

Spectres of Class: Marxism, Deconstruction and the Politics of Affiliation

Ross Abbinnett

The paper is concerned with the reaction of the left to the publication of Jacques Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (SM). My argument is that this reaction has, in general, been unwilling to engage with the ethico-political significance of Derrida's thought, and that it has concentrated largely on reiterating certain protocols which ought to govern the inheritance of Marx's political provocations. I have taken three particularly vociferous critics of SM as exemplary of this attempt to designate the proper conditions of affiliation to Marxism: Aijaz Ahmad, Alex Callinicos and Tom Lewis. I argue that each of these thinkers has ignored the concept of the question which informs Derrida's attempt to remain faithful to "a certain spirit" of Marxism, and that consequently they have failed to take seriously his attempts to transform conventional notions of class solidarity. In the final section I will examine Fredric Jameson's attempt to restage the encounter between Marxism and deconstruction, and to reconfigure the idea of class in the light of Derrida's remarks on logic of revolutionary condensation and historical necessity. My aim is to show that the apparent homology between Derrida and Jameson is ruptured by the latter's insistence upon the "allegorical" configuration of class solidarities, and the former's commitment to the de-affiliating questions (of hospitality) that arise from global organization of capitalism.

I will always wonder if the idea of Marxism—the self-identity of Marxist discourse or system or even a science of philosophy—is not incompatible with the event-Marx. (Derrida 1993)

Introduction

So why return to the concept of class? Why revisit what seems to be the point of absolute differentiation between Marxism and deconstruction? My purpose in restaging this polemic is to examine a particular set of generic protocols which have, to a very significant degree, established the terms of legitimate affiliation to Marx's thought and politics. Put very schematically these protocols are: the ultimate recuperability of class struggle within the global-technological

transformations of capitalism; the redetermination of proletarian solidarity through the strategic interventions of Marxist theory; the invocation of history as both the loss and the recovery of the revolutionary dialectics of class; and the referral of political agency to the structural antagonisms which determine power relationships within the mode of production. Thus the deficiencies of deconstruction, conceived as a particularly sophisticated form of postmodernist theory, are easily determined. For in so far as Derrida neglects the logics of historical necessity which are played out through the material effects of class struggle, he is left with no basis from which to launch a socially transformative politics. Indeed, it is claimed that his desire to give priority to the ethical demand of “the other” and to avoid what he takes to be the totalizing/totalitarian ontology of Marxism, leads him into a fatal complicity with liberal capitalist ideology. The purpose of my paper is to dispute these claims.

The protocols I have enumerated operate within a particularly influential strand of Marxist thought—that is, the kind of radical modernism which is espoused in the work of Aijaz Ahmad, Perry Anderson, Alex Callinicos, Terry Eagleton, David Harvey, and Tom Lewis, to name only a few. Obviously constraints of space mean that I cannot undertake a comprehensive survey of the work of each of these authors. What I can do however is to register the effects of a particular encounter between Marxism and deconstruction, that is, of Michael Sprinker’s solicitation of responses to the publication of Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx (SM)*. The collection of essays, published in 1999 under the title *Ghostly Demarcations*, includes contributions by Ahmad¹ and Lewis² which, I will argue, exemplify the Marxist conventions I have sketched above. Callinicos is absent from Sprinker’s collection; however his spirit is frequently invoked by Ahmad and Lewis, and I will examine the article on *SM* which he published in *Radical Philosophy* in 1996, as well as a number of other interventions he has made in the Marxism-postmodernism debate. My intention is to clarify the terms through which Ahmad, Callinicos and Lewis have reconstructed the political effectivity of class and through which they have determined the rules of Marxism’s proper engagement with deconstruction.

The second part of my paper is concerned with a different encounter between Marxism and deconstruction—one which is staged in the essay “Marx’s purloined letter” which Fredric Jameson contributed to *Ghostly Demarcations*. As we will see, Jameson’s engagement with deconstruction marks a significant shift away from the Marxist conventions I have enumerated. In particular he is willing to grant that deconstruction has a certain independence from the postmodernist thought and culture which has been the subject of his cultural critiques. This independence is configured around the concept of spectrality which Derrida deploys in *SM*: the trembling disjuncture of the present which constantly postpones the moment of revolutionary realization and summons the ghosts of old

1. ‘Reconciling Derrida: “Spectres of Marx” and deconstructive politics’, in Sprinker, ed. (1999), 134-167.

2. ‘The politics of “hauntology” in Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx*’, in Sprinker, ed. (1999), 134-167.

ideologies to the crises of the day. What is important here is that the cultural turn of Jameson's Marxism entails a certain independence of the ideational sphere of capitalism—an independence whose limits are constantly reproduced in the depthless, technologically reproducible culture which has pervaded the lifeworld of postmodern societies. Derrida's account of the spectralizing powers of capitalism therefore discloses the infinite horizon of deferral which is the trademark of postmodern capitalism: for in so far as the class dynamics of the present are always already dispersed through the virtualizing effects of image technologies, the possibility of political transformation demands a permanent critique of the forms of false individualism through which the global totality of capital is sustained (Jameson in Sprinker 1999, p. 36).

However these apparently sympathetic meditations on the transformative potential of deconstruction remain complicit with the Marxist conventions I have specified. I will argue that his attempts to determine the "allegorical" significance of class struggle within the play of ideological spectres, draws his critique back towards the logics of gathering and composition which are formulated by Ahmad, Callinicos and Lewis. This, of course, is not to say that Jameson simply repeats this logic, but rather that there are specific points in his writing where the logic of class struggle returns to supplement his critique of postmodern culture. The conclusion of my paper therefore will examine the radical possibility of inheritance which Derrida introduces in *SM*: the possibility of a Marxist politics in which class struggle and class solidarity are configured (and re-configured) through the originary demand of hospitality.

Marxism and the Politics of "General Economy"

If deconstruction teaches us anything it is that there is no such thing as a symmetrical encounter between two opposing positions. However it remains possible—and indeed ethically necessary—to expound the logics of inclusion and exclusion, composition and dispersal through which certain orthodoxies of thought and practice have come to be established. My aim in this section therefore is to clarify the terms through which Ahmad, Callinicos and Lewis have reconstructed the political effectiveness of class, and through which they have determined rules of political engagement with deconstruction.

I want to begin by specifying the significance of Derrida's distinction between "restricted" and "general" economy—for it is this distinction which initiates the possibility of an ethical relationship which exceeds the recuperative dialectics of class solidarity. The encounter between Hegel and Bataille which Derrida examines in his essay "From restricted to general economy: a Hegelianism without reserve", is one which seeks to open Hegel's philosophy to the originary condition of its possibility. This origin appears in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the life or death struggle through which self-consciousness emerges from its subjugation to nature. In order for this transformation to take place, it is necessary for both combatants to survive; for if one or both are killed, the possibility

of “consciousness” finding the confirmation in the other which marks the transition to “self-consciousness”, is negated. Thus the two distinct forms of being which institute the historical drama of signification—the Master and the Slave—are established through the moment of capitulation in which the latter accepts enslavement in return for his life (Hegel 1967, pp. 228-240).

