‘Out-of-jointedness’:
From Shakespeare to Derrida and Deleuze

Few Shakespearean phrases have had the fortune of the couplet that closes Hamlet’s first act. After the hero’s “wild and whirling words” and the weird pacifying of the “old mole” under the floorboards, Hamlet suddenly does a volte-face from delirium to diagnosis: “The time is out of joint,” says he. “O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right.”

The latest episode in the saga of “out-of-jointedness” as time-travelling metaphor is its resurgence in modern French philosophy (in Bataille on Nietzsche, Deleuze on Kant, Derrida on Marx). If such is its resonance down the ages and across continents it is because the phrase carries with it as an undertow, is the symptom, the point of emergence – in the literal sense, the ana-morphosis – of something other than most accounts have subsequently furnished of it. Hic et ubique, like Hamlet’s Ghost, this metaphor is a representation which, in its root form as in its ramifications, haunts Shakespeare’s opus, and is, I suggest, only exercised at its close, because it belongs (though not in the Freudian sense) to ein anderes Schauspiel which is the measure and the mark of its historical moment, but which is also what fuels it for the future. What, then, does Shakespeare mean by “out of joint”? Or rather, to take Terry Hawkes’ point, what is meant or signified by it?

In 2002, Lukacs’ pupil Agnes Heller devoted an entire book to our metaphor, The Time is Out of Joint: Shakespeare as Philosopher of History, announcing a prior “unpack[ing] the sentence” and defining the title’s problematic as: “To be born to put time right is Hamlet’s fate, his destiny.” “Set,” alas, is not the same as “put” – something, given the historical moment, which the Elizabethans heard loud and clear, for in none of the various, some notably foul, states of the text (and Hamlet is one of the most revised) does the metrically possible “put” appear. Why, and its consequences, are the subject of this essay.

3 Heller 11.
4 Heller 6.
What is certain is that never, in all the myriad mutations which constellate drama, is a Shakespearean joint – whatever its state of repair – of the carpentering, craftsmanly or more generally construction business kind: in a word, a hinge. Not once. Nor could it be, given what is at stake. And if proof were needed, apart from reading the plays, it lies in the fact that on one occasion, and only one, Shakespeare actually goes to the length of creating a comparison with a hinge – but even there, note well, a hinge that is no hinge (when the archrebel Northumberland, in Henry IV Part 2, laments that “[his] fever-weak’ned joints, / Like strengthless hinges, buckle under life.”) The same speech, conversely, throws up the only joint in the corpus that is, indeed, not of blood and bone, but nonetheless riveted to the human joint, predicated on and exactly espousing it – the joint in the glove that is the gauntlet: (“A scaly gauntlet now with joints of steel [Northumberland continues] / Must glove this hand”).

For Shakespeare, therefore, a joint is not a hinge, and on the sole occasion when it is, it is in human form. So much for what it is not. What is it therefore (something apparently far from obvious if we look at its subsequent history, and even some of Shakespeare’s own uses)?

Symptomatic, not to say emblematic, of what is consistently convoked by the Shakespearean joint is the servant Alexander’s portrait of Ajax (who has yet to appear) in Troilus and Cressida (in Act 1, as in Hamlet):

This man, lady, [...] [is] as valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear, slow as the elephant [...] [with] joints of everything, but everything so out of joint that he is a gouty Briareus, many hands and no use, or purblind Argus, all eyes and no sight.

This is the paradigm of what is touched upon, or called up, by Shakespeare’s recourse to human jointing. In this portrait, antitmetabele and anamorphosis – that is to say out-of-jointing, respectively, in the de-constructive, then re-constructive sense –, are spectacularly two sides of the same coin: Form exists only as deformed. Which raises the question: When is a joint not a joint? The answer: Whenever Shakespeare writes it into his texts. Or, to put it another way, in Shakespeare a joint is only a joint if and when out of joint – even if the latter phrase does not necessarily appear.

Thus the most conventional evocation of joints thrown up by Shakespeare’s opus are those on the dissecting table of what the period would have identified as ‘anatomies’ (portraits): desperate ones like the York.

