

COGITO, SPECTERS, AND MARRANOS: THE DECONSTRUCTION OF A NEW
HUMANISM UNDER THE AEGIS OF A DISCIPLE'S CONSCIOUSNESS

By

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To Jaiden, Azsia, and Mikah

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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In this dissertation, I trace a connection between Jacques Derrida and Frantz Fanon back to one particular passage on Fanon's "cry" in Derrida's "Cogito et historie de la folie" (1963) and draw out the implications of the replacement of this passage in a later version (1967) of the article that omits any mention of Fanon. My aim in the project is three-fold: to make more manifest the nexus between these two "Algerian" infidels or marranos; to suggest that deconstruction and Fanon's project of "new humanism" resonate with each other in interesting and incalculable ways, primarily in their rethinking of transcendental purity and intransigence, or, in a simpler term, justice; and to expand our general understanding of deconstruction, whose "origins" appear commensurate with Martin Heidegger's "Destruktion," a term denoting the operation performed in relation to the totalizing structure of Western metaphysics. The success of this project falls largely on the openness of deconstruction, as I have expected it to run squarely against its typical articulations, movements, trajectories, and readings by situating it tentatively and performatively in an African context. To accomplish this end, I rely heavily on the analyses of Geoffrey Bennington, Judith Butler, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and especially Christopher Wise; the spectral presence and revolutionary fervor of Karl Marx; and the prescience and literary genius of William Shakespeare.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: A MYSTICAL DISAPPEARANCE

This dissertation begins with an inquiry into the mystical disappearance of the following quote:

Un peu comme la révolution anti-colonialiste ne peut se libérer de l'Europe ou de l'Occident empiriques *de fait*, qu'au nom de l'Europe transcendante, c'est-à-dire de la Raison, et en se laissant d'abord gagner par ses valeurs, son langage, ses sciences, ses techniques, ses armes; contamination ou incohérence irréductible qu'aucun cri—je pense à celui de Fanon—ne peut exorciser, si pur et si intransigeant soit-il. (“Cogito” 466)

A bit like how the anti-colonialist revolution can only liberate itself from a *de facto* Europe or West in the name of transcendental Europe, that is, of Reason, and by letting itself first be won over by its values, its language, its technology, its armaments; an irreducible contamination or incoherence that no cry—I am thinking of Fanon’s—could exorcise, no matter how pure and intransigent it is. (Baugh 40)

The reference comes from French Algerian philosopher Jacques Derrida, more specifically his “*Cogito et histoire de la folie*,” which first appeared in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* (1963). In “*Cogito et histoire de la folie*,” Derrida argues that the unreasonableness of classical reason can only be ruled as such on the grounds that reason is purely *Reason in general*. In other words, madness and reason are not mutually exclusive. His argument is in response to Michel Foucault’s *Folie et déraison. Histoire de la folie à la âge classique* (1961), in which Foucault attempts to do an archeology of madness’s silence and protests against reason’s sequestration of madness. In the particular paragraph in which the quote appears, Derrida describes a revolution against reason that can only occur on the basis of or within reason. Ultimately, there exists no term such as madness that can be opposed to reason, specifically because madness emerges from reason. The quote was dropped from the essay four years later in Derrida’s *L’Écriture et la différence* (1967) and replaced with the following:

On ne peut sans doute pas écriture une histoire, voire une archéologie contre la raison, car, malgré des apparences, le concept d’histoire a toujours été un concept rationnel. C’est la signification “histoire” ou “archie” qu’il eût peut-être fallu questionner d’abord. Une

écriture excédant, à les questioner, les valeurs “d’origine,” “de raison,” “d’histoire,” ne saurait se laisser contenir dans la clôture métaphysique d’une archéologie. (59)

A history, that is, an archeology against reason doubtless cannot be written, for, despite all appearances to the contrary, the concept of history has always been a rational one. It is the meaning of “history” or *archia* that should have been questioned first, perhaps. A writing that exceeds, by questioning them, the values “origin,” “reason,” and “history” could not be contained within the metaphysical closure of an archeology. (“Cogito and the History of Madness” 36)

The credit for bringing the lost quote to our attention belongs to Bruce Baugh. “In Sartre, Derrida, and Commitment: The Case of Algeria,” he describes this “reference”¹ as “anxious,” written “on the heels of the Algerian independence in 1962, with the wounds of that conflict still fresh, and by someone who,” as a French Algerian with sympathies for the anti-colonialist revolution, “was no mere spectator” (40). For Baugh, the quote raises the following problem for revolutionaries, in Derrida’s view: “they can protest against European injustices only in the name of a European ideal of justice, and fight European colonial power only by using European weapons, tactics, forms of political organization, and theories (including Marxism and psychoanalysis)” (40-1). If Baugh believes the quote is “anxious” because of the context in which it was written, it is anxious for me not only because it suggests that we can trace Derrida’s political engagements to the “beginning” of his publishing career, but also because it marks the disappearance of any relevant connection between two controversial, complex, revolutionary, and seemingly unrelated intellectuals of the 20th century, Jacques Derrida and Frantz Fanon. In some respects, these two should be viewed not only as contemporaries, but also as “Algerian” compatriots in search of the “pure and intransigent” and whose aims at achieving change in the world were similarly radical. The quote also yields implications regarding the scope and potentially transformative nature of deconstruction as a radical politics, though I should take

¹ In Baugh’s article, he refers to the quote as a footnote, but it appears in the actual text.

great care not to reduce deconstruction to a method or process of pragmatic politics. It is possible that one might regard Fanon's formulation of a new humanism as deconstructive. The aims of this dissertation are two-fold: to reestablish a relation between Derrida and Fanon more than 40 years after the disappearance of an “anxious” quote and to suggest formatively that deconstruction and Fanon’s new humanism both resonate with each other in interesting and incalculable ways. First, I would like to offer a way that we might read the omission of Fanon from “Cogito” and its effect, as if Derrida were casting an incalculable shadow of some sort on Fanon.

(Politically) Left in the Shadows (of Philosophy)

The year 1967 marks Derrida’s emergence as a major figure in contemporary French thought—and subsequently the beginning of the end of structuralism, according to Jason Powell—during which time he saw the publication of his first three texts: *La voix et le phénomène* (translated by David Allison as *Speech and Phenomena* in 1973), *De la grammatologie* (translated by Gayatri Spivak as *Of Grammatology* in 1976), and *L’Écriture et la différence* (translated by Alan Bass as *Writing and Difference* in 1978). Though Derrida suggests that there may be a particular order to read these three books, all three lend themselves to an examination of philosophy’s concepts to determine the issues that philosophy has historically hidden, forbidden, or repressed. As Alan Bass notes, the first step of this deconstruction of philosophy, “which attempts to locate that which is *present* nowhere in philosophy,” involves working through the notion of presence as undertaken by Martin Heidegger, who recognized in this notion the “destiny of philosophy” (x-xi). What compounds the difficulty of a deconstruction of philosophy is language itself, especially translation. On this subject, Derrida writes: “As a matter of fact, I don’t believe that anything can ever be untranslatable—or, moreover, translatable” (“What Is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” 178). One could suggest that ultimately nothing is translatable, but if we must accede, we become bankrupt in the process of having

translated that which is untranslatable. Derrida posits that there is a certain economy related to the enterprise of translation, an economy that signifies two things: property and quantity, both of which present empirical challenges. Bass asks two fundamental questions concerning the empirical difficulties of translation, “Can *any* translation be made to signify the same thing as the original text? How crucial is the play of the signifiers—etymological play, stylistic play—to what is signified by the text?” (xv). Elsewhere, Derrida has concurred that the history of metaphysics has always imposed upon semiology the search for a “transcendental signified,” a concept independent of language or a concept that can be unproblematically transferred among various languages without losing its purity. It is this promise of a transcendental purity or search for this purity that makes translation possible.

Considering first the difficulties of language and translation in the project of the deconstruction of philosophy, I wonder why Derrida dropped the allusion to Fanon from the second version of “Cogito et historie de la folie,” especially given that Derrida associates Fanon’s cry with a purity and intransigence in the original. Might the dropping of this proper name have anything to do with the systemic repression of ideas in concepts in philosophy? Might it have to do with Derrida’s emergence as a major figure in contemporary French thought? Does the omission indicate a certain change reflected in the questions on madness and reason that are deemed no longer relevant? Had the Algerian conflict ultimately become of little importance to the larger questions raised in “Cogito” that Derrida felt compelled to excise the reference in the second version? Though we may never understand the motivation behind eliminating the quote, we can revisit the text to determine for ourselves if the omission is indeed important. I’ll offer a brief discussion of “Cogito” below.²

² I will refer to Derrida’s article in both French and English as “Cogito,” and I will refer to Descartes’ theory of the Cogito without quotation marks.

Derrida begins “Cogito” with a modest acknowledgment: “I retain the consciousness of an admiring and grateful disciple” of Michel Foucault’s (31). He remarks that this disciple’s consciousness is similar to the Hegelian unhappy consciousness, in that it makes him feel like an infant when he attempts to enter into dialogue with the master. The child is one who cannot speak and certainly must not answer back, though the disciple anticipates the challenge of the master “who speaks within him and before him, to reproach him for making this challenge and to reject it in advance, having elaborated it before him; and having interiorized the master, he is also challenged by the disciple that he himself is” (31-2). The unhappiness of the disciple stems from the fact that he does not know or fails to realize that the master is always absent and that the disciple must, at some point, start to speak. Derrida breaks this silence and interrogates a mere three pages of Foucault’s 673-page book on the “history” of madness, the three pages that Foucault devotes to a certain passage from Descartes’ Meditation I. Derrida is concerned necessarily with two questions: (1) Does Foucault interpret Descartes accurately, and insofar as Descartes is represented accurately in Foucault’s *History of Madness*, does Descartes’ intention, as Foucault understands it, have the “manifest historical meaning” assigned to it? In other words, has Descartes’ work been properly historicized? And (2) in light of a rereading of the Cartesian Cogito, will it not be possible to interrogate *certain* philosophical and methodological presuppositions of this history of madness? In the end, what Derrida shows us is that reason and madness are never fully distinct from each other and that one cannot write the history of madness, even if someone like Foucault wants to remain true to the language and substance of madness by attempting to excavate or provide for an archeology of madness, without recourse to reason or Logos. This perhaps will have been Foucault’s biggest error in writing *History of*

Madness, according to Derrida, but what Foucault has shown us in the process is that “there are crises of reason in strange complicity with what the world calls crises of madness” (63). Though the child (Derrida) has spoken against the master (Foucault), he does so with the utmost respect for him: even in erring, the master has still taught us something.

Derrida’s “Cogito” project is impressive in the manner it examines Foucault’s attention to Descartes, describes how Foucault could have avoided falling into the trap of reason in speaking about madness, and attempts to locate Descartes’ manifest historical meaning to understand Meditation I accurately. Derrida is bothered by Foucault’s engagement with the “decision,” that which, through a single act, links and separates reason and madness. The “decision” produces indeed the archaeology of silence (madness), where reason is characterized by speech. Derrida’s problem with this is that Foucault has left “in the shadows” the decision’s true historical ground (39). He lists two reasons: First, Foucault alludes to Logos as having no contrary, unlike classical reason, whose contrary is supposedly madness. The second reason has to do with a profound link that Foucault establishes between the division, the dissension (or decision), and the possibility of history itself.

I point out what bothers Derrida not because I agree with his argument about Foucault particularly, but because I find quite fascinating the phrase “in the shadows” to describe a certain philosophical process of repression, forbiddance, or concealment. What I find even more compelling is that Derrida, the moment he excises the references to Fanon and anti-colonialist revolution, seems to set the tone for deconstruction for the next three decades by relegating them to the shadows. Without the references in the second version, “Cogito” remains fixed in the historical—we read mostly about the Greeks—and deconstruction becomes foremost philosophical, silencing (or leaving in the shadows) its political dimensions. Simultaneously, the

omission of the citation also leaves Fanon “in the shadows,” a non-place ultimately, where he and the other Algerian revolutionaries are to linger. One might argue that engaging Fanon and the Algerian context might be irrelevant given the nature of the essay, Descartes and the history of madness. But what are we to make of this critical distancing in light of Derrida’s professed close relation to his birthplace, Algeria, a land he experienced difficulty leaving for the first time at age 19? In “Taking a Stand for Algeria,” Derrida explains this relation:

. . . all I will say is inspired above all and after all by a painful love for Algeria . . . an Algeria to which I have often come back and which in the end I know to have never really ceased inhabiting or bearing in my innermost, a love for Algeria to which, if not the love of citizenry, and thus the patriotic tie to a Nation-state, is nonetheless what makes it impossible to dissociate here the heart, the thinking, and the political position-taking—and thus dictates all that I will say. (3-4)

Derrida writes this description in 2003, 40 years after “Cogito,” as if he has always felt this way. So, one might ask, if this country has been so important for Derrida, why does he abandon it after 1963 and defer for nearly 30 years his political engagements? I suspect that for deconstruction to have had the impact that it has had on the academy, Derrida would have to undermine deconstruction’s own potentialities by embarking on such a substantial detour. He has never denied the extent to which deconstruction handles both the philosophical and political, but his decision to defer these connections until after three decades of teaching, speaking, and writing has given the world the impression that deconstruction is merely a mode of reading, that it has no political component, and that there is no sense of urgency in deconstruction. In other words, deconstruction, as an elaboration of a democracy to come (*la démocratie à venir*), is made to appear less than what it is: the search for a pure, intransigent, and undeconstructible moment or, more specifically, the search for justice.

Undecidability = Urgency = Deconstruction

In “Jacques Derrida and Alain Badiou: Is There a Relation between Politics and Time?”

Antonio Calcagno argues that Derrida is correct to bring to the fore the undecidability in his political notion of a democracy to come but that he does not extend the aporia of undecidable politics far enough. According to Calcagno, Derridean democracy-to-come yields two results: (1) all politics are arch-structured by the undecidability of the double bind of possibility and impossibility—via the temporal models of the spatio-temporization of *differance*, which makes the fully present an impossibility—and the “to come” of the promise, and (2) such undecidability determines the limits of possibility and impossibility, limits that make evident the aporias structured into politics. Regarding the temporal models of politics as democracy to come, there are namely two, *differance* and the promise, which I will sketch briefly here. (I discuss these two concepts more fully in chapters four and five respectively.) The first model, *differance*, can be traced to Derrida’s “Différance” and has two movements. The first movement delays or defers an origin that can never come to full presence because that which has been originally present has to be represented by a sign. The second movement consists in differentiating among various elements within a chain of signification, each element vying to stand out within the chain. Derrida develops more fully the second temporal model, the promise, in *Specters of Marx* and *Voyous*. The promise emphasizes a futurity, a “to come,” which has within its structure the double bind that is haunted by a past and a present that never fulfills itself as fully present. Calcagno argues that the promise not only contains within itself the logic of *differance*, but also emphasizes the possibility of a future. He then examines the two temporal structures in relation to Derrida’s notion of democracy, as articulated at an international philosophy colloquium in April 1968, just one year after the appearance of second version of “Cogito.” In his address, he

maintains that democracy should be the form of political organization of society and follow two rules particularly:

National philosophical identity is placed together with non-identity. Philosophical identity must not exclude a diversity relative to and that comes with the language of such diversity, that comes eventually as a minority. . . . Concerning the fact that the totality of this diversity be exhaustively represented, this cannot but remain problematic. . . .