Bataille’s interest in this moment of instigation is significant because it raises the question of the possibility of recuperating the “occurrence” of historical events (their heterogeneity, immediacy, and uniqueness) through the timeless categories of absolute knowledge. He argues that Hegel’s brief encounter with the unthinkable contingency which is put into play by the life or death struggle, immediately discounts the moment of absolute risk which founds the recuperative economy of signification. History as the unfolding of spirit, in other words, is instituted by a gamble; a gamble in which Hegel has bet on the sublation of mortal desire (its excessiveness, its *jouissance*) under the forms of recognition in which the integrity of ethical life, or *Sittlichkeit*, is recuperated (Derrida 1990, p. 260). What is important here is Bataille’s insistence that what Hegel does in the Master-Slave dialectic is to reveal, and then immediately rescind, the interruptive significance of death for the restricted economy of philosophical discourse. The Hegelian logos, in other words, is haunted in advance by the excessive performativity which it is possible for any mortal being to exercise in relation to its own death (Derrida 1990, p. 261). The concepts of sovereignty, non-meaning and general economy therefore are placed close together in Derrida’s exposition of Bataille’s *Hegel, la mort*: for it is through the pure expenditure of the mortal being (in art, poetry, eroticism) that it is sometimes possible to disrupt the “immense enveloping resources” of the Hegelian system.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, productive negation (*Aufhebung*) works through what Bataille calls the “logic of servility”: the progress of self-consciousness takes place through a teleological movement which rends the historical forms of ethical life, but only in so far as what is destroyed is conserved in higher, more self-consciously universal, expressions of spirit. Everyday consciousness, in other words, is always ready to be taken up in the logic of signification; its experience is always prepared for the conserving destruction of the *Aufhebung* and the recuperation of absolute knowledge. Thus to take on Hegel on his own ground is always to lose; for the power of dialectical sublation (the gathering of the antithesis into the synthetic order of the system) operates in every argument that seeks to reconfigure his dialectics of recognition and ethical life. What Bataille attempts however is to bring the unpredictable excess of mortality into the very centre of the Hegelian logos. Sovereignty, as he conceives it, expends itself “without reserve”; its events occur as moments of spontaneity which immediately withdraw from the system of recuperable meanings (Derrida 1990, p. 265). The relationship between the general economy of mortal desire and the restricted economy of absolute knowledge therefore is one in which the received meanings of the logos are constantly at risk from the excessiveness which defines “being towards death”. And so the “sovereign” forms of writing to which Bataille refers have no meaning beyond immediate occurrence—their performativity is

simply the transmission of unforeseeable effects which disrupt the movement of spirit towards its self-realization (Derrida 1990, pp. 273-75).

What Derrida takes from Bataille's insistence upon the events of mortal excess which make the Hegelian system waver, is the need to subject every form restricted economy to an analysis of the conditions under which it determines its own necessity. In Bataille's thought the unaccountable, irrecuperable excess which disrupts the order of the logos is the sovereign relationship of mortal beings to their own death. For the performativity through which the recuperation of meaning is made possible (the pure expenditure of the life or death struggle), is also that which imports a non-dialectical contingency (what Derrida names *différance*) into the very heart of the Hegelian system. Two important issues emerge here.

First there is the question of ethics. Bataille's notion of mortality as the basis of performative independence is related to what he calls "major writing"; it is expressed through forms which withdraw from the economy of signification and which disseminate accidental effects across the established relations of objective morality or ethical life. For Derrida this account of a sovereignty which is sustained through the unforeseeable events which arise from the closure of the system, bears upon the possibility of ethics; for it raises questions about how the autonomy of the other is to be received, about what our responsibilities to him or her might be, and about the relationship of ethical obligations to the formal structures of the law.³ These questions are crucial to the general economics of Marxism which Derrida expounds in *SM*, and I will return to them in a moment. The second question concerns Marx's critique of Hegel, or more specifically, his attempt to expose the internal logic of absolute knowledge to the material dynamics of capitalism. In his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Marx begins by questioning the origin of Hegel's concept of ethical life:

The fact that served as a beginning [the actuality of the idea] is not conceived of as such but as a mystical result. The real becomes an appearance, but the idea has no other content than this appearance. Also the idea has no other aim than the logical one "to become explicit as infinite actual spirit". (Marx 1982, p. 27)

Marx's point is that Hegel's account of the unfolding of increasingly universal forms of work, satisfaction and desire proceeds from the assumption of a reality (the *concept* of ethical life) which is implicit in the empirical existence of family, state and civil society. To assume such a rational trajectory however is to misrecognize the relationship between state and economy. For the acquisitive individualism which Hegel conceived as the moment of abstract difference (civil society) that finds its appropriate sublation in the juridical structures of the state, actually arises from the material-historical contradictions of capital accumulation. Hegel's concept of ethical life, in other words, abstracts democracy from its foundations in "the real men, the real people" who live under the

3. These questions are dealt with explicitly in the fourth essay of *Writing and Difference*, 'Violence and metaphysics: an essay on the thought of Immanuel Levinas'.

yoke of private property, and transforms it into a speculative concept which legitimizes the acquisitive regimes of capital (Marx 1982, p. 28).

The significance of Marx's break from Hegelian idealism is crucial to understanding the antagonism between deconstruction and the left.⁴ Derrida makes it clear that for him, Marx's attempt to determine an absolute break between the ideological ghosts of Hegelian spirit (namely the speculative humanism of Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*) and the dynamics of "real individuals ... and the material conditions of their lives" (Marx 1982, p. 160), is itself a provocation of the disturbing effects of general economy. The exorcism which Marx attempts in *The German Ideology*, in other words, cannot be separated from the anxiety which accompanies the calling forth of ghosts; for as soon as the material reality of Man is announced, its enunciation is contaminated by ideological forms which disrupt the seamless articulation of his being (Derrida 1994, p. 110). Now the temptation at this point would be to draw some crude distinctions between Ahmad, Callinicos and Lewis's inheritance of the self-certainty of Marx's critique of Hegelianism and Derrida's account of a "hauntological" Marxism which responds to the excessive mutability of technological capital. It could, for example, be argued that all of the former are committed to a materialist dialectic in which the agency of the oppressed is taken to be immanent in the contradictory organization of private property relations, while Derrida's freedom from the constraints of historical-material necessity means that he is able to entertain all kinds of radical emancipation from the technocratic regimes of capital. In the paragraphs which follow however I will show that the concept of general economy, as it is developed in *SM*, offers the possibility of an ethical critique of the dialectical protocols which constitute the foundation of orthodox Marxism.