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[^5]: My remarks confine themselves to the drama to which Hamlet’s initial quotation belongs.
[^7]: Shakespeare Henry IV Pt. 2 145-47.
family’s anatomy of supplication in Richard II, or devastating ones like Suffolk’s anatomy of malediction in Henry VI, which verbally prefigures the out-of-jointing he wishes on his enemies: “Would curses kill as doth the mandrake’s groan / [...] My tongue should [...] / Mine eyes should [...] / My hair [should] [...] / And every joint should seem to curse and ban [...]”.10

If Shakespearean joints are not hinges, more often they are not even joints. A mangled mess, they are all the ransom Henry V is prepared to offer his victors.11 Already Suffolk’s joints were cursing mouths; in Troilus, if a joint is a wound in a war (“let him [Aeneas] die with every joint a wound”12) it is a window in a whore (“her wanton spirits look out at every joint”13) and in Achilles’ remarkable apostrophe of Hector (“Now, Hector, I have fed mine eyes on thee [...] And quoted joint by joint”14), the quotation sends the joint back to its original sense of quota pars, serving up a quasi cannibalistic helping of the hero to his slavering enemy. If Troilus offers an unrivalled range of joints, it is for a reason that leads to the core of our problematic case: it is par excellence the play of betrayal: sexual betrayal, whore-caused and war-causing, that is to say, private betrayal.

In the public sphere, betrayal is treason, and rarely if ever has the aesthetic of drama been so intimately bound up with its politics, “one’s role as theatre-goer with one’s role as subject,”15 especially since, as one historian points out, “Tudor treason tended to be not only unbelievably maladroit,” it was “more wildly fantastic than any fiction.”16 With, in addition, an excommunicated queen and papal djihad, historical figures like Marlowe and Munday17 are there to prove that dramatic text and dire treason exist in a state of near osmosis.18

11 Even though it fits the picture, I omit Othello’s (F, Q2) splint-requiring “broken joint” (ed. M.R. Ridley, 1982; London/New York: Methuen, 1958: 2.3.313) since compared to Q1’s “brawl,” it smacks decidedly of a posteriori rationalization.
12 Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida 4.1.29-30.
13 Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida 4.5.57.
14 Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida 4.5.230-2.
18 Which is why the most recent biographer of Walsingham has called this an age of terror. Derek Wilson, Sir Francis Walsingham: A Courtier in an Age of Terror (London: Constable, 2007). And if Walsingham departed this life in the 1590s, the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 is there to prove the underlying, undying pertinence of the phrase.
What vitally articulates this interface, however, is the Shakespearean joint as quintessentially out of joint. From the outset, from Titus Andronicus, and Romeo and Juliet, the place of the joint is a place of terror, unhinging joints and mind alike: Quintus shudders at “this unhallow’d and blood-stained hole [...]” that sets his joints a tremble and Juliet quails at “the terror of the place,” a “foul mouth,” like Suffolk’s, but strewn with her “forefathers’ joints.” Out of her mind since they are out of their joints, she will, she says, brain herself with a bone. This scene, like Suffolk’s curse, is placed under the sign of the mandrake, which reconfigures the place of terror as a place of execution, for it was by gallows that they supposedly grew.

Thus, the ‘fester’d joint’ York wants cut off in Richard II is his own son turned traitor; and if the latter’s mother utters the anatomy of supplication she does, it is to forestall the ultimate anatomy imposed on the traitor by the state apparatus. That apparatus, in its abstract as well as its concrete form, is most graphically adumbrated in the only Shakespearean joints which, paradoxically, are not only in place but “fine joints,” when, learning of Juliet’s recalcitrance to his “decree,” Capulet bids her, wrenching language itself out of joint, “Thank me no thankings and proud me no prouds, / But fettle your fine joints ’gainst Thursday next [...] Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.” The phrase “fine fettle” is, of course, itself disjointed and in the process sent back to its origins in German ‘Fesseln,’ chains, thereafter English “straps.” For “hurdle” here is not the vertical kind that fence fields but the horizontal, to which, having been marched down from the death cells, condemned traitors were strapped, “fettled,” and dragged through the streets at a horse’s tail towards a disjointing even more absolute than the out-of-jointing on the rack which had invariably gone before. Conveyance was by hurdle not so much because they might run away, but because, radically out of joint, walking to the gallows was, literally, not a going proposition.