So that philosophers will not identify with one another, the philosophers present here must not assume the politics of their own countries. It should be permitted here that I should be able to speak in my own name. I will not do otherwise than in the measure where the problem posed to me refers back in truth to an essential generality and it is in the form of this generality that I wish to articulate it. (“The Ends of Man” 33)

In a footnote, Calcagno notes that, in the French, the word *société* serves as a *double entendre*, alluding to both society in general but also the French Society of Philosophy. We might then apply Derrida’s reflections not only to philosophy, but also to society and the political. Still, Calcagno believes that Derrida’s temporal models and his philosophy in general sorely lack an account of human agency and the possibility for intervention. The constantly shuttling back and forth of political possibility, the differing and deferring of the future and the impossibility of self-presence, ultimately lead nowhere for Calcagno. Within this gap perceived in Derrida’s thought of the undecidability of politics, Calcagno places Alain Badiou’s notion of time as a subjective, decisive intervention. Badiou’s idea functions as the timely, settling intervention in a politics structured by undecidability, so to speak. These interventions are otherwise considered events, those that make evident what Badiou refers to as “truth” or the “rupture or radical space where something can come to appear” (Calcagno 807). Examples of events include the French Revolution, the American Revolution, the Soviet Revolution, and the example of May ‘68, all marking great historical shifts in the manner we do and think politics. Badiou’s notion of the event differs from Derrida’s notion, in that the latter conceives of the event (on the basis of his treatment of Heidegger’s notion of *Ereignis* and his own treatment of *la*

donation) as an occurrence that undoes itself and renders both the possibility and impossibility of naming or pronouncing that very occurrence, according to Calcagno. In Badiou's framework, the event is caused by a subject who acts according to a temporal force exerted during a pre-political phase of state affairs. This state of affairs might take the form of bourgeois restrictions and various repressions (in the external or extra-subjective world) that motivate the subject to respond and bring about singular and unique change. Calcagno refers to this outside force as *kairos*, the appropriate time of action, "a time that does not stem from the subject alone through the actualization of his or her political *techné*, but also through the state of affairs of the world that calls or elicits the subject to respond through an intervention" (811). We might view this Greek concept of the *kairos* as that which presents a sense of urgency or an appeal that promotes a subjective intervention.

Algeria as “Originary” Deconstructive Event (A New Humanism on the Horizon)

Considering Calcagno's view that subjects and *kairos* "must work together" to produce events within the structured undecidability of politics, I argue that Derrida himself is an example of a subject who responded to certain ruptures and intervened politically at an appropriate time, an argument that seems rather counterintuitive to Jason Powell's argument that Derrida's emergence as a political figure can be attributed to his career seemingly going nowhere (162, 192).³ I also read the excision of Fanon from Derrida's "Cogito" as an intentional, strategic omission that foregrounds the possibility of a politics to come. If Fanon's cry represents the purity and intransigence of a future politics or justice, a purity and intransigence incompatible with the legitimacy of Western tradition, Derrida could never afford to jeopardize the success of

³ Powell also argues that Derrida's discussion of the political element of deconstruction does not arrive until "The Deconstruction of Actuality" (1993). His view clearly neglects *Specters of Marx* (1993) or "Force of Law" (1987) as considerations or texts inaugurating the politics of deconstruction (191).

deconstruction by foregrounding the question of politics with the reference to Fanon. The original “Cogito” surfaced just months after the Algerians defeated the French and gained their independence. So, the reference to Fanon in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* can be viewed as a rather bold, originary, yet premature investiture. In his *White Mythologies*, Robert Young detected this investiture or thread long ago in Derrida’s writings. Young’s text represents his effort to “re-translate” Derrida’s deconstruction as philosophical and literary strategies into a colonial and postcolonial framework. This thread, the location of philosophy at the heart of the system of western dominance, mobilizes poststructuralism, which sets out to defend itself against this western problematic. Young notes that poststructuralism has generally been regarded as theoretical positions originating with theorists associated with Algeria and its war of independence, individuals including Helene Cixous, Albert Memmi, Pierre Bourdieu, Francois Lyotard, Derrida, Fanon, and Albert Camus, all of whom identify as Franco-Maghrebian. Hence, Young identifies their positions as “actively concerned with the task of undoing the ideological heritage of French colonialism and with rethinking the premises, assumptions, and protocols of its centrist, imperial culture” (“Subjectivity” 414).

Echoing Abdelkebir Khatibi and Jane Hiddleston, Young declares deconstruction “a form of cultural and intellectual decolonization” (“Subjectivity” 421), saddled with the burden of teasing out the myth of reason from metaphysics that rarely fails to go uncontested. If we trace his analysis back to *White Mythologies*, we find the difficulty that subsists in decolonizing ontology and the ontological subject by attempting to install the ethical into the political. If ontology can be charged with making the other into the same, we see the futility in attempting to neutralize the philosophy of power responsible for guarding the concept of totality. On this point, Young finds Emmanuel Levinas’ *Totality and Infinity* particularly instructive in that it traces

“ontological imperialism” as far back as Socrates, but also as recently as Heidegger (*White Mythologies* 13). While for Levinas the preponderance of History maintains the imperialism of the same, metaphysics, which precedes ontology presents us with the possibility of breaching totality through a surplus that remains exterior and marks the radical alterity of the other. The problem with this formulation is that it returns us to the mythology of logos and Reason, leaving us little margin of error to recuperate the ethical injunctions that politics and ontology expose if only momentarily and fleetingly. Like Derrida, Levinas locates this possibility in Marx’s Eleventh Thesis. The problem for Derrida and deconstruction becomes the difficulty of anticipating the spatio-temporal dimensions of the politics of a democracy to come.

I argue that Derrida must resume his open engagement with/on Africa later, after deconstruction has established itself as something worthy of a promising event. Even then, we should not obligate Derrida to take responsibility for making manifest the historical meaning of his work; the responsibility must be someone else’s, in the way that Derrida took it upon himself to correct Foucault, his mentor, on his reading of Descartes and madness. In fact, I suspect that Derrida understood that his most critical and productive readings would surface after his death, after our work of mourning. Eliminating the reference may or may not have been an easy decision for Derrida, but as a French Algerian intellectual, shattered by French discrimination in Algeria, distancing himself from Africa indefinitely appears philosophically and politically pragmatic.

In “Sartre, Derrida, and Commitment,” Baugh explains Derrida’s intractable difficulties as a French Algerian intellectual in the early 1960s on the subject of Algerian independence, similar to the difficulties the Algerian revolutionaries faced, as if they were placed in the predicament of Hegel’s unhappy consciousness: wavering between the opposites of independence and

dependence, affirmation and negation, and Europe and Africa, without reaching some reconciliatory synthesis. To negate Europe, the revolutionaries must affirm. To reach a transcendental Europe, they must negate the empirical one. Derrida, as a French Algerian by language and culture and a North African Jew by birth, finds himself in a similar, “very Derridean position: both inside and outside of Africa, neither inside nor outside of it, caught in an aporia that places him, too, in the position of Hegel’s unhappy consciousness, which affirms what it negates and negates what it affirms” (Baugh 41). Baugh argues that this awkward position would make it difficult for Derrida to speak on or to African concerns as a European Western intellectual, and Baugh seems to attribute the omission to this awkward position.

Baugh then turns to Sartre’s difficulty as a Western intellectual speaking against colonization. For Baugh, Sartre interprets Fanon’s pure and intransigent cry as that which signals that Africans, previously mere objects for Europeans, were then beginning to speak to other Africans about Europe were establishing an order of knowledge that V. Y. Mudimbe refers to as African *gnosis*. Baugh writes, “Sartre’s concern is not what Africans should do to liberate themselves from their European masters; it is what Europeans should do in the face of Africa’s efforts to liberate itself. Consequently, he does not offer judgments concerning either African goals or means, but engages in an effort of *comprehension*, of understanding and listening” (42). The dilemma, then, for both Derrida and Sartre is that if they were committed intellectuals on the side of the oppressed, the difficulty with this commitment therein would lie with the question, “on which side *is* the oppressed?” Matthew C. Ally might suggest that this question would be simply one among many regarding the problem of intellectuals and their role in activism. He writes:

Perhaps a proper understanding of the role of intellectuals would involve each of these tendencies [toward detachment, relative engagement, and revolutionary activism] as

moments in an ongoing process. Not a synthesis, but a diachresis, a broadly mutual but temporally selective interaction between the moment of stepping back, the moment of stepping forward, and the moment of meeting. And the intellectual can effect all of these moments, even if not always, even if not all at once. (77)

Ally describes both a non-contemporaneity (disjoined sense of time) and a call to intellectuals, both of which remain significant for this project.

In general, I agree with Baugh's reading of Western intellectualism and the difficulties of addressing African concerns without assuming European theory and moral and political values, but I am not convinced that Derrida drops the citation because of this difficulty. Baugh recontextualizes Derrida's earlier invocation of the Hegelian unhappy consciousness by situating both Derrida and Algerian revolutionaries within its overall framework. Where Derrida uses the unhappy consciousness in "Cogito" to explain the relationship he has with Foucault as student and critic, Baugh uses it to greater (though not necessarily better) effect. In his view, not only is Derrida victimized by the position of being both inside and outside of Africa, but the Algerians are as well. The problem with the Algerian revolutionary example, however, is that the Algerians as a whole were never as critically aware of this awkward position, as Baugh seems to insist. In fact, Fanon emphasizes in *The Wretched of the Earth* (WE) that the Algerians lacked not only critical awareness, but also an ideology to replace colonial awareness once independence would be secured. He feared that once Algeria gained its independence, the colonizers would be replaced by Algerian bourgeoisie who would develop the same mindset as their predecessors about the Algerian natives. This lack of ideology could be attributed to the various, distinct forces in Algeria all vying to open up new outlets and engender new aims for the violence of colonized peoples. The first group includes the political parties and the intellectual or commercial elites who are not interested in a "radical overthrowing of the system," but in offering instead "a string of philosophico-political dissertations on the themes of the rights of

peoples to self-determination, the rights of man to freedom from hunger and human dignity, and the unceasing affirmation of the principle: ‘One man, one vote’” (*WE* 59). The native intellectual has only his individual interests in mind and desires to assimilate to the colonial world. The second group consists of the peasantry, who are the first to discover the utility of violence, which will only yield to a greater violence. The colonialist bourgeoisie, a third force, strives to create a non-violent colonial situation, which “signifies to the intellectual and economic elite of the colonized country that the bourgeoisie has the same interests as they and that is it is therefore urgent and indispensable to come to terms for the public good” (*WE* 61). There are indeed French settlers who support the Algerian movement, but the most radical and revolutionary force, the nationalist militants, flee the towns and their demagoguery only to discover real politics and real action that does not resemble the old politics. Fanon writes:

These politics are the politics of leaders and organizers living inside history who take the lead with *their brains and their muscles* in the fight for freedom. These politics are national, revolutionary, and social and these new facts which the native will now come to know exist only in action. They are the essence of the fight which explodes the old colonial truths and reveals unexpected facets, which bring out new meanings and pinpoints the contradictions camouflaged by these facts. (147)

Given all these various positions, it would seem rather disingenuous to attribute an unhappy consciousness to a monolithic fiction known as “Algerian insurrectionaries,” for not all of the forces in Algeria would have been cognizant of this awkward position. Fanon, however, remained well aware of the difficulty of reconciling Western intellectualism and Third World revolution, or rather the difficulty of separating or clearly marking the limits of the “irreducible contamination or incoherence” of reason. Richard Owuanibe argues that Fanon himself was “a man struggling to reconcile the apparent contradiction between genuine humanism and violence” (xiii). His response to this aporia is a “new humanism,” that which recognizes the preponderance of reason—he knows we cannot simply abandon, ignore, or neglect Europe—but attempts to

think beyond the moral and political value systems of Europe. The signifier “new” can be misleading in a sense. Fanon does not wish to replicate or merely improve the old humanism. He wants a transformation of man and society in a most radical manner. He, however, developed its thesis so very little that, at times, he uses the terms “new humanism” and “new humanity” almost interchangeably. Still, the concept denotes a futurity, and I will argue here that Fanon’s new humanism should be viewed as ultimately another formulation of deconstruction, justice, or a democracy to come.

As Calcagno reminds us, the relation between time and politics is best expressed in the spatio-temporization of *différance* and later in Derrida’s notion of promise and democracy to come, structured by the undecidability of the double bind of possibility and impossibility. The elimination of the citation becomes more relevant when we consider the relation between time and politics. If Derrida must conceal Fanon, it is because the time is not right for politics on Africa. Time becomes more urgent and Africa, more critical in the late 1980s and early 90s, when Derrida returns to the question of Africa in *Specters of Marx*, which serves as a subjective intervention structured by the unfolding of events in 1989. When I consider the early omission, however, I suspect that Derrida is not only intentionally hiding this crucial relation between time and politics, but he is also postponing his timely, performative, political intervention. I would now like to sketch briefly *Specters of Marx* as that specific intervention.

Specters of Marx: Going Back to Africa and Looking Toward the Future

In 1989, an overwhelming sense of hope and conceit came over the Western world as it witnessed the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the infamous confrontation in Tiananmen Square. Neoconservative political scientist Francis Fukuyama added to this spirit of optimism by confidently claiming that “the end of history” was near and that the future would be the global triumph of free market economies. Amidst the talk

of a new world order after the collapse of the Soviet Union, several thinkers, unconvinced of an imminent demise of Marxism, began rethinking the global transformations and developing new theoretical approaches. By October 1991, two professors at the University of California at Riverside, Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg, began envisioning with several of their colleagues “what it might be like to have a conference which would *not* consist of yet another autopsy administered mostly by Anglophone economists and policy analysts who typically were and are very far from the sites of struggle and transformation” (*Specters* ix). Nearly two years later, their conversation led to a multinational, multidisciplinary conference titled “Whither Marxism?” which brought together Marxists thinkers from “China, Russia, Armenia, Poland, Romania, Mexico, Germany, France, the United States and elsewhere” to discuss future directions for Marxism after its presumed death. Magnus and Cullenberg organized the conference, which was held at UC-Riverside, and it began on 22 April 1993 with the plenary address of Derrida, who lectured over the course of two evenings on the futures of Marxism, Marx, and global politics, and arguably on the futures of deconstruction and himself. The conference ended on 24 April 1993, and Derrida’s address, “*Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*,” was published by Routledge Press a year later with additional notes.