In the introduction I identified three themes through which the encounter between Marxism and deconstruction has been played out: the ethical significance of Derrida's critique of metaphysics; the complicity of deconstruction with the ideological and technological regimes of liberal capitalism; and the political

4. This question of Marx's break from Hegel, of course, receives its most controversial treatment in Louis Althusser's essays 'On the Young Marx' and 'Contradiction and Overdetermination'. According to Derrida, the rise of the Althusserian orthodoxy among left-wing intellectuals in France during the late sixties, prevented any proper interrogation of the nature of this break—particularly with regard to Althusser's reformulation of the base-superstructure relationship in terms of the 'absent causality' of the economy. The concept of an immanent cause which survives its dispersal into the mediating/spectralizing forms of the superstructure, in other words, demands that we consider the questions that arise from its putative operation: questions concerning how its effectivity is to be quantified by structuralist science, of how it is divided into distinct types of experience, and of how it is gathered into specific forms of social agency. It is Althusser's failure properly to address these questions which, for Derrida, implicates his structuralism in the metaphysical discourse which it sought to avoid. For his attempt to separate the logic of 'structure in dominance' from the categories of Hegel's idealism, suffers from the fact that he never examined the implications of bringing together the concept of 'overdetermination' (which puts into question the logos of human essence and collective agency) and the structural categories through which he sought properly to determine the historical necessity which Marx presented in *Capital* (Derrida in Sprinker 1993, p. 208). A certain spectre of Hegel, in other words, is recuperated in Althusser's account of structure in dominance; that is, the spectre of a bureaucratic authoritarianism which absorbs every rejoinder to its power into the institutional forms of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*).

ineffectiveness of Derrida's account of international socialism. Let me begin with an examination of the first of these themes.

The fundamental claim of Tom Lewis's essay "The politics of 'hauntology'"—that deconstruction has abandoned all commitment to the concepts of "social class" and "mode of production"—is directly concerned with the Derrida's reconfiguration of Marxism around the ethical demand of hospitality (Lewis in Sprinker 1999, p. 139). He argues, quite rightly, that *The German Ideology* was determined to put an end to the endless "ghosting" of humanity into the egological forms which Stirner opposed to Hegelian idealism. What Marx demanded, in other words, was a recognition that Stirner's categories were themselves expressions of the abstract social relations through which capital frustrates the creativity of real individuals. Now, for Lewis, Derrida's attempt to expose Marx's exorcism of Stirner to the disturbing affects of general economy instigates a dangerous descent into political indeterminism. His particular concern is with Derrida's attempt to transform Marxism into a "messianic" responsibility which simply registers the catastrophic mutations of global capitalism without intervening. For in so far as Derrida understands the fundamental structures of Marx's politics as having arisen from "a reaction of panic ridden fear before the ghost n general" (Derrida 1994, pp. 104-5), he can only conceive of actual socialist movements and regimes in terms of their struggles to conquer the spectres of difference/alterity which haunt them. Lewis therefore maintains that Derrida maps the analytical strategies of Marxism (immanent critique, structural analysis, negative phenomenology) directly onto his critique of the metaphysics of being; and in so doing, inscribes the Stalinist/totalitarian fear of difference at the centre of Marxist theory and politics (Lewis in Sprinker 1999, p. 145).

Aijaz Ahmad's essay "Reconciling Derrida" pursues a similar argument. Ahmad contends that there is a complicity between deconstruction and the liberal democratic hegemony whose geopolitical contours emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. Derrida's determination to pursue the "ethical" questions which arise from the techno-scientific reorganization of capitalism, in other words, betrays a fundamental lack of historical imagination: for had he bothered to consider the historical circumstances which have allowed this reorganization to take place (that is, the failure of working class organizations in liberal democracies to resist the functionalizing, consumerist tendencies of late-capitalism), he would have recognized that such questions can only detract from the strategic imperatives of class struggle (Ahmad in Sprinker 1999, p. 97). Ahmad therefore contends that *SM* simply follows the depoliticizing effects of media technological capitalism without reference to the immanent power of class solidarity—either as it *should* have been constituted during the political upheavals of 1989 or as it *ought* to be solicited, channelled and constituted in our immediate historical present.

Callinicos's account of the relationship between political agency, class solidarity and the historical transformations of capitalism requires slightly more exposition. In his essay "Crisis and class struggle in Europe today" he argues that as western European governments came under increasing pressure to ensure that

the big corporations were provided with the most favourable conditions for their operations, so working class organizations came into violent conflict with moves to reduce wages, extend working hours, crack down on industrial action, and reduce public spending on welfare programmes (Callinicos 1994, p. 20). This conflict was—and indeed continues to be—particularly acute in Germany. For the longevity of the contract between labour and capital in the post-war German economy meant that attempts to roll back the system of welfare benefits and processes of consultation which had been essential to the success of “Rhine capitalism”, served mainly to intensify the conflict between the trade unions, the state, and the major industrial corporations (Callinicos 1994, p. 18). It is in the context of this dislocation of state and civil society that the political dimensions of the German crisis should be understood. On the one hand the popularity of neo-fascist parties showed the disillusionment of “alienated, privatized workers” with trade union bureaucracies, while on the other, the monetarist retrenchment that was triggered by the recession opens the possibility of new forms of spontaneous working class resistance (Callinicos 1994, p. 21). This unstable vacillation between socialism and right-wing populism has, for Callinicos, become symptomatic of a general malaise in European democracy; the fact that the electoral success of the National Front in France and of the pro-fascist National Alliance in Italy occurred simultaneously with an up-turn in working class activism in both countries, points to an evolving crisis whose ultimate trajectory remains to be determined (Callinicos 1994, p. 23).

In the final section of his article Callinicos argues that the historical conjuncture which produced the fascist dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini—a deep-seated economic crisis, a ruling class offensive against worker’s organizations, the rise of overtly fascist political groups—is, with certain qualifications, being replayed across the major democracies of the EU. Thus while he is careful to point out the countervailing factors which have slowed down the drift to the right (failure of neo-fascist parties to become mass political movements, continued support for working class organizations, the durability of liberal democratic institutions, the cumulative rather than catastrophic temporality of the depression), his analysis returns to the threat of an old political barbarism which, if unopposed by a self-consciously militant working class, could sweep through the democracies of an economically weakened Europe (Callinicos 1994, p. 24).

There is a homology among Lewis, Ahmad and Callinicos’s arguments concerning the historical effectiveness of class which requires some unpacking. In Lewis’s article the emphasis is placed on showing that the collapse of the October Revolution into Stalinism can be accounted for by a Marxist analysis of the position of the Soviet economy in the geopolitical order of early twentieth century Europe. The mechanisms of “state capitalist totalitarianism”, in other words, were constituted not through an obsession with the ghosts of metaphysical alterity, but by the economic and technological backwardness which was inherited by the newly formed socialist regime. Leaving aside the crudity of Lewis’s exposition of the “method” of deconstruction, the structure of this argument entails a founding moment of prohibition which is similar to the one that Derrida identified in

Bataille's reading of Hegel. For what Lewis maintains is that if the empirical conditions which prevented the realization of a genuinely socialist society had been different (that is, if the historical dialectics of class solidarity had not been disrupted by the general economy of effects produced by the state of the world market), then it is possible that the conditions of socialized production could have been realized. What is at work in both Lewis and Ahmad's objections to Derrida's critique of Marxist "science" therefore is a logic of immanence which draws the contingency of historical events back into the dialectical strictures of universal suffering and collective agency. For in so far as they both maintain that the constitutive power of class is always reinscribed in the general economy of capital, their critiques of *SM* begin by positing the referents of a trans-historical identity which Derrida's concepts (hauntology, spectralization, the *arrivant*) have called into question (Derrida 1994, p. 11).

