Introduction

The Process of Difference,
the Difference of Process

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> We are separated by so many similar things that the flow which attracts us
> to each other is exhausted as it beats against these obstacles. It no longer
> flows, held back by boundaries that are too watertight. We are divided by
> that part of the selfsame and its theater, which cannot be traversed.
>
> —Luce Irigaray, *Elemental Passions*[1]

The present collection stages a meeting between two postmodernisms that
have never been one. Process and poststructuralist discourses pursue diver-
gent aims, conflicting methods, and discordant styles. They emanate from dis-
parate sources and from different cultural traditions.[2] So this volume
expresses not a nostalgia for reunion but a desire for *différance*. Is this the
rather foolish, fleeting infatuation of an otherwise rational philosophy with a
younger, fashionable, flirtatious theory—a cartoon of the dignified older man
who falls for the coquette? Or is there a more interesting eros in evidence
here? Does it display the potentiality for reciprocal transmutation, if not for
any abiding mutual commitment? By positioning these chapters in a series
dedicated to the production of a reconstructive postmodernism, by including
three European contributions, by concluding it indeed with an essay by an
important francophone philosopher, we signal the intensity that the contribu-
tors to this volume attribute to this attraction.

   Of course if so-called deconstructive and reconstructive postmod-
ernisms are never likely to become one, neither would either movement claim
to be unitary in itself. As in Irigaray's titular pun, *Ce Sexe Qui N'en Est Pas
Un*,[3] neither is singular—or singularly masculine. So we do not anticipate a
romance between a single process thought and a single poststructuralism.
Indeed as each comprises a radical pluralism, each has already generated a
nest of divergent trajectories. At their different scales, these movements both
continue to proliferate internationally, decolonizing their own centers, without
thereby obscuring the strong family resemblances that mark each as a move-
ment. But as movements toward each other?

Certainly within Whiteheadian thought there is massive mistrust, if not outright antagonism, toward the French style of inquiry that is still largely identified—despite the gallant efforts of this series—with postmodern thought. This mistrust could hardly be avoided. The academic force of post-structuralism delegitimates any project that can be called "metaphysics," "ontology," "cosmology," or "worldview." It withers away any appeal to "universals," to "coherence," "consistency," "reason," "totality," or "God." Process thinkers wring their hands at the insouciant irrationality with which incommensurable, indeed opposed, meanings of all these signifiers get con-flated. We have found ourselves repeatedly within intellectual spaces where Alfred North Whitehead's linguistic strategies get swept, indistinguishably from the very metaphysics he opposed, into the dustbin of philosophy. Such dismissive tactics may indeed exhaust "the flow which attracts us." For they often take place among progressive and creative thinkers, often in faculties of religion, often engaged in feminist theory. Beneath these obstacles to coalition lie serious questions as to the capacity or the desire of deconstruction to engage the problems of the world, indeed to offer a discourse with which one can even refer to a world—that which infinitely precedes and exceeds lan-guage; that which will not relieve language of the task of responsible refer-ence within our endangered terrestrial swathe of relations.

Nonetheless, some of us within the process trajectory have outgrown the terms and tenor of our own mistrust of "deconstructive postmodernism." Within Whiteheadian thought the "lure for feeling" that poststructuralism con-veys may too readily get dismissed, as though it is nothing but infatuation with modish jargon. Yet if we repress this lure as morally lightweight and philo-sophically incoherent, do we not caricature deconstruction—as the seductress, against whom younger scholars must be warned? Yet both schools of thought are equipped to deal affirmatively, even irenically, with difference.

Deconstruction as Elimination?

Let me first articulate the difference as falling within reconstructive postmod-ernism—that is, as a difference in the modes of prehension or reception of deconstruction. Permit me to pursue a more specific argument on behalf of this volume. We in these chapters would have little objection to the series' edi-tor's criticisms of the "eliminative postmodernism" of Mark C. Taylor and Richard Rorty.[4] David Ray Griffin's general argument with deconstruction—that Other in opposition to which the *re*constructive alternative *constructs* itself—introduces his historical account of the postmodernity he prefers. It frames his account of the founders of constructive postmodern philosophy (among whom Whitehead figures prominently, but with the important paral-lels of Charles Sanders Peirce, Charles Hartshorne, Henri Bergson, and

William James).[5] I will suggest that his analysis suffers from a "fallacy of misplaced opposition."

Griffin's characterization of modernity as antirational belongs in the toolkit of any serious postmodernism. It builds upon Whitehead's disruption of the hackneyed identification of the last half millennium and its science as a triumph of rationality.[6] In a tight tour de force, Griffin's historical analysis of the foundational incoherence of modernity demonstrates the constitutive role of the rejection of "panexperientialism" (or pananimism) in shaping modern reason.[7] He does not however engage Derrida, who coined the term *deconstruction*, nor Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, or Julia Kristeva, or indeed any of the French theorists whom one thinks of as originators of the "deconstructive postmodernism" to which this series offers the preferred alternative. Instead, he disputes with U.S. philosophers like Karl Popper, Wilfrid Sellars, and Keith Campbell. They are no doubt worthy opponents. Yet their questions, terms, and analytic methods simply do not represent what is known as "deconstruction." Indeed there is if anything less tolerance between North American philosophy and French deconstruction than between the latter and process thought.

Griffin makes the aggressive assertion that the antirationality of modernity, as exemplified in these anglophone philosophers, "finds its logical conclusion in deconstructive postmodernism."[8] Whether or not there is any validity in such a culminating accusation cannot, however, be ascertained within the terms of his own argument. For he has mounted the argument against a "deconstruction" of his own invention. Griffin claims, more specifically, that deconstructive postmodernists make a "tacit identification of perception with sense-perception" and thus of the latter with "the given." Yet the founder of deconstruction *propre* would, as I will show, reject precisely that identification. I am not interested however in arguing against Griffin's critique. Rather, to continue with Whitehead's criteria, it is in "applicability" and "adequacy" to the relevant body of texts that this critique has been lacking. The fallacious opposition does not invalidate Griffin's argument with U.S. philosophy.[9] The present volume decenters the opposition in order to advance the positive agenda of the series.