While participants at the conference were determined to rethink both practical and theoretical solutions to the problems that had befallen Marxism, Derrida made matters more complicated by asking them to think through two seemingly unrelated considerations. The first concerns the dedication of Derrida’s lecture to Chris Hani, the South African patriot and communist gunned down just twelve days before the conference by a Polish immigrant and his accomplices. This dedication would be important for two reasons: (1) Despite the conference

organizers' attempts to include Marxist theorists from all over the world, the conference failed to include even a single *black* African theorist on the program. Christopher Wise believes this omission to be a critical error in judgment and planning, considering "the rich historical legacy of African theorists who have been influenced by Marxism, including figures like Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabril, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Thomas Sankara" ("Saying 'Yes' to Africa"); and (2) The more obvious reason Derrida mentions Hani is to remind his audience that the "historic violence of Apartheid" still had not been cancelled out by that time (xv).

Derrida also asked conference participants to consider the existence, so to speak, of ghosts. According to Derrida, "There has never been a scholar who really, and as scholar, deals with ghosts," and he believes that what "seems almost impossible is to speak always *of the* specter, to speak *to the* specter, to speak with it, therefore especially *to make or to let a spirit speak*" (11). Because scholars, observers, intellectuals, witnesses, and theoreticians privilege sight, they are not in the best position to *speak to* the specter. But, according to Derrida, to *learn to live* and to *think the possibility of justice*, we must always speak of, to, and with ghosts "from the moment that no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable and *just* that does not recognize in its principle the respect for those others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet *there*, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born" (xix). To examine this perspective, Derrida critiques Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which serves as an underlying thematic throughout *Specters of Marx*. One might imagine Derrida's opening lines on his reflections of justice, as if in a Shakespearian monologue: "To see (Africa) or not to see (ghosts), that is the question . . ."

More important than these two considerations, however, is the context in which Derrida delivered them, an acknowledgment that has been remarkably underappreciated. Ever since the

publication of his lectures, many theorists have been provoked to challenge Derrida's reflections on Marx, and indeed *Specters of Marx* has been considered a landmark text for Derrida, as it is considered one of the first texts in which Derrida diverts his attention to politics. Still, while some believe that his manner of engaging politics should be commended, others believe that his engagement remains insufficient. In 1999, Verso published the meditations of several of Derrida's peers, including Fredric Jameson, Werner Hamacher, Antonio Negri, Warren Montag, Terry Eagleton, Pierre Macherey, Tom Lewis and Aijaz Ahmad, in a collection titled *Ghostly Demarcations*. Also included in the volume is Derrida's response to his critics, "Marx and Sons," a response that he considers inadequate but one that stresses the importance of keeping his remarks on Marx in their historical and performative context. He writes,

I may perhaps be permitted to mention here, at the very outset, even before beginning, the most troubled interrogation of *Specters of Marx*, and the most anguished, bearing as it did on the legitimacy and, simultaneously, the timeliness of a book that was initially a lecture delivered at a specific moment, a lecture which "took a position" in response to a significant invitation in a highly determinate context. This question was, to be sure, left suspended in a place from which the strategy of this discourse and its address were organized. (217)

He claims that virtually none of the texts in *Ghostly Demarcations* seems to have taken context seriously or "directly into account as a question," which was precisely "a threefold question: (1) the question of the 'political' (of the essence, tradition and demarcation of the 'political,' especially in 'Marx'); (2) the question of the '*philosophical*' as well (of philosophy *qua* ontology, particularly in 'Marx'); and therefore (3) the question of the topoi all of us believe we can recognize in common beneath these names—particularly the name '*Marx*'—if only to indicate disagreement about them" ("Marx and Sons" 217). While it may indeed have been a far stretch for intellectuals at the conference to attend to *all* of the questions and considerations Derrida posed over two nights, I believe that we as readers of his published lectures have no excuse to gloss over something as relevant as the "highly determinant context" in which his

address first took place. In fact, Wise believes this context to be one of the most important effects of *Specters of Marx*, insofar as it “functioned in the first instance as a voiced performance at a specific place and time” (“Saying ‘Yes’ to Africa). For Wise, too, this performative intervention reinforces Derrida’s solidarity with Africa.

A Disciple’s Declaration: Motivation and Methodology

For this dissertation, I am deeply motivated by Derrida’s “Cogito,” which begins with a disciple’s consciousness. Where Derrida mobilizes this consciousness to examine three pages of Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* and the specific passage in Descartes’ Meditation I that Foucault considers, I would like to use as my point of departure the omission of the reference to Fanon, an event whose origins are unknown—sometime between 1963 and 1967—and which seemingly undermines the very argument that Derrida wishes to make about reason in 1963 with “Cogito” and deconstruction in 1967 with the publication of *Speech and Phenomena*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Of Grammatology*: that both reason and philosophy historically repress, hide, forbid, leave in the shadows, and render absent what indeed is endemic to them. In this case, what Derrida represses is a *manifest* attention to questions of the political. This study will not attempt a thorough investigation of Derrida’s various political, philosophical, and literary engagements post-1963, as Derrida has indeed represented himself politically in various ways since then, but this study recognizes that many critics argue that Derrida makes his first overt turn toward the political in 1993 with *Specters of Marx*, the much anticipated text in which Derrida finally discusses deconstruction’s relationship to Marxism. Therefore, this dissertation is concerned with two events: the dropping of the Fanon reference as an originary event and *Specters of Marx* as a deferred event structured around an undecidable politics. As both events are indeed deconstructive, this dissertation attempts to extend our understanding of deconstruction additionally as one’s learning to live, an offspring of Marxism, additionally

African (not exclusively European as is generally assumed), and the search for justice. Last, I will argue that deconstruction anticipates Fanon's "new humanism," an argument that I hope will support the idea that Fanon and Derrida should be regarded as virtual compatriots, renegades, infidels, or Marranos.

As this dissertation is focused ultimately around the question of deconstruction, the chapters reflect various engagements with it. In the spirit of *Specters of Marx*, I have attempted to establish a resonance with it by (de-)constructing this dissertation as a five-act play; hence, each of the five major chapters constitute acts. Furthermore, the ellipses that precede and succeed the chapter titles should denote performatively the undecidability of the double bind of possibility and impossibility inherent in a future-to-come. In Chapter Two, "Act I: . . . Learning to Live . . . ,” I examine more fully *Specters of Marx*, in which Derrida explains deconstruction's relation to Marxism through a discussion of the first spatio-temporal dimension of Derridean democracy-to-come, the emancipatory promise. I also take up briefly Derrida's engagement with Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History*, his vision for global politics called the New International, his exegesis on Karl Marx's response to Max Stirner in *The German Ideology*, and his performative reading of *Hamlet*. In the third chapter, "Act II: . . . (Not) Marxism. . . . ,” I further distinguish between deconstruction and Marxism by examining the arguments of various Marxist critics. In this chapter, I also highlight the importance of the context in which *Specters of Marx* is performed and draw out the details of that text as an “event” by engaging Derrida's response to his Marxist critics in “Marx and Sons.” In Chapter Four, "Act III: . . . African . . . ,” I situate *Specters of Marx* and deconstruction as “originarily” African. In this chapter, I consider Wise's “Saying ‘Yes’ to Africa: Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*,” “Deconstructionism and Zionism: Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*,” “The Figure of Jerusalem: Jacques Derrida's

Specters of Marx,” and “Derrida and the Palestinian Question” to examine the “highly determinant context” in which Derrida presents *Specters of Marx*, one that opens up the possibility of Derrida deepening a solidarity with Africa, but also one that eventually leads us back to Fanon, Algeria, and “Cogito et histoire de la folie.” I also consider Geoffrey Bennington’s “Mosaic Fragment: if Derrida were an Egyptian . . .” and Gayatri Spivak’s “Philosophy” from *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, and I re-evaluate *différance*, deconstruction, and spectrality. In the fifth chapter, “Act IV: . . . Justice . . .,” I explore the violence inherent in deconstruction by tracing three key components that will serve as another significant movement of difference in this deconstructive analysis of Derrida’s affirmation of solidarity with Africa and more manifest connection to Fanon: (1) deconstruction is justice, which is different from the law; (2) justice is linked to the performative and its force, which assumes a certain violence; and (3) the affirmation of the performative yields “a number of yes” which opens itself to the other. In this movement, I rely significantly on Derrida’s “Force of Law” and Roberto Buonamano’s “The Economy of Violence: Derrida on Law and Justice.” In the last chapter, “Act V: . . . New Humanism . . .,” I engage Fanon’s new humanism as deconstruction and return to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* to offer a more performative reading of the relation between Derrida and Fanon.

CHAPTER 2

ACT I: . . . LEARNING TO LIVE . . .

Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (*Specters*) is often regarded as the much-anticipated response to the pressing question, "What is deconstruction's relationship to Marxism?" Though Derrida found a convenient occasion in 1993 to confront this old question at the "Whither Marxism?" symposium at UC-Riverside where commitments to historical materialism seemed resolutely clear and uninhibited, the critical rigor and tone of his address were no less demystifying than those of his previous texts. Of *Specters*, Michael Sprinker writes: "[I]f one comes to the book in the hope that now, at long last, Derrida's (or deconstruction's, which is not quite the same thing) relationship to Marxism will be profoundly clarified or definitively resolved, one will almost certainly be disappointed" (1). Indeed, *Specters* is infused with characteristic Derridean reticence, which stems from an anxious concern for being misunderstood or assimilated too fast. Given the nature of Derrida's address as political exegesis, one can only imagine the extent to which his concerns for clarity might be amplified.

One result of this carefully managed position is the following declaration, which serves at the opening lines to his Exordium: "Someone, you or me, comes forward and says: *I would like to learn to live finally*" (xvii). We may gather tentatively that *Specters* is simply about "learning to live." Furthermore, we might recognize that this modest phrase "*I would like to learn to live finally*" is one that Derrida himself utters, an utterance that suggests deconstruction's indebtedness to Marx and Marxism, not necessarily the other way around, as several of Derrida's detractors would argue. To put the phrase another way: without Marx or Marxism, there perhaps would be no revolutionary potential in deconstruction or, more pointedly, deconstruction's remarks on justice would appear far less urgent.

Still, what follow remarkably from this “strange watchword,” *to learn to live*, are various questions that return repeatedly throughout *Specters* concerning life, death, and that which falls in-between, or rather “the place of a sententious injunction that always feigns to speak like the just” (xviii). In simpler terms, the in-between is the place of ghosts. According to Derrida, whatever happens between life and death can only maintain itself with ghosts or specters. Thus, if we are to learn to live, we must learn to live with ghosts, and if we allow ourselves to live and speak with ghosts, we enable ourselves to treat more seriously questions of memory, inheritance, generations, responsibility, and justice. Derrida writes:

It is necessary to speak *of the ghost*, indeed *to the ghost* and *with it*, from the moment that no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable and *just* that does not recognize in its principle the respect for those others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet *there*, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born. (xix)

Clearly, we recognize the striking similarities between Derrida’s appeal, which calls for an attenuation of specters (those dead or not yet born) and history, which is presumably a disciplinary and ontological act of remembering the past in order to “learn” from it and avoid repeating the same mistakes. The five chapters of *Specters*, however, establish the critical and unstable distancing between history (as ontology) and spectrality, or what he refers to as “hauntology.” Hauntology exceeds ontology, just as the logic of the ghost exceeds binary or dialectical logic, “the logic that distinguishes or opposes *effectivity or actuality* (either present, empirical, living—or not) and *ideality* (regulating or absolute non-presence)” (*Specters* 63). So, on the surface, if spectrality can be represented initially in the difference between pronouncing a hard “h”—as in “hauntology”—and maintaining a silent “h”—as in ontology—then we might see why Derrida insistently modifies and recapitulates his positions on the constitutive relationships between deconstruction and Marxism.

He further distinguishes between hauntology and ontology by noting that hauntology also concerns a future to come, not only the past. Derrida writes, “The future can only be for ghosts. And the past” (37). No one can anticipate the coming or returning of a ghost, the *revenant*, which nullifies the possibility of the specter appearing present to itself or becoming present in the form of a body. We can also never predict a present reality in which the specter comes, and we have no control over how long the specter may wish to remain among us. The unpredictability of spectrality has implications for the arrival of justice, and indeed Derrida’s description of spectrality seems to resonate with the religious figuration of the Messiah. Hence, we arrive at a hauntology that signifies a messianicity without religion, a messianic/-ity⁴ without messianism, whereas ontology remains strictly tied to religion. The future of any moment is contingent upon the anticipation of the specter. Thus, if one is to ask, “Where is Marxism going?” or “Where may Marxism one day find itself?” one must think through that which remains irreducible to any sort of deconstruction or what is undeconstructible itself: an emancipatory promise. One could refer to this promise as justice, which Derrida distinguishes from law, right, human rights, or democracy (to come). A certain spirit of Marxism remains faithful or committed to the promise, a promise that may no longer fulfill itself in the “spiritual” or “abstract.” This promise as messianic affirmation brings forth the possibility of producing “events, new effective forms of action, practice, organization, and so forth. To break with the ‘party form’ or with some form of the State or the International does not mean to give up every form of practical or effective organization. It is exactly the contrary that matters to us here” (*Specters* 89). And if hegemony organizes the repression and confirmation of a haunting, which belongs to the structure of every hegemony, as Derrida suggests, then the possibility of a haunting continues to concern

⁴ In the English translation of *Specters*, “messianic” and “messianicity” are used interchangeably.

capitalism. While Derrida tends to regard the form of the Party or the International as outdated modes of communism, he continues to hang on to a specter of Marxism that leaves open the possibility of other, more effective forms of resistance. The whole of *Specters* operates on the assumption that justice remains possible, but its form can never be anticipated; this is perhaps the most important lesson we can glean from Marx, the one specter, or several specters rather, that hover around Derrida's text.

Against the difficult—and frequently perplexing—spectral backdrop in *Specters* lie an engagement with Francis Fukuyama's proclamation of the end of Marxism and of history; a recommendation for a course of political action, under the auspices of deconstructive undecidability, of course, referred to as the New International; exegeses of several of Marx's texts, including *The German Ideology*, *Communist Manifesto*, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, and *Capital*, regarding Marx's presumed ambivalence toward ghosts and Max Stirner; an analysis of the work of mourning; and intermittent relapses into discussions on memory, inheritance, generations, responsibility, and justice. Interestingly, Derrida's most spectacular feat in *Specters* is not simply pulling off this polyvocal, intertextual discursive play in what many see as his first attempt at an open discussion on global politics. The fact is, deconstruction has always been political, as Derrida and his supporters will argue, and Derrida has taken stands politically and publicly since the 1960s. No, his audacious move consists in situating this hermeneutic within a reading of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, where Hamlet and his father's ghost provide an occasion for imagining Marx's specters, and Hamlet's supposedly ontological cry, "The time is out of joint," serves as a starting point for meditations on the temporal and spatial dislocations that signify the Derridean neologism "hauntology."

