

JACQUES
DERRIDA

TERRY
EAGLETON

FREDRIC
JAMESON

ANTONIO
NEGRI et al

EDITED AND INTRODUCED BY MICHAEL SPRINKER

V { **GHOSTLY
DEMARCATIONS**
:
A SYMPOSIUM ON
JACQUES DERRIDA'S
SPECTERS OF MARX



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GHOSTLY DEMARCATIONS

A SYMPOSIUM ON JACQUES DERRIDA'S
SPECTERS OF MARX

*Jacques Derrida, Terry Eagleton,
Fredric Jameson, Antonio Negri, et al.*

Edited by Michael Sprinker



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Introduction

Michael Sprinker

The immediate occasion for Jacques Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* – a symposium sponsored by the University of California at Riverside on the topic 'Whither Marxism?' – was perhaps not the most auspicious for producing the long-awaited direct encounter between Derrida and Marxism. The original lecture that later became a book was delivered at an academic conference held in a region, if arguably not a university, dominated politically by the Right. The conference site could not but evoke another, homonymic sense of Marxism's historical fate ('with(er) Marxism'), and it was mounted at a moment (April 1993) when the future of Marxism seemed bleaker than at any time since the defeat of the Second German Revolution in 1929. The environment for Derrida's lecture thus seemed an unlikely one for him to renew, if not precisely to redeem, an old pledge: to confront head-on the relationship of deconstruction to Marxism, to subject Marx's texts to the same kind of exegetical rigor that Derrida himself had already brought to bear on those of Plato, Rousseau, Heidegger and many, many others. *Spectres of Marx* does partially satisfy that expectation, especially in its final two sections, which engage in close textual analyses of, respectively, *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and *The German Ideology*. But if one comes to the book in the hope that now, or long last, Derrida's (or deconstruction's, which is not quite the same thing) relationship to Marxism will be profoundly clarified or definitively resolved, one will almost certainly be disappointed.

The commentators in this volume differ about whether Derrida's mode of engaging Marx's texts, and Marxism more generally, is to be commended or condemned (or in some cases simply dismissed). That condemnation predominates was only to be expected, given the political positions occupied by the majority of the contributors, who, it will come as no surprise, tend to be on the Marxist side of the

deconstruction/Marxism divide. Of course, it is among the several burdens of Derrida's argument to challenge this very binary, as he makes plain in what to date must be the most frequently cited passage from *Spivak*: "Deconstruction has never had any sense or interest, in my view at least, except as a radicalization, which is to say also in the position of a certain Marxism, in a certain spirit of Marxism . . . But a radicalization is always indebted to the very thing it radicalizes" (*Spivak of Marx*, p. 92; emphasis in the original). Yet it is this very gesture of affiliation – deconstructionist as keeping faith with 'a certain spirit of Marxism' – that most provokes Derrida's critics, who respond in registers ranging from skepticism, to ire, to outright contempt. Readers can judge for themselves who gets the better of this debate. Suffice it to say here that whatever the limitations of *Spivak* itself, in its account of contemporary capitalism, in its telegraphic rendering of the Marxist and communist traditions, and in its postulation of a new 'international' that remains determinately underspecified – despite what Derrida himself concedes are the large gaps requiring to be filled in before one can judge the value of his engagement with Marxism fairly – no Marxist today can afford to ignore the challenge he has laid down.

That challenge, put in its most brutally simplified form, is for Marxism to come to terms with its own past, politically and theoretically, to admit frankly and openly – as at least some of the contributors to this volume candidly do – the crimes committed in its name, the errors in which it indulged, the massively undemocratic forms of organization which it tolerated. Those ghosts have not even begun to be laid to rest; acknowledging their continuing existence remains among the most urgent tasks for any possible revival of the Marxist project.

That said, the challenge can be turned back equally on Derrida and deconstruction. In a lecture originally published in *New Left Review* 208 and included here, Aijaz Ahmad asserts unequivocally that the dominant political effect of deconstruction has been to give aid and comfort to the Right. (He refers primarily to the US, but one doubts the judgment would have been significantly different had his condemnation included Europe.) Whether or not deconstruction can finally be acquitted of this charge, Derrida and others must surely be called to the bar as witnesses and advocates in their own defense. By now deconstruction, too, has a history, one that Derrida has hitherto been reluctant to examine in any but the most schematic manner. The ghosts on both sides still walk.

