

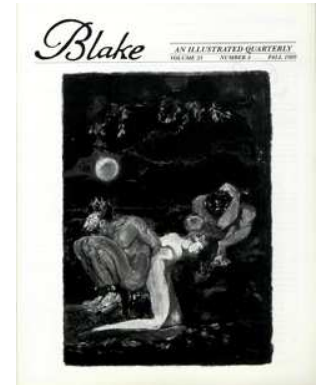
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

R E V I E W

Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, trans., Jacques
Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*

David Worrall

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Jacques Derrida. *The Truth in Painting*. Trans. by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987. xiv + 386 pp. \$49.95 cloth/\$19.95 paper.

Reviewed by David Worrall

"I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you" (Paul Cézanne to Emile Bernard, 23 October 1905). Derrida's book first appeared in France in 1978 and is largely a compilation of writings from the mid 1970s. What is "the truth in painting" and does Derrida tell it to you? Do you need to know what deconstruction means to the visual arts? The answer to the former is partially explained by this review but it could actually be the latter question which proves to be of immediate and wider interest.

At the end of March 1988 London's Tate Gallery played host to "the world's first symposium on art, architecture and Deconstruction." Derrida was to have appeared at this packed conference but it turned out he was absent except in the reproductive (what else?) medium of a video interview specially recorded for the event. The Tate symposium was breezily covered by most of the quality newspapers but there was one substantial report by David Lodge (*The Guardian* 8 April 1988, London ed.: 25). However, a more lasting testament to deconstructive movements in art and architecture is the publication of two special issues from the Academy Group. The issue of *Art & Design* is devoted to "The New Modernism: Deconstructionist Tendencies in Art" (4 [1988]), while *Architectural Design* covers "Deconstruction in Architecture" (58 [1988]). Of the two, the *Architectural Design* issue is probably the more substantial and scholarly although the *Art & Design* number has excellent color reproductions of work by Adami (discussed below) as well as a spicy set of aphorisms by the translator of *The Truth in Painting*, Geoff Bennington ("Deconstruction is Not What You Think" 6-7). *The Truth in Painting* is also excerpted in the magazine.

There are several reasons why deconstructive architecture will probably be of future note (or notoriety). Deconstructive buildings have already been built and deconstructive architects seem already to have identified their own high-priests and coterie groups around Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, and Zaha Hadid. It is also the case that Derrida has been recently thinking (or has been asked to think) about architecture

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especially in connection with his contributions and dialogues with Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi. There is a spiky interview in *Architectural Design* between Charles Jencks and Eisenman ("that is silly of you . . . there's no need to get on your high-horse and dichotomise. . .") with lots of talk of *différance*, intertextuality, and the dislocation of the center. Derrida has contributed "an unfinished text that he was working on from Plato's *Timaeus*" for a Choral or Chora work of Eisenman's: "We finally forced Jacques to draw something. He then drew the lyre which became both the figure and the frame for the site" (or *liar*, Eisenman concedes). Derrida has also written on Bernard Tschumi's "Parc de la Villette" which is now well under construction and whose sets of gardens have a collaborative contribution from Jean-Francois Lyotard. Perhaps it is in these ways that deconstruction will become a genuinely popular, or populist, idea. Charles Jencks has ventured to bet that a multinational corporation is likely to build

a major deconstructivist building in two years time and a major headquarters in probably four years time.

Meanwhile, although reports of its demise appear daily, deconstruction still seems to be only narrowly, or even mistakenly, understood. It is easy enough to detect in some of the writings and interviews with architects and art historians in these issues some rather willful readings of Derrida's work (although the essays by Andrew Benjamin are notable exceptions). Nevertheless, precisely because artistic practice may be running ahead of academic theory and practice, it is invigorating to have such a seminal book as Derrida's translated into English.

The Truth in Painting is an exciting book. Why read Culler, Eagleton, or Norris when Derrida's methodology is visible in all its rigor at every turn? Begin anywhere. Although Derrida has slotted disparate writings together (journal articles, prefaces to exhibition catalogues), the argument is consistent throughout and each stage can be treated discretely. In *The Truth in Painting* as well as in painting there is no frame, no passe-partout of a necessary introduction or conclusion which is not already a part of "the work." The "work of art" (and Derrida's *The Truth in Painting* can stand in its place) has no outside which is not already inside and no inside which is not already outside: "These prolegomena of *The Truth in Painting*, themselves the *parergon* of this book, are ringed together by a circle" (9). Begin anywhere and lace it together.