It is the passion of reconstructive postmodernism rather than the nits it picks that stimulates this entire debate, including of course the present volume and its "difference" within the series. Griffin's immense project does not lack applicability and adequacy to the problems of the earth. In Griffin's specific argument this passion takes the form of this "rhetorical question":

> Given a world with a growing ozone hole, imminent global warming, and an enormous stockpile of nuclear weapons, any of which could bring the human race and much of the rest of the life of the planet to a grossly premature end, and given a host of other interconnected prob-

lems of gargantuan proportions, should we not say, from this type of pragmatic point of view, that a philosophy that results in a strenuous contributionism is "truer" than one that promotes ironic detachment?[10]

Unfortunately, however, this particular deployment of apocalyptic rhetoric permits the caricature of (all) deconstruction as irresponsible and of irony itself as disengaged. Griffin had claimed that "Richard Rorty's 'irony' is probably the best term for the stance toward life that follows from deconstructive postmodernism."[11] Again, I agree with Griffin's judgment of Rortian pragmatism; I also read Rorty's "liberal ironism" as inadequately pragmatic and incoherently postmodern. But I find it a mediocre and indirect substitute for the continental poststructuralism, which thereby—at least in the minds of any poststructuralist reader—gets damned by association. It is not that poststructuralism (and all other ironists, Nietzschean, Kierkegaardian, Socratic, or Joban) should be defended from such questions of accountability to the earth and to its vulnerable species. Nor have feminists and postcolonialists working from within the deconstructive heritage ever ceased to ask these questions. But then Griffin's particular question must become a real and not a rhetorical one. Otherwise the reconstructive challenge, however carefully framed, will continue to be read as a polemical dismissal of French-based theory. And *as such* it remains almost as ill-grounded in the relevant literature as are blithe dismissals of "metaphysics."

If Griffin's "strenuous contributionism" is not to be used to discipline those drawn to poststructuralism—as though they have succumbed to some irresponsible relativism, some (globally) fatal attraction—then the chapters in this volume will be permitted to make their own strenuous contribution to process postmodernism. Such a postmodernism, as Griffin insists, "should have been officially dubbed '*reconstructive*' to indicate more clearly that a deconstructive moment is presupposed."[12] By inviting the process poststructuralists out of their methodological closet, this volume seeks to prolong and not merely presuppose that "moment." Only so can deconstruction play a constructive role within process thought. The latter may then show the way out of an unsatisfactory and uncharacteristic opposition. If, that is, the Whiteheadian criterion of "contrast" be consistently entertained, then the "lure for feeling," which some process thinkers take from poststructuralism, will exceed the impulse either to separate the two movements as incommensurable or to merge them as one. Thus reconstructive postmodernism depends upon deconstruction as much as deconstruction depends upon the speculative schemes it deconstructs. What Isabelle Stengers calls a "peace-making proposition" emerges out of the nexus of disputation and divergence by which difference heightens in relation. Indeed, while Whitehead predates by half a century the eruption of the thought of difference as such—as *différance*—this pluralism radicalizes the particularity of the other, but precisely as an other-in-relation. Contrast hybridizes a new one from many. It does not appropriate the others

for the selfsame identity of the one, and as "feeling" it resists reduction either to rationality or to language.[13]

Perhaps the proposition entertained by this volume augurs the coming of process poststructuralisms and deconstructive cosmologies. Or perhaps it merely opens up a third space, for now as positively unnameable as the subject of the "postmodern" itself. At any rate, the chapters in this volume, whether working more on the common history of the postmodernisms or more on the potentiality for future contrasts, do not conceal the sympathetic feeling motivating the rather abstract comparisons of these two distinct and nonparallel postmodernities.

Imbalanced Attractions

Of course the opening romantic comedy, casting poststructuralism in the feminine role, reverses gender rather quickly in the light of an analysis of cultural power. Poststructuralism, for all its postures of subversion, occupies a position of virtual ideological hegemony in the liberal arts academy, while process thought, dependent as it is upon theological studies, has faced not only the ongoing attack of various Christian orthodoxies but the loss, due to its metaphysical taint, of much potential solidarity on its progressive flank. While we in Griffin's series inherit a style and a polemic that I would be hard-pressed to fit to any feminized subject-position, we do find ourselves in some analogy to a stereotype of the woman who does not even rise into visibility as a worthy opponent. Poststructuralist scholars do not need to bother with any argument at all against constructive postmodernism. Whether or not we extend a desirously inclusive "we" to the poststructuralist, one can hardly imagine a conversation between the two movements, so unequal are their powers of influence, so imbalanced is the attraction. So this volume does not pretend to represent a dialogue. It is not as though this project emerges from any version of equal representations, but within a minority of poststructurally inclined process thinkers, embedded within the minority of which process thought represents within the academy. But we do not bemoan the impossibility of what Stengers (chapter 10), anyway, finds suspicious in the call for "civilized conversation."

Rather, like the Irigarayan "woman," this form of process thinking will seek out textual points of rupture in the "watertight" boundary, certain intersections, interactions, and interfluencies, where poststructuralist and process streams have already mingled. Thus we might read Irigaray's opening utterance as parable for the present task: "The flow which attracts us to each other," like the "lure for feeling" in the sense of a Whiteheadian proposition, can be ignored and exhausted. When elsewhere she questions the seamless privilege of language we can imagine her speaking not only *comme femme* but as reconstructive postmodernist:

Is the domination of language's rule unshakable? Allowing merely the addition of stylistic devices, of rhetorical flourishes, of still unsung melodies, of lyrics or words yet to ring out, within an empire of unchanging delineation. Will man speak to himself, still and always, through a medium that is determined by him, through an other defined in him? . . . *Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* [14]

Our parable cuts both ways. "How can we still approach each other if there are only coverings which are not porous enough? . . ." Seeking to soften and transgress the boundaries of an androcentric subjectivity, Irigaray might speak either for process or poststructuralist challenges to the "separative self" and its language games.[15] So my (admittedly ironic) gender positionings of both postmodernisms must remain a bit queer; that is, ambiguously bounded, subject to hybrid identities and reciprocal permeabilities.

