" (10)—wonders ". . . what ideology proposes that everything should and must be mixed, that everything should be profaned? Plasticity to be sure, but is it more than that?" (11). He ultimately finds that "the thing most associated with change is the thing that does not change" (3).

16. Malabou, *Future of Hegel*, 55.

17. Esp. "Habit and Organic Life" and "The Proper of Man in Question" in Malabou, *Future of Hegel*, 57–74. In "Time for Farewells," Derrida remarks that "a profound thought or conception of animal life animates this entire book. It almost gives it its breath," xvii.

18. I mainly refer to Malabou, *Heidegger Change; Plasticity at the Dusk; New Wounded*; and "Eternal Return"; and Butler and Malabou, *Sois mon corps*.

19. For a different interpretation of the "trial," see Ronell, *Test Drive*.

20. Malabou, "Eternal Return," 28.

21. Butler and Malabou, *Sois mon corps*, 53. See, in "closed" circularity, the interpretation of Derrida, "Time for Farewells," of the question of the "abandonation" of time in Malabou's rethinking of Hegel. On a different critical interest, "In body if not in spirit: Malabou and Butler on Hegel" by Unemployed Negativity, stresses that the discussion on the "body" by Malabou and Butler

brings the elements of “death, work, and fear” back on the scene of public debate; this “return,” associated with what Negri describes as a “post-humanist anthropology,” “is both the challenge and the limit of their project: in some sense a posthumanist interpretation of “Domination and Servitude” is nearly impossible because it is precisely placing this section, with its drama of death, work, and desire, at the center of Hegel’s thought that constitutes the humanist reading.” http://www.unemployednegativity.com/2011/01/in-body-if-not-in-spirit-butler_and_6182.html.

22. Derrida, “Paper or Me.” For the genre of the “interview,” its preestablished context, and the “dialogue” it stages, see Derrida, *Points*.

23. See Saghafi, “Derrida.”

24. In Derrida’s oeuvre, his impossible “trans-actions” were originally and extraordinary inscribed on the Hegelian page—see Derrida, *Glas* (1974). For the dialogue that deconstruction itself establishes with contemporary science, Derrida’s “trans-actions” inform the “intra-actions” as elaborated by physician Karen Barad, “Quantum Entanglements.”

25. For an “unmetaphorical” outcome of the “program of the baseless,” it is interesting to note that, in the year of the quoted interview, Derrida gave the speech “Manquement du droit” at the Théâtre des Amandiers in Nanterre, during the event organized in support of Parisian “*sans-papiers*.” Derrida began his talk by saluting the chance of the “gathering,” the opening of the theatre to its political vocation, affirming that its “scene” can become the “just” habitat where, “without representation and without demagogy,” it is possible to give hospitality to the chance of “word” of the other; in this case, the poetry, songs, and analysis of the ones who, having lived in France for many years, found themselves exposed to the French law of expulsion. The “clandestines,” the “undocumented,” the ones without the “dignity” of papers testifying their identity: Derrida knows that the “violation of justice” affects the *sans-papiers* in an unbearable way—it is “an inadmissible discrimination, a crying injustice, a repression that requires an answer in the general protest and universal fight,” 83. At the same time, this violation announces something terrifying for everybody, for all the “sans” of the world (“without” work, “without” home, “without” degree. etc.). “Le manquement à la justice” represents a universal symptom, a “global” tragedy organized by a “sad, depressing, depressed, hopeless and inducing lack of hope, power,” (86), determined to punish even the “host” who welcomes the other—“the crime of hospitality,” indeed. In this sense, for Derrida, we must fight against all its implementations at local and worldly levels, everywhere it takes place, because its “threat” concerns the freedom of everybody—the *sans-papiers* and the *non-sans-papiers*. This fight must employ all material, symbolic, financial, legal, and juridical resources; all chances of civil disobedience must resist its “evil”; all critical and political movements must “change” the law, so as to be able to reinvent a future chance of justice: “a real other justice, both intelligent and generous, which

washes the shame and the infamy of the actual laws, a politic of the stranger, a right of strangers which is not a *manquement à la justice*. We must finally have the chance of living, speaking and breathing otherwise," 91; translation mine. The publication is the transcript of Derrida's intervention, Jan. 21, 1996: <http://pharsic.blog.lemonde.fr/2010/11/09/derrida-note-sur-manquements-du-droit-a-la-justice/>. "Breathing otherwise," here associated by Derrida with justice, is taken as the emergence of the "feminine" in philosophy by Irigaray, *Forgetting of Air*. In this respect, Malabou, in Vahanian, "Conversation," 3, refers to Irigaray as "her mother philosopher," while affirming that a "female" philosophy would belong to a "constitutive outside" or an "excessive materiality" that "cannot be said to be something, otherwise it wouldn't be able to transgress ontology. It is then impossible to create or imagine what a feminine philosophical subjectivity might be. . . ." See Malabou, *Changer de différence*. The "female question" is in fact very complex, and it exceeds the limits of this chapter.