A slightly different version of this argument is deployed in Callinicos's article. As we have seen he is at pains to point out that the struggle between left and right which has been precipitated by the economic crisis in Europe is not subject to a strong historical determinism. It may well be, he argues, that the liberal democratic order will survive through its ability to integrate disparate elements of left and right-wing populism, or that there will be a steady drift to the right which is precipitated by the electoral success of neo-fascist parties. Yet to conclude matters here would hardly be true to the principles of Marxist critique; and so Callinicos attempts to reconfigure the dialectics of class solidarity through the "whiff of Weimar" which has returned to the political arena of Europe. The spectre of fascism as a mass political movement, in other words, is introduced in an attempt to radicalize the present, and to galvanize the working classes of all European democracies into rejuvenating socialist and communist alliances (Callinicos 1994, p. 27).

This apparently messianic appeal to the crises and opportunities of the day however retains the structure of dialectical iterability that is present in Ahmad and Lewis's responses to *SM*. According to Callinicos the return of the spectre of fascism is determined by the deterritorializing power of global capital; for the lack of stability which has come to characterize the European economy has solicited dangerous old appeals to divine election, racial purity and national culture. None of this would provoke any dissent from Derrida (Derrida 1994, pp. 81-84). And yet there are important questions concerning the possibility of historical repetition which arise at this point. In Callinicos's account of the crisis of European politics, the conditions of the appearance of the spectre of fascism are given little attention; indeed the images, mythologies and psychological cathe-
xes which he invokes seem to spring unmodified from their place in European history. This unwillingness to address the conditions under which the spectre of fascism reappears (that is, the transformation of public space through new media and informatic technologies, the rise of "biopolitical" regimes of production, and the emergence of new forms of aesthetic distraction etc), is significant because Callinicos deploys the threat of its return as rejuvenating the politics of class struggle. Derrida's "hauntological" reading of Marx however is concerned

precisely with the possibility of this logic of reinscription (Derrida 1994, p. 10). What the term hauntology names is an infinitely mutable play of effects (distraction, supplementation, dispersal, erasure, silencing) which defer the operation of the signifiers through which class solidarity is recuperated. And so while it is true that the return of unquiet ghosts to the present belongs to the originary responsibility of Marxism, it is neither ethically nor strategically judicious to re-gather them into the conventional oppositions of class struggle. In the end we must take responsibility for the unforeseeable effects which their manifestations produce in the temporal economy of the present.⁵

This brings me to the second point of encounter between Marxism and deconstruction: the supposed complicity of Derrida's critique of metaphysics with the ideological and technological regimes of liberal capitalism.⁶ Let me give a brief summary of the arguments presented by Ahmad and Lewis in *Ghostly Demarcations*. Lewis's article claims that deconstruction, conceived as a reading strategy which seeks to disclose the logic of presence through which culture, identity and law are sustained, looks suspiciously like the moment of ideology which Marx referred to in *The Communist Manifesto* as "true" socialism (Lewis in Sprinker 1999, p. 146). Derrida's pursuit of the truth of humanity's participation in the onto-theological resources of philosophy, in other words, repeats the "one-sidedness" of the French socialists whose ideas of "Human Nature" and "Man in general" remained withdrawn from the realities of class struggle (Marx 1998, p. 31). And so the spectre of Marx which Derrida evokes is a purely messianic presence which demands the revision of neo-liberal forms of hegemony but

5. Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* makes it clear that the return of spectres from former epochs is always a process which precipitates unforeseeable consequences. In his attack on the revolution of 1848 he maintained that Louis Bonaparte's attempt to portray himself as the heir to the revolutionary values of 1789 had descended into a farcical walking of ghosts through the revolutionary exigencies of nineteenth century France (Marx 1977b, p. 301). What Derrida takes from this account of the temporality of ghosts is the impossibility of ending the transformative power of their return; for in so far as the question being is always precipitated by the scientific, media and technological organization of the social (this is the origin of Marx's revolutionary promise), the spectres which arise from the past will always seem to offer the chance of resolving the dilemmas of modernity (Derrida 1994, p. 107). Ultimately therefore our responses to the return of fascist politics should be informed by an understanding of how technological capitalism has transformed dynamics of geopolitical space, how the emergence of new 'legitimate' forms of right-wing populism (the National Front in France, the National Alliance in Italy etc) has impacted upon the ethical constitution of liberal democracy, and how we ought to inherit the *cosmopolitical* demand which is inscribed in Marx's determination to exorcise the ideological power of spectres (Derrida 1994, p. 109). Such responses precipitate the question of class beyond conventional forms of iterability, and constantly reopen the question of hospitality to who comes from beyond the established constitution of the good (*Sittlichkeit*).

6. The most consistent account of this periodizing logic is set out in David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity*. His claim is that the opposition between modernist and postmodernist accounts of the relationship between politics, economics and normative legitimacy must be understood in terms of their relative advantages at any given time. A Marxist account of the relationship between cultural, theoretical, and economic production demands that we recognize the extent to which any particular (capitalist) economy that has adopted the ideology of 'Fordism' or 'flexible postmodernism' will 'vary from time to time depending on which configuration is profitable and which is not' (Harvey 1999, p. 344). The 'aesthetic turn' of the postmodernists, in other words, is an adaptive strategy of capital: a form of cultural production whose transformation of the established order of economic conformity and political obedience determines its own particular contradictions.

without ever engaging with their material structures (class, superstructure, state). For Ahmad, this spectral Marxism is no more than a “Third Way” politics—“not fundamentally different from more sophisticated, less cruel forms of liberalism”—whose revolutionary power is dissipated in hopeless revisionism and infinite mourning (Ahmad in Sprinker 1999, p. 103).

These arguments misrecognize the questioning of ontology which runs throughout Derrida’s thought. As we have seen his exposition of Bataille in *Writing and Difference* gestures towards an ethics that is opened by a desire which both precedes and exceeds the recuperative movement of the logos (Derrida 1990, p. 260). The possibility of this ethics is explored more fully in the essay “Violence and metaphysics”, for it is here that Derrida attempts to disentangle Levinas’s account of hospitality from the eschatological forms of revelation and epiphany. What Derrida insists upon is that the question of ethical responsibility remains *proximate* to the Heideggerian question of Being; for the possibility of taking responsibility for the other has always already been determined through the ontological and linguistic designation of Man. His argument is that if, as Levinas claims, the ethical demand springs immediately from the inscription of infinity (God) in the face of the “Other”, then the pure desire which haunts the systemic organization of discrete subjects (ipseities) cannot determine itself in any specific command. Levinas’s phenomenology, in other words, collapses into a kind of “empiricism” that seeks a pure unmediated contact with divine alterity (Derrida 1990, pp. 151-52). It is however important to remember that Derrida’s insistence upon inscribing the possibility of ethics within the general economy of Being is not simply a defence of Heidegger against Levinas’s notion of the infinite. Rather deconstruction opens up the institutional/ontological forms in which the law of hospitality is inscribed to a general economy of effects which includes technological prosthesis, genetic manipulation, and informatic transformation of public space (Derrida 2000, p. 45).