Porous Proposition

The particular proposition proposed by this anthology will partake, like any "complex propositional feeling," of a hybrid series of events unfolding within a nexus of affinity and difference. It partakes of the uncertainty that Whitehead relished in quantum theory as in his definition of a proposition: a tale "that perhaps might be told about particular actualities" (PR, 256). The tale, familiar in its contours, but requiring restatement from the present perspective, runs this way:

Toward the end of the second Christian millennium, Western philosophy had unleashed successive and simultaneous waves of resistance to the "self-same": to the metaphysical premise of "substance," *ousia*, as the simple unity of self-identically subsisting subjects and objects. Among anglophone thinkers, Whitehead and his school posed the major alternative, while the Nietzschean-Heideggerian-French lineage developed a continental antiessentialism. The one fights substance with *process,* the other with *difference*. Both have exercised a wide interdisciplinary appeal largely outside of philosophy proper. And both can claim the title "postmodern" with ancestral legitimacy.[16]

The profound parallels may still startle those who have the patience to untangle both skeins of arcane vocabulary. Both jubilantly privilege becoming over being, difference over sameness, novelty over conservation, intensity over equilibrium, complexity over simplicity, plurality over unity, relation over substance, flux over stasis. Both repudiate the inherited "truth-regimes" of unifying metanarratives, which objectify reality from the vantage point of a stable, underlying subject. Both deconstruct—or, in Whitehead's language, "criticize the abstraction of"—any essentialized substance or subject. And both accomplish this critique by exposing the Western linguistic structures

that fabricate the illusory common sense of what Derrida calls "self-presence" and what Whitehead calls "the subject-predicate form of proposition."

But of course poststructuralism is one long revolt against the authority of metaphysical first principles. By contrast, many process thinkers continue to presume upon the metaphysical truth and unexceptionable explanatory power of Whitehead's categoreal scheme. Poststructuralism maintains a playful cadence of ironic indirection, dispersive of any propositional claims and shunning holistic, unifying language. Process thinkers continue to construct additions to their integrative worldview, in which the many do not merely multiply but become one. If only for an instant. The latter understands its claims to correspond more-or-less, however imperfectly, with things-in-themselves: language constructs *from* something, the nature of which we can infer by a process of speculation and description. Poststructuralism has, with Kant, nothing to say about any *Ding an sich*—except about the self-deceptions of language when it claims to discover the "pure presence" of anything. So language cannot "represent"—make present again, mirror—that real presence: linguistic construction goes "all the way down," because any substratum of "common experience" can itself only be recognized *in and by language*.[17]

So far these differences of rhetorical style and self-definition, operative within the imbalance of cultural power, have obviated exploration of the massive similarities that exercise such a gravitational force on this volume. Of course it is more characteristic of the process "worldview" to seek out such divergent similitudes as grist for "contrast." I hope this characterization is not too flat or too unfair. It only recapitulates rather familiar generalizations in order to surface the width of the proposition. Put provocatively, if not apocalyptically: The current waves of process and poststructuralist thought may, for all their inequality, be quite equally in peril. They may be in danger of exhausting their own respective modes of resistance to the systems of "the selfsame." Might we suggest that precisely inasmuch as reconstructive and deconstructive postmodernisms remain poised in impermeability to each other—however oblivious each may be of the other's existence—they will both tend to an ineffectual scholasticism? If they cannot honor each other's "approach"—not as schools or fronts of thought but rather as *styles of responsible engagement*—they may lose their own creative edges. In other words, without each other, each might lose the world.

Here, when one needs to warn against the danger of world-loss, one is immediately tempted to continue the same practice of caricature that each school continually defends against. That is, as soon as we name the problems—problems that may dissipate when one studies the primary texts, but that continue to function, to "circulate" in the Foucaultian way of knowledge-regimes—we risk a form of that irresponsibility. But certain generalizations that do not apply to the primary texts remain descriptive at the level of widely dispersed discursive effects, rhetorical styles, and propositional feelings.

The ontophobia, the self-proclaimed ethical undecidability, the ecological indifference, the anti-essentialist "witch-hunt" of which so many progressive scholars accuse deconstruction in America—these problems have not decreased with widespread tenure.[18] They accompany a general cultural tendency toward political burnout and failed coalitions, with concurrent academic regression to specialized, if differently disciplined, discourse.[19] More importantly, they symptomatize a tendency, born of exhaustion with the conventions of representation rather than of political indifference, to replace the world with language. In the meantime language for "world"—cosmos, universe, totality, worldview, nature, community, and perception (sensory and extra)—has all been helpfully problematized but often irresponsibly abandoned.[20]

Similarly, reconstructive postmodernity sacrifices broader academic credibility, attractive power, and therefore its own potential for broad-based cultural alliances to the extent that it backs itself into a metaphysical corner. It might with its confident system—assuredly an open and growing one—capture "some of life in its meshes" but lose access to the cultural world in which it must test and change its language.[21] The profound pragmatism of the reconstructive project will be best served by a livelier sense of rhetorical strategy.

The former by its élan for negation and dissipation, the latter by its dogged insistence on the language of rationalist ontology, hurt their own capacities to make a difference (however you spell it). Clearly, the editors of and the contributors to this volume and its series do not think such an outcome inevitable. They propound not some romantic union of the two schools, by which love redeems the world. But more modestly, they practice a discourse of the overlap, an interstitial language in which a certain regenerative flow becomes possible.

The positive form of this complex propositional feeling would read as follows: The "multiple contrast" (Whitehead) generated in this volume exemplifies the potential of a "disjunctive conjunction" (Deleuze) of the poststructural and process trajectories. They will not merge. Certain coverings—by which the one wards off metaphysics, by which the other shields it—can however become *more porous toward that which they fear*. Key concepts can, like pores, get unclogged. A whole membrane of relevant concepts are becoming more permeable in the present anthology. In what follows, I will raise the question of two such conceptual pores, which remain pivotal to the interchange constitutive of what might be called "a process poststructuralism," or a "deconstructive cosmology."

