

Ambivalent Promises—Reproductions of the Subject: A Forum on Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* after 25 Years, Part IV

Thomas Clément Mercier*

Paulo Chamon**

Abstract: Jacques Derrida delivered the basis of *The Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International* as a plenary address at the conference 'Whither Marxism?' hosted by the University of California, Riverside, in 1993. The longer book version was published in French the same year and appeared in English and Portuguese the following year. In the decade after the publication of *Specters*, Derrida's analyses provoked a large critical literature and invited both consternation and celebration by figures such as Antonio Negri, Wendy Brown and Frederic Jameson. This forum seeks to stimulate new reflections on Derrida, deconstruction and *Specters of Marx* by considering how the futures past announced by the book have fared after an eventful quarter century. In this fourth group of contributions, Thomas Clément Mercier shows how Derrida's book, besides questioning reception and influence, yet remains to be read, especially in light of ongoing archival research on Derrida's engagements with Marx's writings in seminars from the 1970s; and Paulo Chamon offers a critical assessment of Derrida's promise of a 'New International' by considering how the book spooks itself in such a way as to raise serious questions in regard to sovereignty and subjectivity.

Keywords: Derrida, Jacques; Marx, Karl; legacy; influence; gender; sovereignty; subjectivity; internationalism; melancholia.

* Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic; thomas.clement.mercier@gmail.com. ORCID iD 0000-0002-3650-357X.

** Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), Rio de Janeiro-RJ, Brazil; paulochamon@gmail.com. ORCID iD 0000-0003-2474-0014.

Before the Specters: The Memory of a Promise (from the Archives)

Thomas Clément Mercier

What imparts itself in the promise must therefore go beyond all forms of transcendental subjectivity and their politico-economic institutions, it must go beyond capital and the labor which it determines, and from this *exceedence* it must transform all its figures in advance, transform them by promising them and shifting them into the ‘trans’ of every form. From its very inception, it must be beyond everything posited in any way, a monster at the limit of appearance, of visibility and representability. It must be, however so gently, an ex-positing.

–Werner Hamacher (2008: 193)

Russian dolls: Derrida & Sons (& Daughters &...)

I come forward on this forum, tasked with assessing the legacy of a 1993 book by Jacques Derrida – a book in which Derrida assessed the legacy of Marx, himself assessing the legacy of Hegel and a few others, and so on and so forth. Or, as Valéry would perhaps put it in reverse order: *Kant qui genuit Hegel qui genuit Marx qui genuit Derrida*. The list will go on.

Are we simply Russian dolls, captive to this consecutive chain of generations? Perhaps, but with each new doll, a death had to take place. And with each new doll, the spectres accumulate and already challenge the stability of the nesting structure which supposedly supports the ensemble. In the 1975-1976 seminar *La vie la mort* – a seminar in which, incidentally, Derrida had quite a lot to say about Marx’s concepts of production and reproduction¹ – Derrida analysed François Jacob’s use of the Russian dolls metaphor in his book *La logique du vivant*. It led to the following remark, in which Derrida interrogates the monstrosity of a generative process that can be reduced neither to pure reproduction nor to pure creation. I will let Derrida’s remark hang here as a second epigraph:

Note that a Russian doll that would ‘emerge’, as [François Jacob] says, is already itself quite new and quite monstrous compared to what we know. He wants that the doll comes out of a box in which it is enclosed according to a nested structure that remains overall predictable, but also that it *emerges*, discontinuously, that is to say, that it comes out suddenly, all at once, but from the sea [*de la mer*] (Derrida 2019a: 180, my translation and emphasis).

After the Specters (+25): disseminating fluid mechanics

Before I start, I would like to confess something: I will not do justice to the task that I volunteered to take on – that is, to assess the theoretical legacy and political impact (or lack thereof) of Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, 25 years after its publication in English in Peggy Kamuf's translation. This is due to the contextual limitations of the present essay, of course, to my overall lack of competence and knowledge, certainly, but also to structural reasons that deserve a short development here. How does one evaluate the legacy and impact of a book whose main argument was precisely to deconstruct the notion of 'legacy,' to exorbitantly pluralise the forms, contents and traces of inheritance, and to challenge the possibility of determining 'influences' in the language of being? 'Influence': against the traditional metaphor of the flux, against the ontological claim that the history of being or becoming manifests itself as confluence of sources, fluids, rivers or water streams, Derrida proposes the haunting of spectrality – that is, the impossibility to determine once and for all the presence or absence of such or such 'influence' in a given work. While *Specters* is arguably a book on the inescapability of inheritance – 'To be... means... to inherit' (Derrida 1994: 67) – Derrida also argues that we should think inheritance before and beyond the capture of ontology and phenomenology. The spectral other need not be present to be influential. The trace of haunting might be silent, perhaps invisible – it is, at the very least, never fully present *as such*, never fully alive in self-presence. It might be at work through the most disdainful of denegations, through the most vociferous of critiques, or through the most opaque of silences. For these reasons, the scope, the wingspan of haunting does not let itself be measured: 'haunting is historical, to be sure, but it is not dated, it is never docilely given a date in the chain of presents, day after day, according to the instituted order of a calendar' (Derrida 1994: 3).

Yet we are before the *Specters*. Unless they be before us. All that which Derrida says about Marx and Marxism in *Specters of Marx*, we might also say it about that book (and about deconstruction in general), in such a way that evaluating its legacy ten, twenty-five, or a thousand years after its publication constitutes and will constitute a very difficult task. This difficulty is literally staged and desired by the book itself. The task is all the more daunting because the book in question does not let itself be summarised into a series of philosophical theses, ontological claims, or political diagnoses. Without taking away from the force and necessity of Derrida's critical depiction of the 'new world order' in 1993, reducing the book to the 'picture' or 'telegram' of the 'ten plagues' (Derrida 1994: 100-4), for instance, would certainly be, well, picturesque, telegraphic and reductive.² In many ways, the *work* that *Specters* accomplishes results from its non-thetic structure, from its essential heterogeneity or self-inadequacy, from its non-identity to itself and to its 'own' moment – a non-identity which it performs and exhibits with a quasi-perverse relish.³

Now, as a matter of fact, the spectre has become a commonplace in literary and cultural studies, media, film and art theory, and has completely transformed traditional questions attached to interculturality and intertextuality.⁴ For all these reasons, today it is impossible to write an article like this one, supposed to evaluate the legacy or influence of a book, in the same way as before the *Specters*. This would be, perhaps, one of the most

powerful and obvious effects of Derrida's book: it works in challenging our genealogical drive; it complicates to the extreme the search for influences and the establishment of a hydrographic survey of sources or seminal fluids, as well as the position of a periodic table of elements or origins. The law of spectrality destabilises in advance all paternity claims. It challenges the order of filiation. This is not nothing. Certainly, one would be hard-pressed to designate this type of 'work' done by the book as 'political' in the narrow sense of the term – but it might point to a politicity or politicality of the concept and of the text, a sort of spectral-ideological force of dissemination, a 'work' that remains undecidable but which 'overdetermines' (to speak like Louis Althusser) traditional politics, and possibly contributes to transforming it: a work of deconstruction, if you like. This sort of troubling force or disseminating 'work' might also participate, for example, in what Geoffrey Bennington calls 'the politics of politics,' or in what Alberto Moreiras designates under the name 'infrapolitics' (see Bennington 2016; Graff Zivin 2018).