In Love’s Labour’s Lost the joint surfaces in a context so seemingly conventional and contrary as to preclude its pertinence; but this very conventional-

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20 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet 4.3.34.
21 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet 4.3.51.
22 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet 4.3.52-55.
23 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet 4.3.57.
24 “That it is never or very seldome to be found growing naturally but under a gallowes” may be pooh-poohed by John Gerard in his Herbal (Bk.2, chapter 60, “Of Mandrake”) as a “doltish dream” (ed. M. Woodward, London: Bracken Books, 1985) 85; in Shakespeare the plant nevertheless comes complete with its traditionally fantastic imagery.
25 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet 3.5.138.
26 Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet 3.5.152-55.
ity paradoxically liberates the alchemy of Shakespeare’s imagination. Holofernes must find actors “worthy” enough to play the Nine Worthies before the court: “this gallant gentleman [for] Judas Maccabeus; this swain, because of his great limb or joint, shall pass Pompey the Great; the page, Hercules,”28 etc., turning the list into a nonsense on a well-worn convention. However, the unarticulated proximity between Judas Maccabeus and “the swain with the great joint” suffices to activate the Shakespearean scenario, because the next time we hear of Judas Maccabeus he has inexplicably turned into Judas Iscariot, been labelled “[a] kissing traitor”29 and promptly dis-jointed (“Ass to the Jude ? [...] Jud-as, away.”30)

Towards the end of Shakespeare’s career, the scenario becomes more and more transparent. Already in Henry IV, though not the rackmaster, it is the constables about to whip her that put Mistress Quickly’s shoulder “out of joint;”31 and as Timon opens, Apemantus wishes himself a rackmaster: “Aches contract and starve your supple joints,”32 “starve” reverting to its Saxon origin, sterben. Prospero orders his ministers to “grind their joints / With dry convulsions; shorten up their sinews / With aged cramps,”33 and in the juridically titled Measure for Measure, the wise councillor Escalus makes no bones about it: “To th’rack with him! We’ll touse you joint by joint,”34 “touse” being a good old medieval name for out-of-jointing.35

In the last analysis (historically the first), it is the “Fount of Justice,” King Richard II himself, who sets the Shakespearean joint in its defining mode between law and awe, to which we shall have cause to return in our second part, as he orders:

[...] the fearful bending of thy knee
Because we thought ourself thy lawful king
And if we be, how dare thy joints forget
To pay their awful duty to our presence.
If we be not, show us the hand of God [...]

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29 Shakespeare, Love’s Labour’s Lost 5.2.595.
30 Shakespeare, Love’s Labour’s Lost 5.2.623.
31 “The constables have delivered her over to me, and she shall have whipping enough” (Henry IV, 5.4.1-3).
35 “to touse”: “to wrench by tugging; “to pull roughly about; to drag or push about; to handle roughly” Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971).
For well we know no hand of blood and bone
Can gripe the sacred handle of our sceptre. 36

As Ajax has “joints of everything” but “everything out of joint,” it is precisely in so far as Bolingbroke’s joints are in place that they are out of place. Under absolutism, awe is critically poised between the holy and the horrendous, wryly instantiated, respectively in “the hand of God” and the “hand of blood and bone.” 37 And since Richard begins “thus long have we stood / To watch (the fearful bending of thy knee),” the scenario that rises is that of Rembrandt’s Anatomy Lesson where the cathedra obscurely figures forth the throne, and the surgeon the “regal phantasm” which did indeed loom over the torture chamber. Before his ministrations Elizabeth’s rackmaster Topcliffe told 38 those soon-to-be-out-of-joint that in his person they came face to face with the Majesty itself, and not only with maiestas, but with its ghostly father in the literal sense: “[H]e [Topcliffe] did not care for the [Privy] Counsell, for he had his authoritie from Her Majesty;” 39 indeed so close was he to her “that she had allowed him to feel her breasts, legs and belly, and said unto him, ‘Be not thease [sic!] the armes, legges and body of King Henry?’” to which Topcliffe, one of the rare male appointments to her household, answered “Yea.” 40 In Hamlet, out-of-jointedness is presided over by the ghost of his father; in Elizabeth’s England, by the ghost of hers.