Metaphysics: Foundation vs. Ground

While studying in Claremont, I happened to see the first *Star Wars*. For more than a decade afterward I suffered from a recurrent phantasm: whenever I would be trying to put some problem of life or theology in process terms, an

image of Luke Skywalker's control panel would flash through my mind. It was as if I were flying this little ship at incredible speeds, through impossible intergalactic labyrinths, steering by the radar grid on his screen. Actual entities, prehensions, the primordial nature of God, the subjective aim . . . these categories seemed to be serving as the grid by which my Skywalker-persona zoomed in on its conceptual target. As a slow, pacific, low-tech, and earthbound feminist, I would swat the image away. But the "initial aim" often taunts like a trickster. Was it mocking my dependence on metaphysics for getting around in the universe? Was it cartooning my crypto-foundationalism?

I do not confuse process theology in the Claremont mode with the Force of *Star Wars,* its geophilic cosmology with "spacey" journeys of groundless abstraction, its embracing vision with any certain or self-enclosed system. Nonetheless, I cannot miss my own temptation to cling to these categories as though they comprised a foundation—*fond* in French, meaning "bottom"—a lowest ground of belief upon which one can build a stable edifice of thought, life, and faith. Do the categories of Whitehead comprise a foundation? Certainly Whitehead uses the language of "metaphysics" to justify an all-inclusive system of concepts, which is to encompass in its text the description, indeed the very "texture," of all possible experience. He summons the pantheon of rationality, coherence, consistency, platonic realism, and system, which seems at best passé, or worse, totalizing and reactionary. Inconveniently for lovers of both process and poststructuralism, one cannot erase this metaphysical terminology like some dirty secret. The text insists. But does Whitehead's commitment to a certain sense of "metaphysical categories" arrayed in systematic form amount to a *foundation*, even if he does not use that word?

We might define foundationalism as "the powerful thesis that our beliefs can indeed be warranted or justified by appealing to some item of knowledge that is self-evident or beyond doubt."[22] Foundationalism becomes a problem for postmodern thought inasmuch as it appeals to the certainty or self-evidence of first principles to justify belief. Revelation, reason, or any combination might be asked to deliver such first principles, which then serve as the firm foundations upon which to build the arguments of the system. It can thus stand on its own, with a certain architectural self-sufficiency. Undoubtedly Whiteheadianism serves for many of its disciples ipso facto as such a foundation. But that much may also be true of the feverishly antifoundationalist disciples of poststructuralism. Does Whitehead himself, however, provide such warrants?

If so, how can one account for his insistent, indeed systematic, assault on precisely such epistemic certainties? "Philosophy has been haunted by the unfortunate notion that its method is dogmatically to indicate premises which are severally clear, distinct, and certain; and to erect upon those premises a deductive system of thought" (PR, 8). This is not just an appeal for intellectual modesty. It is as clear a statement of antifoundationalism as one can find

prior to the formulation of the problem in current terms. If some of us are tempted to deduce our own utterances from his scheme, we are clearly violating its own first principles. Those first principles, while not simply unknowable, require the "asymptotic approach" (PR, 4) of an ongoing "imaginative experiment" (PR, 5).

With his good-humored radicalism, Whitehead went about puncturing the false certainties of philosophy: "the chief error in philosophy is overstatement" (PR, 7). He did not substitute for them new and improved certainties. Rather, he launched into the very space of metaphysics his "categoreal scheme," an entire fleet of "metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap." His "tentative formulations" voyaging on "an experimental adventure" inscribe within that discursive space an alternative matrix of concepts "systematic" enough—that is, organically intercohering—to prevent, one might say, the recourse to conventional habits (PR, 4-9). Contrary to the pursuit of a principle of Sameness by which the new, the other, the strange can be domesticated or excluded, Whitehead practices an empiricism, which demands revision of, rather than reduction to, the system. "We habitually observe by the method of difference" (PR, 4). This difference, as will become manifest in the course of these chapters, has much in common with the Derridean and Deleuzean strategies of difference, even while it stresses more than the former the role of perception and the positive potentialities of science and religion in the production of difference itself. Even of science he argues, as though anticipating Irigaray's fluid plea, that "the systematization of knowledge cannot be conducted in watertight compartments" (PR, 10). Whitehead thawed out the metaphysical tradition of the West, melting the unchanging, eternal Reality of its Being into the turbulent flow of an endless Becoming. "Creativity," as the first principle, cannot constitute a foundation as just defined. But then his disciples are ever tempted to cling to his tropes like life rafts amid the very flux that his philosophy has unleashed. Irony abounds.

So while some of us would prefer to de-emphasize the currently dysfunctional terminology of "metaphysic" and "ultimate generality," we might nonetheless find Griffin's key argument for the nonfoundationalism of his own Whiteheadianism compelling. He develops "Whitehead's antifoundationalist belief that epistemology cannot be discussed in isolation from metaphysics." Whitehead is in this move making a specific case against Cartesian and Lockean epistemologies of representation. Griffin's contention is intriguing: "By prehending our bodies, we thereby indirectly apprehend the actualities beyond our bodies *insofar as those actualities beyond our bodies are present within actualities comprising our bodies*."[23] Put less technically, by learning again to think with our bodies, we discern what a complex and porous community they comprise; and how they themselves open out into the endless interrelatedness of their worlds. It is a matter of letting the body—as a densely hermeneutical embodiment of world—back into the philosophical

heritage that had variously but consistently excluded it. Indeed it had most perniciously excluded it by its insistence on the foundational role of sense perception—hence the importance, which one might too readily miss, of amplifying Whitehead's broader, sometimes mysterious ("vague," "primitive," "obscure," etc.), but rather concrete understandings of perception.