One might characterize the areas of most direct engagement and disagreement as follows. First, there is a tangle of problems concerning the nature of capitalism as it has mutated since Marx's day. Etc

Hobbesawm, in his introduction to Verso's reissue of *The Communist Manifesto*, has asserted that Marx's vision of capitalism on the eve of the 1848 revolutions is even more perspicuous today than when it was written. In one sense, neither Derrida nor his critics would disagree. Whether, however, Marx's subsequent theorization of the capitalist mode of production, above all in *Capital*, still meets the criterion of scientific validity to which Marx aspired is a matter of some contention – and not only among the contributors to this volume!

Second, Marxist politics has always taken shape in and achieved its greatest political effects through mass organizations of the working class. From the later nineteenth century onwards, these have typically assumed the form of political parties, either clandestine (as with the Bolsheviks and many national Communist parties of the Third International) or above-ground and often with electoral pretensions (as eventually with the German SPD during the *Weimarer*, or with many Communist parties in and out of power to this day). One cannot emphasize too strongly this virtual *sine qua non* of Marxist politics. Derrida's insistent questioning of its value is surely the most pressing issue over which he and his critics contend. In the light of its checkered history, the pertinence of the party form to an emancipatory politics of the Left must, at a minimum, be subjected to serious, sustained scrutiny, if only to be reinvented anew.

Finally, there is the matter of ideology, its place in the corpus of Marxist concepts and its centrality to any account of society, historical or contemporary. Derrida steadfastly refuses to concede what Marx asserted (most directly in *The German Ideology*) and the majority of Marxists have continued to hold: that ideology can be banished by the science of historical materialism. This will not have been the first time that a French philosopher was vilified for hypothesizing that even a communist society would not be able to do without ideology. More than three decades have passed since Althusser first tabled his motion denouncing the humanist Marxism of the *Khrushchev era*. Derrida's stern rebuke of the familiar dogmatism frequently invoked to refute his premises constitutes the core of his challenge and provides unimpeachable testimony that he does indeed write 'in the position of a certain Marxism, in a certain spirit of Marxism'.

It would be presumptuous to hazard any fuller characterization of the essays included below than the sketchy remarks offered thus far. Agaló, readers can judge for themselves the merits of each, along with the justice of Derrida's treatment of them. If the texts don't exactly speak for themselves – but what text ever does? – they are nonetheless, on my reading of them at least, entirely lucid about their aims in relation to *Specters of Marx*. The contributors have paid Derrida the

compliment of reading him closely, perhaps on occasion tendentially, but for the most part not carelessly. Derrida himself has returned the favor by producing a text that scrupulously, if nearly always critically, examines their claims, in particular the criticisms of Spinoza that they level. He defends himself against the most virulent, while conceding that a great deal of further reflection on all the major motifs he and his interlocutors have introduced in this debate remains to be done. Although he cites the famous communist slogan, 'Encore un effort!', with some irony, it would seem that this injunction is of the most general pertinence, for Derrida and for all of us. Other readings of Derrida's book are possible - many have been written and published already - but none can escape entirely the probing questions and searching criticisms put in different ways by these essays. The history of deconstruction's engagement with Marxism is a long way from being at an end.

The Specter's Smile

Antonio Negri

... for though a mouse depends on God as much as an angel
does, and sadness as much as joy, a mouse cannot on that
account be a kind of angel, nor sadness a kind of joy.¹