In *SM* Derrida argues that if the question of “living in” the resources of metaphysics cannot be closed (if it is re-opened by every “empirical” concept of community, belonging, identity, friendship, and hospitality), then the question concerning technology (the relationship of “the human” to its supplements) is simultaneous with the questions of ethics, justice and politics that arise from techno-scientific capitalism. What this means is that we can treat “capitalism” neither as a fixed set of socioeconomic conditions, nor as a teleological organization of human desire which will ultimately transcend its negative effects. The term should be understood as registering an open-ended relationship between power, technology and exploitation; a relationship which constantly transforms itself and which precipitates the events of suffering and erasure (of the other/others) to which Marxism is originally responsible (Derrida 1994, p. 13). Now what is important here is Derrida’s continued insistence that responsibility to “who comes” precedes the particular legal and contractual forms in which it is expressed, and that this originary responsibility is constantly reconfigured in the dynamics of capitalism and technology. The fact that he is unwilling to revert to the dialectical categories of relatedness which Ahmad and Lewis take to be

essential to Marxist politics therefore, does not mean that deconstruction is *ipso facto* complicit with the ideological forms of liberal capitalism, or that it is a type of messianic resignation that awaits deliverance from the evils of the world. Rather the ethical responsibility which is announced in *SM* both exceeds and includes the dialectical temporality of class relations; for it is immediately given over to questions (about cosmopolitanism, international law, the rights of the foreigner etc) which disrupt the functioning of global-techno-scientific accumulation and configure new and contingent forms of solidarity (Derrida 1994, p. 37)⁷

So how can such questions become socially transformative? How, in the absence of the dialectical foci through which Ahmad, Callinicos and Lewis conceive the effectiveness of class relations, can they solicit resistance to established structures of political authority? Callinicos's answer in *Against Postmodernism* is that they cannot, and that the position on South Africa which Derrida took in "Racism's last word" (the essay he contributed to the catalogue for the "Art Contre/Against Apartheid" exhibition which visited Paris in 1983) is proof of his complicity with the political and economic opportunism which was provoked by the existence of such a wealthy racist state. The argument he pursues is that Derrida's praise of the exhibits for their "silence"—for their withdrawal from any possible collusion with the "last racism still parading itself in a political constitution"—discloses a complete lack of concern with the historical and political realities of the South African regime. Deconstruction, in other words, comports itself best with aesthetic solicitations of an unknown and unknowable future, and, as such, has nothing to say about the multiple struggles which transformed the *de facto* existence of apartheid (Callinicos 1990, p. 78)

A similar claim is made by Ahmad in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. He argues that division of the globe into "First", "Second" and "Third" Worlds is a neo-imperialist project which is connived at by immigrant intellectuals who present an aesthetic of home, arrival and displacement that functions without reference to class or gender determinations. This aesthetic configuration of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer marks the emergence of de-politicized analysis their difference; for the more the colonialist encounter

7. In his response to 'The spectre's smile'- Antonio Negri's contribution to *Ghostly Demarcations*—Derrida maintains that his description of the 'real subsumption' of labour under the conditions of biopolitical capitalism begs the question of the relationship between messianism and ontology, or, more precisely, of the logic of gathering which is inscribed in Negri's concept of 'the multitude' (Derrida in Sprinker 1999, pp. 257-62). Negri has argued that the networks of biopolitical capitalism determine a 'hybrid' compositional power of labour: the desire of each individual is transformed by his/her engagement with the technological systems which facilitate the flows of global capital, and as such, each contributes to a 'plane of immanence'—of revolutionary subjectivity—which exceeds the parasitic order of Empire (Hardt and Negri 2000, p. 361). The general intellect of the multitude therefore develops through the hybridity of the desiring subjects who expand the technological connectedness of biopolitical production. From Derrida's point of view this position demands something of a theological leap of faith. For it assumes that within the economy of exploitation, silencing, exclusion, erasure, distraction, abandonment, and injustice that is determined through the technological expansion of capitalism, there is a logic of gathering whose transformative power exceeds all of the suffering—and all of the events of ethico-philosophical questioning— which arise from our living present.

becomes the subject of classless and genderless narratives, the more the “Black intelligentsia” are drawn into the trap of narrating (and re-narrating) the irreducible difference of “Third” and “First” World cultures. Deconstruction therefore emerges as central to a new orientalist apparatus; for in so far as it demands the multiplication of different forms of aesthetic self-representation, it deprives post-colonial politics of its roots in the class struggles which ground international socialism (Ahmad 1992, pp. 91-93).

These remarks however are based on a misconstrual of the relationship between writing, *différance* and general economy which informs Derrida’s concept of the political. The passage from “The time of a thesis: punctuations” which Callinicos quotes in *Against Postmodernism*, is used to justify his claim that deconstruction always moves from analyses of the (socio-political) conditions which produce certain kinds of discourse, to an obsession with the play of *différance* which inhabits the structures of truth, identity, and being (Callinicos 1990, pp. 77-78). The claim which Derrida is actually making in this passage however is neither that “the real” is simply a function of the diversity of writing, nor that the project of philosophical inquiry ought to be subsumed under the expository techniques of deconstruction. Rather his argument is that if philosophy can no longer seek to inscribe its metaphysical categories in the institutional space of ethical life, then it must seek to respond to the questions of hospitality that arise from the violence of our living present. If we return to the onto-theological foundations of apartheid (the inscription of God’s hierarchical order of the black and white races in the law of the state) therefore it becomes clear that Derrida’s welcoming of a new aesthetics of self-representation is not simply a refusal to engage with the political reality of South Africa. Rather the silences that are configured in these aesthetics are what make ethico-political transformation conceivable; for they present the undetermined future to which strategic and theoretical praxis is responsible (Derrida 1985, p. 299). Without this obligation to who and what is to come—the very obligation which Mandela assumed in drafting the new South African constitution—there could be no ethical reserve in the dialectics of “historically necessary” transformation (Derrida 2001, pp. 55-58).

This brings me to the final indictment of *SM*: Derrida’s supposedly formalistic and politically ineffectual idea of the New International. As we have seen his account of the political is closely related to the concepts of *différance* and alterity through which he expounds the condition of “living in” the resources of metaphysical reason. So if we begin from the position that the originary act which institutes language and rationality constitutes a “promise” that gives us over to the question of the legislative power of the logos, then the possibility of the political must be referred to a “faith” (in democracy to come) which cannot be erased from the narrative structures of authority (Derrida 1989, pp. 129-30). Politics, in other words, proceeds from an irreducible responsibility to the other; it is that which responds to the coming of those strangers (*xenoi*) who are solicited by the established forms of cultural self-identification. This responsibility is always dispersed; for in so far as it arises with the heterogeneous events of

silencing, erasure and exclusion which are put into play by the discourse of power, it cannot authorize any particular narration of political inclusion. The types of transformative practice for which Derrida calls therefore find their effectiveness in the transmission of unforeseeable responses to the presence of the other—of his or her alterity—in the hegemonic structures of liberal capitalism (Derrida 1994, p. 90). And so if we are to understand the political project which Derrida is proposing in *SM* we need carefully to examine the cosmopolitical forms of resistance, gathering and solicitation which are configured in his idea of the New International. I will return to this in the following section.