Let us fill out the earlier citation of Irigaray: "How can we still approach each other if there are only coverings which are not porous enough, and *a void between those who no longer dwell in their bodies*?" (emphasis mine). Irigaray seems to be directing her plaint at theorists in her own discursive tradition, perhaps indeed at a simulacrum of Jacques Lacan. It would be a serious mistake to assume that, despite all the feminisms reading the text as body and body as text, deconstruction more successfully inhabits its bodies than any metaphysics. The difficulty in finding the conceptual pores with which to open language into the speech and the silence of the body, when concepts are constructed "all the way down," is notorious. Judith Butler's poignant "what about the body, *Judy*?" marks the trouble at the heart of feminist poststructuralism.[24] Griffin's process thought may more consistently avoid both essentialism and the linguistic idealism to which deconstruction is prone, while actually performing a "solution"—but in overtly metaphysical terms that will remain incompatible with poststructuralism.

What shall those of us do, however—those of us for whom reconstructive postmodernism does not beat, absorb, or supersede deconstruction—with the Whiteheadian language of metaphysical system? Of course we can contextualize it historically and defend it on its own terms, as Griffin does. We can also strategically deemphasize the language that is not pragmatically useful, as John B. Cobb Jr. has done in his construction of a Christian theology and of a life-centered economics. I want to make a further suggestion: we can read Whitehead's most stubbornly rationalist language as a deconstructive strategy. His antifoundationalist scheme is based on intricate readings of the key texts of substantialist metaphysics. His categories enter the cracks that fissure the thought of Plato, Aristotle, John Locke, René Descartes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and Benedict de Spinoza; they probe with uncanny precision, and remain—precisely because they fit well enough—like a wedge, which, once inserted, prevents the closure by which the system contains and sustains itself. Or in Derrida's language, like a hinge, "brissure"—at once "fracture," "fragment," and "joint" (OG, 65).

In that case however we must understand deconstruction itself more like its originator means it, and less like his English-speaking disciples (a literary assembly, remarkably free of philosophical education) use it: that is, like an inside job. "Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to

its own work" (OG, 41). So of course Whitehead's system—as system—"falls prey" to its own antifoundationalist dynamism.

It is not just that Whiteheadians will commit fallacies of misplaced concreteness with the very abstractions Whitehead designed to counter such overgeneralizations. We will need to continue to *risk* metaphysics. (Cf. Isabelle Stengers's chapter in this book on putting oneself at "risk" in the peace-making process.) That is, even if we experiment with postmetaphysical, postontological, or posttheological varieties of Whiteheadianism (as some of us do, to very different effect, in this volume[25]), the continuation of that which we find indispensable in the process project will entail, to distort Gayatri Spivak's famous phrase, a certain "strategic metaphysics." We need to speak about "world." We cannot always be coy. We need to think as bodies very concretely about our earth context and with our communities. We need operable language, theological and cultural, with which to confront the hegemony of a transnational economy bent on consuming world, earth, and community. For all its own formidable barrage of technical language, process thought, perhaps due to its dependence upon the progressive educational arms of religious institutions, still evinces a robust capacity to interact with social movements (e.g., trying to arise from the *fin-de-millennium* "battle of Seattle"). *Au contraire,* French-based theory may in the United States exercise a more purely academic range of effects.

We need not argue about degrees of political impact, however. Rather the question remains methodological. Whitehead now belongs to the origins of a past century. Many of us do not consider that which is precious in his philosophy indelibly yoked to impressive but dated linguistic strategies. Defense of traditional metaphysical language, like polemics against deconstruction, exhausts "the flow which attracts us." We may let certain codes fade into history (precisely not oblivion). But others—the language of prehension, event, concrescence, actual entity, and "interconnected relations of difference in contrast"—remain fresh enough to operate "from the inside"—as lures to feeling for a poststructuralist process cosmology. But what is it to which we are appealing, if not a foundation, if not necessarily a metaphysical template, with such interrelated figures of speech?

We might consider, for example, a distinction thus far usually missed, or actively denied: that between foundation and ground. Antifoundationalists tend to use the terms synonymously. This is partly a problem of the particularity of the French language: *fond,* in *fondation,* translates as both "bottom" and "ground." Therefore one can understand a tendency to con/found the two, which equates antifoundationalism with groundlessness. However in English the terms remain distinct: a foundation designates that which is sunk into the ground. The cultural artifact is not the same as the earth-ground that is given—however much we name, form, construct from, poison, erode, or ignore the earth.

Too literal, such terrestrial "ground?" *Pardon,* but I think the distinction opens up ground that cannot be ceded. It is precisely as metaphor that the conflation of ground with foundation becomes dangerous. Diane Elam performs a standard instance of the literary-critical posture of groundlessness: arguing valiantly for a coalitional feminism of "shared ethical commitments" within Derridean terms, she ends up proposing faithfully "a groundless solidarity" within a "politics of undecidability." For, as feminists, "we are all concerned for women, yet we don't know what they are." She merrily expands the claim to this axiom: "what binds us together is the fact that we don't know."[26] While one can readily unpack what is actually meant, the use of these gross but slick overstatements would benefit from some Whiteheadian deconstruction of their abstraction. Decision is confused with certainty, as ground is reduced to foundation. This is the sort of irresponsible indifference to the difference that language makes—all in the name of *différance*—that sends many back into the arms of Mama metaphysics. But then this is not Derrida, but a disciple. Unlike Sophocles' Athena, I do not in general "prefer the male." I simply cannot imagine a politically meaningful public to whom I would want to propose this "groundless feminism." It merges with deconstruction at precisely the point at which feminism offers its more fruitful resistances.[27]

Anyone serious about feminism or any other form of resistance to power will surely want to offer ground—to give reasons, to cede turf, and to remember the shared earth that provides the one common ground in which all of our contexts nest. Might the bodily and earthly ground—*adamah*—be permitted to offer itself as trope for the most embracing perspective in which *earthlings* live, breathe, and have our discourses? Or must we continue to mistake "ground" for fixity, the self-present, the changeless—for the Same? Yet the dirt shakes, shifts, creeps, and crawls. "Neither humus nor humans are humble at all."[28] Literal ground, recycled stardust like us, oozes with life-forms. Yet nothing is more sustaining of life than the densely relational, *relative* stabilities of the spinning earth-ball. I propose this apparently retrograde metaphor for the shared project precisely *not* as a shared foundation, but as a possible perspective in which to read our differences. So no set of texts will provide the ground, but they will variously inhabit and honor it. Their concepts will either attend to their own "ground," the earthly habitat that endlessly and differently gives rise to thought, or they will drift in the conventional groundlessness that has provided the very foundation of *classical* metaphysics.