— Spinoza, Letter XXIII

It happens often that a great philosophy takes a step forward and simultaneously takes a step back, unilaterally circumscribing a central nucleus of thought and a strong and coherent methodological intuition. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida gives a demonstration of his philosophy's advancing, taking the method at the origins of deconstruction back to that specific historical entanglement which conditioned its genesis: 'deconstruction, in the figure it initially took ... would have been impossible and unthinkable in a pre-Marxist space. Deconstruction has never had any sense or interest ... except as a radicalization, which is to say also in *the* tradition of a certain Marxism, in a certain *spirit of Marxism*.'² It seems fairly clear that deconstruction is born and unfolds in — while together forming — that theoretical climate of the rue d'Ulm where the work of Althusser, Foucault and Derrida, successively but to no lesser extent contemporaneously, takes place. More specifically the genesis of deconstruction seems to go back to a mutual exchange with Althusser's work, in his 'lecture symptomale' and in his structural interpretation of the invasiveness of state ideological apparatuses, from *Reading 'Capital'* to his study *Sur la reproduction*.³ (It is interesting to note that in his later writings, Althusser repeats his conviction that Derrida is amongst the greatest philosophers of our time.) Yet the deconstructionist's claim to a Marxist tradition and a Marxist spirit is even more valuable if, beyond simple genealogy, we take into consideration the rigorously critical direction that deconstruction embodies — a hermeneutic direction (in its own ontological

manner) which takes part in the dynamics of capitalism's historical and conceptual world only to oppose itself to it from the first through demystification – demystification of its language, in the first place, and then by way of and behind language, demystification of a 'metaphysics of the proper' and of some 'logocentrism' encapsulated in capitalism.

In this sense, what becomes increasingly important in the progressive constructing of deconstruction is the relation it engages in the transformation of its object, in other words the perception of that spectral redefinition of the real which it does not produce, but which it progressively registers as a paradigmatic mutation. Over a period of great acceleration in the translocation of the world, the hermeneutic, ontological, and critical aspects of deconstruction are, so to speak, constrained to contracting themselves together more closely, advancing as consorts. Here, the question 'whither Marxism?' is inextricable from the question 'whither deconstruction?', and both presuppose a 'whither capitalism?' As far as deconstruction is concerned, responding to the question 'whither Marxism?' in one way or another becomes the same as responding to the question 'whither capitalism?'. In one way or another – *as what even?* This is our focal interest in reading this book of Derrida's.

The 'specters of Marx' are therefore, in some way, the specters of capital. Those specters that appear in *Capital* but shew all those specters that nowadays give shape to a society unanimously defined as 'capitalist' by political economy and public opinion. Marx has always played with specters, a 'whirling band of ghosts' notes Derrida, perusing the pages of that founding work, *The German Ideology*. With good reason Marx's preface states that the work's aim is to 'uncloak the 'innocent and childlike fancies' of that young Hegelian philosophy – 'these sheep, that take themselves and are taken for wolves' – and to show:

how their bleating merely imitates (z a philosophic form the concepts of the German middle class; how the boarding of these philosophic commentaries only mirrors the wretchedness of the real conditions in Germany. It is its aim to debunk and discredit the philosophic struggle with the shadows of reality which appeals to the dreamy and muddled German nation.⁷

Transferred onto the terrain of the critique of political economy, this project of a spectral reading of ideology is applied to the categories of society and capital, develops ontologically, and becomes definitively fixed in *Capital* (Derrida speaks of this in *Specters*, pp. 147–58). The specters scattered herein have a particular ontological pertinence: they reveal the complete functioning of the law of value. A specter is the

movement of an abstraction that is materialized and becomes powerful: above all the abstraction of value which, in a bloodless movement, vampirizes all of the worker's labor and, transforming itself into surplus-value, becomes capital; money, secondly, which in a circular movement verticalizes itself and is consolidated into currency, i.e., in finance capital and in parasitic potentiality; technology, lastly – but also in principle – which, in accumulating itself, in constructing well integrated and firm lines of objective command, regulates and hierarchizes society and life. The phenomenology of capitalist production described by Marx in *Capital* demonstrates therefore how, by way of this spectral movement, a true and proper metaphysics of capital is produced, as well as the autonomy of its power. But because it unfolds itself in a spectral form and autonomizes capital, this phenomenology – Marx maintains – masks the real genesis of the process of capital's development. In order to dissipate capital's fictitious autonomy and its attendant interpretive categories, as well as to demystify the necessary order of the market's political economy, one must – according to Marx – take into account the method of production and exchange, analyze the powerful fabrication of the centrality of the worker's labor that takes place therein, to break thereby the law of value's functioning and reconstruct the productive dynamics of society and of life on a free basis.