Of Grammatology (trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974]) is now over twenty years old and its discoveries, and its author's subsequent discoveries, should no longer be considered optional. *Différance* is not "free-play" or "anything-goes" or "lack-of-referentiality" brings "any-referentiality." Still less is it "nihilism." Rather, *différance* is process, an economy of presence and absence (and anything else structured like language: e.g., psyche, painting) which is like the rattle of a machine. This is worth saying at the outset because of the frequent misreadings of Derrida which occur in print and in the conference hall from people who seem to have read nothing but "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (cf. *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978] 196-231). Their position is as ideological as any they think they are "deconstructing." "Free-for-all" free-play is as good a demon-

stration of the workings of the supplement as could be hoped for as any careful reading of "Structure, Sign, and Play" will reveal.

The Truth in Painting has all the rigor of Derrida's other books and, of the principal works to date, can be neatly placed chronologically between *Glas* (1974) and *The Post Card* (1980). Much of the book is directed at a re-reading of Hegel's, Heidegger's and Kant's aesthetics with a concentration on textual examples rather at the expense of the visual. Derrida quotes Kant to the effect that "Examples are thus the wheelchairs of the faculty of judging" but, in his own view, "If things run as though on wheels, this is perhaps because things aren't going so well. . . ." (78-79). Perhaps examples are to logic what metaphor is to language. Anemic: white logic.

In many ways the arguments of *The Truth in Painting* are an elaboration from the revelation of the workings of *différance*. It is seldom recognized that Derrida shares with Saussure an urge to keep things simple. This is perhaps the only way in which it is fair to say that he is reductive. The book has a simple formal structure: a large section (half the book) called "Parergon" discusses the frame in art. This has further subsections on "The Sans of the Pure Cut" (the beautiful) and "The Colossal" (the sublime). The book then moves into the exciting chapters "+ R (Into the Bargain)," "Cartouches" and "Restitutions" which deal with the way Derrida looks at pictures and where there is a usually a transition from the more didactic format of "Parergon."

In "Parergon" Derrida asks what is not of the work of art? Does it have an end and a beginning? What is a frame? Is ornament of the work or outside it? Derrida provides an illuminating example: Lucas Cranach's *Lucretia*, 1533 (Staatliche Museen Preussische Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) which is reproduced in a (barely adequate) black and white photograph. Cranach's *Lucretia* holds the point of a dagger to her chest while, with the other hand, she positions a diaphanous veil over her upper thighs. She wears a necklace but is otherwise unclothed. Derrida asks ". . . where is the *parergon*? Should one regard as a *parergon* the dagger which is not part of her naked and natural body and whose point she holds turned toward herself, touching her skin (in that case only the point of the *parergon* would touch her body, in the middle of a triangle formed by her two breasts and her navel)? A *parergon*, the necklace that she wears around her neck?" (57). The

lack of plenitude in the "content" of the painting produces its meaning as a supplement. But which is the supplement? Lucretia, the dagger, the veil, the necklace, the picture frame, other works by Cranach, other paintings of his epoch, the title and its supplements? The *parergon* is "lacking in something and it is lacking from itself" (56). What works, what labors is the frame: "The frame labors [*travaille*] indeed. Place of labor, structurally bordered origin of surplus value, i.e., overflowed [*débordée*] on these two borders by what it overflows, it gives [*travaille*] indeed" (75). In other words, the production of meaning is absent from what one might call "pictorial content" and is deferred to the frame which is the site of the picture's placement in the process of *différance*. Whereas "the whole analytic of aesthetic judgment forever assumes that one can distinguish rigorously between the intrinsic and the extrinsic" (63) at the place of the frame, which is the site of the production of supplement, "Deconstruction must neither reframe nor dream of the pure absence of the frame. These two apparently contradictory gestures are the very ones — and they are systematically indissociable — of *what* is here deconstructed" (73).