Here we share the series' (counter)apocalyptic urgency: in an epoch of accelerating ecological suicide, the cultural elite of our species surely will not want to continue unwittingly the long tradition of degrading the earth, of taking *mater* for granted, of ignoring the suffering of bodies, of constructing ground once again as the inert, the lifeless, the dull, the opaque to knowledge—that which without *logos* does not exist. Theologically the classical tradition, which constitutes the very heart of what Heidegger and Derrideans call

"ontotheology," grounded itself in the denial of this ground: in the release of thought into ever more transcendent abstractions, ever more unchecked generalizations, ever more transcendental subjects. So might there be a possibility for something like an intentionally *grounded* poststructuralism? Could this ground not support the wide-ranging dynamisms of the Deleuzean "nomadology," which will figure in this volume—for do nomads not inhabit the earth with all the more poignant versatility?[29]

If we cannot converse within the reverberation of the moving earth, I suspect the barrier of the Same will continue to loom too large between these schools. But there is ground for hope. For instance, Donna J. Haraway, the most influential voice within the deconstructive movement of science studies, proposes not another groundless anti-ontology but a "dirty ontology." Standing in the gulf between scientific and poststructuralist discourse, a margin not dissimilar to the present one, she—in the persona of the "modest witness"—offers one of the rare moments of the desired distinction:

> S/he is about telling the truth, giving reliable testimony, guaranteeing important things, providing good enough grounding—while eschewing the addictive narcotic of transcendental foundations—to enable compelling belief and collective action. (MW, 22)[30]

We may impute at least an intuitive convergence between the dirt and the ground of Haraway's multidimensional argument. The figure of the "modest witness" embodies a challenge to scientific overgeneralization while claiming the moral and empirical obligation to observe in the fullest and most worlded sense. Not coincidentally this challenge will turn out to be well versed in Whitehead.

The Trace of Correspondence

I hope that the antifoundationalist reading of Whitehead appears plausible and a bit surprising. Its helpfulness would lie in its capacity to help us feel our complex, continuous bodily exchange with our worlds, and thus to intensify our sense of ourselves as fellow creatures nesting within the precarious and precious ecologies of our carbon-based complexity.[31] But this feeling and this intensity will not translate into the wider coherence it politically seeks, without *minding its language*: that is, bearing its own linguistic constructivity always in mind. Yet on the whole, we of the process heritage tend to speak as though we are describing the world-as-it-is, albeit humbly and imperfectly. However practical such realistic rhetoric may be in nonacademic contexts, however insistent Whitehead was upon his "platonic realism," however well we may distinguish naive from "pluralistic realism" (PR, 78), and however

many battles we can win by appeal to common sense, we forfeit the possibility of "common ground" with deconstruction if we tread heavily through the post-Kantian marshlands. On this path, the widespread impatience of process thought with issues of language, rhetoric, and textuality only makes matters worse. The alternative is not, I trust, to get mired in linguistic narcissism. But we may perhaps pick up our text and walk. The chapters in this volume perform various forms of this double attention—to language and to the world. Each of them moves closer to a deconstructive critique of linguistic representation, and moves there on *process* grounds.

Does treading more lightly on language mean, as some would surely suppose, that process thinkers should give up the idea of correspondence? Certainly the Heideggerian influence on continental philosophy has delegitimated the theory that language corresponds more or less truthfully with reality. Yet especially in his critique of Rorty, Griffin has advanced a careful argument in favor of correspondence. Rorty (with the sweeping simplification to which the American reception is prone) has reduced all sense of linguistic reference to the world beyond language to correspondence, and reduced correspondence to the fallacious "mirror of nature."[32] Whiteheadians of course also repudiate any foundationalist claim that language can with transparency or certainty mirror anything (except at best itself, in the form of analytic tautologies). But to smash the mirror is not the same as to cut the link between language and the world within which language takes place.

We may perhaps agree that our Logos creates the world-as-we-*know*-it. Indeed we may agree that our understandings and our sensations of the world are radically constructed—constructed at least as far down as our consciousness can reach. Whatever we *know together* ("con/sciousness" is, after all, always collective) we have already prefabricated together. Whitehead's theory of symbolic reference surely suggests a process of reference so elaborately indirect that it can justify no one-to-one correspondence, no mirroring or naive realism.

But we do not believe that our language has created the world-as-it is. This would be a mere replication of the *creatio ex nihilo*—which Whiteheadians do not even grant to God![33] Moreover, we do not just *believe* that something exceeds and precedes language. With the intriguing doctrine of causal efficacy, we learn to attend to the very filaments of memory, visceral feeling, and mood that make us aware of "a circumambient world of causal operations" (PR, 176). In this causal preconsciousness—for we can never "know" the cause and therefore mirror its process in a concept—is embedded the link to the world in its immediacy. Our concepts cannot therefore directly correspond to anything beyond concepts. Yet this indirection remains critically important to Whitehead. It is the entire basis of his critique of Kantian subjectivism as well as of foundational objectivisms (and thus pivotal for Griffin's argument). Whitehead's language about this prelinguistic modality remains striking:

> In the dark there are vague presences, doubtfully feared; in the silence, the irresistible causal efficacy of nature presses itself upon us; in the vagueness of the low hum of insects in an August woodland, the inflow into ourselves of feelings from enveloping nature overwhelms us; in the dim consciousness of half-sleep, the presentations of sense fade away, and we are left with the vague feelings of influences from vague things around us. (PR, 176)

It may be that the efficacy of Whitehead's theory of causal efficacy rests on this sort of stylistic shift: he moves into a language of poetic invocation, appropriate to a subject matter, which, if reduced to its categories, presents a rather flimsy platform upon which to build the whole nondualist edifice.