But if we indeed want to assess the book's influence on 'real' politics – politics in the narrow, 'proper' sense of the term, supposing that we can agree on that 'proper sense,' which is dubious to say the least – things get much more uncertain. To my knowledge, no political movement has come forward brandishing *Specters of Marx* in book form or on a tablet as their manifesto. Nevertheless, let me recall that in 2004 Derrida hypothesised a direct line of – of what? Influence? Anticipation? Concomitance? Perhaps simply a chance of haunting? – between the 'new international' promised in *Specters of Marx* and the alter-globalisation movements of the early 2000s:

At the time – this was in 1993 – what was at issue was a 'new international,' the subtitle and a central theme of the book. Beyond 'cosmopolitanism,' beyond the notion of a 'world citizen,' beyond a new world nation-state, even beyond the logic, in the final analysis, of political 'parties,' this book anticipates all the 'alter-globalist' imperatives in which I believe and which appear more clearly today (though still insufficiently, in a chaotic and unthought way). What I called at that time a 'new international' would require, I argued back in 1993, a large number of mutations in international law and in all the organizations that establish world order (IMF, WTO, the G8, and especially the United Nations and its Security Council, whose charter would have to be changed for starters, along with its autonomous forces of intervention, its composition, and first of all its location – as far away as possible from New York City...) (Derrida 2007: 22-23).

Of course, we do not have to believe Derrida when he speaks about the structure of political 'anticipation' featured in *Specters*. Nevertheless, if one indeed wanted to try and map the legacy and impact of *Specters* on political theory and more particularly on Marxist studies, on a so-called 'return to Marx' in the late 1990s and the 2000s, as well as on the political practices possibly inspired by these theoretical works, one would have to evoke the names of Marxist or post-Marxist authors such as Daniel Bensaid, Jean-Luc

Nancy, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffé, and Étienne Balibar, whose readings of Marx have explicitly been influenced by Derrida's. In turn, some of these authors have been named as influences by European left-wing movements such as Podemos, La France Insoumise, and by a multiplicity of proto-Marxist, Gramscist, and Trotskyist movements in Latin America and in the world. Chantal Mouffé's political theory has also been influential on the work of thinkers associated with the 'decolonial turn,' such as the great Peruvian anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena (2010). It would also be necessary to mention Derrida's influence on Marxist-feminist thinker Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (even though it is well known that *Specters of Marx* is not her favourite book – more on this below), and on postcolonial and cultural studies more generally – as well as on the cultural and institutional transformations to which these studies have contributed, in the academia and (perhaps) beyond. Here I would also like to invoke the great work on post-hegemony, infrapolitics and spectral marranism that is currently done in several departments of comparative literature, Hispanic and Caribbean Studies – see for instance the texts collected in *The Marrano Specter* (Graff Zivin 2018).

In the work of these many authors, in these various theoretical ventures and the political movements and institutional transformations they supposedly inspired, or will perhaps inspire, the influence of *Specters* is sometimes direct and explicit, oftentimes indirect, most times rare and scattered. So, far be it from me to try and turn *Specters of Marx* into a generational book, or to suggest that it is the Book of Our Times – and to do so here and now, twenty-five years after its publication. In each case, with each reading, *Specters* went through a process of transformative translation – a translation that is each time unique, with effects and implications which are at once or in turn theoretical, ideological, political, strategic, institutional, disciplinary and so on. In fact, the law of spectrality comes and perturbs the modalities of the type of translation we are talking about here, usually conceived as coming from the intellectual (ideological) field to the material (practical) field, or vice versa depending on the strategic moment or on the type of interpretative model one wishes to use in such or such situation. These strategic effects of translation, transformation and potential betrayal are always overdetermined, and always singular. So that the question of how *Specters of Marx* was translated in the fields of Marxist and post-Marxist theory, postcolonial and decolonial thought, but also feminist thought, gender studies and queer theory, political science, international studies, and so on, would deserve each time singular and specific analyses, texts in hand.⁵ Because, certainly, what is *left* of *Specters* in the work of aforementioned authors or disciplines (and many others), as well as in the analyses and practices of the political movements they possibly influenced, remains to be clarified. The 'rest' of a spectre, once again, is a difficult thing to evaluate, and I will not venture into trying this, for all the aforementioned reasons and – I realise now – certainly for lack of courage, too. But ignoring this 'rest' purely and simply would not be helpful either. This disseminated and disseminating 'rest' might also be uncannily active and generative in and through the work of Marxist or neo-Marxist authors who explicitly and violently criticised *Specters* (see for instance the essays collected in *Ghostly Demarcations*, edited by Michael Sprinker (2008)), and even through the work of those who claim to have

nothing to do with deconstruction, to have never read Derrida, and who seem to be set on never reading his work nor the work of those who work on Derrida. The ‘Russian dolls’ effect is always more perverse, more surprising, more resourceful, and somewhat more monstrous than it seems to be at first glance.

One last thing, before I finish this long introduction: it seems to me that all these problems related to the evaluation of the reception and impact of *Specters of Marx* are made all the more difficult because of the apparently unique status of the book in Derrida’s enormous oeuvre. On the one hand, *Specters* cannot in any meaningful way be isolated from Derrida’s overall work of deconstruction of the Western canon, and, more particularly, from texts such as ‘Force of Law: The “Mystical Foundation” of Authority’ and *The Politics of Friendship* (with which it arguably forms a sort of triptych). But, on the other hand, *Specters* is often considered, not without reasons, as Derrida’s Magnum Opus on Marx, which seems to confer a specific status to the book, at least institutionally and circumstantially, as a commodified object, precisely – something which Derrida pointed out in 1997:

But does one ever know how a book is ‘received’? By whom, first? buyers or readers? at what rhythm? for how long? When it comes to books, too, it is sometimes necessary to account for a just anachrony. The time of the book can be a *contretemps*, a time ‘out of joint’, as Hamlet says. A book is never contemporary with itself, with its appearance [*apparition*] and with its publication [*parution*]. I can only say this, which is an ‘objective’ fact: for reasons that remain to be analysed, and compared to most of my other books, this one [*Specters of Marx*] was, let’s put it this way, distributed, bought, and translated faster and more widely. I didn’t say ‘read.’ I suppose this means something (Derrida 1997: 53–54, my translation).

Without wanting to simply erase the singular status of *Specters* (it is often the first and sometimes the only book by Derrida ‘read’ by Marxist thinkers and by political theorists at large), I would like to make a bet, here: the notion that *Specters* is a unique and exceptional object in Derrida’s corpus will be somewhat challenged in the future. Indeed, while it is commonly considered that *Specters* constituted Derrida’s first *real* incursion into Marx’s thought (give or take a few passing references in earlier texts and interviews), archival research reveals that it is not the case at all, and that Derrida already proposed very lengthy and detailed readings of Marx and Marxist texts as early as some twenty-five years earlier. During the late 1960s and (perhaps more significantly) the early 1970s – a very important and prolific period for French and international Marxist thought – Derrida wrote and taught extensively about Marx and Marxist authors (including Engels, Gramsci, Lenin, Benjamin, Kojève, Althusser, Balibar, Buci-Glucksmann, and many others), but none of this work was ever published.⁶ The fact that Derrida did not proceed to publish these texts earlier, preferring to defer his public engagement with Marx and Marxism until the fall of the USSR (which more or less coincided with the death of his friend and colleague Louis Althusser, in 1990) raises a multiplicity of questions, of course, which I cannot even

touch upon here. In particular, the fact that Derrida reserved the vast majority of his early analyses of Marx and Marxist texts to the semi-public, semi-private pedagogic scene of the seminar deserves in itself long developments – concerning, notably, Derrida’s complex relationship with the institution of philosophy, and his critical outlook on the educational system to which he belonged.⁷ As a matter of fact, contrary to many seminar sections that were extracted from their pedagogic context, revised and published in one form or another, Derrida’s long and detailed analyses of Marx and Marxism from the 1960s and 1970s seminars – before the *Specters*, then – remained unpublished all his life.