The Derridean frame has already been discussed by Edward Larrissy in *Re-Reading . . . William Blake* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) but rather than discuss *passe-partout* and *parergon* further, I would like to come back to an earlier, more immediately recognizably Blakean, example from *The Truth in Painting* in order to lead on to Derrida's discussions, in the earlier parts of the book, on the limits of the representational in art. Derrida reproduces a printer's emblem showing the ubiquitous Renaissance device of hands-in-clouds-holding-dividers-inscribing-a-circle, a device which has long been held to be generic with Blake's "The Ancient of Days" and the Urizenic attempt to contain the abyss. Derrida abruptly begins "Parergon" with the words "it's enough to say: abyss and satire of the abyss" (17). Admittedly this is Derrida at his most apparently gnomic but the phrase gets worked through reassuringly and systematically. In a brilliant piece of deconstruction Derrida argues that the "abyss," which is forced between being presented and yet remaining unrepresentable, "saturates," fills up and yet "hollows out" (33–34) the content of its meaning: this is why the abyss is "satire, farce on the edge of excess" (17). Any idea of the "abyss" is forced into representability which is narrativity (parody, satire, farce) or, to put it more simply, supplement. This, it seems to me, was exactly Blake's problem: how to present the unrepresentable?

Derrida's discussions of the sublime (in "The Colossal") are highly relevant to Blake's arguments with his contemporaries about the presentation and content of his pictures and poems. What looms perilously close is the satire of the abyss, a presenting of the unrepresentable as a lack of presentation. Blake's way, and he has no other, was "Sublime Allegory," a satire of the abyss. It is worth pursuing a deconstructive reading of Blake's important statements on this in his letter to Thomas Butts: "Allegory addressed to the Intellectual powers while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding is My Definition of the Most Sublime Poetry" (to Butts, 6 July 1803, E 730). Blake's position is a fairly standard phenomenological one (dilute Husserl) where the "Intellectual powers" are capable of being remotely "addressed" across the abyss from "Corporeal Understanding." In other words, Blake bridges the gulf between the corporeal and the intellectual in an analogy or allegoric narrative while maintaining the discretion of these two faculties: "The abyss calls for analogy . . . but analogy plunges endlessly into the abyss as soon as a certain art is needed to describe analogically the play of the analogy" (36). There is nothing "wrong" with Blake's allegoric innovation: there is, quite simply, no other way.

The colossal, like the abyss, like Blake's "Sublime Allegory," is appeased into presentation by a lack in presentation: "Colossal Fort: *Da*. What comes-in-front [*devant*]-of-it-to-erect-itself. Having to [*Devant*] erect itself in the excessive movement of its own disappearance, of its unrepresentable presentation" (145). This is why "Singular & Particular Detail is the Foundation of the Sublime" (Annotations to Reynolds, E 647) and why "Obscurity is Neither the Source of the Sublime nor of any Thing Else" (E 658). Blake's position on the sublime is, in fact, postmodernist. It is worth comparing Jean-Francois Lyotard's definition, which is more succinct, if less rigorous, than Derrida's: "The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable" ("What is Postmodernism?" [1982] printed as the appendix to *The Postmodern Condition* [1979], Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984, 81; also in *Innovation/Renovation*, ed. Ihab Hassan and Sally Hassan, Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1983). The essentialism of Blake's ideas may be rather at variance with his artistic practice.

The *télos* of this journey, from essentialist reaction against eighteenth-century mimesis to postmodernism, has already been hinted at in an account of art history from the perspective of postmodernism (see Simon Morley, "A Differance," *Art & Design* 4 [1988]: 26–32).

To come back to Blake's letter to Butts once again: Derrida helps us to see very clearly the aporia in Blake's statement. This is not, structurally, the corporeal/intellectual opposition but, rather, the supposition that the two powers can be "addressd." The fully located address from addressor to addressee is Blake's bridge plunging into the abyss as intention tries to deposit itself into absolutely referenced meaning: "both potent and impotent, potent in its very impotence, all potential in its unequalness to itself. Everything here resounds and echoes in the dynamic sublime" (146). This echo or resonance is the rattle of the frame or *passe-partout* and is denotative of "The *Sans* of the Pure Cut."