What's to be done, today, with this Marxist response, or better yet, with this specifically communist proposal? What's to be done with the Marxist specters, today?

With this in mind, we should take note of one of the firm substantial contributions of deconstruction to updating the project of a critique of capitalism. Nowadays, we can actually do little or nothing with Marxist ghosts. What has changed isn't so much the spectral reality of the world produced by capital (the spectral mass has even become gigantic!) as much as it is the adequacy of the Marxist response. A century and a half ago, this response consisted in willing to speed away ghosts and, in so doing, in the revolt of the industrial working class, reappropriating those riches produced – in order to reform the productive praxis as well as the subjective, the human one . . . But what could this project mean, nowadays? With kindness, but with an equal force, Derrida opposes Marx in the same way Marx opposed Séttem: for the naiveté of taking a universalizing stance, in other words, for the inadequacy of the proposal for demystification. In reality, in Marx's work in both *The German Ideology* and *Capital* the non-spectrality of the productive subject opposed the conditions for constructing capital's spectrality: the former

was indicated through the activity of demystification and was expressed in the will of reappropriation, each and every time the movement of exchange-value clashed with the ineluctable independence of 'use-value', therefore with a heterogeneity capable of generating an alternative. But where can this heterogeneity be found? Where can use-value and subjectivity be found at present? Today, the labor paradigm has greatly changed (in particular, the division between intellectual and manual labor and the alternatives linked to different projections of forms of value). Inasmuch as it concerns labor, the postmodern is certainly not just an ideological image, but the recording of a deep and irreversible transformation in which all traits of the Marxist critique of value – more precisely, that theory of specters – stop short. 'These seismic events come from the future, they are given from out of the unstable, chaotic, and dislocated ground of the times. A dis-jointed or dis-adjusted time without which there would be neither history, nor event, nor promise of justice.' Derrida's first conclusion is powerful. It introduces us to the new phase of relations in production, to the world of change in the labor paradigm. 'The time is out of joint' – but here deconstruction is 'in joint'.

Now if the mutation of labor is a given, if the law of value has been thrown 'out of joint' due to the fact that time is no longer a measuring gauge of value, nor use-value its real referent¹⁰ – now then, why shouldn't deconstruction accept to move itself into this new critical perspective, there where these new dimensions of capital's political economy reveal themselves? Why does deconstruction accompany the efficacy of this critical move with a regressive pause (the immersion in the 'work of mourning')? Why does deconstruction want an aura of nostalgia which renders the ontological consistency of the new spectral dimension elusive and frankly ungraspable? In so doing, it works by effectively unhooking the hermeneutic of the present and of the future (which is also separated from the past and from the insertion into the new paradigm) from intense contact with the new spectral ontology. But why? Why, after having grasped the ontological element of this mutation, does deconstruction need to immerse itself anew in a transcendental continuum, relying on a phenomenological and noumenal time, both temporal and psychic, which has the effect of dramaticity and practically rendering the ontological discovery irrelevant, flattening it onto the obscure background?

We do not know how to respond to Derrida's sad sidestepping, nor do we know how to construct a straight line that would cut through his process's agonizing curves. Nevertheless, if we're unsatisfied with the lack of a cut-and-dried heuristic process, we know by contrast what the deconstructionist hermeneutic produces here. It produces a new theory

of spectrality which corresponds with common experience: an experience of the everyday, and/or of the masses; the experience of a mobile, flexible, computerized, immaterialized and spectral labor. A common experience of spectrality as clear as the sun. The new spectrality is there – and we're entirely within this real illusion. We've nothing more than this real illusion before us and behind us. There's no longer an outside, neither a nostalgic one, nor a mythic one, nor any urgency for reason to disengage us from the spectrality of the real. There's neither place nor time – and this is the real. Only a radical 'Unheimlich' remains in which we're immersed. It's good that here deconstruction prevails in its agility in playing with the phenomenon, and that it hides itself by crouching in the set of relations that are on this side of the phenomenon. In the genesis of its appearing; but it would be just as good if in taking this into account, operating in the world of political economy in this way, it described the phenomenology of a new productive reality, a social one – of a lifeworld that fully meshed with the new spectral reality. The subject is therefore unlocatable in a world that has lost all measure, because in this spectral reality no measure is perceived or perceptible. The 'specters of Marx' were so very different: here, they're no longer valid.