The responses to this book range from unquestioned acceptance, to skepticism, to frustration, to ire, to overwhelming contempt. Overall, I might identify at least three typical responses, which I consider more thoroughly in chapter three. First, some intimate that Derrida's readings of Marx are atrociously misguided and argue that his deconstructionist hermeneutic is simply "sad sidestepping" (Negri 8). Leading this vanguard are well-respected Marxists Antonio Negri, Aijaz Ahmad, Terry Eagleton, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Frederic Jameson,⁵ who seem most distressed that Derrida does not theorize in Marxian terms, though his provocative intervention resembles very much Marxian dialectical inquiry in the way it examines the relations between the material and the spectral. More forgiving but equally critical reactions to *Specters* encourage further deconstructive readings that do not necessarily question Derrida's ambivalence to Marx's formulations on value, class, and exploitation, but ones that highlight critical gaps in Derrida's work. If Derrida warns us that "Deconstruction has never had any sense or interest, in my view at least, except as a radicalization, which is to say also *in the tradition* of a certain Marxism, in a certain *spirit of Marxism*," as "a radicalization is always indebted to the very thing it radicalizes" (*Specters* 92), then these deconstructive readers recognize the futility in expecting Derrida to speak like a Marxist. Instead, these readers, which include Christopher Wise, Simon Critchley, Spivak, and Jameson examine the critical fissures that I believe are most important in understanding the scope of Derrida's text. In a sense, they point out not what Derrida is getting wrong in Marx, but the things that Derrida should be saying outright but isn't. The last type of critique is generally more optimistic than the others, arguing that *Specters* is indeed a useful text for refashioning law in order to anticipate or reflect I hope the impossible possibility of justice. Proponents of this type of appropriation include Robert Buonomano, Adam

⁵ Oddly enough, Spivak and Jameson are situated twice in this discussion of responses, as they are sympathetic to both Marxism and deconstruction.

Thurschwell, and Ernesto Laclau, who are interested in motivating Derridean hermeneutics to speak to more political and practical concerns. One question they might ask is, how can we approach the law so that it reflects a determination to secure something as undeconstructible as justice?

For the remainder of this chapter, in my attempt to illustrate theoretically what is implied in the “strange watchword” *to learn to live*, I will discuss the hermeneutics of *Specters* to sketch more fully the limitations of deconstruction and speculate upon the extent to which Marxism and deconstruction are “related.” To do this, I will focus on Derrida’s engagement with Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History*, with the New International, and with Karl Marx’s response to Max Stirner in *The German Ideology*. Before I begin this critical examination, though, I would like to start with a brief, tentative definition of deconstruction.

What is Deconstruction?

De-construction, a term that appeared in several of Derrida’s texts published in the mid-1960s, is a translation into French of Martin Heidegger’s term “Destruktion,” which suggests “an operation performed in relation to the structure of the fundamental concepts of Western metaphysics,” as Martin McQuillan reminds us (1). Peggy Kamuf notes that the success of de-construction can be explained in part by its resonance with structure, which was then, in the 1960s, the reigning word of structuralism. She speculates that the entrance of the term de-construction into North America’s vocabulary might be attributed to Derrida’s text “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.” His use of the term would seem to imply an inevitable and necessary ethnocentrism of any science formed under the auspices of European tradition and progress. Kamuf defines de-construction in this context as that which marks a distance (the space of a hyphen, later dropped) from the structuring or construction of discourses, such as Levi-Strauss’, that have uncritically taken over the legacy of Western metaphysics. If, however, it cannot be a matter of refusing this legacy—“no one

can escape from it”—then the distance or difference in question is in the manner of assuming responsibility for what cannot be avoided. Deconstruction is one name Derrida has given to this responsibility. It is not a refusal or a destruction of the terms of the legacy, but occurs through a remarking and redeployment of these very terms, that is, the concepts of philosophy. (*Between the Blinds* viii)

The act of dropping the hyphen from deconstruction is rather appropriate if we accept the conclusion that any de-emphasis of legacy is impossible. The space that was once marked by the hyphen disappears, and the gulf or divide is violently recuperated and the mark of refusal becomes virtually indistinguishable from the legacy that engulfs it. The only sensible remainder is a responsibility that acknowledges the legacy from which the terms of its own refusal originates. Deconstruction thus admits its debt to Western thought and, at the same time, marks the limits of it. It is with this responsibility that Derrida reads Plato, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Ferdinand de Saussure, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, among others. David Wood argues that this responsibility stems from Derrida’s attempt to understand each author’s “intentions,” about which Wood writes, “the belief that Derrida has no concern with authorial intentions is itself a misreading of his typical concern with authorial intentions against structural constraints that both limit and subvert authorial meaning” (2).

Derrida’s detractors argue, however, that his readings are irresponsible and know no limits. Imagine the frustration one might experience if he or she were to encounter Derrida’s definition of deconstruction as articulated in his “Letter to a Japanese Friend.” It is not “Everything of course!” and it is “Nothing of course!” But it is precisely between the “everything” and the “nothing” that deconstruction consists in sketching its limitations, four of which I will consider here: First, deconstruction must always be open to the other, as it attempts to understand this otherness. McQuillan argues that being sensitive to otherness is extremely difficult because we ultimately reduce the other to self-same. The openings made possible by otherness is just about one of the most difficult things we can hope to do. Ultimately, any attempt to do so will fail,

because we always end up reducing the other to the self-same. This fact, however, should not absolve us of our responsibility of listening for the “unsettling effects of the other” (6). With respect to the act of reading, we must be open to the possibilities and the otherness of the text. Any shortsightedness would be an abrogation of our responsibilities, especially when that shortsightedness can be avoided. This last point leads us to a second limitation: Deconstruction is more than a method of literary criticism or reading because there is no set of rules and because it does not follow from a program or theory. Deconstruction simply happens, even if its procedure may evolve into something that might be considered a method, upon reflection. In this sense, deconstruction may be considered an impossible method. Any semblance of structure or methodology might be attributed to a third limitation: Deconstruction is an attempt to understand difference by examining assumptions about binary (Western) thought and the resultant, logocentrism, which McQuillan defines as “the mode of thought which works through the erasure of the metaphorical status of privileged terms within a binary opposition in order to support a conceptual order structured around the valuing of such terms as positive” (12). What deconstruction attempts to do is identify the moment of erasure of the valuation of secondary terms and the simultaneous deployment of positive terms and their privilege status. In other words, deconstruction attempts to locate the moment of difference prior to or at the point of forcible, though arbitrary, valuation and privileged status attribution. These forceful erasures and adjustments lead us to a fourth limitation, that deconstruction is violence. Up to this point, I have illustrated Derrida as a philosopher for whom deconstruction is devoted, albeit critically and self-reflexively, to a legacy of Western metaphysics. His appreciation for philosophy and literature is unquestionable. Over the years, Derrida has tried to sharpen the distinctions between the concepts of philosophy, which is generally regarded as a rigorous, intellectual, and non-violent

endeavor, and literature, which is associated with passion, emotion, and in some cases violence, in order to demonstrate that each presupposes the other, similar to the relation between deconstruction and Marxism (hauntology and ontology). If the reader would permit here a brief reading of Derrida's reception as a philosopher of deconstruction, I would point out that what is often neglected is the passionate, violent aspect of Derrida's work, an aspect that Derrida himself has mentioned on several occasions.⁶ In "The Economy of Violence," Roberto Buonamano sums up this aspect rather nicely: "the violence involved in discourse generally, and specifically in every practice of metaphysics, stages a war in which the task of deconstruction is to counteract the aggression of speech as presence" (175). Buonamano refers to a "certain silence," or in Derrida's words, "a certain beyond speech," as the peace that one might envision after violence. But this silence, a *finite* silence, according to Derrida, "is also the medium of violence, [and] language can only indefinitely tend toward justice by acknowledging and practicing the violence within it. Violence against violence" ("Violence and Metaphysics" 117). It should be clear from these descriptions that deconstruction is violence combating the violence of discourse. Buonamano has called deconstruction the violence of *otherness*, in the name of justice, and has argued that Derrida maintains a relation between justice and revolt, though this relation should not be reduced to a simple dominant theory-praxis paradigm. Though I take up the questions of justice and deconstruction in chapter five, I want to stress here that Derrida recognized the necessity and inevitability of violence.

Having established a preliminary understanding of deconstruction, I would now like to discuss *Specters*.

⁶ See "Force of Law" specifically.

Fukuyama, Kojève, Hegel, and the Right

At the outset of *Specters*, Derrida speaks of the considerable (and perhaps undue) amount of media coverage received by Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* and its eschatological themes of the "end of history," the "end of Marxism," the "end of philosophy," and the "end of man" as having emerged long before Fukuyama discovered them in the 1980s. These themes emerged in the 1950s, during which various historical entanglements erupted: the totalitarian terror in the Eastern countries, the socio-economic disasters of Soviet bureaucracy, the Stalinism of the past and the neo-Stalinism in progress. In the midst of these entanglements, deconstruction emerged, as Derrida would have it. He uses Fukuyama's work as an occasion to critique not only the pronouncement of those themes of an "end," but also the metaphysical implications of those pronouncements. He writes, "As for those who abandon themselves to that discourse with the jubilation of youthful enthusiasm, they look like latecomers, a little as if it were possible to take still the last train after the last train—and yet be late to an end of history" (15). Derrida sees Fukuyama as someone who claims to be the bearer of a new gospel, "the noisiest, the most mediatized [*médiatized*], the most 'successful' one on the subject of the death of Marxism as the end of history" (56). On Fukuyama's text, Derrida admits that it is "not as bad or as naïve" as one might think, despite its claim to lead "the greater part of humanity" toward "liberal democracy" and its reading of Alexandre Kojève and Marx. In the text, Fukuyama reduces the terrors, oppressions, horrors, exterminations, genocides, massacres, and other cataclysms that have erupted the last half of the 20th century to empirical realities, whereas liberal democracy takes the form of an ideal orientation, a *telos* of progress. I gather that Derrida's problem with Fukuyama's work stems primarily from the fact that his distinctions between the empirical and the ideal exist as absolute orientations rather than as useful binaries from which one might conduct productive analyses. Derrida is unable to make sense of what

Fukuyama refers to as “good news,” though we learn that it takes the form of an alliance between liberal democracy, which “remains the only coherent political aspiration that spans different regions and cultures around the globe” (Fukuyama xiii), and the “free market.”

Derrida connects the evangelistic figure of the “good news” of liberal democracy with the figure of Palestine or the Promised Land, where there are several forces mobilized at once, waging war against one another. These forces or rather “three messianic eschatologies” attempt to resolve conditions or questions with respect to “old concepts of State and nation-State, of international law, of tele-techno-medio-economic and scientifico-military forces, in other words, the most archaic and the most modern spectral forces” (58). He speculates that the war of messianic eschatologies can be summed up in the expression “the appropriation of Jerusalem.” In Derrida’s analysis, the three religions or eschatologies form several possibilities of holy alliances, but only one has proven itself to be the necessary but also insufficient source for the transformation of Marxism: Islam, more specifically Middle-Eastern violence, which is generally regarded as the poorest choice in the field of eschatological candidates vying to be delivered to the Promised Land. Derrida then notes Fukuyama’s strategic mobilization of the figure of the Promised Land to discredit “modern natural science,” which seems indispensable for the stability of the economic free market but alone not sufficient for liberal democracy (Fukuyama xv). This move allows Fukuyama to distance himself from Judaism and Islam and privilege a Hegelio-Christian vision as the model of the liberal State. Invoking Hegel’s *The Philosophy of Right*, Fukuyama sets up the end of history as a Christian eschatology: The French Revolution would have been “the event that took the Christian vision of a free and equal society, and implanted it here on earth” (Fukuyama 199). This Christian vision resonates with the discourse of the Pope on the European community, which is envisioned as a Holy Alliance.

Derrida argues that Fukuyama's book functions more specifically as a simplified and highly Christianized outline of the master-slave dialectic, a dialectic of desire and of consciousness. This dialectic enables Fukuyama to shuttle uncritically and problematically between ideality of politico-economic liberalism and a post-Marxist/post-historical reality, both of which emerge opportunely in the form of "good news." Fukuyama's response to the atrocious historical realities always seems to point toward an ideal liberal democracy. When one notes the failure of liberal democracies, Fukuyama responds by pointing out that this ideal is inaccessible and cannot be measured against any historical event or empirical failure. The key term here is "event," as Fukuyama seems to conflate two types of events, the ideal and the real. Fukuyama's invocation of the event also conceals his original connection with Marx. In *The End of History*, he notes that both Hegel and Marx posit an "end of history," but for Hegel the end is a liberal state, and for Marx, it is a communist society. Derrida insists that this convenient selection between the ideal and reality, essentially hiding from the failures of society, effaces or conceals the potential of the *spirit* of Marxist critique, which he distinguishes from Marxism as ontology, philosophy, metaphysics, and dialectical and historical materialism. Unlike Fukuyama's gospel, deconstruction does not disavow its Marxist legacy; it sharpens the distinction between that legacy and itself by no longer remaining a critique "where the questions it poses to any critique and even to any question have never been in a position either to identify with or especially to oppose symmetrically something like Marxism, the Marxist ontology, or the Marxist critique" (*Specters* 68). Deconstruction is a thinking of the event that exceeds binary or dialectical logic, the logic that opposes the empirical and the ideal, or the very logic that presupposes Fukuyama's "good news" argument. The possibility of redemption in his position lies in his engagement with two particular moments of Kojève's postscript on post-history and post-historical animals after

his trip to Japan in 1959. Upon returning from this visit as an important public official of the European Community, Kojève concludes that post-historical Japan is set on a path diametrically opposed to the American path, primarily as a result of the snobbism of formal Japanese society, Derrida notes. This view, however, puts into question Kojève's earlier view on American society as representative of "the Hegelian-Marxist end of History," which would put him in a rather curious position to extend his critique of Japan further to suggest that Japan is on a more formal, extreme path to the final end of history. Japanese post-historicity succeeds in saving the post-historical man from a return to animality precisely because of the country's snobbish attitude. According to Derrida, these conclusions not only silence Kojève on his earlier analysis of man's return to animality, which would be the result of the final stage of communism in postwar United States, but they also indicate a certain arrogance that one might find in Fukuyama's various proclamations regarding "the universalization of Western liberal democracy" as an "endpoint of human government" or the victory of capitalism as a means of resolving the class problem.⁷

Derrida seizes an occasion to identify Kojève as someone who, no matter how he may have erred in his predictions on the end of history for America and Japan, correctly points to an essential lack of temporal specificity of any event, "an indetermination that remains the ultimate mark of the future" (73). Derrida is referring specifically to the opening of a postscript where Kojève argues that, for post-historical man, "it is necessary that there be a future" (qtd. in *Specters* 73). In the James H. Nichols, Jr. translation of Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, we discover that "post-historical Man must continue to *detach* 'form' from 'content,' doing so no longer in order actively to transform the latter, but so that he may *oppose* himself as a pure 'form' to himself and to others taken as 'content' of any sort" (162). For Kojève, the act

⁷ Derrida is drawing here from Michel Surya's "La puissance, les riches et la charité," in *Lignes* 18, 1993, 21 and 29.

of opposing subject to object seems not only in keeping with Hegel's definition of human, but creates the possibility of a post-history. The totality of history can only be understood as the end of the History, and "a particular historical World can be understood only after its end or death in History" (163). The thought of a post-historical necessitates both an end and a future, both of which point toward the opening of an event and the inevitability of the promise that needs to be fulfilled in the future moment, indicating a historicity as a future to come. This figuration is what Derrida refers precisely as the "messianic without messianism," a figure that deconstruction perceives as an emancipatory promise having nothing to do with the onto-theological or the teleo-eschatological. The undecidability of the promise is what makes deconstruction non-Marxist "no more than it has been" Marxist, remaining faithful to a spirit of Marxism, which has more than one spirit, all of them heterogeneous. The "messianic without messianism" enables the possibility of justice. Based on Derrida's conclusion that Fukuyama crudely manipulates Kojève, one can only conclude that Derrida finds nothing salvageable or redemptive about Fukuyama's text, a text that boldly claims an "absence of coherent *theoretical* alternatives to liberal democracy" (70) This absence leads Fukuyama to ask Kant's old question anew: "Is there such a thing as a Universal History of mankind, taken from a point of view far more cosmopolitan than was possible in Kant's day?"