"The *Sans* of the Pure Cut" is a fascinating section on the beautiful facilitated by the use of the work "cise" by Derrida's translators: "an obsolete spelling of 'size' . . . and suggestive of cutting (cf. incision)" (120n32). The *sans* of the pure cut is rather like reformulating Derrida's "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*" (*Of Grammatology* 158). This phrase seems to have been the subject of repeated, ideologically positioned, misreadings: it is not just that "there is nothing outside of the text" but also that "there is no outside-text." In order to understand the *sans* of the pure cut (Derrida's example is a ubiquitous print of a single cut tulip), it is necessary to take the object of beauty and notice that "This tulip is complete from the first because a concept cannot fill it up" (94). The tulip or tulip-print is installed within an economy of *différance* because the single tulip is the *parole* within the *langue* of the tulips of the field, the tulips of Nature. As such, the cise of the single tulip has no meaning fully unto itself. Its only completion is that it signifies, which is to say that it fixes no referent: "A beautiful flower is in this sense an absolutely *coupable* [guilty, cuttable] flower that is absolutely absolved, innocent. Without debt. Not without law, but of a law without concept" (94). In other words, the concept of the beautiful tulip is another labor at the frame. The cise is what samples this tulip from millions of others, makes it into a small-sized sample, but also cuts it off from signification: "The *without-goal*, the *without-why* of the tulip is not significant, is not a signifier, not even a signifier of a lack. At least insofar as the tulip is beautiful, *this* tulip. As such, a signifier, even a signifier without signified, can do anything except be beautiful" (95). This is the double-bind

of the work of art: a Blake *Song of Innocence*, say, is a snap-shot, a photographic print (both unique and reproducible) which is the cise of "Innocence": both the size of "Innocence" and cut-off/cut-into it. This cise, this "*sans*" of the pure cut (there is nothing outside the cut/there is no outside cut, we might say) is the economy of *différance* in pictures.

The without/absence of the pure cut is an important contribution to the philosophy of art. It is, substantially, a philosophy based on a grammatological method (not that grammatology is exclusively, or even strictly, an epistemology). As such, it is analogous to Lévi-Strauss's application of the method of Saussurian linguistics to anthropology. What Derrida has put forward is rather more than a *simple* intertextuality of pictures; rather, what is discovered is the *différance* of pictures. To repeat Derrida's words: "What comes-in-front [*devant*]-of-it-to-erect-itself. Having to [*Devant*] erect itself is the excessive movement of its own disappearance, of its unrepresentable presentation." Pictures present themselves, yet they do not present themselves completely: in the presence of presentation is the absence of presentation. Perhaps the easiest way of putting across Derrida's point about a presentation of the unrepresentable is to look at his discussion of the deconstructionist painter Valerio Adami and at one picture in particular. Adami's pencil drawing *Disegno per un ritratto di W. Benjamin* (1973, private collection) has a reasonably good illustration in *The Truth in Painting*.

Derrida's discussion is, essentially, a simple one. Adami uses a familiar, fairly ubiquitous, photograph of Walter Benjamin as the basis for his picture. Benjamin was the author of the important "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936). What, then, is the relationship of Adami's drawing to Benjamin's photograph "reproduced," off-center, by Adami's pencil?

Derrida notes that Adami has captured Benjamin in an economy of *différance*:

Benjamin had a theory of the portrait, which, according to him, played a transition role, on the frontier between "ritual religious art" and "technical reproducibility." The photographic representation of the face is the remainder, the last resistance of ritual. When the face begins to disappear or, as here, no longer to occupy the top or the center, the legend [*Beschriftung*] becomes necessary. "Its character is quite different from the title of a picture." *Ritratto di Walter Benjamin* is of a type as legendary as the name "Benjamin." Just about in the middle land on the subject's forehead [*front*], the name is also at the bottom of a frame. Title of one absent (picture): of one no more [*disparu*]. *Disappeared* [*disparu*] is the subject. What has disappeared *appears*, absent in the very place of the commemorative monument, returning to the empty place marked by his name. (178)

This is a brilliant commentary: concise, witty, and flawless.