26. For Derrida, "Marx, c'est quelqu'un," 24, the sentence "God is dead" goes hand in hand with "Marx is dead" and with the necessity of "le travail of deuil en politique": "When you say 'Marx is dead,' this formula so often repeated, what do you say? . . . To say 'Marx is dead' echoes the formula 'God is dead,' it means to speak after Hegel but also after Christ and Luther, the Christ, himself, 'God is dead' and it has lasted, it lasts. Thus Marx is dead, this sentence, this slogan . . . is the symptom, the symptom of a labour of mourning in progress, with all its phenomena of melancholy, of maniac jubilation, of ventriloquism . . . What seems to me necessary today, is to transport with the necessary transformation, with the necessary translation, to transport the psychoanalytic concept of 'work of mourning,' which normally concerns the individual, the family, to transport it into politics," 25. In terms of the theatrical "scene" on which to play Marx *otherwise*, Derrida appeals to "another way of playing, of operating the *mise en oeuvre*, of making theatre. On the scene of the world, we will have to play Marx, again, to play him well, to *play otherwise*," 65; translation and emphasis mine.

27. Bouabdellah and Sans, *Soft Transgression*, 29.

28. See www.bankgalerie.com/content/pop/pagezoulikha/biozoul.php.

29. Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk*, 28–44, is devoted to Hegel, Heidegger, and Levinas on the "fantastic intersection," "visibility," "phantasia" and the "phantasma."

30. Derrida, "Time for Farewells," xiv. It is interesting to note that, in Malabou and Derrida, *La contre-alleé*, at the beginning and at the end of their common journey, one difference between Derrida and Malabou concerns interpretation of *écart*. In the discussion of the "journey" of Ulysses and his experience of *dérive* (as deviation or derivation), Malabou thinks that "Ulysses' path would therefore be a *derived drift* apart from yet toward a founding point. Deriving understood as indicator of provenance wins out over the drift that disorients,

inasmuch, precisely, as the origin itself remains immune from the drift that it renders possible: the origin does not travel. When drift as deviation happens, like some unforeseen catastrophe, it always arrives as an accident befalling an essence, and far from causing structural damage, reaffirms it rather," 5. From here, the philosopher "derives" that "Derrida ne dérive pas," 16. Derrida, in his turn, comes back to the classical text at the end of their "journey" by giving his ("poetic") vision of *écart* in connection with the question of "poetic filiation": "And the Odyssey. There is really there, in the infinite detour, another origin of the world, an impassable secret, and death on the path, the most irreducible other 'within' (not with-in, be careful, but 'within') the one who commands us through a transversal, transversified deviation: the poem of the absolute other. Because it is a question of the poem, a poem, their poem, they [his sons] know it before me, they know it all before me . . .," 260.

31. In Derrida, "Unsense the Subjectile," the philosopher quotes Heidegger in this respect: "*Wahn* belongs to Old High German and means *ohne*: without. The demented person . . . is gifted with another sense . . . *Sinnan* originally means: to travel, to stretch forwards . . . to take a direction. The Indo-European roots *sent* and *set* mean path," 70.

32. In *Aporias*, Derrida articulates his "concept-figure" of the "Marrano": ". . . Marranos that we are, Marranos in any case, whether we want to be or not, whether we know it or not, Marranos having an incalculable number of ages, hours, and years, of untimely histories, each both larger and smaller than the other, each still waiting for the other, we may incessantly be younger and older, in a last word, infinitely finished," 81. See also Goldschmit, "Cosmopolitique" and www.jacquesderrida.com.ar/comentarios/marrane.htm.

33. Bouabdellah and Sans, *Soft Transgression*, 29. Recently, in "Set Me Free," Z.B. inscribes what Isabelle van den Eynde describes as "couples of giant colourful Arabic letters cut out of aluminium sheets or formed of flashing neon hang randomly on the wall in a playful and lighthearted manner. They are deceptively simple. The elements are familiar—strings of neon twisted to form colourful letters. Yet their unconventional positioning and movement mount a remarkably visceral spectacle, with the suggestive title *Hobb* (Arabic for love) functioning as an integral part of the beguiling ensemble." <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/75806900/ZOULIKHA-BOUABDELLAH>.

34. Malabou, *What Should We Do*, 40.

35. See <http://zoulikhab.com>.

36. Derrida, "Unsense the Subjectile," 145.

37. In "Silence d'or," in Bouabdellah and Sans, *Soft Transgression*, 13, Z.B. quotes Marcel Duchamp, explaining that "silence is the best production there is, because it spreads—it propagates."

38. Derrida, "Unsense the Subjectile," 141–42.

39. Derrida, "Unsense the Subjectile," 147.

40. Derrida, "Unsense the Subjectile," 147.

41. *Islamic Arts Magazine* online, "'Mirage' by Zoulikha Bouabdellah," 2011. For the "revolution" in Malabou, a direct reference can be found in *What Should We Do*, 66, where, as she explains, the "neuronal man," as a product of scientific "revolutions," understands the absence of "revolution" in his life: "And what do we get from all these discourses, from all these descriptions of the neural man, from all these scientific revolutions, if not the absence of revolution in our lives, the absence of revolution in our selves." On his part, Derrida, *Death Penalty*, concentrates on the material "revolution" required by the international "legal systems" (see also Saghaki, "Derrida"). The "neuronal man," "death penalty," and "Arab uprisings" might provide another "outline" of a revolutionary articulation of "philosophy," "politics" and "art."

42. *Islamic Arts Magazine* online, "'Mirage' by Zoulikha Bouabdellah," 2011.

43. *Islamic Arts Magazine* online, "'Mirage' by Zoulikha Bouabdellah," 2011.

44. Derrida, "Quelqu'un s'avance et dit," in Derrida, Guillaume, and Vincent, *Marx en jeu*, 65.