Nevertheless, there is something unique and fascinating about these texts. In these early seminar notes, Derrida provoked the collision between Marxist-materialist concepts and deconstructive notions still in phase of elaboration: writing and speech, of course, but also the question of the animal and anthropocentrism, sexual difference and phallogocentrism, ideology and fetishism, imperialism and Eurocentrism, economy and violence, psychoanalysis and the ‘uncanny’, metaphor and the text, ideality and materiality, technicity and capitalism, promise and messianicity, the ‘Jewish question,’ and so forth. In the seminars, Derrida strives to think ‘Marxism’ non-monolithically, that is, as a heterogeneous convergence of scattered influences and textual traces, with constant attention to matters of text and textuality, language, translation, reading, teaching, and transmission. Although Derrida constantly emphasises the importance and originality of Marx’s philosophy and the necessity of reading Marx as a philosopher, he also rejects the notion that Marx’s texts should be considered as a perfectly systematic ensemble of coherent philosophical theses, reducible to a series of ontological claims. On the contrary, Derrida wishes to highlight the exorbitant plurality and heterogeneity of the Marxian text – to which he refers, in the 1974–1975 seminar, as ‘the text-Marx.’

The discovery of these unpublished materials on Marxist theory (approximately 1000 pages altogether) will shed new light on Derrida’s engagement with Marx, Marxism, and materialism before *Specters of Marx*, but also on the ethical and political implications of deconstruction – much earlier than Derrida’s so-called ‘ethical-political turn’ (usually dated, with much bad faith, in the late 1980s or early 1990s). For all these reasons, even though I said above that I do not feel quite competent to evaluate the legacy and political impact of *Specters of Marx*, I am much more confident about this other aspect of the question: Derrida’s 1993 book remains to be read, and its reception will certainly become completely transformed as Derrida’s writings on Marx and Marxist thought in his seminars from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s progressively emerge and lend themselves to critical readings. The emergence of these texts will completely change current perspectives on the relationship between deconstruction and Marxism, and will contribute to produce new readings of *Specters of Marx* itself. Considering the crucial importance of the archive in Derrida’s corpus, one can bet that these effects of *contretemps* were, if not calculated, at least somewhat desired, maybe subconsciously and perhaps perversely, by Derrida himself. Everything happens as if the book were itself haunted by other texts, as if it carried the barely visible traces of former seminars which were never published in Derrida’s life, but which nevertheless announced themselves silently from the archive, in view of propelling future readings, grafts and cross-pollinations. If that is true, *Specters* remains to be birthed

through the memory of a promise: the promise of a future that comes from the archive, as if from beyond death, to dislocate the canonical timeline – a sort of insemination and a labour which is nothing short of monstrous. Now, I would like to give one example of this type of retrospective reappraisal driven by archival research. There is a lot to be said, of course, but here I will limit myself to one motif: the ‘question’ of sex and sexual difference in the 1974-1975 unpublished seminar ‘GREPH. Le concept de l’idéologie chez les idéologues français.’ As we will see, this motif of sexual difference is not without connection to the dissemination of heritage and to the scattering of influences which I have described above as chief effects of the law of spectrality.

Who/what reproduces whom/what? (Sex in the archives)

In her 2005 ‘Notes toward a Tribute to Jacques Derrida,’ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak wrote the following lines:

Derrida was always mindful of sexual difference. The project of sexual difference can now be summarized as: catch the mother. I, the son, am the mother’s trace and the father’s sign. Mindful of sexual difference, Derrida was also mindful of what kind of seeker or investigator he could be. I now understand why the daughter’s quest could not be staged by him. Although the books on democracy (*Politics of Friendship, Rogues*) are full of worries about women, the book on Marx (*Specters of Marx*) is without a trace of what one would recognize as feminism [...] (Spivak 2005: 102).

Much could be said about Spivak’s playful and provocative statement, in particular her claim that *Specters of Marx* is ‘without a trace’ of feminism. For starters, Spivak knows very well that the trace is not a presentational structure, so this ‘without a trace,’ the claim of the ‘without,’ the determination of the trace’s presence and/or absence, all this depends on future readings and requires a patient work of textual deciphering. For example, there is an argument to be made that Derrida’s long discussion of *Hamlet*, of the King, the Father, and the spectre in *Specters of Marx* is entirely oriented towards a deconstruction of phallogocentric filiation and hetero-patriarchal hegemony, as well as their ambiguous reliance on the spectral.⁸ Many other such traces could still be spotted, followed, revived, reanimated. But let’s admit with Spivak that the question of sexual difference is not all that central or explicit in *Specters of Marx*, particularly compared to many other works by Derrida, for example *Glas* (which, by the way, includes more than passing references to Marx and Marxist concepts). In contrast, in the 1970s seminars, Derrida makes of sexual difference and ‘the woman’ a central and prominent aspect of his analyses of Marx and Marxism – notably in relation to the production of ideology, to the socio-economic reproduction of capital and sexual reproduction, and to gender and body politics. Let me just give one example of how this is done in the 1974-1975 unpublished seminar ‘GREPH. Le concept de l’idéologie chez les idéologues français.’⁹

In the seminar, Derrida analyses at length the Marxist logic of socio-economic reproduction and the conceptual matrix of production/reproduction which undergirds it. Through intricate readings of Marx and Engels's *The German Ideology* and Althusser's theory of Ideological State Apparatuses, Derrida demonstrates that the Marxist logic of 're-production' tends to ignore the question of sexual and biological reproduction, thus obfuscating problems related to sex, sexuality, gender and sexual differences in the analysis of the reproductive system of the *socius*.¹⁰ Nevertheless, in the last two sessions of the seminar, which are largely dedicated to Marx and Engels's critique of ideology, Derrida proceeds to complicate the question of sexual reproduction and its articulation to socio-economic reproduction. He does so by zooming in on a short passage of *The German Ideology* in which Marx and Engels define sex and sexuality as *labour*, and more particularly as the 'originary' division of labour. In his reading of *The German Ideology*, Derrida highlights the fact that the concepts of division of labour, class divisions, and ideology (which are inseparable in the Marxian text) presuppose *another* division of labour, presented as more 'originary' and 'natural': this originary division is called by Marx and Engels 'the division of labour in the sexual act' (*die Teilung der Arbeit im Geschlechtsakt*). In Marx and Engels's description, this 'originary' division of labour seems to be predicated on sexual difference, and on the familial and tribal structures which allow the reproduction of the species. The sexual division of labour, because it is defined as natural and originary, is therefore presented by Marx and Engels as pre-ideological and pre-political; it already supposes dynamic relations between forces, tensions and antagonisms, but it precedes the class division strictly speaking, that is to say the *later* class division which will result from the division between material and intellectual labour, division in which the production of ideology originates. According to Derrida, this Marxian description of sexual difference thus presupposes a certain naturalness of the hetero-patriarchal structures of society, conceived as preceding the class struggle properly speaking and the production of ideology as such – as if this originary division of labour, indexed on sexual difference and on the 'sexual act,' were purely natural and weren't in itself ideological. Derrida shows that this presentation tends to espouse classical Hegelian schemes by reproducing traditional oppositions such as nature/culture, animality/humanity, sexuality/politics, private/public and family/society.