It is not as though poststructuralism, especially where it joins with psychoanalysis, has been lacking in such attention to the preconscious. Indeed it benefits from the scaffold of decades more of Freudianism to lean upon. Let me just allude to Kristeva's concept of the "semiotic," which cries out for interchange with Whitehead's odd doctrine of "causal feeling." She identifies the semiotic (by contrast to the Lacanian "symbolic") with Plato's cosmological concept of the "chora": "the chora precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm." She reads this cosmological concept into a theory of the unconscious. The notion of the subject thus proposed "will allow us to read in this rhythmic space, which has no thesis and no position, the process by which significance is constituted. Plato himself leads us to such a process when he calls this receptacle or chora nourishing and maternal, not yet unified. . . ."[34] Of course, for Kristeva the semiotic remains a "psychosomatic modality of the signifying process"[35]—the emphasis being upon the presymbolic generation of language, not upon the impact of the world. But this is a matter of differing emphases: for Whitehead the point of the description of causal feeling is also, precisely, to account for symbolization through the traces of a rhythmic presymbolic process.

This introduction can only raise and complicate these questions of the relation of Whitehead's theory of language to that of deconstruction. Griffin considers "eliminative" in Rorty, Taylor, and their followers, that which purges from theory the causal links, however dark, dim, and presymbolic, to the world; that which in short erases the traces of the world in language. If we underscore his own *proviso*—that he does not claim that his critique applies to a thinker such as Derrida[36]—we find ourselves in agreement with this criterion of postmodernism. Therefore we need not identify the eliminative with the deconstructive. Certainly the leading female poststructuralists, Kristeva and Irigaray, seek more to protect the presymbolic, the presensory (especially the previsual) from the "specular" transparency of the normative Western and certainly male gaze.[37] But Derrida, who also disavows the "phallogocentric" gaze, may provide a clear test case on the question of the reference of language to world.

Setting aside for the time being the mere term *correspondence,* what might Derrida's critique of the "transcendental Signified" entail for process thinkers? This question will be taken up more fully in Joseph A. Bracken's and Luis G. Pedraja's chapters. We may at least indicate the problem. Derrida's formative deconstruction of the binary of signifier and signified comprises an argument that all that is signified also signifies: that there is no logos, no ultimate subject, no consciousness, or Presence or Being, where the signifying chain stops; that is, no Platonic, changeless original of which all signs are mere imitations. As there is no pure Signified, there is also no pure Origin: signified also signifies; cause is also effect. This news should not surprise Whiteheadians, though the language and its tones may. Derrida used the metaphor of "text" to indicate all that signifies, all sign-systems—including especially nonphonetic ones, even nonhuman ones such as genetic codes. The argument, however, issued in the claim that "there is no world outside the text,"[38] a phrase since chanted as a mantra of literary criticism. If it means that there is literally no world outside of language, we reconstructors truly must join the chorus of critics appalled at this unrelenting linguistic idealism and its solipsistic textualism—at this festival of writers worshiping "Pure Writing."

The critique of *logocentrism,* Derrida's term for the Platonized understanding of language as something exterior to that which it signifies, has, however, been widely misconstrued as what he calls the error of "linguisticism."[39] Derrida sought liberation not from the nonlinguistic, not even from the theistic, but rather from the quasi-theological claims of the transcendental Signified. Standing in for the divine Logos in its mid-Platonic incarnation in classical theism, this unchanging, intelligible, fixed reference of speech oriented Western philosophy, according to Derrida, even structuralist linguistics. *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte* in the context of Derrida's text does not mean there is nothing outside the text, but rather that there is no significance outside of context; and that the context itself is comprised of signifiers. Derrida means to dispute "*the tranquil assurance that leaps over the text toward its presumed content, in the direction of the pure signified*" (OG, 159, his emphasis). Every element of meaning of which we can say anything is enmeshed in a "web of significations," that is, in relations rather than substantives corresponding to substances. Thus he is trying to rescue the context of the text from the violent abstraction of representation—of the illusion that language makes "present again" the thing. The critique of representation however cannot be read as repudiation of reference to the world. Derrida himself has become understandably impatient with the misunderstanding: "It is totally false to suggest that deconstruction is a suspension of reference." His own terminological preference would be however not "reference" or "correspondence," and certainly not representation with its associations with the "metaphysics of Presence" (substantialism), but rather "the other of language":

> I never cease to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declara-
> tion that there is nothing beyond language, that we are imprisoned in
> language; it is, in fact, saying the exact opposite. The critique of logo-
> centrism is above all else the search for the "other" and the "other of
> language."[40]

Because that other of language only appears in language as language, Derrida's
project—incommensurable even if after all not incompatible with White-
head's—contents itself with the investigation of the "traces" in language itself.
If we take Derrida at his word (how else?) when he proposes the concept of
"trace" as "strategic nickname" for *différance*—following Bracken's clue that
we read *différance,* Derrida's substitute for, and deferral of, a first principle, as
"creativity"—we may find more positive analogies between deconstruction
and Whitehead's much earlier critique of the Same of modernity.

   "Trace" names *différance* when it conveys something ancient, a primor-
dial process of signification, an "archiwriting," "'older' than the . . . truth of
Being" (MP, 22). By trace he does not mean graphic marks of human language
but rather something "which must be thought *before the opposition of nature
and culture*, animality and humanity, etc., [and] belongs to the very movement
of signification" (OG, 70, my emphasis). Because of its quasi-metaphysical
implications, its insinuation of the primordiality of *différance,* this is a side of
Derrida's thinking largely ignored by his disciples. Yet it should appear evident
to us that this critique of logocentrism does not reduce signified to signifier any
more than it reduces nature to culture or world to text. Rather, it exposes the
self-deceptions of dualisms that pretend to derive language from a nonlinguis-
tic and unchanging original, which language can re/present. That presence, or
substance, subjects "the other of language" to the inflations of a language that
authorizes itself as representation of the same. In short, Derrida has reinvented
for an other and later context the fallacy of misplaced concreteness.