Nevertheless, 'one must assume the intention of Marxism, assume its most "living" part, which is to say, paradoxically, that which continues to put back on the drawing board the question of life, spirit, or the spectral, of life-death beyond the opposition between life and death. This inheritance must be rethought by transforming it as radically as will be necessary.'¹⁰ But how will it be possible to follow this task through, immersed as we are in the world of specters?

When the analysis passes from the hermeneutic and ontological viewpoint to the experience of the political, the picture given is terrible. The conspiracy against Marxism and the world evangelization of the free market, the construction of a global power 'without place' and 'without time', the structuring of the 'end of history', the media's colonization of consciousness and the impoverishment in the quality of work, the emptying out of meaning from the word 'democracy' – within individual countries and in international relations – these represent only a few of the hegemonic orders of capitalism in one phase of the spectral reconstruction of the real. How does one circulate within this new determination of being? At this crucial point, deconstruction refers back to a radical questioning of the problem of life and death, the opening of an experience of ethics and community. It's at this crucial point that a discourse on ethical resistance unravels, one that reflects on the experience of the gift and of friendship, that feels a certain affinity with the messianic spirit and reaffirms the unconstructability

of the idea of justice. The work of Derrida's that surrounds *Specters of Marx* serves to illustrate this approach: above all, *Force de loi*¹⁷ and *Politique de l'amitié*.¹⁸ But how could one believe this protest or this ethical alternative to be effective in a world of forceful ghosts? How can ethical resistance become real – if indeed it can – before the overbearing ghostly dominion?

Derrida himself avows not to count on a useful result following an ethical insurrection. In *Specters of Marx*, he recognizes that 'barely deserving the name community, the new International belongs only to anonymity'.¹⁹ In *Politics of Friendship*, when he introduces the notion of political friendship, he concludes by stating: 'it still deals with a fraternity, but a fraternity that leads infinitely beyond all the figures of the brother, a fraternity that no longer excludes anyone'.²⁰ There's something that's exhausted in these pages, like the shadow of that melancholic libertarian when, at the end of another revolutionary age, men who were still free resided in refusal of the Counter-Reformation and awaited the martyrdom of the Inquisition. We cannot comfort ourselves with this, perhaps because our Marxist heritage has already been proven in practice; more likely because – in dealing with specters – the eye, the other senses, and the mind begin to detect delineations of new realities. So is it possible then to proceed beyond the level of moral protest?

There's a word that rarely appears in Derrida's book: exploitation. This absence is understood accordingly: exploitation is in fact the category in which, more than any other, Marx would make 'a critical but pre-deconstructive ontology of presence as actual reality and as objective'.²¹ We agree in deeming the Marxist ontology out of date, and this ontological description of exploitation, in particular. But is there any chance that this theoretical supersession has the consequence of really eliminating exploitation? No reasonable person could so affirm, in the same way that no reasonable person could insist on, exploitation's identical form then and now. The fact is that in speaking of exploitation, it's necessary to take into consideration not so much the categories that, *pari passum*, denounce exploitation, but rather the mechanisms that produce it. Now, in the ghostly production of post-industrial capitalism, these mechanisms remain intact and become even more powerful.

Taking this situation into account means recognizing that if the law of value no longer works in describing the entire process of capital, the law of surplus-value and exploitation is, in any case, constitutive of the logic of production. The fact that some discursive sex occupy productive space and articulate its order (more so than do the masses of

commodities) does not remove the other fact: that these discursive sets are themselves products of industrial capitalism, both cause and effect – circularly – of a general exploitative device.¹⁶ Taking this situation into account therefore means recognizing that, aside from any objective (or any ontological, predeconstructive ...) measure, human labor, both mental and manual, is increasingly implicated in exploitation, prisoner of a world of ghosts producing wealth and power for some, misery and discipline for the masses. Together, in an indistinguishable manner, both exploitation and discursive universes travel the Internet, constructing themselves through communicative networks while fixing hierarchical and expropriative dividing lines therein. Accumulation nowadays consists in that kind of acquisition of knowledge and social activity taking place within these communicative horizons. At the same time, if those mechanisms of expropriation do not follow in the footsteps of the exploitative devices of industrial labor's old ontology, then they presuppose new ways – immaterial and ghostly ones.¹⁷ On the one side, we have communication and the wealth that accumulates therein; on the other, we have the solitude, the misery, the sadness, the exodus and the new class wars that define this exploitation of labor in a world of immateriality and spectral production.