Deconstruction and the New International, or Beyond Cosmopolitanism and Liberal Democracy

Derrida's New International "refers to a profound transformation, projected over a long term, of international law, of its concepts, and its field of intervention," a field that "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 and of the phantom-States . . ." (84). From this definition, we gather

that the New International, as a figure of law, is democratic, attempts to secure human rights for all, and extends beyond the scope of nationalism. Derrida seems to argue that such a form of law today has never been more necessary, as there has never in the history of humanity been so much violence, inequality, exclusion, exploitation, famine, and other injustices that have affected so many men, women, and children. For Derrida, the answer to these issues cannot be liberal democracy, like the Fukuyama-type, which I discussed above, for it depends too much on religion. The problems of the world, according to Derrida, might be best dealt with by the reflections of an international law, which would not only account for the crimes of mankind, but also serve as an untimely, nameless “link” of hope. This law mobilizes effectively at least one of the spirits of Marx or Marxism as it

calls to the friendship of an alliance without institution among those who, even if they no longer believe or never believed in the socialist-Marxist International, in the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the messianic-eschatological role of the universal union of the proletarians of all lands, continue to be inspired by at least one of the spirits of Marx or of Marxism . . . (86)

In other words, this spirit of Marx(ism) that Derrida calls a New International is one that can only be derived from deconstructive thinking, which is only made possible by Marxism itself and by the non-methodological deconstruction of Marxist ontology. Simon Critchley concurs that the New International “must be in the spirit of the Marxist idea of critique (critique of ideology and of capital) and the quasi-atheist notion of messianic affirmation or promise which . . . proceeds in the name of justice and emancipation. Furthermore, such critical and messianic promises must be made with the intention of being kept, and thus the promise of the New International must in its turn give rise to new forms of organization and activism” (“On Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* 23).

The New International is rooted in the tenth plague of the so-called new world order, international law and its institutions, which suffers from at least two limits. The first has to do

with the norms, charters, and missions of international law, all of which “cannot be dissociated from certain European philosophical concepts, and notably from a concept of State or national sovereignty whose genealogical closure is more and more evident, not only in a theoretico-juridical or speculative fashion, but concretely, practically, and practically quotidian” (83). The other limit is inextricably linked to the first, which says that international law remains dominated primarily by particular nation-states typically responsible for the drafting of charters, norms, and missions in the image of European philosophical concepts. The New International attempts to correct, modify, or encourage the reconsideration of international law, which seems to be linked to the other nine plagues of the new world order: (1) “unemployment”; (2) the “exclusion of homeless citizens” from democratic participation and the expulsion of “exiles, stateless individuals, and immigrants” from national territories; (3) the “economic wars among the countries of the European community themselves, between them and the Eastern European countries, between Europe and the United States, and between Europe, the United States, and Japan”; (4) the “inability to master the contradictions in the concept, norms, and reality of the free market”;⁸ (5) the “aggravation of the foreign debt and other connected mechanisms”; (6) the “arms industry and trade” and their collusion in the “normal regulation of the scientific research, economy, and socialization of labor in Western democracies”; (7) the “spread . . . of nuclear weapons”; 8) “inter-ethnic wars”; and 9) “mafia and drug cartels.”

Cosmopolitanism can be said to treat these problems of the new world order quite seriously and to attempt to think through these global transformations, much like the New International does. In her essay, “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” Martha Nussbaum promotes

⁸ Indeed, the sex trade and human trafficking are absent from the above list, as are other plagues, but we might consider these problematic episodes in our era to be linked indissolubly with number four, the contradictions in the reality of the *free market*.

a classical universal of “man” as a way to engage a cosmopolitan project of educating people toward the common goal of a “worldwide community of human beings.” For the American citizen concerned with sacrificing his or her American-ness for the betterment of the global society, Nussbaum argues that our allegiance to America would be better served if we were to subscribe to “the very old ideal of the cosmopolitan.” Her argument relies heavily on a logic that recognizes the arbitrary nature by which we come into being in the world. Because we arbitrarily become citizens of a variety of nations, this fact alone should compel us to think of ourselves as naturally outside of national boundaries. She derives her position first from Diogenes, the Cynic, who replied, “I am a citizen of the world,” and second from the Stoics, who followed Diogenes’ lead. To be a citizen of the world, one need not relinquish one’s local identifications. The model she borrows from the Stoics to describe our orientation as world citizens is a series of concentric circles: the first one encircles the self, the second includes the immediate family, then the extended family, followed by neighbors, fellow city-dwellers, and fellow countrymen, in that order. She adds that we can easily add to this list groupings based on ethnic, linguistic, historical, professional, gender, or sexual identities. Outside of all the circles is the largest one: the world. If we come to accept our role in all of these various communities, we can, through cosmopolitan education, learn more about ourselves. In turn, we might solve problems more efficiently through international cooperation, recognize moral obligations to the rest of the world that are real and that otherwise would go unrecognized, and make consistent and coherent arguments based on distinctions we are prepared to defend. Though in theory these suggestions are not without merit, pragmatically they seem largely unenforceable and not applicable, which is why she later admits that becoming a citizen of the world is “often a lonely business” (13).

Criticisms of Nussbaum extend beyond practical concerns. Consider the argument that, according to the Stoic and Kantian ideal, there is only room enough for one “cosmopolitanism, one ‘world citizenship,’ for there is only one ‘worldwide community of human beings’” (Robbins 148). The notion of one centralized European framework for organizing citizens of the world acts as merely a reassertion of Western philosophical universalism, without recourse to other theories or philosophies. Bruce Robbins concedes that he eventually learned to accept Nussbaum’s argument, however, for two reasons: First, generally invisible or unrecognized citizens in the world sometimes encounter or experience fortunate opportunities where they may emerge from their “convenient invisibility” but still may not be factored “into calculations of global well-being.” Second, Robbins himself feels alienated by some of Nussbaum’s critics who offer forms of American nationalism that may simply be hypocritical versions of idealist universalisms, such as a borderless-world globalism, both capitalist and electronic.

There are, however, critics of Nussbaum who are much more careful not to conflate American nationalism with globalization. Immanuel Wallerstein, for example, believes Nussbaum has separated cosmopolitanism and patriotism, claiming that “being disinterested and global on one hand and defending one’s narrow interests on the other are not opposites but positions combined in complicated ways” (124). He also charges that we need to learn that we occupy particular niches in an unequal world, which I believe Nussbaum does when she argues that we need to take Kantian morality seriously and educate our children to be troubled by the fact that “the high living standard that we enjoy is one that very likely cannot be universalized, at least given the present costs of pollution controls and the present economic situation of developing nations, without ecological disaster” (13). Another of Nussbaum’s convincing detractors is Kwame Anthony Appiah, who argues that we would be wrong to conflate

cosmopolitanism and humanism. Cosmopolitanism is “not just the feeling that everybody matters,” he writes (25). The distinction that he makes between the two can be summed up as follows: cosmopolitanism celebrates difference, while humanism attempts to collapse those differences in its desire for global homogeneity.

Appiah’s critique resonates slightly with Judith Butler’s, whose critique asks if it is possible to have a more “universal” understanding of the universal. The problem is that the meaning of universal “proves to be culturally variable, and the specific cultural articulations of the universal work against its claim to a transcultural status” (“Universality in Culture” 45). For Butler, it is possible that Nussbaum is simply articulating an Anglo-cosmo-ethico-political universal, especially if we consider Nussbaum’s first narcissistic impulse of cosmopolitan education: to “learn about ourselves.”

Pheng Cheah argues that some of the new cosmopolitanisms articulated by various theorists have a strategic alliance with the nation-state. Drawing from Anthony Smith, Cheah suggests that transnational mobility and interconnectedness do not necessarily lead to meaningful cosmopolitanisms. In fact, arguing against Nussbaum’s point, Anthony Smith argues that global loyalty is anthropologically impossible. He writes:

A timeless global culture answers to no living needs and conjures no memories. If memory is central to identity, we can discern no global identity-in-the-making, nor aspirations for one, nor any collective amnesia to replace existing “deep” cultures with a cosmopolitan “flat” culture. The latter remains a dream confined to some intellectuals. It strikes no chord among the vast masses of peoples divided into their habitual communities of class, gender, region, religion and culture. Images, identities, cultures, all express the plurality and particularism of histories and their remoteness from . . . any vision of a cosmopolitan global order. (24)

Smith is correct to argue that there is no global memory⁹ of which to speak, but this fact is perhaps one of the reasons why Nussbaum suggests education, perhaps as a means of working around a lack of any perceived or shared global commonality preserved through memory. Indeed, without global support, Nussbaum's vision may simply be "a dream confined to some intellectuals." And if we take Lord Acton's remarks as a de facto predicate of political engagement—the "scheme of a philosopher can command the practical allegiance of fanatics only, not of nations" (17)—we might graciously accept the fate of a failed cosmopolitanism. For the sake of time, however, I will concede Smith's point here.

The absence of global memory and identity is what seems to distinguish idealistic or empirically driven versions of cosmopolitanism from the New International, which aspires to belong only to anonymity, from which it will proceed in a spirit of Marxism. One inherits a responsibility to the New International, a responsibility that can be described as non-religious, non-mythological, and non-national. The form that the New International takes is a promise, whether it be satisfied or not, but we must understand that there is "necessarily some promise and therefore some historicity as future to come. It is what we are nicknaming the messianic without messianism" (*Specters* 75). This singular event remains uneffaceable "except by a denegation and in the course of a work of mourning that can only displace, without effacing, the effect of a trauma" (91). If what we have today is a religious messianism in the form of a triple eschatology and an aggressive campaign for state-sanctioned liberal democracy throughout the world, Derrida is calling for or awaiting rather a messianism without religion, an emancipatory promise that remains irreducible to any deconstruction. In short, it is an idea of justice,

⁹ Is it possible that there truly exists a global memory, but it has yet to be written, or if it has been written, it has not been widely accepted? I am thinking about Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* as a starting point for thinking the possibility of a collective global memory. Diamond's book attempts to look objectively at the evolution of civilizations and proposes various theories as to why some civilizations possessed and/or developed arms, and why some societies remained in the hunter-gatherer stage.

irreducible to law or human rights. Derrida appears to have no problem with the promises of the Enlightenment or the ideals of democracy; the problem stems from the inability of these ideals and promises to be put to work. He writes, “I will dare to say in a deconstructive fashion, in the name of a new Enlightenment for the century to come. And without renouncing an ideal of democracy and emancipation, but rather by trying to think it and to put it to work otherwise” (90). Thinking through a new Enlightenment without renouncing the ideal of democracy exemplifies precisely an undecidable politics both structured by an undecidability of the double bind of possibility and impossibility, and contingent upon the spatio-temporization of *différance* and the “to come” of the promise. If the Enlightenment and democracy have provided us the prodigious theses by which we might live justly, they have also given us unfortunately the means by which we can discriminate against the Other on the basis of difference and then apply certain rules discriminately against the Other. This double bind of possibility and impossibility, a pure, indiscriminate, deconstructive application of universal values and morals, lies not only at the heart of the deconstruction (such as the New International), but also anticipates Fanon’s new humanism, a connection that I will address in chapter six.

The New International exceeds cosmopolitanism in another fashion. Let us consider Derrida’s essay “On Cosmopolitanism,” in which he formulates a *cosmopolitics* of international law that enables cosmopolitanism as a “city of refuge.” This new concept is neither essentially endowed with classical concepts of the city, nor is the old subject of the “city” given new concepts. Instead, Derrida dreams of “another concept, of another set of rights for the city, of another politics of the city,” which emphasizes hospitality offered to the political asylum seeker or immigrant, something that Derrida feels European nations have abandoned. Drawing from Kant’s definition of cosmopolitanism—relating to the conditions of universal hospitality—

Derrida recognizes two limits. The first limitation is that hospitality includes the right to visitation only, excluding the right of residence. Political asylum seekers are given temporary visitation rights, but provisions for more permanent residencies become the sole responsibility of the asylum seekers. Since state sovereignty defines hospitality, especially as a question of the right of residence, the conclusion we might draw from this second limitation—hospitality defined by state sovereignty—is that European states offer refuge to the same degree that they solicit vacationers. Political asylum seekers can do no more than simply pass through national borders and enjoy their temporary stays. Derrida envisions the city of refuge as overcoming these limitations by providing a corrective to crime, violence, and persecution, and giving rise to a place for reflection on the questions of hospitality and asylum and a place for a new, more just order of law and democracy-to-come. Derrida continues, “Being on the threshold of these cities, of these new cities that would be something other than ‘*new cities*,’ a certain idea of cosmopolitanism, *an other*, has not yet arrived, *perhaps*” (23).

