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***DECONSTRUCTION AS A PRAYER:  
CINDERS AND THE “WE” OF DERRIDA’S JEWISH SELF***

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**Abstract:** *At first glance, neither Judaism nor the Holocaust would appear to have a rightful place in the philosophy of Jacques Derrida. However, progressing through the chronology of Derridan texts, one quickly begins to find that issues of Jewish identity begin surfacing throughout his works, and as the philosopher aged, he began to increasingly examine both the Holocaust and his relation to it. In other words, Derrida’s later deconstructive writings regarding Jewishness and the Holocaust allow for an inner examination of his relationship to the Holocaust, and thereby his own Jewishness. In this context, both the word and the historical event of the “Holocaust” becomes a two-way mirror through which readers may attempt to view the inner workings of Derrida’s Jewish self. In his 1991 publication *Cinders*, Derrida openly aligns himself with a collective Jewish “we” by examining and deconstructing the Holocaust through the concept of ashes or cinders. Derrida both begins and ends *Cinders* with a prayer “Il y a là cendre” (Derrida, *Cinders* 21). This paper will trace the manner in which Derrida’s “prayer,” or call to the “other” suggests that cinders are both implicitly and explicitly in the world and bear witness to the Holocaust as the event that has scarred history across temporalities, in the same way the Holocaust has forced a reconfiguration of Derrida’s self in relation to Jewish others who perished in the Shoah.*