   If we would temporarily put Derrida *en procès*—letting resonate here
Kristeva's *sujet en procès,* the double entendre of the French phrase, which
means both "in process" and "on trial"—we must come again to the question
of the sensory. Derrida's argument with Edmund Husserl comprises another
aspect of the quasi-metaphysical thought lost upon most literary-critical users
of deconstruction. "Since the trace is the intimate relation of the living present
to its outside, the opening to exteriority in general, to the nonproper, etc., the
temporalization of sense is, from the outset, a 'spacing.'" Thus "archewriting
is at work at the *origin of sense*."[41] In other words, we find in Derrida a felic-
itous analog to Whitehead's and Griffin's arguments against the primordiality
of sense perception: sense is already inscribed, interpreted, or, in Whitehead's
terms, *abstracted*. Indeed Derrida's "spacing" as exteriority puts space in time
but also temporalizes space. This exteriority will become the "deferred pres-
ence" of *différance* itself: "*Différance* as temporization, *différance* as spacing.

How are they to be joined?" (MP, 9). Derrida has already suggested the answer, in the notion of "the becoming-time of space" and "the becoming-space of time" (MP, 8). We may consider vis-à-vis the problem of language and perception Whitehead's notion of "the presented locus" as a "common ground" between causal efficacy and presentational immediacy (sense perception):[42] "It must be remembered that the presented locus has its fourth dimension of temporal thickness 'spatialized' as the specious present of the percipient" (PR, 169). Despite the unappetizing technicality of both texts at this point, the convergence seems inviting. Might there not be significance in how both thinkers at once temporalize space and spatialize time in their articulations of that which always already imprints and precedes sense perception?

Derrida's delicate analysis of the present as nonpresence, as not constituted in the purity of substantial self-presence transmitted in the habits of *res cogitans,* yields instead a fractured tracery of past and future not incompatible with Whitehead's composite and interrelational "drop" of the present. Moreover, as Derrida rules out any possibility of a one-to-one correspondence between language and thing, by which one could merely mirror, so surely does Whitehead. Whitehead's analysis of the fragile emergences of consciousness as a spatiotemporal effect of contrasts between past and future surely precludes what Derrida calls "Presence," or its re/presentation in language. Indeed Whitehead anticipates the precise contours of the critique of representation: "Anyhow 'representative perception' can never, within its own metaphysical doctrine, produce the title deeds to guarantee the validity of the representation of fact by idea" (PR, 54).

If then we sense a convergence of criticisms in the repudiation of representation, what is to be said of correspondence? Must the reconstructive postmodern argument for a nonfoundational theory of correspondence remain incompatible with the radical critique of representation as logocentrism? Certainly Griffin has protected correspondence from its reduction to Rorty's mirror—to an imitation of reality by language. Whitehead's notion of proposition had inserted a wedge between language and reality, guarding against any such unmediated representation.[43]

By returning to the root sense of "correspondence" we might release another set of its resonances. The etymology of correspondence can help to free it from the onus of a one-to-one and one-way relation of signifier and signified. The word, as H. Richard Niebuhr notes in his articulation of a "responsible self," originally denotes a relational activity of co/responding, that is, of "answer[ing] to something else in terms of fitness," as the size of the nose may be "responsible" to the head.[44] First, therefore, it suggests an aesthetic sense of fit, and then an ethical sense of responsibility. So might we consider in a process-poststructural sense of correspondence an active and constitutive interrelation of language and world, in which the truth we tell is measured in the co/responsibility we produce? That is, the correspondence of our language

to its world will be experienced in the beauty and the justice of the relations we answer to?

Perhaps we may consider such a hermeneutic of correspondence as a grounding referentialism suitable to a dirty ontology: it may not suit many Derrideans but it does answer to what many Whiteheadians find beautiful and just in deconstruction. At any rate, it has opened the second node, brissure, or conceptual pore, for the present state of imbalanced attraction.

The Chaosmos

> But how then can we proceed in philosophy if there are all these layers that sometimes knit together and sometimes separate? Are we not condemned to attempt to lay out our own plane, without knowing which planes it will cut across? Is this not to reconstitute a sort of chaos? That is why every plane is not only interleaved but holed, letting through the fogs that surround it, and in which the philosopher who laid it out is in danger of being the first to lose himself.
>
> —Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*

Thus Deleuze and Guattari on the difficulties that confront the project of this very collaboration. If we do not seek to subsume the deconstructive under the reconstructive moment, the chapters in this volume begin to constitute a third space: not in the abyss "between" two established methodologies so much as in the overlap, in the interleaf. But does such a process poststructuralism or a deconstructive cosmology then begin to lay out what Deleuze and Guattari have called "a plane of immanence" of its own? Or does it merely unfold certain implications of process thought, as already process theology has done so munificently? Perhaps such explication, as long as it does not appeal to Whitehead's scheme as a foundation, is always already its own creation. Such a creation takes place of course not from nothing but amid the chaos that fogs our lenses. In the early attempt to construct a third or planar space—neither metaphysics nor deconstruction, nor opposed to either—we may only be more acutely aware of the danger.

Thinkers of the French tradition (for whom the etiquette "constructivism" is more properly applied than "deconstruction"), whose abstruse work is only recently coming into prominence, Deleuze and Guattari are not recommending disorderly thinking but rather a constant confrontation of chaos. They understand the function of philosophy to be the production of concepts. A concept "crosscuts the chaotic variability and gives it consistency [reality]." Consistency? Reality? Whiteheadian ears will be perking up. "A concept is therefore a chaoid state *par excellence;* it refers back to a chaos rendered consistent, become Thought, mental chaosmos" (WP, 208). Might the chaosmos symbolize at once the form and the content of the third space sketched out in this volume? Perhaps then we may be together constituting a speculative