We see in this formulation that Derrida does not altogether abandon the Kantian notion of cosmopolitanism. His reflections consider international law, but also a generous sense of openness toward the Other. He describes essentially a cosmopolitanism beyond, a beyond-cosmopolitanism, something between justice and traditional forms of cosmopolitanism and democracy. We might then view the New International then as an extension of Derrida’s conceptualization of the new city to encompass a more global perspective. This law of the New International assumes a certain hospitality, but it actively intervenes in what remains largely and unsatisfactorily addressed in traditional law. This law of the New International tends toward, in a word, justice.

Memory, Responsibility, and Inheritance

We ended the previous section on the New International and cosmopolitanism with memory and responsibility, two concepts among several that form the subtext of *Specters*. In the Exordium, Derrida mentions that living and being-with specters is generally a “*politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations*” (xix). With respect to memory, inheritance, and generations, we must assume some sort of responsibility to them all. And when Derrida says that he will speak about ghosts, inheritance, and generations, those who are no longer or not yet presently living, it is always in the name of justice. Justice is contingent upon a certain respect for others, alive or no longer present, regardless of race, nationality, sex, gender, or class.

Clearly, this characterization alone is not necessarily radical, original, or insightful. Many of us would assume that any formulation of justice attempts to calibrate its scales in terms of identity so that each individual is guaranteed the right to be treated with the dignity and respect that he or she deserves as a person endowed with human rights; all persons should be treated humanely. In general, we might identify two types of formulations regarding justice: in the abstract sense, where one conceives of an ideal construction that encompasses both moral and political obligations such as cosmopolitanism,¹⁰ or in a concrete sense, where one finds oneself committed to responding globally to injustices. Circuit Judge Peter Murphy describes the difficulty of trying international criminal cases where almost all evidence, including hearsay, is permissible, and the language(s) and civil and common law traditions of the participants of the trial differ considerably.¹¹ Both versions consider precedent, but one significant difference is that while one version seems to visualize an exemplar of justice, the other seems to view justice more

¹⁰ For a sufficient discussion of cosmopolitanism as contingent upon both the feasibility of a popular sovereignty (moral and political obligations) and stability of the body politic through civic education, see Lea L. Ypi’s “Statist Cosmpolitanism.”

¹¹ See “Excluding Justice or Facilitating Justice?” *The International Journal of Evidence and Proof*.

pragmatically, if not more urgently. Derrida's break with these formulations begins precisely at the concession that justice ultimately emerges at the disjuncture among precedent, the present, and a time to come, what he refers to as a "*non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*," the notion that "time is out of joint." Justice is then "*beyond therefore the living present in general*" (xx). One figure can account for this beyond-ness or between-ness, that which is between the past and the *present* and between the *present* and the future: the ghost, which no longer belongs to real time, but rather to a spectral moment, where it enters, exits, and re-enters freely, without warning.

Our responsibility to this sense of time, which is not really time proper but something rather incalculable, begins at birth. And if we want to carry Derrida's analysis a bit further, we might say that the responsibility begins at conception, in the act itself. The act implicates two generations, at least, in this responsibility—of course, we could go back further to previous acts, invoking several ghosts along the way—and signifies the inheritance, what one inherits in the way of responsibility from the other. Throughout this succession of acts, "One never inherits without coming to terms with [*s'expliquer avec*] some specter, and therefore with more than one specter," according to Derrida (21). For him, this is the originary wrong from which Hamlet suffers, the bottomless wound experienced at birth, is that time is out of joint, which relegates one to the realm of law or right. Derrida refers to this wrong as "an irreparable tragedy," which marks history as law rather than justice. In Derrida's view, the primary manner in which we have historically dealt with this responsibility has been to turn to law and right to deal justice, where we punish with vengeance in the form of incarceration, retaliation (an eye for an eye), or the ultimate sacrifice, death. Derrida argues that justice is beyond vengeance, law, and right, and as

such, we can only await the coming of it. The future holds the promise of the coming of justice, even if it is something that we can prescribe, as long as it bears no resemblance to right or law.

When Derrida presents *Specters* to the reader, he assumes the responsibilities he has inherited from Marx and Marxism. When one takes up these or similar responsibilities, one promises or takes an oath, “committing oneself in a *performative* fashion—as well as in a more or less secret fashion, and thus more or less public, there where this frontier between the public and the private is constantly being displaced, remaining less assured than ever, as the limit that would permit one to identify the political” (50, my italics). Inheritance, then, is a performative gesture, as well as a political act or event; it is always a task and never a given, according to Derrida. Via *Specters*, for the first time—and yet again, as the question of the event is a question of the ghost, which assumes both a repetition *and* a first time (10)—Derrida opens himself to address us on the connections between Marxism and deconstruction, but also to profess a profound respect for Chris Hani and his manner of politics, which included student protests activities as a student; military training in the Soviet Union; campaigns in the Rodesian Bush War; and appointments as head of both Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC), and later the South African Communist Party (SACP). Derrida’s dedication of *Specters* to Hani emphasizes a certain ambivalence toward organizational Marxism when he writes,

This popular hero of the resistance against Apartheid became dangerous and suddenly intolerable, it seems, at the moment in which, having decided to devote himself once again to a minority Communist Party riddled with contradictions, he gave up important responsibilities in the ANC and perhaps any official political or even governmental role he might one day have held in a country freed of Apartheid. (xvi)

The performative gesture of invoking Hani at the outset of *Specters* sets up the problematic that is at the heart of Derrida’s specific conjuration of Marx. If Derrida feels ambivalent toward Marx, it is not necessarily because he finds Marxian dialectics outmoded or useless. His relation

to Marxism has much to do with the various perceived permutations that it has experienced over the years, especially as a result of new technologies. As Derrida would have it, recognizing Marx and Marxism over the past century becomes difficult as technologies proliferate, but Marx himself foresaw these changes. (“Metamorphosis” is the word Marx uses.) Derrida speculates that the worldview about Marxists is no longer one of fear,¹² but people are “still afraid of certain non-Marxists who have not renounced Marx’s inheritance, crypto-Marxists, pseudo- or para-‘Marxists’ who would be standing by to change the guard, but behind features or quotation marks that the anxious experts of anti-communism are not trained to unmask” (50). If invoking Hani serves as Derrida’s first critical move in *Specters* to distinguish between self-described Marxists and those who embody Marx’s spirit(s), his second move leads us back to Marx’s own words of the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach: “Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.” Marx here calls for a certain responsibility, one that runs counter to Lord Acton’s remarks about the trained philosopher and his or her fanatical followers. This call would illustrate Marx’s position as a social critic, but nothing would provide a more stark contrast between Marx and his contemporaries on the role of human nature and activism than his response to Max Stirner. In *Specters*, Derrida attempts to examine the nuanced distinctions between Marx and Stirner and ultimately encounters an irresolvable double bind with respect to their fear of ghosts.

Dipesh Chakrabarty recognizes a similar inheritance from and through which he writes. He explains, “Postcolonial scholarship is committed, almost by definition, to engaging the

¹² As I write this, I am reminded of a story I heard a few years ago about a Marxist presenting at a conference whose cellular phone rang during her presentation. I wondered who could have been calling at that hour and about what. Revolution? Indeed, it isn’t extraordinary for cellular phones to ring during presentations, which is why I was rather struck by the degree to which this commonplace occurrence seemed to pervade the seriousness of this supposedly radical environment. I recognize that the same could be said deconstruction, which, interestingly enough, recently made its way into the game show *Jeopardy* as a question.

universals—such as the abstract figure of the human or that of Reason—that were forged in eighteenth-century Europe and that underlie the human sciences” (5). The difficult task that Chakrabarty, who acknowledges that Fanon also struggled with this same inheritance, must undertake is exploring how European thought, “indispensable and inadequate” as it may be, remains a question of viewing postcolonial scholarship to be viewed as a problem of translation. In this formulation, Marx and Heidegger provide a way for us to look at history through capital, and human belonging and historical difference, respectively. What is particularly compelling about Chakrabarty’s work with respect to Derrida’s is not the resonances between their focus on Marx and Heidegger, the acknowledgement that translation remains a problematic, or the insistence that they write from within a certain inheritance; it is that Chakrabarty feels the need to bring into the network of power and humans the immanence of gods and spirits. He writes, “One empirically knows of no society in which humans have existed without gods and spirits accompanying them. . . . I take gods and spirits to be existentially coeval with the human, and think from the assumption that the question of being human involves the question of being with gods and spirits” (16). For this reason, he does not reproduce any sociology of religion in his analysis. In some sense, it reminds one of the messianism without messianicity about which Derrida speaks.

Max, Marx, and Ghosts

Born Johann Kaspar Schmidt in 1806, German philosopher Max Stirner¹³ is highly regarded as a major influence on nihilism, existentialism, and individualist anarchism. His main work, *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* (1844), translated in English as *The Ego and Its Own* and more literally as *The Individual and his Property*, is a polemic against the concrete universality

¹³ Stirner is the *nom de plume* he adopted from a schoolyard nickname he had acquired as a child because of his high brow [*Stirn*].

of Hegelianism, the possible culmination of the Hegelian conception of absolute spirit, and a celebration of his antithetical radical egoism. His attack, sparing relatively few in the circle of Young Hegelians, takes particular aim at Ludwig Feuerbach's universal altruism in an attempt to transcend the "magic circle" that is Christianity's grip on Hegelian theoglico-philosophy ("Stirner and Feuerbach" 458). Such abstract concerns may lead one to think twice about Arnold Ruge's comment that Stirner had produced the most readable book of philosophy in Germany at that time, or Engel's depiction of him as the most talented, independent, and diligent of the "Free Ones" ("The Revival of Max Stirner" 323). Still, despite these characterizations, Lawrence Stepelevich has suggested that *The Ego and Its Own* (*EO*) has produced little consensus among its interpreters. The variety of interpretations might be attributed to the diverse, interdisciplinary backgrounds of Stirner's readers, those few historians and political scientists who have cared to pay any attention to Stirner at all. According to Stepelevich, with the exception of Marx and Engels, no philosophers with experience in Hegel's theories have taken Stirner seriously as a philosopher ("Max Stirner as Hegelian" 599). In truth, the book received only critical success when it was first published, overshadowed no doubt by the events of 1848, and it would later experience a brief revival in the early twentieth century with the help of Stirner's biographer John Henry McKay.

In *EO*, Stirner argues that religious modes of thought (fixed ideas) and the oppressive social institutions of the state, which he believed to be illegitimate, dominate the modern world. In this world, our obligation to obey the law conflicts with our individual self-mastery and that when this conflict arises, we should resist the requirements of law. The individual who asserts her self-mastery and autonomy epitomizes what Stirner regards as "egoism." While individuals are not expected to overthrow the state, Stirner thinks that the state will eventually collapse as a

result of the cumulative effect of a growing egoistic disrespect for law. Though Stirner's structure, tone, and conclusions about the self and the world differ remarkably from Hegel's, whose lectures he attended at the university in Berlin, Stepelevich has argued that Hegel was a significant influence on Stirner's thinking. Stirner, like Hegel, saw himself as the heir of a spiritual line that could be traced to the origins of conscious history. Hegel accepted this patrimony, while Stirner rejected it ("Revival of Max Stirner" 327). Stirner, however, did see himself as the "last of the Hegelians," chiefly because he completes Hegel's dialectical project by continuing it ("Hegel and Stirner"). Having been well acquainted with and developed an appreciation for the whole of Hegel's major writings, Stirner would be in a rather fortunate position to criticize the Hegelian forms of Objective Spirit and produce the logical consequence of Hegelianism.

While the historical import of *EO* is not easy to determine, it is claimed to have had a divisive impact on his young Hegelian contemporaries, especially Feuerbach, who was a rather productive writer until 1845. Stepelevich has argued that Feuerbach's move from humanism to materialism can be attributed to Stirner's negative criticisms of his latent idealism, an argument contrary to Engels' claim that Marx's *The Holy Family* (1844) can take responsibility for Feuerbach's turn. According to Stepelevich, both Simon Rawidowicz and Friedrich Jodl also contend that Stirner pushed Feuerbach's thought more fully toward naturalism. Considered by Engels as "the prophet of contemporary anarchism," Stirner is known to have influenced the tradition of individualist anarchism. Last and most important here, Stirner is regarded as having played a significant role in the intellectual development of Karl Marx (Leopold). Between 1845 and 1846, Marx collaborated with Friedrich Engels on *The German Ideology*, an ardent attack on their philosophical contemporaries. Though Marx and Engels devote more than three hundred

pages to Stirner, contributing significantly to his ridicule and subsequent marginalization among both popular and academic discourses, not many have sought to analyze the influence Stirner may have had on both men, especially Marx. For Stepelevich and others such as David Leopold, “Stirner’s book appears to have been decisive in motivating Marx’s break with the work of Feuerbach, whose influence on many of Marx’s earlier writings is readily apparent, and in forcing Marx to reconsider the role that concepts of human nature should play in social criticism” (Leopold). For them, Stirner is regarded as the motivating force behind Marx’s break with idealism and move toward materialism, just as Stirner had done with Feuerbach’s thought.