But allow me a brief parenthesis here. In the conclusion of his *Ethics*, *De Vita Aeternae, Pars III*, Spinoza speaks of an emotion called a 'pathos of the soul'¹⁸ – which he defines as: 'a confused idea, by which the Mind affirms of its body, or some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before, which, when it is given, determines the Mind to think of one thing rather than another.'¹⁹ In the 'Explication' that follows, Spinoza speaks of 'a greater or lesser force of existing than before' born through the confrontation of experience that passes through the body and mind (or through active memory) with the body and mind's actual consistency. The *pathos* is therefore a dual state of mind, which is between passivity and activity and lives in the present though it is prefabricated in memory, enduring the past while turned towards action. Consequently, the *pathos* is also the perpetually uncertain but nevertheless open moment of an ontological passage which leads the mind to grasp the very nature of Desire, beyond the (past) determinations of existence or the (present) external dialectic of sadness and joy. I've always been struck by the spectral quality of this emotion, as well as by the constitutive dynamic that traverses it. Speaking elsewhere of this emotion, in relation to Y. Yovel's work on Marrano culture,²⁰ it seemed to me that one could recognize in it a sort of parable of the 'Marrano' or could transcribe the genealogical paradox that characterizes it as follows: condemned to choose between two religions that confound and torment him, the 'Marrano' refuses

transcendence and chooses to live a worldly, fair and rational ascent that will lead him towards a constitutive hermeneutics and an ethics of liberation. I now ask myself if this way – which leads from passivity to potential, in the twilight of the 'passion' and among the specters that haunt the 'Marrano's' life – isn't also a parable of the experience of change in the paradigm of productive labor – from materiality to immateriality – and a parable of change in the hope for communion here and now in the postmodern dimension.

Once this is said, the other face of exploitation must nevertheless be emphasized, i.e. the capitalist relations of production in the present age. No longer are capitalist relations of production exercised solely on a subject characterized through misery and a 'predeconstructive' referent to a generic human essence. On the contrary, the exploited subject appearing on this new scene, who must deal with ghosts, is presented rather as a flux, a mobile and flexible reality, a hybrid potential that busies the spectral movement of production and, in so doing, continually reconstitutes itself anew. Today, exploitation, or, rather, capitalist relations of production, concern a laboring subject amassed in intellectuality and cooperative force. A new paradigm: most definitely exploited, yet new – a different power, a new consistency of laboring energy, an accumulation of cooperative energy. This is a new – post-deconstructive – ontology.

I believe that if we had the opportunity to lead deconstruction onto this new ontological terrain, we could exalt its hermeneutic capacity even further, for this hermeneutic capacity brings the spectral aspect of capitalist production to light. I also believe that, if this were the case, we could ultimately refer ourselves to several of deconstruction's suggestions related to the problem of resistance. It is in fact evident that when deconstruction comprehends that capitalist production is the production of ghosts, a dominion extending over and regulating linguistic universes, as well as the causation of desire, at this very moment it indicates lines of flight and area of resistance: in being organized through an underivable line firmly sustained through the decision to refute every logocentrism and to desert any form of senseless, disciplinary regime. So, is there still the possibility for rupture? And how so?