But there is something of further, perhaps of greater, importance here. Reproduction is a *condition* of painting: there are no "originals." This case can be proven with regard to Blake's life and art. Blake's deconstructive economies (this is not an anachronism: deconstructive economies are consistently latent and have never waited on Derrida's writings) can be identified by the paradoxes of his positions with regard to drawing and engraving which may be conveniently discussed in relation to Blake's *Canterbury Pilgrims*. To follow the usual formula of deconstructive styles of argument: *on the one hand*, Blake protests that Stothard and Cromek stole the essence of his conception of *Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims* while, *on the other hand*, Blake offers his own multiplication of that essence as an engraving.

Blake's status as an artist offering a supplement at the origin can easily be seen from Blake's first prospectus on *The Canterbury Pilgrims*: "no other Artist can reach the original Spirit so well as the Painter himself, especially as Mr. B. is an old well-known and acknowledged Engraver" (E 567). In other words, the "original Spirit" which "the Painter himself" offers to "reach" in painting is simultaneously offered as a reproduction deferring the "original Spirit," just as writing signs the absence of the author. In a revealing passage from the Notebook "Public Address" Blake seems to specify that the reproductive supplement is already there at the origin of drawing: "I request the Society to inspect my Print, of which Drawing is the Foundation & indeed the Superstructure it is Drawing on Copper as Painting ought to be Drawing on Canvas or any other [table] < surface > & nothing Else" (E 572). In saying that drawing is both "the Foundation & . . . Superstructure" it seems that drawing must operate as *both* an original *and* a reproduction. Blake's intensifier, "indeed," is a signifying aporia which attempts to bridge the "Foundation" and "Superstructure" of "my Print" but which only reveals the inevitable break into allegory. Drawing is both the original "Foundation" *below* the "Print" (embodying "the original Spirit") which might offer the artist's invention as presence (his "reach"), but at the same time, drawing is also the reproductive "Superstructure" *above* drawing, mystifyingly close to "Print" yet retaining the trace of the origin (the "drawing"). Blake's architectural metaphor notifies the chiasmus operative at the ground level between foundation and superstructure: precisely the "ground" of the copper plate which has to act as two and yet one. Drawing operates as Blake's

version of Freud's Mystic Writing Pad (cf. *Writing and Difference* 196–231): it must be both breachable *hyle* (i.e., a "Print" made by "an old well-known and acknowledged Engraver" "on copper") and yet also remain (for it precisely *is* a remainder or supplement) an "original Spirit." Blake's art was never elsewhere but in The Age of [Mechanical] Reproduction.

I have tried, so far, to sketch out some of the theory of Derrida's book and how it might apply to Blake's works. But, *how does Derrida look at pictures?* The final part of *The Truth in Painting*, called "Restitutions," is a long meditative argument about those series of paintings by Van Gogh on the subject of shoes which prompted Meyer Shapiro's criticism of Heidegger's discussion of them in *The Origin of the Work of Art*. To give Derrida's long and careful critique a rather violent and injurious summary, Derrida puts forward the view that shoes, like paintings, cannot be located determinately with their peasant owners or their painters. To do so would be to give not *The Truth [in Painting]* but "hallucination in painting" (366), the spectres of painting as he calls them elsewhere (374). Yet, at the same time Derrida does not simply end up with the position that nothing can be said about Van Gogh's shoes; *différance* may be in process but so is representationality and the viewing subject. The viewing subject is constantly modified by pictures acting like texts, like post cards: picture post cards.

I emphasize picture post cards by way of alluding to Derrida's *The Post Card*. If Derrida's datings of his missives are to be believed, the early parts of *The Post Card* were being written at the same time as *The Truth in Painting's* "Cartouches," that is, in approximately the last few months of 1977 (a few specific days in November 1977 do appear to coincide between the two works). "Cartouches" was published at the time of the exhibition of Gerard Titus-Carmel's *The Pocket Size Tlingit Coffin and the 61 Ensuing Drawings* (National Museum of Modern Art, Pompidou Center, Paris, 1 March–10 April 1978). OED: "Cartouche: in architecture, scroll ornament e.g. volute of Ionic capital; tablet imitating, or drawing of, scroll with rolled-up ends, used ornamentally or bearing inscription; ornate frame . . . F. = cartridge." "Cartridge: . . . spool of film, magnetic tape, etc., in container . . . ink-container for insertion in pen. 2. --paper thick and rough, used for cartridges, for drawing and strong envelopes." That there are no "strong envelopes" for pictures might be implicit from Derrida's remarks on painting, but "Cartouches" is also a discussion of the concept of what constitutes a series. Of a series of 127, why were only 61 drawings exhibited (plus

the extraordinary *Pocket Size Tlingit Coffin* which is hand-sized and made of wood, glass, fur, and brass with lacings hanging from it, cf. 187)? At least two drawings are said by Derrida to have been destroyed or else there would have been 129 (209). Answers to me on a post card, please, which, no matter how clearly addressed, will be sure to go astray. Which is exactly the point about the other 66 drawings: they never arrived.