From what has preceded it not difficult to anticipate Ahmad, Lewis, and Callinicos's objections to Derrida's "gesture of fidelity" to the idea of international socialism (Derrida 1994, p. 90). The gist of their arguments can be briefly summarized. The possibility of overthrowing the global hegemony of liberal capitalism depends upon the compositional power of class struggle. And so if the idea of a worker's International is to have any political significance, it must function to focus the disparate struggles of the international working class: it must seek to organize the real commonalities of experience that underlie the racial, religious, cultural, and gender differences which fracture its revolutionary potential. The New International as Derrida conceives it however has no substance; it has degenerated into a Kantian form of cosmopolitanism which tries to configure revolutionary resistance through indeterminate concepts like "hospitality", "*différance*" and "the other". Indeed both Ahmad and Lewis complain that Derrida's stripping away of the class content of the International leaves him with nothing more to do than solicit deconstructive critiques of state authority, national cultures, and international law (Ahmad in Sprinker 1999, pp. 104-05, and Lewis in Sprinker 1999, p. 149). The spectre of the International which Derrida invokes, in other words, has no possible articulation with the experience of the masses; it exists merely as an ideological phantasm whose revolutionary demands remain withdrawn from the material dynamics of historical transformation (Callinicos, 1996: 40).⁸

8. Terry Eagleton, in his essay 'Marxism without Marxism', is determined to drive a wedge between what he sees as the analytical precision of deconstruction as ideology critique and Derrida's 'committed yet rather crude' version of Marxist politics. He argues that the bravura performativity with which Derrida approaches the archive of western philosophy cannot be translated into a political doctrine with specific strategies and apparatuses (Eagleton in Sprinker 1999, p. 85). And so Derrida's failure to determine the substance of his 'New International' should be seen as proof of the incompatibility of deconstruction—as a critical technique—with the strategic necessities of class organization which are the stuff of Marxist politics. This account of the breach between the 'method' and the 'politics' of deconstruction however ignores the general economy of the question which is sustained throughout Derrida's writing. The processes of institutionalization through which Marxist politics is carried on are not external to the ethical demand of the New International; rather they are what constantly reopen the questions of hospitality and affiliation which arise from the accumulative regimes of global capitalism. Thus it is not the case that the critical performativity of deconstruction is irreducibly foreign to the political strategies of Marxism—rather this performativity proceeds from an ethical responsibility which both *inhabits* and *exceeds* the institutional structures of Marxist politics.

The question which arises here, of course, is the very question which Derrida puts at the centre of his accounts of cosmopolitan responsibility and the New International: the question of hospitality. If we stick to the line of argument pursued above, then Derrida's precautionary remarks on class solidarity can be no more than ideological impediments to the gathering of cultural, religious, ethnic, and gender differences into the strategic organization of the international working class. If however we are prepared to take the force of his argument seriously, then we must consider the question of how the general economy of effects through which global capital functions (deterritorialization, informatic exchange, commodification of culture) can be gathered into the universal discourse of class struggle. The responses which are given by Ahmad, Callinicos and Lewis are hardly adequate—for they simply revert to the primacy of economic forces which Derrida's account of media-techno-scientific capitalism seeks to question. In order to respond properly to Derrida's remarks on the new International therefore, I propose to steer the discussion towards a set of issues—namely the technological condensation of space and time, the transformation of public space, and the aesthetic porosity of the “postmodern” individuals—which provoke the question of hospitality beyond the established narratives of class and international class solidarity.

Derrida and Jameson: Towards a Marxism “Without Reserve”

Jameson's contribution to *Ghostly Demarcations*—“Marx's purloined letter”—exemplifies the ambivalence towards deconstruction which is sustained throughout his critique of postmodernist theory. The culture critique which he develops in his later writing, and most notably in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, takes its inspiration from Adorno's account of negative dialectics. For Adorno “thinking” is that which registers the violence of objectified totality; that is, the processes through which social, economic, and political identities are imposed upon the being of each individual (Adorno 1973, pp. 174-76). And so his critique of the reified forms of desire, aesthetic sensibility and psychological satisfaction which constitute the modern subject, is configured by a sense of how much more efficient the regimes of rational capitalism are when their violent perfection of the “standard” personality remains below the level of critical analysis. Now for Jameson the social, economic and cultural relations through which Adorno presented the dynamics of late capitalism have been superseded: the heavy industrial production which required stable domestic economies has been undermined by the ebbs and flows of multinational capital, global communications networks have facilitated the shift towards a knowledge based economy, and the proliferation of new image technologies has produced an entirely new range of moral, cultural and political effects. Despite this radical transformation of the operational logic capitalism however, Jameson insists upon the value of negative critique. He argues that postmodernist forms of theory and culture should be the subject of historical analyses which conceive

them “not [as] the determinants of a whole new social order, but only as the reflex and concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself” (Jameson 1995, p. xii). Ultimately therefore negative critique—or what Jameson calls “symptomal philosophizing”—continues to respond to the violent mutability of capital; it is that which traces the implicity of autonomous individuality through technological transformations of space, time, habitus, and community.

The argument presented in *Postmodernism* is that the new technologies which have exponentially increased the flow of images and information around the world market, function to produce a cultural economy which is based upon the virtual simultaneity of production (of images), consumption (by the masses), and distraction (from the violent deterritorializing power of capital) (Jameson 1995, pp. xiv-xv). What is important here, and what marks a crucial shift away from the more orthodox Marxisms we examined in the previous section, is Jameson’s insistence that the practice of negative critique is responsible to the infinitely complex, technologically intensified processes through which capital continues to transform its expropriative culture. Remaining faithful to the Marxist inheritance, in other words, means sustaining a “polemic stance” which is focused on the mutability of capital (its power rapidly to transform the experience of identity, community, love, desire, sexuality) and which eschews materialist logics of revolutionary composition and historical necessity (Jameson in Sprinker 1999, p. 36). Derrida’s precautionary remarks about the spectralizing powers of capitalism and the class constitution of the International therefore find a certain resonance in Jameson’s Marxism. For his concern with the possibility of representing the heterogeneous forms of “subalternity” which are distributed across the global economy, has led Jameson to maintain that deconstruction is a “method par excellence” for detecting the enforcement of binary logics of class composition (Jameson in Sprinker 1999, p. 47).