In order to answer this question, and in order to reincorporate important elements of deconstruction into this response, we must nevertheless refer ourselves back to fundamental qualities in deconstruction's way of proceeding – and now, in all likelihood, we must make distinctions among them. When it comes down to it, we've already said so: it seems that, in its approach, deconstruction remains prisoner of an infernal and exhausted definition of ontology. The

reality principle in deconstruction is out of its element. When Derrida concludes his analysis of the Martian ontology of value, kidding himself of its naive ontology of presence – to the extent that it thinks of the possibility of dissipating spectrality from the starting-point of a consciousness representative of the subject – he does not produce an adequate ontological jumpstart, aside from the correctness of his phenomenological approach. Derrida is a prisoner of the ontology he critiques. When phenomenology changes, he uses it to critique the horizon of Martian ontology, and rightly so – but he does so in an inconsequential manner, refusing to change the ontology itself or to reconstruct it according to the standard set by the phenomenological change. He doesn't want to see its occurrence beginning with the spectral and hybrid figures which today, in the age of postindustrial capitalism, produce wealth and reality (and which Derrida nevertheless defines with great care); he therefore does not want to see a movement of ontological constitution and/or the production of subjectivity. Other elements contributing to deconstruction's genesis, other than Marxism (principally elements tied to negative theology à la Blanchot or to the paradoxical Nietzscheanism of Bataille), take the upper hand here. Eclipsed in this milieu, the 'specters of Marx' become even more evanescent. Intellectual spectacle: where can their practice be found?

Here Derrida seems like a Hume who trespasses onto Schopenhauer's territory – as has happened elsewhere in the best moments of 'critical-critique' in the history of German identity:

What craves humanity very dearly is doubtless to believe that one can have done in history with a general essence of Man, or the present that it represents only a *Heutiges*, arch ghost, but also, what craves down to the same thing – at *bottom* – to still believe, no doubt, in this capital ghost. To believe in it as do the credulous or the dogmatic.⁷

No – here the discriminating factor is cut and dried, and it's neither credulity nor dogmatism, but the awareness – not only to come, but presently, alas, to persist – that the ghostly reality which ambushes and keeps us, not only in ideology but in the body, forms an ontology in which we're enveloped. But for this very reason, those old Martian problems concerning exploitation and liberation are no longer signalled here as if, behind the ghostly reality, we should find something positive to rebuild on. On the contrary: those problems concern us to the extent that, without an outside any longer possible, without the precedent of a human universal, we fight against exploitation, an exploitation that is real and intolerable, and we can do this only in constituting a new reality, a new hybrid being, different each and every

time, constructed and therefore unatched away from humanity's archetypes with each instance.

If we want to deepen deconstruction's crisis over this issue, and explain why a correct phenomenology ends with an inadequate ontological opening, perhaps we should denounce the insufficiency of deconstruction's concept of practice. This is not to say that deconstruction's practical application is a mere amalgamation of the decrypting and demystifying of linguistic disseminations: certainly not – and even if it were, it would somehow have an ontological connection. *But this constitution guards itself from being constitutive*. Deconstruction has a tremendous stake in interpretation: but what would it tell us when the interpretation intersects with, or, better yet, is presented as, practice? Through various models of social and linguistic practices, performativity maintains itself in a domain where the sense of belonging to being is left undecidable. And it's with the idea of justice that this knot is entangled, rather than unravels. And not by chance. In fact, when performativity comes to life in practice, when – in this concrete instance – it designates the overcoming of exploitation, exclusion, solitude and misery, it must find its direction in the constitution of being, thereby implicating the question of justice. *Specters of Marx* becomes one chapter in *Force of Law* . . . But it's precisely here that the knot does not untie, and in playing with the specters of being, rather than proposing an exit toward the future, or a new construction of justice that's tangled with new forms of spectral being, it turns back and loses itself in that which is 'inaccessible to man', in the 'infinitely other'. The game is played out in mysticism, in the recognition of an irremediable foundation of the law, in the definition of responsibility as committing to an ungraspable ontological 'other'. Why? Why this regressive step back? Why does deconstruction get stuck in subordinating the new phenomenology of the specter (which nevertheless has a productive and singular ontological base) to the oldest of reactionary ontologies: the theological one?

(But who should bear this work of mourning, and for what reason? Not the person working on a new theory of revolution. It's natural that theory be renovated, since it renovates itself according to a mutation of the real, the old theory being one of its fundamental agents, despite everything. Nor the person working for the construction of a new revolutionary organization. The person who fights or who has fought for communism is certainly not nostalgic for the old organizations, neither the Stalinist one, nor the folkloric one that survives on its bridges. The new communist experiment is born through the rupture with memory. A rupture distinct from any melancholy or resentment. And it's there that, in the present, amongst all and no specters, the

only real continuity appears: that of the struggle, of the constant spurt, of the ontological violence of transformation. The awaited event makes the past explode. A real coming-to-be." In this same spirit, why should Walter Benjamin be considered a 'proco-Marxist'?