Derrida believes the relation between Marx and Stirner to be a bit more complicated, disturbed primarily by what he perceives as their ambivalence toward ghosts. His reading of Marx’s *The German Ideology* not only lays the groundwork to discuss this ambivalence, but it also serves as an occasion to speak about the *thing* that distinguishes the specter or *revenant* from *spirit*,¹⁴ a distinction necessary for understanding the role of spectrality in justice or that which is to come. Derrida describes this *thing* as

doubtless a supernatural and paradoxical phenomenality, the furtive and ungraspable visibility of the invisible, or an invisibility of a visible X, that *non-sensuous sensuous* of which *Capital* speaks . . . with regard to a certain exchange-value; it is also, no doubt, the tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of *someone* as *someone other*. And of *someone other* that we will not hasten to determine as self, subject, person, consciousness, spirit, and so forth. (7)

Derrida refers to this figuration as the *visor effect*, summarily drawn from the ghost of King Hamlet: “we do not see who looks at us.” In the play, the ghost appears and disappears wearing its armor and without warning. The visor effect functions as a figure representing the classic disjunction between presence and absence, Being and non-being, and an unlocalizable moment or body. Historically, Western man, despite having both a profound attraction for and

¹⁴ I also take up more thoroughly this notion of thing, spirit, and specter in chapter three.

fear of this thing, has had relatively little success in coming to terms with that which escapes definition and exceeds space and time: the ghost. Derrida argues that Marx loved and detested the figure of the ghost, claiming that Marx was haunted, harassed, besieged, and obsessed by it (106) and tracing this obsession with ghosts to Marx's dissertation, *The Difference in the Philosophy of Nature of Democritus and Epicurus* (1841). This obsession remains through the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), whose opening lines are "A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism," to *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (Specters 1852), which deploys "something like a spectropolitics and a genealogy of ghosts, more precisely a patrimonial logic of the *generations of ghosts*" (107). In the latter text, Marx is accused of conjuring and exorcising ghosts, separating the good from the bad and still desperately trying to oppose spirit from specter, something he hadn't resolved in *The German Ideology* (1845). Derrida believes this text to be most important in understanding how closely spirit (*Geist*) and specter (*Gespenst*) are related, as closely perhaps as Marx and Stirner themselves are related, something that neither one would have admitted. The initial problem in attempting to maintain the two distinctions in German originates with the double meaning of *Geist*, which can also mean specter. Derrida believes that Marx exploits this equivocation in *The German Ideology* and allows himself to distinguish between the two terms in a discreet and subtle manner. On this difference, Derrida writes:

The specter is of the spirit, it participates in the latter and stems from it even as it follows it as its ghostly double. The difference between the two is precisely what tends to disappear in the ghost effect, just as the concept of such a difference or the argumentative movement that puts it to work in the rhetoric tends to vanish. (125-6)

According to Derrida, Marx takes up this ghost effect at the beginning of "The Leipzig Council III: Saint Max" in *The German Ideology*, noting that the production of the ghost is not the same spiritualization or an autonomization of spirit, idea, or thought as it occurs in Hegelian

idealism. The effect occurs once the ghostly moment overtakes the spirit after an initial expropriation or alienation, whereby a supplementary dimension, another simulacrum, alienation, or expropriation adjoins the spirit. The supplementary dimension is a body or flesh, for “there is never any becoming-specter of the spirit without at least an appearance of flesh, in a space of invisible visibility, like the disappearing of an apparition” (126). There must be a return to a body for there to be a ghost, and this return must be abstract. This process of autonomization or spiritualization corresponds to a paradoxical *incorporation*. The difficulty in understanding this spectrogenic process occurs when the first ghost effect, the initial autonomization or spiritualization, is “negated, integrated, and incorporated by the very subject of the operation who, claiming the uniqueness of its own human body, then becomes, according to Marx as critic of Stirner, the absolute ghost, in fact the ghost of the ghost of the specter-spirit, simulacrum of simulacra without end” (127). For spirit to become specter, it must assume the image of a unique body or flesh, sans density, which would give the specter the dimensions of simulacra. Marx accuses Stirner of maintaining ghosts throughout *EO* under the aegis of political critique and denounces Stirner’s rhetorical move as *Eskamotage* or “conjuring trick,” of which Marx finds several in Stirner’s text. The most significant conjuring trick consists in Stirner’s description of the discovery of self where the adolescent becomes an adult by spectralizing his thoughts, transforming them into specters, and destroying these thoughts as he takes them back into his own body, a body of specters. In Stirner’s view, the living body returns by annulling or taking into it phantomatic projections, a moment that marks the destruction or negation of the first ghost and the promise or hope for more life. For Marx, where Stirner sees more life, we can only expect more death in the hyperbolic surplus of spectrality.

Derrida points out that both Marx and Stirner seem to have one thing in common: the critique of ghosts. He argues that both of them “want to have done with the *revenant*, both of them hope to get there. Both of them aim at some reappropriation of life in a body proper. This hope at least is what impels the prescriptive injunction or the promise of their discourses” (129). As I mentioned earlier, the difference between the two is that Stirner wants to do away with ghosts after incorporating them into the body, and Marx believes that the body becomes the ghost of all ghosts. The Stirnian living individual, invaded by its own specter, is haunted, but in a way that cannot hide its Hegelio-Christian dimension. Andrew Koch suggests that it is precisely the lie of “spirit” that was created by the rise of Christianity that Stirner wants to disavow. The logic is as follows: human beings invented the idea of spirit so that they could become spiritual, the consequence of which became the “fixed idea.” Koch continues: “The fixing of ideas makes us prisoners to thought rather than the creators of thought. Transcendentalism takes the fixed idea and tries to shape the world in its image. Ultimately the ‘idea’ has subjected the human being to itself” (101). The fixed idea is what allows the state to subordinate human beings to its will and to quell all resistance. For Marx, Stirner never quite resolves his anti-Hegelian conception of absolute spirit, thereby rendering him in the image of Jesus Christ through the mediation of the Holy Spirit.

The debate on the treatment of spirit and specter continues with the status of conceptual generality, the idea that men represent, by means of new appellations, general concepts. These men are accused of representing the generality of concepts in “the Negroid form,” Marx’s phrase which serves in two ways. First, according to Derrida, the phrase “denounces the confusion within which Stirner maintains the concept, more precisely the *presentation* of the concept, the manner in which concepts ‘come onstage’ in the intuition: the indetermination of the

homogeneous, in the dark element of nocturnal obscurity” (137). In using this phrase, Marx criticizes Stirner for condemning those who are too generous with generality and who are preoccupied with ghosts, claiming these men obscure conceptuality. Derrida articulates the formula as such: “‘Negroid form’ equals obscurantism plus occultism, mystery plus mysticism and mystification. Blackness is never far from the obscure and the occult. Spiritualism is but a spiritism” (137). The second definition of the “Negroid form” signifies the enslavement of these generalized pseudo-concepts that have no autonomy. These concepts work as objects in the service of men for men. Derrida quotes Marx: “These general concepts appear here for all in the Negroid form as objective spirits having for people the character of objects . . . and at this level are called specters or—*apparitions!*” Indeed, this Negroid form signals the singularity or particularity of the ghost or specter and the extent to which Marx and Stirner attempt to understand ghosts, even if all they wanted to do was exorcise them. What I find particularly compelling is that spectrality, in the eyes of Marx especially, is contingent upon the Negroid form or blackness, an idea that I will pick up on in chapter four.

Insofar as Marx and Stirner differ, similarly to difference between spirit and specter in subtle nuance, it might serve us well to bring up the Derridean term that signifies this difference: *differance*. The term, whose origins date back to Derrida’s 1968 lecture of the same name to the Société français de philosophie, signals a “graphic disorder” that results from the substitution between two vowels: a and e. Derrida argues that the difference between these two vowels remains purely graphic or visual but not audible. To illustrate this point, Derrida conjures the term *differance* to emphasize that the existence of the homonyms *difference* and *differance* may suggest a reversal of a traditional binary, speech and writing. Our historical view has been to accept speech as a precursor to writing, but Derrida’s argument anticipates an arche-writing that

precedes speech and makes the homonym possible. Drawing upon the French *differer*, which means “to defer or postpone” and “to differ,” *différance* serves as an exemplar for this reversal and displacement and signals an intensified play often found in negative theology, philosophy, or discourses of figures such as Marx, Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Saussure, and Plato. Derrida imagines all of these designations being bundled together or complexly interweaved like a sheaf, where they represent coordinates within a general system of either a linguistic or philosophical economy.

The primary task of deconstruction then is to insert itself within the sheaf, to weave itself throughout to explore the paradoxical figurations that keep the general system of a linguistic or philosophical economy in tact, albeit tenuously. Ultimately, deconstruction mobilizes *différance* to mark the difference between itself and Marxism, which I will explore further in chapter three, and the difference between spirit and specter. Derrida’s most poignant examination of this relationship may be in his reading of *Hamlet* in *Specters*.

Spirits, Specters, and *Hamlet*

In order to illustrate the difference between specters and spirits, and by default the relationship between deconstruction and Marxism, Derrida relies significantly on his reading/rendering of *Hamlet*, in which “everything begins by the apparition of a specter. More precisely by the *waiting* for this apparition” (4). In *Hamlet*, we anticipate not only the perpetual exit and return of the ghost of Hamlet’s father, but also the manner in which the ghost will present itself and address others when it returns. Derrida reminds us that Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* anticipates a similar reappearance of a specter, which I mentioned earlier. But Derrida admittedly is not the only one to have made the connection between Marx and *Hamlet*. In “*La Crise de l’esprit*,” Paul Valéry describes an “intellectual Hamlet” who seizes various skulls including those of Gottfried Wilhelm Liebniz, Lionardo di Sir Piero, and “*Kant qui genuit Hegel*,

qui genuit Marx, que genuit ...” (qtd. in *Specters* 6). For Derrida, however, Valéry serves a more useful purpose when we consider the ghost as “this *thing*,” that which exists between spirit and specter. This unnameable thing is regarded as a non-present, a non-present present, or a non-object that no longer belongs to the order of knowledge, and though it looks at us, it defies ontology, semantics, philosophy, and psychoanalysis. Derrida writes:

Nor does one see in flesh and blood this Thing that is not a thing, this thing that is invisible between its apparitions, when it reappears. This thing meanwhile looks at us and sees us not see it even when it is there. A spectral asymmetry interrupts here all specularity. It de-synchronizes, it recalls us to anachrony. We will call this the *visor effect*¹⁵: we do not see who looks at us. Even though in his ghost the King looks like himself. (6-7)

Looking through the visor, we see that what separates specter and spirit further is “the furtive and ungraspable visibility of the invisible” or what Derrida calls “the *non-sensuous sensuousness*.” The non-sensuous sensuousness functions in this particular deconstructive interstice in the same phantom-like manner that exchange-value gathers its nominal and fetishistic power over and above use-value in Marxist methodology. It is with this “foresight” that Derrida reads not only the ghost of Hamlet, but also what he perceives as numerous specters of Marx. Derrida’s critics read this move as omniscient posturing, which allows Derrida to put himself in the position of Hamlet. This criticism is especially telling when one considers that in *Hamlet* the ghost (Marx) reappears and makes itself visible to several characters (Marxists and those sympathetic to Marx), but it only speaks to his son, Hamlet (Derrida). (I urge the reader here to keep this characterization in mind, for it will return later and remains integral to an argument I wish to make later.)

¹⁵ This *visor effect* is significant for Derrida not only regarding the specter in general, in Marx and elsewhere, but also with respect to the law, since we do not always see who makes the law. I will return to this point later in the chapter when I discuss Buonamano.

Derrida reads as significant the gesture of affiliation between Hamlet and the ghost, for Hamlet inherits a responsibility from the ghost, one that obligates him to find his father's murderer. Derrida's reading of Marx as the ghost of king Hamlet suggests that we are all "inheritors of *more than one* form of speech, as well as of an injunction that is itself *disjoined*" (16). Derrida argues that, as an inheritance is never natural, given, and univocal, we must recognize that Marx's legacy defies interpretation, and as such, we must decide *what* we inherit from Marx. We always inherit from a secret, which both gives us a directive and a challenge: "read me, will you ever be able to do so?" (16). These two separate moments, the inheritance (of/from the secret) and our response to this inheritance, denote a disjointedness of time, marking not only the narrative of *Hamlet*— Hamlet cries, "Time is out of joint"—but also the entire corpus of *Specters*. Derrida continues:

The critical choice called for by any reaffirmation of the inheritance is also, like memory itself, the condition of finitude. The infinite does not inherit, it does not inherit (from) itself. The injunction itself (it always says "choose and decide from what you inherit") can only be one by dividing itself, tearing itself apart, differing/deferring itself, by speaking at the same time several times—and in several voices." (16)

In essence, one always inherits when one comes to terms with some voice or specter, despite or as a consequence of the disjointed nature of inheritance. The parameters of law, right, and justice are defined by our responsibility to the other. Derrida reads Hamlet as having been cursed by this responsibility "to do justice, to put things back in order, to put history, the world, the age, the time *upright*, on the right path, so that, in conformity with the rule of its correct functioning, it advances straight ahead [*tout droit*]—and following the law [*le droit*]'" (20). He also believes that Hamlet curses his mission to avenge his father's death, complaining that law and right stem from vengeance. If law and right are tied to vengeance, then justice remains that which no longer belongs to history and removes the "fatality of vengeance." This Levinasian formulation of justice assumes both an incalculable gift and "the singularity of the an-economic

ex-position to others” (23). The gift, to be read in Heideggerian terms, removes any notion of culpability, debt, right, and duty. Derrida writes, “The question of justice, the one that always carries beyond the law, is no longer separated, in its necessity or in its aporias, from that of the gift” (26). And this appeal of the gift, singularity, and the relation to the other is the space from which Hamlet speaks when he declares that “time is out of joint.” The tripartite of gift, justice, and disjointed time form the basis of the seemingly untranslatable *Dikē*, what Heidegger usually translates as “joining,” “adjoining,” “adjustment,” “articulation of accord or harmony.” Derrida is interested in Heidegger’s engagement with presence and non-presence, non-contemporaneity of present time, where the present always passes or never remains. The “out of joint” then signifies a dislocation in Being and in time, and the rendering of *Dikē* as “justice” is contingent upon this dislocation. Derrida continues:

The necessary disjointure, the de-totalizing condition of justice, is indeed here that of the present—and by the same token the very condition of the present and of the presence of the present. This is where deconstruction would always begin to take shape as the thinking of the gift and of undeconstructible justice, the undeconstructible condition of any deconstruction, to be sure, but a condition that is itself *in deconstruction* and remains, and must remain (that is the injunction) in the disjointure or the *Un-Fug*. (28)

Deconstruction reads this dislocation of time as offering the possibility of hope in the future, and Derrida invokes the figure of the messianic to describe this futurity. This particular mark of the messianic is what remains “an *ineffaceable* mark” that one cannot or should not efface, a mark of Marx’s legacy and of the experience of inheritance in general. For Derrida, Marx’s most significant contribution, or what Derrida inherits from Marx rather, is his propensity to anticipate the arrival of justice in the form of a non-religious messianism. The particularity of the event and the alterity of the other, however, risk being rendered impure and being reduced to morals, legal rules, and norms. At the moment of pure intervention, we no longer have undeconstructible justice; we have law, at best, and cause for mourning.

The Work of Mourning

The characterization of the king as *thing* comes directly from *Hamlet*: “The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing” (93). Derrida argues that when we speak of spirits, specters, or justice, we must speak only of mourning, which always consists in attempting to ontologize or make present the remains by identifying them and by localizing the dead. The certainty of “who” and “where” is always a question of the work of mourning. As Derrida puts it, “one *has to know* who is buried where—and *it is necessary* (to know—to make certain) that, in what remains of him, *he remain there*. Let him stay there and move no more!” (*Specters* 9). Without this certainty, we find mania, jubilation, and incantation, forms that Freud assigned to the phase of mourning work,¹⁶ according to Derrida (*Specters* 52).

With respect to Marx and Marxism, we might consider the function of hegemonic or dominant discourse in the work of mourning. Derrida argues that this discourse often assumes the tone of something rather “manic, jubilatory, or incantatory.” It seeks to ontologize the remains of Marxism, pronounce it dead once and for all, while it proclaims, “Long live capitalism, the market, free enterprise, economic liberalism, and political conservatism!” But the dominating discourse always remains uneasy about these proclamations; it convinces only itself, because Marxism has not been properly buried. Marx’s specters cannot be looked upon, like King Hamlet peering through his visor. And these specters appear unannounced in the form of protests against immigration and outsourcing, immigrants protesting against unfair treatment or pay, or the threat to national security in Western countries by Islamic fundamentalists.