However, against the tendency to reduce Marx to a critical continuator or to a transgressive reproducer of Hegel, Derrida proceeds in the last (ninth) session of the seminar to read Marx in a non-teleological, non-dialectical way. He explains that Marx and Engels, in *The German Ideology*, do not seem to draw all implications from the incredible realisation that sexual division is the *originary division of labour* (or, conversely, that the originary division of labour is indeed *sexual*). Derrida wants to show that the presupposition of this originary sexual division, which is in itself very hard to delimit and to stabilise – Is it simply natural or already cultural-ideological? Is it biological or socio-political? Is it even *human*, strictly speaking? Is it reducible to the traditional duality of sexes? and so on and so forth – tends to wreak havoc in the whole Marxian system and in the theory of the class struggle (or at least in what remains overly Hegelian, metaphysical, and dialectical-ontological in it). Particularly interesting is the way in which Derrida articulates this

Marxian account of sexual difference (conceived as the originary division of labour) to the problem of ideology and its critique. I cannot do justice to Derrida's whole analysis here, which is really quite stunning. It consists in showing that since the originary division of labour (the sexual) is required and necessarily reproduced in and through the secondary division of labour (class division in the strict sense of the term, starting with the division between intellectual and manual labour, which in turn produces ideology), then this must also signify that all class divisions and the production of ideology are always already sexual, sexualised or sexualizing, that they are marked sexually. It follows that concepts such as 'division of labour,' 'production/reproduction,' 'class domination,' 'class divisions,' 'class struggle,' or 'ideology' must be understood as immediately sexual, as always already affected by sexual difference, which is their origin. This dissemination of sexual difference immensely interests Derrida, as it supposes the impossibility to fully contain and locate the 'question' of sexual difference: all 'labour,' all work, whatever its shape and form, becomes originarily affected by a sexual division that always-already precedes it, as well as any discourse that could be formed on the subject. In this sense, sexual difference, because it is the labour and the division in which all other labour originates, becomes the origin of both manual and intellectual labour, of both material and ideological production. It follows that sexual difference cannot simply be stabilised or captured by the discourse of philosophy, precisely because this discourse is itself the (ideological) product of the socio-economic-sexual divisions identified by Marx. In fact, the philosophical discourse has always strived to contain and obfuscate sexual differences and the divisions of labour they suppose because these divisions betray philosophy's originary reliance on agonistic structures and relations of forces. In sum, Derrida explains that, if we take it seriously, Marx and Engels's postulation of the originary (sexual) division of labour should lead us to the realisation that *all labour* (manual and/or intellectual) is always already marked sexually, and that it is therefore never neutral from this point of view. All labour is marked by the antagonisms and relations of forces carried in and through sexual and class divisions, and repeating each time material or ideological limits and differences that remain to be read, deciphered and deconstructed.

In order to think all these aspects together, Derrida postulates what he calls an originary and irreducible 'agonistic *différance*,' a multiplicity of sexual-material-textual differential forces affecting and traversing all the concepts at play here, and challenging the stabilisation of 'politics,' 'economy,' 'sexuality,' or 'ideology' into ontological categories. This supposes the inseparability and co-implication between sexual, cultural-ideological, and economic-material differences – thus suggesting a distinctly deconstructive interpretation of 'intersectionality.' Derrida calls this general structure the 'ideological-sexual organisation' of the *socius*. In this way, Derrida proceeds to articulate the Marxist discourse on class struggle and ideology with the psychoanalytic questions of sexuality, the unconscious, the phantasm, the economy of the drives, repression, the uncanny and so on. The 1974-1975 seminar thus paves the way for a conjoined deconstructive reading of both politics and psychoanalysis by bringing together Marx's critique of ideology and fetishism and Freud's analytics of the unconscious. Regarding more particularly the Marxist critique

of ideology, Derrida's pre-ontological 'agonistic *différance*' implies, first, that the structure of the ideological is itself non-homogeneous, that it exists in *différance*, as a heterogeneous system of sexual, economic, cultural and textual traces; and, second, that the ideological cannot be abolished once and for all but that its structure remains to be translated, transformed and deconstructed. This also implies considering Derrida's deconstruction of the sexual politics of ontology (through the notion of *dissemination*, for example, understood as *that which does not return to the Father*) as a continuation and radicalisation of the Marxian critique of ideology – an aspect which is several times highlighted by Derrida in the early seminars. Deconstruction always targets a seminal father figure, be it the logos, the state, the capital, or the ontological authority of philosophy, which performs its own sovereignty by positing itself as ontological discourse on the truth of being. Deconstruction is always concerned with challenging the sovereign determination of an origin, as well as the genealogical order of filiation that comes with it.

In many ways, the socio-political-sexual collision between the economies of Freud and Marx – deconstructing Marx through Freud, deconstructing Freud through Marx – provoked by Derrida in the mid-1970s could be interpreted as a deconstructive response to Althusser's reading of Lacan, or to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze is in fact mentioned in several handwritten notes on the 1974-1975 seminar's typescript). Unfortunately, I cannot go much further here, but from this short introduction, it will readily appear that the type of analysis put forward by Derrida in the early seminars is very different in style and in content from what will later be developed in *Specters of Marx*. As usual with Derrida, there is still an astonishing sense of coherence in the whole oeuvre, but the seminars of the 1960s and 1970s constitute without a doubt another scene, another genre, one that deserves to be explored, read and compared with Derrida's later texts. I hope to have shown in these schematic remarks the type of work that remains to be done, with and around *Specters of Marx*, and how this work of transformative translation can and will benefit from the study of Derrida's unpublished seminars. In particular, I want to emphasise the fact that *Specters* remain to be read, translated, written and rewritten, and perhaps betrayed, in order to continue the type of deconstructive work that Derrida invited us to pursue, in view of liberating the emancipatory potentialities inscribed in what Derrida calls 'the text-Marx' – to which *Specters* now pertains, within/without. The *Specters* are *before* us because they are *behind* us; but because they are *behind* us, we are *before* them, before the *Specters* and before their law, and as such they remain to come. They are both before and behind us, in and through a structure in which we find ourselves undecidably active *and* passive. This complex structure of being before-after, before-behind, is commanded by the law of spectrality. Now, let's be very clear: the sexual connotations of this apparently impossible corporeal and topological structure – I'm tempted to call it 'queer' – cannot and should not be ignored. This labour of transformative deconstruction is through and through marked sexually, but it radically disrupts the sexual politics of metaphysics and ontology. We are before the *Specters* because they are before us, inside/outside, and yet to come – *encore*.