Objectors may see my reading of Shakespeare’s metaphor as sensationalist, but to this Francis Barker responds in his great “essay on subjection,” The Tremulous Private Body:

The effort of historiographical denial of the situation for discourse and the body abolished by the [subsequent dispensation] is [...] [a]bove all [...] evident in the indictment for sensationalism which has so frequently secured the Jacobean’s inferior status in the calm and hygienic moral order that obtains in literary criticism, if nowhere else. In part, the charge of sensationalism goes to the substantive and recklessly bodily contents of the scenes and images [...] said to elicit the sensation [...] but also [...] it more covertly denigrates the Jacobean mode of representation

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36 Shakespeare, Richard II 3.3.73-79 (my emphasis).
37 Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida 4.5.77 and 4.5.79.
38 If, of course, we are to believe him, but even if the veracity of his declaration can no longer be proven, the thrust of its (alleged) argument is eloquent enough of his attitude to his role, as it is seemingly of others,’ or it would not have come down to us as it has.
40 A wealthy Lincolnshire gentleman, Topcliffe had taken over the role of rackmaster general on his recent capture of Robert Southwell, writing of it not to Burghley or the Privy Council but directly to Elizabeth. British Library Ms. Harley 6998, fol. 46, qtd. in Brownlow 173.
itself, which is alien to the history which succeeded it and the historiography which has refused its significance.41

In the 1986 winter issue of the review Philosophie (Paris) appeared an article by Gilles Deleuze entitled “Four poetic formulas to resume the philosophy of Kant,”42 later chapter 5 of Critique et clinique.43 The “four poetic formulas” constitute a first foray into canonic literature, even if it is a tangential one, for the logic of the problematic is one of analogy between Kant’s texts and Shakespearean characters. Deleuze’s introduction to the volume, entitled “On literature and life,” stresses from the outset the “painting and music specific to writing, [...] it is through and between words that one sees and hears,” he writes, and Beckett is adduced for his recommendation to “‘bore holes in words’ (‘forer des trous’) to see and hear ‘what lurks behind it.’”44 One is thus led to expect a degree of reactivity, if not sensitivity, to the riches “packed”45 into Shakespeare’s metaphor. What happens is rather different, and highly illuminating, for two reasons.

On the one hand, Deleuze is interested in the signifier (as opposed to the signified) only in so far as it is capable of becoming other than it is, as a site of Werden not Gewesen Sein. On the other hand, he is a great believer, like Machiavelli or the Futurists, in speed, celerità, Geschwindigkeit, hence his admiration, which I share, for his recommendation to “Out of joint” has to do not with blood and bones but with the building industry. Full stop. He begins: “Le Temps est hors de ses gonds [...]” Time, in Deleuze, is off its hinges, which is what it never is in Shakespeare.

“(H)inges,” begins Deleuze, “are the axis around which the door turns. The hinge, Cardo, indicates the subordination of time to the precise cardinal points through which the periodic movements it measures pass,” and he adds, “[a]s long as time remains on its hinges, it is subordinated to the movement of extension – of which it is the measure, the interval or the number.”46 What Deleuze envisages, “la Porte tournante [...] la porte-tambour,” resembles rather the revolving door of the Grand Hotel, the hotel being the universe, gone wonky. Hamlet’s formula marks, for Deleuze, the first major Kantian reversal – that operated in Die Kritik der reinen Vernunft – the reversal from a cardinal to an ordinal conception of time as ordering rather than or-

42 Sur quatre formules poétiques qui pourraient résumer la philosophie kantienne. (All translation from French are my own unless stated otherwise.)
44 Deleuze 9.
45 Heller 11.
46 Deleuze 40.
dered by movement, replacing a circular revolving time – the time of aeons, and of rurality, with an overarching time or aion, itself immutable, subsuming the sequential linearity of the ordinal – as nature subsumes mutability in Spenser’s “Mutability Cantos” in Book VII of The Faerie Queene. Both the tone and tenor of the Deleuzian excursus into Elizabethanism has more to do with these than with either Hamlet or his out-of-jointedness. Hamlet, concludes Deleuze, is no sceptic or doubting Thomas, but the man of the Kritik.

Given the original sense of our metaphor, what is interesting is that one of the cardinal hinges of Deleuze’s own philosophy is what he calls (after another dramatist, Antonin Artaud) the Body without Organs, Corps sans Organes, or CsO, which he writes like H2O for water, no doubt for a supplement of the precious fluidity he promotes. The major exposition of this concept, in A Thousand Plateaus, begins by quoting the ethnologist Griaule on the Urmyth of the Dogon tribe:

The problem of the organism, then, – how to ‘make’ an organism of a body? – was that of articulation [...] The Dogons [...] put the problem thus: the blacksmith’s body became an organism through some machine [...] ‘With the force of the blow, the hammer and the anvil had broken his arms and legs at the level of the elbows and knees he did not yet have. Thus he received the articulations needed for the new human form, about to sweep the earth, destined for work [...] In order to work, his arm had bent itself.47