Derrida's meditations on Titus-Carmel's series of productions is a matter of concern for anyone thinking about what constitutes a series. Despite the oddness of Titus-Carmel's titles, his naming is no more performative than, say, Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* or *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. What Derrida discusses is the relationship, or lack of it, between the producer, performances, and readers or viewers. The Tlingit Coffin is a fascinating device that may very well work like, say, one of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* in that each is a pocketable cise (a size) of Innocence and Experience yet each cise is interlaced to something beyond itself. The relationship of one *Song* to another is like the Tlingit Coffin: it is both self-contained and yet interlaced beyond itself, like a post card and its unforeseen readers. The squared margins of Blake's plate at once defines and falls short of defining his *Song*. Derrida seems to modify his earlier concept or condition of *brisure* to accept this lacing effect (*Of Grammatology* 65-73). Instead of texts being both hinged/broken, the lacing allows us to see that while *brisure* might be a condition of text, lacing is a condition of the relationship between reader and text (or viewer and picture). "A parallelepiped (OED: "solid bounded by parallelograms") like the coffin . . . the matchbox has the peculiarity that it does not open, like so many other caskets, along the articulation of a hing . . . Here, for once, *one* box opens or shuts by sliding *into another*, which is none other than itself . . . The hermetic closure composes the two openings, is composed by them both" (226). Or, a *Song of Innocence*, like the brief hermetic closure of a post card, closes on itself yet opens out into *Innocence* (which is its cise) and opens out to the play of reading. The post card, or *Song*, never arrives at its destination because the specificity of its communication is readable by everyone. Theoretically it may have its own conditions (William Blake, 1757-1827, may well have *intended* to say something with it) but it is always laced to something else, to another *Song* or another ideology:

There are remains of cartridge, because the dissemination of the cartridges or cartouches (in all sense/directions, in all genres/genders) never exhausts a *total*. There is no total of meanings and genders (masculine/feminine). Always a box *in* the box, some supplementary cartridge, a *parergon*, that's what the coffin's mutism *says* to us, and, in it, the couple of beakless fledglings. Always a box *outside* the box. (231)

This is Derrida at his most creatively rigorous (the silent fledglings are the fur deposited in the Tlingit Coffin): cartridge is to *Song* as cartridge is to can(n)on (229)! "The play of the supplement, the repetition of the deviation can go on *ad infinitum*, or *almost*, unless, with a 'that's sufficient' you let the series stop one fine day" (237). In other words, the *Song* cartridge is already in the can(n)on: the can(n)on bears the trace of other *Songs*/cartridges.

Pictures act like Van Gogh's shoes: their laces offer to lace themselves to an hallucinatory Van Gogh yet they also unlace themselves because Van Gogh can never fill the shoes shown in his pictures. The paintings of shoes by Van Gogh and Derrida's discussion of them is the culmination of an "interlacing" effect he has hinted at throughout *The Truth in Painting*. The lacing of the picture to the viewer passes towards the viewer but also behind the picture. Valerio Adami's *Study for a Drawing after Glas* (reproduced on consecutive pages, 153-54) makes this point by having one side of the picture have a penciled-in frame across which words transgress (Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* [1915-23] would be an early deconstructive piece of art working in the same way). On the other side, a sketched scaffolding of ladders and thongs keeps the picture moving in, out, near, far, there, gone.