Specters of Specters of Marx: Sovereignty, Subjectivity—Returns

Paulo Chamon

Of fears and common grounds

Specters of Marx can be read as an endeavour to simultaneously theorize the two meanings contained in its title: the specters that are Marx and Marxism, and the specters that haunt Marx and Marxism. Simply put, in invoking the specters of communism to haunt Europe, Marx would not only have scared his targets, but also himself, since the not-one [*plus d'un*] of spectrality – specters are always more-than-one (heterogeneous) and less-than-one (disjointed) and, therefore, uncontainable – risked undoing any stable ground for critique. Thus, *Specters of Marx* shows that a common fear of specters binds together a certain spirit of Marx and the late 20th century liberal triumphalism famously expressed in Fukuyama's claim to the end of history. In turn, by claiming fidelity to a different spirit of Marx – that of the promise of emancipation through the radical critique of the present –, *Specters of Marx* offers ways for remaining open to the radical disjointed heterogeneity of spectrality.

In this essay, I inherit *Specters of Marx* through a similar dual move. More specifically, I propose we can read *Specters of Marx* as also scaring itself when it invokes spectrality to haunt the common world of Fukuyama and of a certain Marx. In this moment of fear, we might be able to speak of a common ground not only between liberal triumphalism and spirits of Marx, but also between these and at least one spirit of *Specters of Marx*.

The sense that *Specters of Marx* ends up scaring itself is not new. Indeed, Macherey implies as much when he ponders whether Derrida's affirmation of the undeconstructibility of justice as the condition of deconstruction 'wouldn't [...] be itself a ghost, the ghost or the "spirit" of Derrida?' (Macherey 2008: 24).¹¹ In what follows, I focus on a different moment of the text: its affirmation of a 'New International' as a response to its present that remains faithful to spectrality. Although the uncanny liberal bias in this conceptualisation has not gone unnoticed (see Brown 2009; Debrix 1999), I am more interested in how we might read it as conjuring spectrality from the text. In doing so, however, I do not ask us to be more faithful to spectrality than the text managed to be. If spectrality spurs that moment of fear, to call for even more fidelity, in that same spirit, might only reproduce the same fear. Nor do I propose to throw away spectrality altogether. Instead, in speaking of specters of *Specters of Marx*, I rely on spectrality long enough for its internal tension to reveal itself and thus to show the need to also move in connected but different directions. To do so, I read spectrality through discursivity more than hauntology, that is, inquiring what it does as a practice circulating in discourse and how that discursive practice works in constituting a particular present. A history of the present haunted by the specters of *Specters of Marx*, we might say.

Unlike in *Specters of Marx*, such present cannot easily be said to be one of liberal triumphalism – international liberalism finding itself closer to being claimed dead than triumphant these days. Nonetheless, I argue that this common ground speaks to what we have come to call, as diagnoses of our present, the ‘return of geopolitics’ and the ‘rise of the radical right.’ More specifically, I argue that the exorcizing of spectrality in *Specters of Marx* works to *chase away* sovereignty and subjectivity as problematisations making for modern politics – that is, as fields in which specific problems can be formulated and specific solutions offered to them in ways that set the terms of what we call ‘politics.’¹² In doing so, it then becomes possible for us to *chase after* them as *either* problems to be solved *or* solutions to be drawn upon. It is a short step from this to diagnosing the present as facing a return of the problems of geopolitics and extremist subjectivities, and/or to reach out to proper sovereign authorities and political subjects as desirable solutions.

The invocation of a ‘New International’ in *Specters of Marx* is conceptualized in two moves: the projected future of a set of historical processes and a disjointed link opening up to what is to-come. I take up each of these dimensions in the next two sections, asking what is exorcized in each of them. Then, bringing both exorcisms together, I venture one way in which, as a common ground shared by liberalism, Marxism, and spectrality, they help give shape to a particular conception of ourselves and of our present.

The consistency of a future ‘New International’ – exorcizing modern sovereignty

In its first dimension, the ‘New International’ refers to a ‘profound transformation, projected over a long term, of international law, of its concepts, and its field of intervention,’ a transformation that follows the injunction that ‘international law should extend and diversify its field to include, *if at least it is to be consistent with the idea of democracy and of human rights it proclaims*, the worldwide economic and social field, beyond the sovereignty of States [, mafias and cartels]’ (Derrida 2006: 105, my emphasis). Here, the ‘New International’ appears as a project and projected future of *consistency* grounded on the historical process through which international law and institutions might be conjoined and made one with the idea of democracy and human rights they proclaim – in other words, might become one with themselves.

This project of consistency relies on two things. On the one hand, the extension of international law to ‘the worldwide economic and social field’ – we might say, the expansion of international law to encompass the ‘world,’ to reach beyond sovereign States and state-like organisations. On the other hand, authorities that might, if necessary, place limits on sovereign States and market forces. This appears not only in the supportive gesture towards humanitarian interventions, but also in the timid consideration of Marx’s critique of the State (Derrida 2006: 105).

In such affirmation of the projected future of the ‘New International,’ *Specters of Marx* highlights two factual objections: (i) the world is everything but democratic and human rights abiding; and (ii) it would be naïve to speak of international law and institutions without also affirming the role played by state prerogatives and market forces. However,

Specters of Marx also affirms that we must not allow these disqualifications to tarnish the perfectibility of law and the project of consistency of the 'New International.' Instead, we must read other facts as *signs* of that projected future: '[h]owever insufficient, confused, or equivocal such signs may still be, we should salute what is heralded today in the reflection on the right of interference or intervention [...] thereby limiting the sovereignty of the State in certain conditions' (Derrida 2006: 104-105).

What I find striking here is the similarity between this discussion and the critique in *Specters of Marx* of Fukuyama's liberal triumphalism and of Marx's critique. Indeed, Fukuyama's argument is shown to rely on a sleight of hand in which the 'good news' of the triumph of liberalism is affirmed simultaneously as a concrete historical evidence and, in view of the continuing destitution of most of the world's population, as a *sign* of a future liberal triumph. Likewise, Marx is shown to rely on a double bind between the historically situated critique of 'the autonomization and automatization of ideality,' and the grounding of such critique in an ontology (Derrida 2006: 213-214).

But doesn't the theorisation of the 'New International' in *Specters of Marx* rely on the same kind of double claim? What makes one a mere sleight of hand and the other a demand of justice? I propose we can locate here a moment in which *Specters of Marx* joins liberalism and Marxism on their common fears of ghosts. A moment in which, having invoked spectrality to haunt liberal triumphalism and Marxist ontology, *Specters of Marx* scares itself and resorts to exorcism. What can we make of this moment in which spectrality conjures itself at the moment of its political formulation? And how to do so if calling for fidelity to specters risks grounding us further in that common place?