Deleuze then focuses exclusively on the molar and the molecular in chemistry and morphogenesis: as if joints, like Hamlet’s out-of-jointing, were beyond the horizon of the usefully thinkable. Thus, if Deleuze hears the pre-organic of myth, he is (typically) deaf to the post-organic of history. And if this is revealing of his method, it is nonetheless ironic, for if the “Body without Organs” is devoutly to be wished, Hamlet’s out-of-jointedness engages directly with the problematic of his subsequent essay “For an end to judgement” (“Pour en finir avec le jugement”),48 where he opposes (and seems to prefer) the system of a finite justice as physical cruelty, in Kafka’s Strafanstalt, to the theological doctrine of judgment and infinite debt in Der Prozeß. What Deleuze does with “out of joint” is a splendid prolegomenon for reading Deleuze.

In 1993, Derrida begins his Spectres de Marx with Hamlet’s liminary ghost which becomes Marx’s “Ein Gespenst geht um in Europa: das Gespenst des Kommunismus” (opening of the Manifesto), whereafter, says Derrida, Shake-

48 This is an abbreviation of the title of Antonin Artaud’s radio play/poem “Pour en finir avec le jugement de Dieu,” which created a furore in 1947; Antonin Artaud, Oeuvres Complètes, vol. XIII (Paris: Gallimard, 1974) 65ff.
speare is to Marx as Marx is to Derrida “absolutely determining.” As in Deleuze, Derrida’s “out of joint” prefaces an entire essay, but this time a book-length one, where, no longer lifted in splendid isolation, it comes complete with twenty line context (and even a hypercorrection [time: “thime”] not, to my knowledge, to be found in any Quarto or Folio). Unlike Deleuze, however, Derrida is no contemptor of the signifier, on the contrary: For him, translators are the only real readers (“les seuls à savoir lire et écrire”). Thus, after reeling off multiple possibilities for “out of joint,” Derrida retains four: 1. the artisanal “off its hinges” (hors de ses gonds), 2. the industrial “off the rails” (détraqué), 3. the inappropriately festive “topsy turvy” (à l’envers), and 4. André Gide’s whimsical “dishonoured” (déshonoré). Derrida may have recently endowed the French language with a durable rendering of that old Hegelian chestnut, Aufhebung (henceforth relève), this, as Lear’s fool says, “is nothing.” But there is a reason for this.

Derrida’s proposal is to oppose the negativity of this out-of-jointedness, which he underlines but does not understand, with the need for a “messianic” dissymmetry in the space which was indeed the stage for Shakespeare’s scenario, that between crime and punishment: a space, writes Derrida, untainted by revenge, where justice becomes a gift (don) beyond law, computation, reparation – where, in this following Heidegger on dikè rather than Marx, the decorporealisation of our metaphor is complete in that this justice is less than harmonic, its new jointedness (Heidegger’s Fug) that of the fugue (die Fuge): Die Fuge ist der Fug (Der Spruch des Anaximander).

What is interesting is that the ultimate destination of Derrida’s Spectres de Marx is that in which Elizabethan “out-of-jointedness” arose: justice and the persecution in the flesh of an ideological minority (communism in Derrida, Catholicism in Shakespeare’s day). Under the auspices of out-of-jointedness, Derrida dedicates Spectres de Marx (1993) to the South African Chris Hani: “Je rappelle que c’est un communiste comme tel [...] qu’un émigré

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51 Including désarticulé, the exact translation of the English. In 1986, Jean-Michel Déprats, the main translator of the authoritative Gallimard “Pléiade” edition, had perfectly rendered it with the synonymous “disloqué” (Hamlet, Paris Granit), for example. One should perhaps point out that both Fanny Deleuze and Marguerite Derrida, the wives of the two philosophers, were not only fluent in English, both were professional translators (from English into French).
52 Qtd. in Derrida: 49. (Spectres de Marx or Qu’est-ce qu’une traduction relevante)
The really fascinating case, however, is the exception, an exception written in exceptional circumstances, by a man who was himself, in most things, an exception as scandalous as Hamlet’s “out-of-joint.” This is Georges Bataille, who rejected the Surrealists’ emblematic eagle for what he himself called “the old mole” burrowing in the dirt and darkness of the Menschliches, Allzumenschliches.