The logic of lacing, of stricture and destructure, is one I want to finally turn to, coming back to my earlier comments about "play" in Derrida. Derrida says quite clearly that "Any stricture is *simultaneously* stricturation and destricturation" (340). To emphasize: stricturing is a necessary alternation of destricturing. "The loosening of the laces is not absolute, it does not absolve, unbind, cut. It keeps an organized stricture. Not a more or less of stricture but a determined (structured) form of stricture: of the outside and the inside, the underneath and the top . . . Deferring: it never sutures" (340). In other words, this is not "play" (except in the sense of the play of loose machinery) but, rather, *fort/da*: "lacing across the line in both directions, making come back, making go away, making come back again, inside, outside, down

there, here, *fort/da*" (357). Certainly the picture goes away from us, destricturing, deferring itself in "the logic of stricture, in the interlacing of *différance* of (or as) stricture" (340) but it also comes back, stricturing itself into the would-be fullness of representation: "What we know is that every step (discursive or pictural in particular) implies a *fort/da*. Every relation to a pictural text implies this double movement doubly interlaced to itself. It is a kind of *fort/da* that is *described by* the circuit of the lace" (357).

This seems to be a little different from the emphasis Derrida's works are sometimes, mistakenly, given. If, simultaneously, with destricturing there is a "determined (structured) form of stricture" then it is clearly one to which attention must be paid and to which "the whole path of thought, for Heidegger, leads back, by a dis-tancing, to a *Da* (thus the *Da* of *Sein*) which is not merely close, but whose proximity lets the distance of the *fort* play within it" (357). The word "proximity" is important and Derrida isolates this word as something wanting in Heidegger's discussion: "No doubt he mis-recognized the necessity of the argumentation, the lacking movement of its coming and going and the abyss of its *fort/da*" (358). After these discussions (and one now sees that the truth in painting is something I cannot give you) we are left with (remaindered with) logic and strictured play: "*There is* painting, writing, restitutions, that's all. Who among you knows Van Gogh? Does anyone here know Heidegger? Goldstein? Shapiro? This square—" (371). When we look at a picture all we can bet on is that we *are* going to bet on it:

All these shoes remain there, in a sale, so you can compare them, pair them up, unpair them, bet or not bet on the pair. The trap is the inevitability of betting. The logic of the disparate. You can also try to buy the trap and take it home, as a tribute, or the way you think you're taking something away on the soles of the painted shoes. All these shoes remain there—for he painted so many. . . . (381)

Pocket up Blake how we may, something will remain: "It gives to be rendered. To be put back on/put off. —It's just gone. —It's coming round again. —It's just gone again" (382). *Fort/da*.

In deconstruction there is no *lack* of referentiality but, rather, an *excess*: "Enough! or Too much" (MHH 10; E 38). It will be interesting to see the emergence of deconstructive analyses of painting for which *The Truth in Painting* will be to art historians what *Of Grammatology* and *The Post Card* have been to literary critics.

William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

DIY Theatre,

Rosemary Branch Theatre Club, London,
July 1988

Reviewed by Michael Grenfell

Is Blake entertaining? One step inside this tiny café theatre and the average member of the public might well regard any encounter with him as a pretty hellish experience: strange subterranean voices cry out like lost souls in an auditorium covered in shroudlike drops. From the ceiling hang various luminous objects with no apparent sense or meaning. Striding through the audience onto the stage, the three actors (two men and a woman) continue in the same vein — "Energy, Genius, Infinite, One Law," they hiss in witch-like tones before stating "The Argument." I say stating, but really it was chanted using various vocal styles — unison, staccato, and syncopation. This made quite a sound, but what was gained in energy and sheer dynamics was lost in clarity and finally in comprehension of the text. Happily this was not the case elsewhere, and, often following Blake's original "color-coding" (Copy H), the swapping of lines between the actors injected a terrific pace and direction into the words. At key points, as in "A Song of Liberty," the players set the text to music, but this was less successful, the natural rhymes and rhythms of the words seeming to fight with the imposed melody.

The biggest laughs of the evening came from the "Proverbs of Hell" — whether out of excess sorrow, nervousness, or at the audacity and wit of the man. With so many on offer it was inevitable that some were passed over rapidly, while others were given a more lingering treatment. Intended interpretation, too, was often heavily hinted at by the use of appropriate intonation. For the most part this was acceptable, but, less forgivable in the interrogative, puzzled tone adopted for "Enough! or Too much" — surely more didactic and imperative in the text?