For one, we might read the 'New International' symptomatically. Particularly, we might interpret the conditions of its project of consistency in terms of what Jens Bartelson (1995) calls the prophecy of expansion and the promise of transcendence of the modern international system. To Bartelson, 'modern sovereignty' emerges in relation to historical knowledge within the modern *episteme*. In this arrangement, the tension between identity and difference is resolved through a dialectics in which the political community of modern subjects reconciles conflict by externalizing difference to a constructed outside. Hence, the sovereign State affirms its identity within by externalizing difference to the system of States outside, and the system of States affirms its identity by externalizing difference to an Other world outside. As such, '[a]t their logical juncture, and at their point of emergence in modern political discourse, the state and the international system have, as it were, two futures. One is centred around the prophecy of expansion, while the other is centred around the promise of transcendence' (Bartelson 1995: 230). While, on the one hand, 'the prophecy of expansion projects the presence of the international system onto the future spaces of history,' on the other, 'the promise of transcendence projects the finalist dialectic of the state onto the future of a globalized international space' (Bartelson 1995: 231). Not only those promises and prophecies are intrinsic to the interplay between modern sovereign states and modern system of sovereign states, they are also halted by the very articulation that makes them possible: the expansion of the international system fulfils the prophecy insofar as it maintains an external space of Otherness in relation to

which the system of States can remain the Same; likewise, the modern political communities – state or system of states – can transcend difference insofar as they maintain an external locus in relation to which they can be limited. In sum, modern sovereignty involves an ‘ontological implication between the sovereign state and the international system’ (Bartelson 1995: 231): one cannot hope to solve the troubles in one part by calling forth the other.

Likewise, according to Walker (2009, particularly chapter 2; see also, 1993, 2016), modern sovereignty articulates the problem of legitimate political community in relation to the posited demise of overarching (premodern) universalities – call them myths, Empire or Christianity. In this context, modern sovereignty affirms the limits in space and time within which one can reconcile unity and diversity between free and equal modern subjects, and beyond which no such reconciliation is possible and political claims must be forgone. These limits are set by tracing imaginary lines of differentiation that articulate a system of universality-within-particularity and particularity-within-universality. One can reach for universality as long as it remains within the limits of a particular sovereign State; one can remain a particular State as long as it remains within the universal form established by a universalized sovereign system of States. Once again, attempts to solve those tensions by moving from one set of limits to the other – from universality to particularity, from State to system of States, from transcendence to expansion (or, in each case, vice versa) – only repositions those limits as constitutive of modern political life. And although these lines are increasingly unconvincing in face of changing discursive and empirical conditions, they continue to operate as regulative ideals – and ‘the less that practice conforms to the ideal, the more the ideal works to regulate the practice’ (Walker 2016: 26).

Read through these theorisations, the projected future of the ‘New International’ plays out the possibilities constituted within the limits of modern politics. In particular, in invoking the expansion and transcendence of international law beyond sovereign States as a way out of the democratic gap stemming from power politics and market forces in modern international politics, it disavows the ontological implication of State and the system of States, of universality-in-particularity and particularity-in-universality, under which expansion and transcendence emerge as possible solutions. In this sense, in *Specters of Marx*, spectrality exorcizes what can be called *the problem of sovereignty* – or, more precisely, the problematisation of modern sovereignty as a paradoxical set of problems and solutions through which we orient ourselves politically by posing the question of legitimate authority in terms of the lines establishing proper sites of sovereignty. Instead, it affirms sovereignty as *either* a problem – to be transcended (towards a ‘super-State’) – or a solution – to be expanded (towards the ‘worldwide economic and social field’). In sum, the projected future of the ‘New International’ of *Specters of Marx* is articulated precisely within the terms set by the problem of the International – now referring neither to the socialist-Marxist International nor the inter-state system, but to the set of tensions set up by the problem of modern sovereignty as a condition of possibility of modern politics.

The promise as a “New International” to-come—exorcizing subjectivity

The ‘New International,’ however, is not solely or mainly a project of consistency in a projected future: there is something in it that cannot be reduced to that historical process. In this second sense,

The ‘New International’ is not only that which is seeking a new international law through these crimes. It is a link of affinity, suffering, and hope, a still discreet, almost secret link, as it was around 1848, but more and more visible, we have *more than one sign of it*. It is an untimely link, without status, without tide, and without name, barely public even if it is not clandestine, without contract, ‘out of joint,’ without coordination, without party, without country, without national community (International before, across, and beyond any national determination), without co-citizenship, without common belonging to a class (Derrida 2006: 106-107, my emphasis).

Here, the ‘New International’ is an untimely, spectral, *link* making for no consistent community, being, or trajectory. And if there are signs of it, they remain themselves spectral, not-one. As such, the ‘New International’ speaks to specters.

In speaking to the specters of that historical process of perfectibility, the aim is ‘not to renounce, but on the contrary to open up access to an affirmative thinking of the messianic and emancipatory *promise as promise: as promise and not as onto-theological or teleo-esschatological program or design*’ (Derrida 2006: 94, my emphasis). This promise as promise affirms nothing but itself, it is irreducible, even indifferent, to any particular content: ‘[w]hether the promise promises this or that, whether it be fulfilled or not, or whether it be unfulfillable, there is necessarily some promise and therefore some historicity as future-to-come. It is what we are nicknaming *the messianic without messianism*’ (Derrida 2006: 92, my emphasis). This promise as promise, this messianic without messianism, marks a radical opening to indeterminacy.

Instead of a projected future of consistency, then, the ‘New International’ affirms the indeterminacy of what remains to come, and thus an absolute hospitality to what is coming. As such, the double futures of the modern international are also displaced: instead of a prophecy of expansion, the messianic without messianism; instead of a promise of transcendence, the promise as promise, irreducible to a content; and instead of the alternate appeals to a concrete historical process and a regulative sign, an opening to the indeterminate to-come. With this, *Specters of Marx* appears to side-step the ground it shared with liberal triumphalism and Marxist ontology.

We might consider, however, whether the promise as promise is as distinguishable from a regulating ideal as *Specters of Marx* affirms it to be. The distinguishing element being claimed is the opening to indeterminacy, which would undo the role of that promise as a regulating ideal: one cannot specify the promise, lest one reinstates a project or program; and without that specificity, the ideal cannot regulate. However, fidelity to a promise is an ambivalent ordeal. As Butler has argued, the result of the unrealizability of an ideal can

‘just as well be (a) the degradation of the ideal, (b) the proliferation of other ideals, (c) the closing of the gap between the ideal and what is realizable, (d) permanent disappointment, disillusionment, rancor, and doubtless numerous other possibilities’ (Butler 1993: 7). In this context, although *Specters of Marx* locates in the promise as promise the spectral link of the ‘New International,’ it can only do so at the cost of exorcizing the specters of that promise, of that interminable critique.

In particular, to Butler (1993), if the realisation of the promise is impossible, if constitutive failure is its condition of possibility, then one might end up embodying Nietzschean *ressentiment* – the moralizing rage of the powerless who, unable to win, overcome suffering by righteously inflicting pain at an external culprit (Nietzsche, 2008). In her words, ‘the fabrication of unattainable ideals retroactively constitutes the subject as a necessarily failed striving [...] and then valorizes and romanticizes that self-defeat as its own constitutive necessity’ (Butler 1993: 8). In doing so, it ‘not only limits the sense of power or efficacy but sanctifies those limits as well,’ in such a way that ‘the very production of the limitless possibilities paradoxically paralyzes the political will’ (Butler 1993: 10; see also Brown 1995: 71).¹³ In this sense, claims to absolute hospitality in the fidelity to a promise as promise may lead less to an openness to the to-come and more to subjects attached to disavowed political limits.