'Whether deconstruction?' unthinks itself from 'whether capitalism?' and 'whether Marxism?'. Capitalism and communism continue to fight on terrain made up of new spectral figures, real nonetheless, and of new movements. Attached to the new social force of mass intellectuality, a radical form of Marxism can constructively respond to renewed forms of capital's regulation and to the exploitation of immaterial labor. At the other extreme, deconstruction insists on solitary transcendental horizons – without keeping in touch with practice and fleeing after having identified the possible determining factor of justice ... It's a shame, for *Specter of Marx* represents a remarkable introduction to a new practice.

A brief digression in closing. I don't feel that the critique of political economy developed in the register of deconstruction is enough to describe the complexity of spectral production that could be traced in Marx, in his work, in his actions and in his heritage. More specifically, it seems to me that if the specter of capitalism is substantially present in Derrida's book (and with that the more recent developments in the capitalist dominion), the 'specter of communism', on the other hand, is harder to identify, if not undetectable. If Derrida sharpens the 'arms of criticism' with great zeal and intelligence, the other specterology nevertheless goes by the wayside, the one organized through a 'criticism of arms'. Communism's ghost is not only the product of a critique, it is also, and above all, a passion, destructive of the world of capital and constructive of freedom, 'the real movement that destroys the present state of things'. But permit me to give an example here. In Alexis de Tocqueville's *Reflections*,²⁷ we're told of a day in June 1848. We're in a lovely apartment on the left bank, seventh arrondissement, at dinner-time. The Tocqueville family is reunited. Nevertheless, in the calm of the evening, the cannonade fired by the bourgeoisie against the rebellion of rioting workers resounds suddenly – distant noises from the right bank. The diners shiver, their faces darken. But a smile escapes a young waitress who serves their table and has just arrived from the Faubourg Saint Antoine. She's immediately fired. Isn't the true specter of communism perhaps there in that smile? The one that frightened the Tsar, the pope ... and the Lord of Tocqueville? Isn't a glimmer of joy there, making for the specter of liberation?

Translated by Patricia Daley and Costantino Costantini

Notes

1. Benedict de Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 389. All future references cited as *CWS*.
2. Jacques Derrida, *Spinoza of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 92. All future references cited as *SM*.
3. Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1971).
4. Louis Althusser, *Sur la reproduction* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1985).
5. 'Determinative?' rather than 'determinative', since the reference is to the construction as a whole rather than to a critical move within it. – Translators' note.
6. *SM*, p. 129.
7. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, trans. W. Lough (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1965), p. 23.
8. *SM*, p. 170.
9. See Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*, trans. Harry Clever, Norman Kyrn and Maurizio Viano ed. Jim Fleming (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publ., 1984); second edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
10. *SM*, p. 34.
11. Jacques Derrida, *Force de loi: La Foudroyante mystique de Dostoevski* (Paris: Galilée, 1994).
12. Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié; suivi de l'écrit de Heidegger* (Paris: Galilée, 1993).
13. *SM*, p. 99.
14. [My translation: Negri's citation without reference from the Latin edition. – Translators' note.]
15. *SM*, p. 170.
16. For a discussion of this point see chapters 8 and 9 of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *The Labor of Divisions* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
17. For a discussion of this see Robert Heilbrunn and Lester Thurow's *Economics Explained: Everything You Need to Know about How the Economy Works and How It Is Doing* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).
18. [Shirley translates (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988) as "passive experience" what Negri cites as the "passiva dei primum", and Rivas (New York: Dover Publications, 1955) translates as a "passivity of the soul". I have kept the Latin for "passivity" throughout, as Negri does. – Translators' note.]
19. *CWS*, p. 542.
20. See *Studi Spinoziani*, *Hàuser* 1995, no. 10.
21. *SM*, p. 170.
22. [Negri uses 'essence', echoing Derrida's hesitation on this term. – Translators' note.]
23. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Revolutions*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J.P. Mayer and A.P. Rice (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978).

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