Yet Jameson’s enthusiasm for the concepts of spectralization (the “wavering” of historical necessity produced by the virtualizing affects of media, communications, and prosthetic technologies), deferral (the “always-already” structure which complicates Marxian distinctions between use and exchange value, base and superstructure), and inoperative community (the technological-cosmopolitical dissemination of ideas which exceed the binary oppositions of class struggle) which Derrida deploys in *SM*, is tempered by a certain reserve. In *Late Marxism* he remarked that:

... both [Adorno and Derrida] need something outside the system in order to criticize it, but in Adorno’s case this something would remain an idea, while in Derrida’s it ought ideally to be a linguistic possibility: the similarity comes from the fact that in neither case can this urgent need be met, except by an elaborate formal subterfuge. (Jameson 2000, p. 235)

This distinction between Adornian “thinking” and deconstructive “reading” turns upon the idea that the independence of the latter is pre-inscribed in an economy of deferral whose “formal subterfuge” (trace, supplementarity, *différance*) is rather less engaged with the objective reality of the concept than Adorno’s

negative critique. It is Jameson's suspicion, in other words, that Derrida's figuration of what comes from beyond the text (the spontaneous arrival of "who comes", the non-iterable occurrence of the other), tends to exclude a historically grounded understanding of the relationships between capitalism, mass culture and the transformation of global space. For the linguistic techniques through which he approaches the ideological inscription of being remain dangerously close—although not wholly complicit with—the aestheticism of postmodern culture.

Jameson's account of the historical development of these relations—an account which Callinicos regards as lapsing into a Hegelian conception of the dialectics of culture (Callinicos 1990, p. 165)—can be briefly summarized. Under the conditions of what Lenin called the imperialist phase of capitalism economic activity becomes properly international; nation states enter a period of violent competition over new territories and resources which transforms the geopolitical organization of the world economy. It is at this point that the contradiction between the lived experience of the locality and the operational logic of capitalism becomes acute; for as particular lifeworlds are brought into contact with the exoticism of other cultures and the exigencies of international trade and conflict, the bonds of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) begin to lose their objective necessity. For Jameson the normative effects of this crisis are configured in the allegorical forms of modernist art: the motifs of subjectivity, transcendence and autonomy are set in relation to an object ("monopoly capital") whose powers of dispersal and integration constantly rupture the internal bonds of particular localities (Jameson 1995, p. 412). The insurmountable difficulty of representing *all* of the conditions which have produced this normative crisis, in other words, is manifested in aesthetic forms which give a sense of the totalizing power of the object, while testifying at the same time to their own contingency and inadequacy.

The impossible necessity of representing the operational powers of capital *in toto* becomes even more acute under the conditions of "late", or "multinational", capitalism. In this phase capital is no longer anchored in particular nation states; highly mobile technologies and flexible production processes mean that it can flow into and out of particular locations the moment profitability begins to decline. This complete openness of the locality is the outcome of an increasingly close relationship between capital and technology; for it is only in so far as media and communications networks have transformed each particular lifeworld into a node of informatic exchange that it has been possible for capitalism to mutate into a deterritorialized regime of hyperaccumulation. For Jameson the collective experience of the subjects who inhabit this global network takes on an evanescent and unpredictable character—a character which is configured in the postmodernist art and theory which celebrates heterogeneity as an absolute value (Jameson 1995, p. 413). Thus the necessity of a Marxist critique which encourages new practices of "transcoding" the hegemony of postmodern culture arises from the increasingly violent forms of expropriation which are justified in the name of respect for difference and the virtues of flexibility and lack of attachment.

The distinction which Jameson makes between the “transcoding” activity of critical Marxism and what he sees as the obsessive “decoding” practiced by postmodernist theory is important here. Decoding, according to Jameson, is one of the generic characteristics of postmodernist theory: Derrida, Baudrillard and Lyotard all practice forms of critique which, in their attempts to undermine the hegemonic categories of ideology, fall back into a ceaseless relativization of narratives which never questions the purpose of its own activity (Jameson 1995, p. 395). Transcoding, on the other hand, begins with the determining force of the object: it conceives the multiple discourses which emerge under late capitalism as “worldviews” (*Weltanschauungen*) which mediate and transform the accumulative powers of the global economy. The cultural dominance of postmodernism for example should be theorized as the reflex of a totality which reproduces itself as total separation; for it is only in so far as the textual, libidinal, and aesthetic economies of the postmodernists are conceived as part of the operational logic of abstract difference, that it is possible to understand their complicity with the decentred, distracted forms of individualism which sustain the dominance of consumer capitalism. The concept of transcoding therefore is an attempt to think the idea of totality beyond the regulative structures of the political; an attempt which seeks to generate “new ambivalent abstractions” from the clash of liberal, Marxist and postmodernist orthodoxies (Jameson 1995, p. 396).

So where does this leave us in respect of the concept of class? It would seem as if Jameson’s technique of transcoding—of sustaining a linguistic critique which looks to destabilize both left and right-wing orthodoxies—cannot remain attached to the idea of an economically structured antagonism which would exceed (and precede) every form of cultural and ideological mediation. This is true—but only to an extent. In “Marx’s purloined letter” Jameson makes it clear that he has a good deal of sympathy for Derrida’s rejection of class as the foundational category of Marxist politics: he remarks upon the power of deconstructive readings to rupture the “utopian fantasies” through which class is constantly recalled to the political arena (Jameson in Sprinker 1999, p. 47). There is however a certain reserve in Jameson’s welcoming of Derrida’s intervention into the debate over class—a reserve which harks back to his conception of the relationship between postmodernism and deconstruction.

As we have seen Jameson traces the dominance of postmodern culture to the antagonism between global capital and the concrete forms of life sustained in particular localities. The emergence of cultural, aesthetic and theoretical forms which valorize pure particularity is part of a general shift in the operational logic of capitalism: it is a response to the loss of nature, tradition and history which is brought about by the condensation of geopolitical space into the temporal economy of media and informatic exchange. Now for Jameson this means that while Marxist politics certainly must avoid utopian fantasies of the revolution, its political activity should remain faithful to the contingent possibilities of resistance that arise from the operational powers of capital. The persistence of class, in other words, lies in what we might call its allegorical impurity; that is, in fact that it is always configured in the multiple forms of identity which haunt the fractured

existence of particular lifeworlds (Jameson in Sprinker 1999, p. 49). The question which arises here, of course, is that of cosmopolitical hospitality. For if it is the case that the allegorical figures which gather collective identities at a local level cannot be mapped directly onto the global dynamics of impoverishment and exploitation, then the work of Marxist theory must be to configure the strategic ("class") solidarities of particular lifeworlds in discourses which challenge the global hegemony of postmodern capitalism. Jameson admits that such figurations are bound to fail—for they proceed from the impossibility of representing the contradiction between global and local spaces. Yet it is through the necessity of this failure that class politics will always make its return; for even if it is the case that such allegorical figurations run the risk of collapsing into postmodernist simulacra, they still retain a certain purchase on the dialectics of the global and the local, essence and appearance, the human and the inhuman (Jameson 1995, p. 415).

Derrida, we should note, does not regard Jameson's allegorical-aesthetic mapping of class relations as a critique of his hauntological reading of Marx (Derrida in Sprinker 1999, p. 246). If we continue with the theme of cosmopolitan hospitality however we can get some sense of the difference between their respective versions of political agency.