In *Specters of Marx*, this fidelity to the promise of the ‘New International’ calls for nothing less than ascesis: ‘ascesis strips the messianic hope of all biblical forms, and even all determinable figures of the wait or expectation; it thus denudes itself in view of responding to that which must be absolute hospitality’ since ‘this hospitality is absolute only if it keeps watch over its own universality’ (Derrida 2006: 211). However, it is precisely the figure of the ascetic that opens the way for Butler’s questions over subjectivity. Still following Nietzsche, she notes in the figure of the ascetic the paradox of the suppression of desire that displaces desire towards prohibition, both libidizing prohibition and eluding the subject from itself. Indeed, to Butler (1997), as one suppresses desire by preserving it in different forms, the self-relation of the subject emerges as relying on something that must also be elusively denied. In this condition, she argues, hyper-vigilant self-reflexivity is the effect of desire in recoil from the workings of subjectivation. This kind of attachment constitutes the problem of subjectivity and, more specifically, of the attachment of subjectivity on the power that constitutes and risks undoing it.

Challenging Butler’s claims, Berlant (2011: 184) argues that one ‘becomes attached not to subordinated dependency but to the scene of the opportunity to imagine the optimistic overcoming of what’s disempowering about this dependency,’ an opportunity that emerges because, in that scene, ‘the subject negotiates an overdetermined set of promises and potentials for recognition and even thriving.’ Instead of thinking of subjectivation as an attachment to subjecting power, then, Berlant proposes we think of it as the production of an atmosphere of contradictory promises through which a subject can posit the overcoming of dependency. In this framework, we might read the promise as promise of the ‘New International’ not so much as subjectivizing *ressentiment* through attachment to an unrealizable ideal, but as forming an optimistic atmosphere articulating contradictory

desires and aims while allowing the subject to imagine overcoming the exorcism of spectrality in order to remain open to the to-come.

To Berlant, optimism is an affective form: the desire to remain close to an object or scene of desire that contains a cluster of promises. If optimism is this will to proximity, then *cruel optimism* is ‘the attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realisation is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic’ (Berlant 2011: 24). In other words, *cruel optimism* is the affective disposition of being optimistically attached to a scene of desire – a cluster of promises – that threatens one’s well-being, even though the attachment itself is also a condition of one’s being. The promise as promise, the indeterminate promise that can only be kept insofar as it is never fulfilled, could easily be seen to slide towards cruel optimism.

If *Specters of Marx*’s promise as promise can therefore be said to lead to a number of different places besides absolute hospitality to the to-come, the very centrality of promises to political subjectivity in the late 20th century has been the focus of analyses regarding leftist melancholia. Although a number of these have echoed the terms (if not always the politics) of *Specters of Marx* by vindicating political melancholia as an asset of the oppressed for sustaining an attachment to the promise of radical transformation even in the face of everlasting defeat (Traverso 2017; Khanna 2011), this has not always been the case. Indeed, in a transvaluation of these interpretations, the melancholic attachment to promises has been shown to often result from forms of abstraction that disconnect political subjects from the goal of transformation. This has come both in the form of an attachment to an idealized ‘Promise of the Left’ that becomes more important than concrete political practices (Brown 2003) and in the form of an attachment to the enjoyment of symbolic actions that express faithfulness to a promise while selling out any organicity with the oppressed (Dean 2013).¹⁴ In this sense, if the promise as promise can lead to varied political dispositions, the fact that it is itself so central can be seen as already resulting from a number of possible conservative (although often very active) political attachments (see also Žižek 2000).

The point here is one of erased complexity. As we read subjectivation as an attachment to subordination, the promise as promise might lead to *ressentiment* just as much as to the creative affirmation of life. Likewise, as we read subjectivation as negotiation of overcoming within a scene of promises, the messianic without messianism might not only configure a form of optimism in itself, but also turn to forms of cruel optimism. Finally, as we read subjectivation as a melancholic attachment to an idealized promise, melancholia might appear as an ultimate bastion of resistance energizing the struggle against oppression, although one likely haunted by the possibility of its reversal in one or another form of conservative melancholia. In all these approaches, the problem revolves around how to make sense of the constitution of subjects that are not self-possessed and transparent to themselves, and how to make sense of the attachments entangled in that constitution. In sum, what is at stake is the set of problems and solutions through which we come to (mis)understand ourselves as subjects – and, particularly, political subjects. In this sense, what the ascetic practice of the promise as promise in *Specters of Marx* seems to exorcize is the problem of subjectivity – or, better said, the complex set of problems and solutions

through which we come to make ourselves as (political) subjects. Instead, it relies on the affirmation of subjectivity as *either* a problem – to be resolved through fidelity to a certain spirit of Marx – *or* as a solution – allowing for the move from the project of consistency to the untimely spectral link – in order to sustain claims to a ‘New International.’

Conjuring our present—to chase away so to chase after

The ‘New International’ is a complex claim. On the one hand, it is *projected* into the future as transforming through processes of socio-political struggles in the form of a prophecy of expansion and a promise of transcendence. On the other hand, it is a spectral link characterized by its untimely out-of-jointness and irreducibility to historical expansion and transcendence. In *Specters of Marx*, each of these two dimensions speak to a different spirit of Marx – as ontology and as hauntology – and must be ‘implicated with each other in the course of a complex and constantly re-evaluated strategy’ (Derrida 2006: 108-109).

However, as I have reinterpreted them, these spirits are also the double exorcism of the problem of sovereignty and of the problem of subjectivity – an erasure that sets the common ground between liberal triumphalism, Marxist ontological critique, and spectrality. And yet, as intertwined sets of problems and answers, sovereignty and subjectivity situate modern (political) subjects through their paradoxes. As such, they don’t simply go away – in the spirit of conjuration, to chase them away is also to chase after them. In this sense, *Specters of Marx* takes part in a particular problematisation of the present, a problematisation that is tenuously secured by its own capacity to make sense of a series of obstacles into a field of questions and answers that are intelligible, effective, and have adherence. If *Specters of Marx* still haunts us, it is also in terms of its participation in such construction of problems and answers, a construction of which we catch a glimpse in this essay.

More specifically, from the work so far, we might speculate about the increasingly common interpretation of our present in terms of a ‘return to geopolitics’ and a ‘rise of the radical right.’ Through the first, we refer to a move ‘back’ from an expanded and transcended condition of authority beyond and above the States (liberal, socialist-Marxist International, or ‘New Internationalist’) to a more crude politics at the interstate level. Through the second, we imply a move from a self-possessed subject (of liberalism, Marxism, or the Promise) to the affectively mobilized subject of a ‘radical right.’ With these interpretations, we *chase after* the international (always on the verge of crude power politics) and the subjective (always amenable to become unreasonable) as ways of making sense of our current political predicaments. Importantly, however, we chase after them in the very terms they assume once they have been discursively *chased away* as sets of problems and solutions in the common ground between liberalism, Marxism, and spectrality. That is, we chase after them as problems and as answers, but not as problematisations that always already set the conditions under which we make sense of ourselves as modern political subjects. In other words, the ‘return of geopolitics’ and the ‘rise of the radical right’ are attempts to solve the problem of sovereignty and the problem of subjectivity that operate by exorcizing them

as *problematization* in order to ‘bring them back’ as possible problems and/or answers. If late 20th century authoritarianism was informed by the call and response around the exorcism of specters, it might be that the political predicament of early 21st century is being informed by the call and response around the exorcism of sovereignty and subjectivity. These are the specters of *Specters of Marx*. We inherit them as our present.