In 1944, Bataille wrote *On Nietzsche*, partly to defend the philosopher who marked his life from the charge of proto-fascism. In the midst of Bataille’s studiedly Nietzschean prose is a short text in six slim sequences originally entitled “Time is out of joints,” where this time Shakespeare’s metaphor is not only excerpted from poetry, but it is integrated back into it under another (first person) speaking voice.

In the corpus of the essay it is this text itself that is out of joint, embedded but enigmatic (which *On Nietzsche* is not); in poetry not prose; laconic not logorrheic; above all, uniquely written not in post-Stalingrad 1944 (February-August) like the rest of the essay, but from the abyss of early 1943 (January).

*On Nietzsche* is prefaced by John Ford’s “Enter Giovanni with a heart upon his dagger.” Like Giovanni’s heart in Ford’s play, “Time is out of joints” is the essay’s “accursed share,” *part maudite* or potlach which disjoints exchange into an excess (“beyond the settling of scores”) which is a *salto mortale* (“une nouvelle sorte de saut”) out of time (“hors du temps”) – that time, all time – a share accursed perhaps but above all assumed. Mole apart, of *Hamlet*, Bataille retains, and introjects, two things:

1. out-of-jointedness
2. the mouse, less the mouse-trap than the mouse trapped (*traquée*), dead and deleterious within, à la manière de Madame Edward and Hans Bellmer’s

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54 “I stress, it is a communist as such [...] that a Polish émigré and his accomplices [...] did to death.”
57 Bataille’s manuscript presents the poem sequence of *On Nietzsche* in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. VI (Paris: Gallimard, 1973) 98-103, as one poem entitled “Time is out of joints”; in the printed version, the Gallimard editor, however, presents the verbless “Time out of joints” as a sort of italicized warcry presiding over the sequence (97).
58 Nietzsche, *Oeuvres complètes* 105.
60 Nietzsche, *Oeuvres complètes* 98: “in my heart hides / a dead mouse // hunted / the mouse dies // and in my hand the world is dead / the candle blown out / before my
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engravings of her/him/it, engravings which are no doubt the *nec plus ultra* in the conjunction of mousetrap (or trapped mouse) and out-of-jointedness. The speaking “I” of “Time is out of joints” being him-/herself the paradoxical plenitude of this contorted *coincidentia*, the *salto mortale beyond* is the ecstatic, hallucinated mix of cosmos and crypt (not forgetting the lethal belly of the wooden horse) that occupies the ensuing stanzas.

Haunted by the blind syphilitic eyes of his paralysed father, no one more than Bataille faced the physical facts of out-of-jointing. This is why, I finally want to argue, there are two readings of Bataille’s “out of joints.” There is a weak reading (a mistake) and a strong one. The latter, firstly, follows the logic of the text: Unlike his successors,’ Bataille’s “jointing” implicates the body in time (a new kind of leap implies a new disposition/dislocation of the joints). Above all, however, it remembers that Bataille was a *chartiste*, trained in the minutiae of editing and paleography at the École des Chartes which produces the great librarians of France (where he always came out top). By his own admission there were two determining influences in his life: 1. Nietzsche, and 2. the unspeakable images of the Chinese execution by “A Hundred Pieces” of Fou-Tchou-Li in April 1905 for attempted regicide (“this photo had a decisive role in my life”), as a literalization of ex-stasy. Written on the edge of the abyss, *On Nietzsche* incorporates its own *abyme*, the ex-static cry “Time out of joints”: the punitive whittling away of the body of Fou-Tchou-Li by the executioner in 1905; that of France by the Nazis in early 1943, the unoccupied zone having just been invaded (November 1942), and the Jews and *resistants* began to be deported.

Shakespeare’s “out of joint” testifies to the enduringly obsidional mentality of such pillars of the Elizabethan régime as the Cecils and Coke; besieged, the body politic of France in 1943, like Fou-Tchou-Li, was running out of joints, of constitutive members, to be violated and cut off. Whether intended or not, what it is at work in Bataille’s plural is the scandalous return of the repressed logic of history itself.

It is as if, except in Bataille, the nucleus (the body) has been scotomized from the scenario (rather than simply the *image*) of law-and/or-awe that is the
metaphor. Only the halo of iridescence surrounding the nucleus survives: that is, of the affect generated at the point where the Real perforates the Symbolic. It seems to be this that propels the metaphor, through a glass darkly, deformedly, into the cultural future. From this point of view any approach to metaphor which does not at some point integrate some account of (human) desire, and the method of its seeming madness, myth-making or other, would suggest itself as being problematic.
Works Cited