For Jameson the possibility of international socialism depends upon the processes of cognitive and aesthetic mapping which politicize the locality. The allegorical forms through which class relationships are configured open up the multiplicity of different lifeworlds to the global logic of exploitation which is obscured by the ideological distractions of postmodernism. Thus if there is to be a New International its effectiveness depends upon the aesthetic imagination which is provoked by the totalizing powers of the object; for in so far as all localities have been transformed into penetrable spaces it is possible to configure a new dialectics of class struggle which exceeds the global circulation of commodified images. Clearly this is not too far removed from what Derrida has said about the law of cosmopolitical hospitality which is threatened by, yet continues to disturb, the media-technological organization of the capitalism. Yet the difference is significant. Derrida has argued that the possibility of being hospitable to the other depends upon the event of his or her arrival—that is, to the moment of pure unpredictability which demands that we put our legal-institutional forms of responsibility into suspension (Derrida 2000, p. 79). As we have seen Jameson's account of class struggle narrates a double mediation of alterity: it gathers the disparate forms of resistance that arise in particular lifeworlds into new forms of solidarity which are open to the arrival of the destitute and the powerless of the world economy (Jameson 1995, p. 417). It is this recursive structure, this attempt to mediate the local and the global significance of class through the cognitive-aesthetic imagination, which marks the difference between Derrida and Jameson's Marxism. For Jameson the dialectics of class disclose the historical thread of a politics of recognition, solidarity and practical agency, while for Derrida this possibility is sustained through the infinite horizon of the other; the unforeseeable futurity which precedes and exceeds every preparation for his or her arrival (Derrida 2000, pp. 25-26).

Conclusion

So where does this leave us? Isn't it true that deconstruction of the last "allegorical" traces of class has confirmed that Derrida's Marxism is no more than a messianic gesture towards an unnameable future? This suspicion is the guiding thread of Jameson's essay on *SM*—for it inscribes a certain reserve, a certain prohibition, in regard to Derrida's account of the general economy of capital. Let me summarize the argument. Postmodernism is conceived as the "cultural dominant" which emerges from globalization of the market, and deconstruction, despite its insights into the spectralizing powers of technological capitalism, remains complicit with the postmodernist desire to live in the pure immediacy of the present (Jameson in Sprinker 1999, p. 59). Derrida's attempt to free Marxism from the deterministic elements of materialism ends up abandoning any sense of historical explanation; the play of spectres which he sets against the logic of revolutionary condensation becomes completely dissociated from the dialectics of subject and object, base and superstructure which determine the temporality of the mode of production. The ethical demand through which Derrida configures the "spirit" of Marxism is therefore incapable of becoming properly political; for if there is no historical critique of the subject-object relations through which capital functions as a totality, then the other will always be without the chance of reception which is configured in the allegorical forms of class solidarity. Thus the "weak messianic power" which is solicited by Derrida's New International is conceived by Jameson as the ghost of Benjamin's hope for redemption in the darkest times of history. For by collapsing the violence of historical repetition into the temporality of the spectre, Derrida's Marxism remains complicit with the unbounded present of postmodern culture (Jameson in Sprinker 1999, p. 62).

This however is to misconceive the political significance of hospitality. Jameson's critique of deconstruction maintains that the categories of trace, supplementarity and *différance* which Derrida deploys in his reading strategies, configure the kind of schizophrenic subjectivity which is at play in postmodern culture. Yet Derrida has always maintained that the law of hospitality to which deconstruction seeks to respond "appears as a paradoxical law, pervertible or perverting" (Derrida 2000, p. 26). What this means is that the absolute obligation to receive the destitute and the powerless which is the foundation of ethical responsibility, is always already embroiled in the legal-contractual designations of friendship, community and identity which regulate the transactions of the life-world. The possibility of justice depends upon this structure of difference: for it is only in so far as the law of "absolute hospitality" remains heterogeneous with and yet indissociably proximate to the categories of "hospitality by right", that we are able to assume political responsibility to the future—to the idea of democracy to come. In the disjointed time of global capitalism this classical question—the question of hospitality to the stranger who comes, to the "barbarian" who has no recognizable name and who does not speak our language—returns with great urgency; for the corporate powers which have come to dominate the global

economy have produced a world of nameless, sub-legal migrants, nomads and refugees (Derrida 2000, p. 45).

The law of hospitality to which Derrida makes Marxism responsible therefore is not an abandonment of the political realities of the present, nor is it the collapse of class politics into a neo-Kantian International which does no more than disseminate the mourning work of deconstructionist intellectuals. Rather Derrida's Marxism demands fidelity to the *question* of class: it attempts to sustain the demand of absolute hospitality in relation to the cultural, ethnic and religious forms through which economic power is differentiated. Thus if we return to Callinicos's account of the relationship between race and class in contemporary Europe, we can raise some issues which complicate the logics of gathering/repetition through which he expounds the condensation of politics into the struggle between left and right (Callinicos 1994, pp. 27-28). In particular we would need to pay close attention to the logics of autochthony through which liberal democracies have staged the integration of race, class and gender; we would need to consider the excessive play of desire through which the global economy has overloaded this staging; and we would need to remain open to the chance of hospitality which is offered by existent forms of class affiliation—the chance that the “socialist culture” of the European democracies can be transformed by the unaccountable event/desire of the other (Derrida 2000, pp. 123-24).

The “gesture of affiliation” which is configured in Derrida's idea of the New International is a gesture which commands without material necessity; it is that which gathers heterogeneous acts of dissent into fragile associations whose responsibility to the other exceeds every contractual bond of fraternity. This, of course, is *not* Marx's International; for Derrida's “inoperative community” of the oppressed is revealed only in acts of ethical responsibility which exceed the subject positions inscribed in Marx's account of class. The point I have tried to make however is that Ahmad, Callinicos and Lewis's condemnations of *SM* on the grounds that it fails to begin with the materiality of class relations, miss the critical significance of Derrida's Marxism. What he is attempting to do is to *accompany* Marx; to open up historical materialism to a highly differentiated notion of class which begins with the thought of its own contingency (Fynsk in Cohen 2001, p. 165). This is not Marxism as it is conventionally understood—yet why should this immediately be conceived as a weakness? Might it not be the case that the ethical performativity which Derrida demands in relation to questions about technological prosthesis, the spectralization of the real, and the rights of the stranger, are precisely the questions which open up the future of Marxist politics? Thus while it is certainly true that the idea of a revolutionary community “without status, without title, and without name” raises an unfamiliar political problematic, this should not be dismissed purely on the grounds of its complication of Marx's revolutionary dialectics (Derrida 1994, p. 85). In the end it is the techno-scientific development capital which has transformed the temporality of class relationships—and so what Derrida has attempted in *SM* is to open up the political and intellectual affiliations which have constituted “orthodox Marxism”

to the general economy of effects (prosthesis, spectralization, virtuality etc) through which capital constantly transforms the “material” conditions of its reproduction.

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