Notes

- 1 [Note by Mercier] On this subject, see my essay ‘Re/pro/ductions,’ forthcoming in *Poetics Today* (Mercier 2020b).
- 2 [Note by Mercier] Derrida’s ‘ten plagues’ telegram is easy to mock, and many have derided its pseudo-prophetic tone and apparent simplicity (see for example Spivak 1995 and Rancière 2009). On the contrary, Étienne Balibar’s analysis is more nuanced and more attentive to what Derrida’s text attempts to perform: ‘there are other messianic statements of politics and its end. Some passages of Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* describing the ‘ten plagues’ of the current world that as a whole constitute the economic horror of our “out of joint” time are clearly oriented in this direction, although we should never lose sight of the ironic element in Derrida’s writing, which constantly plays with the contemporary return of archetypes’ (Balibar 2004: 107).
- 3 [Note by Mercier] I analysed Derrida’s politics of disjunction and *contretemps* in Mercier (2019).
- 4 [Note by Mercier] See for instance the texts collected in *The Spectralities Reader* (del Pilar Blanco & Peeren 2013).
- 5 [Note by Mercier] For a good overview of Derrida’s small but growing influence in the field of International Relations and political science, see Hirst 2019: 10-12. Here again, a patient work is required in order to analyse the ways in which Derridean concepts such as ‘hospitality’ or ‘autoimmunity’ have been modified and translated so as to accommodate disciplinary requirements specific to political science or International Relations, sometimes contributing to deconstruct the methodological presuppositions of these disciplines in either discreet or spectacular fashion.
- 6 [Note by Mercier] These texts are the object of a research I currently conduct at CEFRES (CNRS)/Charles University Prague, in the context of the research group ‘Archives and Interculturality,’ which focuses on archives and manuscripts of philosophy and theory. The seminars that make up my corpus notably include: ‘Théorie du discours philosophique: la métaphore dans le texte philosophique’ (1969-1970); ‘Théorie du discours philosophique. La forme du texte philosophique: les conditions d’inscription du texte de philosophie politique (l’exemple du matérialisme)’ (1970-1971); ‘La famille de Hegel’ (1971-1972); ‘Religion et philosophie’ (1972-1973); ‘GREPH. Le concept de l’idéologie chez les idéologues français’ (1974-1975); ‘La vie la mort’ (1975-1976); ‘Théorie et pratique’ (1976-1977); ‘Walter Benjamin’ (probably between 1973 and 1976: year uncertain); ‘Séminaire au GREPH sur Gramsci’ (1976-1977), and many others seminar notes, archival texts and documents. The seminar ‘Théorie et pratique’ (1976-1977) was published in 2017 and recently translated into English by David Wills (Derrida 2019b). The seminar ‘La vie la mort’ (1975-1976) was published in 2019 (Derrida 2019a). See Mercier (2019, 2020b) for more details on this corpus.
- 7 [Note by Mercier] On this subject, see my essays ‘Pas de course,’ forthcoming in *Philosophiques* (Mercier 2020a), and ‘Re/pro/ductions,’ forthcoming in *Poetics Today* (Mercier 2020b).
- 8 [Note by Mercier] In fact, Derrida makes this very clear in ‘Marx & Sons’ (2008).
- 9 [Note by Mercier] For an extended and more detailed analysis of Derrida’s work on Marx and sexual differences in the 1970s seminars, see Mercier (2019, 2020b).
- 10 [Note by Mercier] These aspects are further developed in the seminar of the following year, *La vie la mort (1975-1976)* (Derrida 2019a).
- 11 [Note by Chamon] On justice as undeconstructible, see also Derrida (1990).
- 12 [Note by Chamon] On problematisations, see Foucault (1997: 118, 1999, especially Lecture 2 and Concluding Remarks).

- 13 [Note by Chamon] Many have argued against this negative reading of *ressentiment* (Coulthard 2014) and against the necessity of suffering turning into *ressentiment* (Ahmed 2008). As I argue below, I am less interested in the necessity of these articulations than in their possibility – and in what their erasure as possibilities tells us.
- 14 [Note by Chamon] On this mirrored diagnosis of left-wing melancholia, see Nunes (2018).

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About the Authors

Thomas Clément Mercier was awarded a Ph.D. in Philosophy and Political Theory by King's College London's Department of War Studies in 2017. He is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at CEFRES/ Charles University (Prague), and will soon start a FONDECYT Fellowship at the Universidad Adolfo Ibañez in Santiago (Chile). His work has been published in journals such as *Global Discourse*, *Oxford Literary Review*, *Derrida Today*, *Revue ITER*, *Parallax*, *Ostium*, *Demarcaciones*, and *CR: The New Centennial Review*. He specializes in political thought and international studies, with a particular interest in the multi-layered problematics of democracy, violence and political resistance from the perspectives of deconstruction, Marxism, queer and decolonial thought. Among other projects, he's currently working on the edition and publication of the correspondence between Louis Althusser and Jacques Derrida.

Paulo Chamon is post-doctoral research fellow at the Institute of International Relations of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (IRI/PUC-Rio), where he also teaches in the graduate and undergraduate programs. His research is in international political theory, particularly the role of the category of 'time' as a site of critical investigation. He also has a long-term interest in the category of 'merit' and the problems of desire and subjectivity in relation to modern politics. More recently, he has been working on the legacies of race development in the constitution of the problem-field of international politics in Brazil.

Promessas Ambivalentes—Reproduções do Sujeito: Um Fórum sobre os *Espectros de Marx* de Jacques Derrida depois de 25 anos, Parte IV

Resumo: Jacques Derrida entregou a base de os *Espectros de Marx: O Estado da Dívida, a Obra do Luto e a Nova Internacional* como discurso plenário na conferência ‘Whither Marxism?’, na Universidade da Califórnia, em Riverside, em 1993. A versão mais longa do livro foi publicada em francês no mesmo ano e em inglês e português no ano seguinte. Uma década após a publicação dos *Espectros*, as análises de Derrida provocaram uma grande literatura crítica e convidaram tanto a consternação quanto a celebração de figuras como Antonio Negri, Wendy Brown e Frederic Jameson. Este fórum procura estimular novas reflexões sobre Derrida, desconstrução e *Espectros de Marx*, considerando como futuro do passado anunciado pelo livro se saiu depois de um movimentado quarto de século. Neste quarto grupo de contribuições, Thomas Clément Mercier mostra como o livro de Derrida, além de questionar a recepção e a influência, ainda precisa ser lido, especialmente à luz das pesquisas de arquivo em andamento sobre os engajamentos de Derrida com os escritos de Marx em seminários da década de 1970; e Paulo Chamon oferece uma avaliação crítica da promessa de Derrida de uma ‘Nova Internacional’, considerando como o livro se assusta de maneira a suscitar sérias questões em relação à soberania e subjetividade.

Palavras-chave: Derrida, Jacques; Marx, Karl; legado; influência; gênero; soberania; subjetividade; internacionalismo; melancolia.

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