Derrida has tried to show elsewhere that the work of mourning “is not one kind of work among others. It is work itself, work in general, the trait by means of which one ought perhaps to

¹⁶ Freud defines mourning as “the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on” (“Mourning and Melancholia” 14: 243).

reconsider the very concept of production—in what links it to trauma, to mourning, to the idealizing iterability of expropriation, thus to the spectral spiritualization that is at work in any *tekhne*" (*Specters* 97). In general, Derrida is referring to a productive mode of the phantom and a phantomatic mode of production, in which the work of mourning involves, after the initial trauma, ensuring the dead will not return or come back to life. The figure of the mortician embodies this notion of production and mourning, typically, as he is often entrusted with the task of rendering the dead body immobile, but also attempting to bring it to life once again (in appearance only) for the wake and funeral. Derrida argues that the same dual-function of rendering lifeless and bringing forth holds true for any sort of mourning, which consistently follows trauma. He locates three “original” traumas upon which Freud remarks in terms of human narcissism, according to Derrida: (1) psychological trauma, the power of the unconscious over the conscious ego, discovered by psychoanalysis, which is preceded by, (2) biological trauma, the Darwinian discovery that man is a descendent of animals, which is preceded by, (3) cosmological trauma, the discovery that the earth is not the center of the universe. A fourth trauma can be attributed to Marx and encompasses all three previous traumas: the “projected unity of a thought and of a labor movement, sometimes in a messianic or eschatological form, as it is in the history of the totalitarian world” (*Specters* 98). The work of mourning inherent in Marxism involves a decentering of the earth and man, of geopolitics, and the concept of narcissism whose aporias are the concern (and themes) of deconstruction. Derrida writes,

This trauma is endlessly denied by the very movement through which one tries to cushion it, to assimilate it, to interiorize and incorporate it. In this mourning work in process, in this interminable task, the ghost remains that which gives one the most to think about—and to do. Let us insist and spell things out: to do and to make come about, as well as to let come (about). (*Specters* 98)

The specters of Marx are what we allow to come about, but also what we in some sense encourage to return, similar to the way in which Hamlet, Horatio, Bernardo, and Marcellus

summon the ghost of King Hamlet during the work of mourning in process. Mourning presupposes an untimely and dis-adjusted sense of contemporaneity, where the figure of the ghost never dies, but remains always to come and to come back. During the process of mourning, we would do well to use the occasion as an opportunity to “learn to live,” to await the undeconstructible justice that will make good on what law and right are insufficiently prepared to do. At present, capitalism can always assume but can never be sure that it has rid itself of communism and the ghost of communism, which constantly haunts it. Deconstruction dutifully anticipates this formulation of Marxism and insists on its immanence within a self-critiquing Marxian orthodoxy. In the next chapter, I will attempt to distinguish further between Marxism and deconstruction by examining several Marxist responses to *Specters* and deconstruction.

CHAPTER 3

ACT II: . . . (NOT) MARXISM . . .

Some of the most interesting criticisms of Derrida's work have been written in the last decade by a few Marxist thinkers, notably Aijaz Ahmad, Terry Eagleton, and Gayatri Spivak. Their sweeping dismissals of *Specters* are convincing enough to innervate a more traditional Marxist base, test the resolve of Derrida's most ardent supporters, and cause Derrida's most ambivalent readers to second-guess his abilities as a philosopher. For an example of this bravura, one need look no further than Ahmad's "Reconciling Derrida," where he admits in the opening passages to reading Derrida's "A Lecture on Marx" on his flight to Ljubljana to attend a conference at *Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis* in 1994, gathering his thoughts on the text the following day, and writing his responses the next morning just before giving his lecture.

Ahmad's rudimentary reflections motivate him to portray Derrida and deconstruction as serving, albeit unwittingly, in the best interest of the Right, simply because deconstruction does very little to establish itself as traditional, orthodox Marxism. We might also consider Eagleton's "Marxism without Marxism," a five-page indictment of Derrida's and deconstruction's come-lately association to Marxism, in which Eagleton decries that "there is something pretty rich, as well as movingly sincere, about this sudden dramatic somersault onto a stalled bandwagon" (84-5).

Mocking the rhetorical style and "tiresomely mannered syntax" of *Specters*, Eagleton meditates: "What is it, now, to chew carrots? Why this plural? Could there ever be more than one of them? Could this question even have meaning? Could one even speak of the 'chewing' of a carrot, and if so how, why, to whom, with what onto-teleo-theological animus?" (85). Last, let us not forget Spivak's "Ghostwriting," a "happy" mimesis of an earlier essay she wrote on Derrida for *Diacritics* called "Glas-Piece." In "Ghostwriting," Spivak proclaims that she has "always had trouble with Derrida on Marx" and that her "main problem" with Derrida, more concretely, is his

“seeming refusal to honor the difference between commercial and industrial capital” (65), a critique that stems from her proprietary feelings for Marx. Generally sympathetic to deconstruction, Spivak believes that any engagement with Marx requires a certain responsibility to his text, a fact that should be most obvious to Derrida, though she believes he gets it wrong. On this point as it relates to her supposed ownership of Marx’s legacy, she asks, “Is it just my proprietorial reaction to think that you can’t catch at any specter of Marx if you don’t attend to the ghost’s signature? Who knows? Maybe” (65).

More serious contributions belong to writers such as Antonio Negri, Tom Lewis, David Bedggood, and Fredric Jameson who certainly recognize the philosophical capital that Derrida has accumulated over the years but spare him no political slack. In “The Specter’s Smile,” Negri locates the origins of deconstruction at the rue d’Ulm where exchanges between Derrida and Louis Althusser (and we might add Michel Foucault) were notoriously commonplace. As a consequence of these exchanges, deconstruction would inherit a type of Marxism of an Althusserian strain, identified primarily by the “invasiveness of ideological state apparatuses.” Negri’s largest concern with deconstruction’s mutation in *Specters*, though, is that we do not “know how to construct a straight line that would cut through his process’s agonizing curves” (8). Still, despite the frustration that deconstruction elicits for Negri, he concludes boldly that “deconstruction remains prisoner of an ineffectual and exhausted definition of ontology. . . . Derrida is a prisoner of the ontology he critiques” (13).

Lewis, seemingly less annoyed with Derrida’s prose and more convinced that Derrida does not “discover any satisfying answers,” considers the text in one of three ways: as a perspective for the evaluation of Marxism’s position in the world, amidst its historical contexts including the events of 1989 as well as the “bankruptcy of West European social democracy in the 1980s and

1990s, and within the debates in the 1990s among the broad Left over the ‘legacy of Marx’” (136). His largest complaint is that deconstruction installs itself in the place that Marxism once occupied while it via *Specters* “relentlessly drives verbal stakes through the heart of Marxism’s claims to provide a viable knowledge of history capable of grounding an adequate practice of social transformation” (139). Interpreting Derrida’s tone as condescending, Lewis feels compelled after reading *Specters* to resign the Marxists of the world to soul-searching, mourning, and atoning, while he suspects that the deconstructionists’ sole task consists in changing the world. Bedggood’s critique resembles Ahmad’s, in that he identifies Derrida as an apologist for capitalism or more specifically as an “ideologist” of “post-Marxist apologetics of the ‘new middle’ that now seeks to replace the neo-liberal ascendancy” (para. 10). What separates Bedggood from many other Marxist critics is that he believes they themselves “fall short of conjuring away Saint Jacques because they represent the flawed tradition of Western Marxism—the failure of materialist dialectics grounded in the ontology of living labor” (para. 3). Indeed, Bedggood engages Derrida and his critics while he sufficiently theorizes Marxist dialectical method, but his critique amounts to little more than saying, “I have Marx more right than anyone else.”

All posturing aside, these critiques indeed share one thing in common, the desire from the Left to get Marx right. These concerns come at a rather crucial moment, on the heels of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, and we might add, with the benefit of hindsight, the humble origins of a capitalist, communist China emerging as a competitor in the global marketplace. If Marxism was to make its case on the world stage in 1993 at the “Whither Marxism?” conference, it certainly took a gamble with asking Derrida to serve as its ambassador. As a result, Marxism appears to have paid a heavy price, according to

critics like Ahmad, Spivak, and Eagleton, whose works seem a noble effort to recuperate these losses. To a certain extent, these critics salvage much of Marxism's dignity, but one wonders how much was actually accomplished in attacking Derrida for reading Marx irresponsibly. If anything, we can say that Derrida encouraged the Left to reexamine the applicability of Marx and to revise Marxist thought that no longer seems relevant to today's concerns. In other words, we might say that Derrida inspired Marxism's most faithful and honorific to treat us to valuable lessons in historical materialism under (de-)construction.

How the Left Gets Marx Right

Indeed, Marxist critics acknowledge the sway of deconstructive exegesis and, in many ways, are quite generous in giving Derrida credit, especially where Derridean critique involves the delegitimization of the Right. Ahmad believes that Derrida's reflections on Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* are "fairly on the mark," but thinks that those reflections would have been "more fruitful" had Derrida offered meditations on the political and philosophical coordinates shared between Fukuyama's proclamation of the end of history and "the end of all metanarratives that one finds routinely in the work of so many deconstructionists" (89-90). Eagleton writes that there "is no doubting the political passion at work" in *Specters* and believes that Derrida's relentless pursuit of a "hapless Fukuyama," although considerably "less original than Perry Anderson's," is an example of his "enduring radicalism." Clearly, Ahmad and Eagleton believe that Derrida doesn't attack the Right thoroughly enough or rather he fails to position himself more determinately on the Left.¹⁷ That abrogation of responsibility erupts the moment Derrida situates deconstruction as that which has inherited a certain spirit of Marxism,

¹⁷ Eagleton begins his essay, "There is no doubt that Derridean deconstruction was a political project from the outset, or that Jacques Derrida himself, in some suitably indeterminate sense, has always been a man of the Left" (83).

more specifically the spirit of a young, de-totalized Marx. One question remains, however: Is deconstruction of the Left or the Right? The remainder of this chapter will attempt to answer this question.

Indeed, it is apparent in this analysis that *Specters* neither engages Marxian dialectics—Derrida’s argument is that those dialectics become irrelevant over time and need to be replaced—nor offers us any prescriptions for change,¹⁸ two points that continually frustrate Derrida’s Marxist critics. For them, Derrida, by positioning himself as Hamlet, installs himself in a privileged position afforded to him by inheritance, whereby the gesture becomes more than simply one of affiliation; it becomes a justification for nepotism, and critics find his engagement problematic on a number of levels. First, his notion of the disjointedness of time with respect to inheritance, justice, and responsibility enables Derrida to defer his engagements with Marxism. Despite the fact that deconstruction has its origins in the movements of the 1950s when others were already proclaiming the end of history and Marxism long before Fukuyama, Derrida waits until the dissolution of one of the last surviving remnants of communism, the U.S.S.R., to address deconstruction’s relation to Marxism. Indeed, Derrida does appear to play the part of Hamlet, who has been charged by many literary critics for being too apprehensive, prone to thinking too much, and deferring action. And also like Hamlet, Derrida is often viewed in the Western world as someone whose motivations are often misunderstood and highly debated. To make this connection between Hamlet and Derrida further, let us recall briefly the narrative of *Hamlet*.

King Hamlet of Denmark has recently and unexpectedly died, and his brother, Claudius, inherits the throne and takes the former king’s wife, Gertrude, to be his own. Prince Hamlet, the

¹⁸ He does, however, discuss what change may look like in the way of a “New International,” which I discuss in Chapter Two.

son of the slain king, is deeply distraught over the usurpation of the throne by his uncle, whom he believes pales in comparison to his father, and his mother's remarriage to his uncle. One night a ghost resembling the deceased King appears to two watchmen of Elsinore Castle, Bernardo and Marcellus, who report this appearance to Hamlet's colleague, Horatio, who attends Wittenberg with Hamlet. The ghost seems to have something important to say but vanishes without delivering the message. The men notify Hamlet of the ghost, and Hamlet investigates the matter. The specter appears once again and speaks to Hamlet, imploring him to seek revenge for his father's death at the hands of Claudius, King Hamlet's own brother. The ghost disappears, and Hamlet decides to feign madness to confirm Claudius's guilt.

Claudius and Gertrude, concerned about this recent development in Hamlet's behavior, entreat a pair of Hamlet's school friends named Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to monitor him and discover the cause of his change. Polonius, the chief advisor to Claudius, believes that Hamlet's madness can be attributed to his love for Polonius' daughter, Ophelia. It is revealed later in a secret meeting between the two lovers that Hamlet is not smitten by Ophelia; in fact, he orders her to a nunnery.

Hamlet stages a play reenacting the murder in hopes that Claudius will admit guilt. Hamlet's strategy works, as Claudius interrupts it midway through and leaves the room, and Hamlet follows him to avenge his father. Poised to kill Claudius who is in prayer, Hamlet decides to relent, as he believes that killing an unaware Claudius will send him to heaven rather than purgatory, which is where the former king is said to linger. Unfortunately for Hamlet, Claudius reveals the insufficiency of his prayer, but only after Hamlet has left to confront his mother. In the middle of scolding her, he hears a noise behind a curtain. Believing it is Claudius eavesdropping, he thrusts his sword into the body behind the curtain, only to find that it is elderly

Polonius. Hamlet flees the castle, and Claudius deports him to England along with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are carrying a request to have Hamlet murdered.

Ophelia, afflicted by grief, goes mad and drowns in a river. Her brother, Laertes, returns from his visit to France enraged. Claudius seizes an opportunity to convince Laertes that Hamlet is responsible for the death of his father, Polonius. Hamlet sends word that he has returned to Denmark because his ship had been attacked by pirates on the way to England. Claudius, hoping to rid himself of Hamlet, wagers that Hamlet can best Laertes in a fencing match. The match is arranged, but Laertes' blade is poisoned, along with the wine that Hamlet is to drink.

During the bout, Gertrude drinks from Hamlet's goblet and dies. Laertes wounds Hamlet, but is cut by his own blade. With his dying breath, Laertes reveals Claudius's plot to kill Hamlet, who manages to kill the king before he dies. Fortinbras, a Norwegian prince with ambitions of his own, leads his army to Denmark and stumbles upon the scene. Horatio recounts the tale and Fortinbras, the son of King Fortinbras who was killed by King Hamlet, orders Hamlet's body to be carried away with dignity.

Considering the narrative, we can see that, despite the ghost's entreaties to Hamlet to avenge his death early in the play, it isn't until much later that Hamlet decides to act, approximately the midpoint of the play (3.4). And when Hamlet finally decides to act, he accidentally murders the old man of the court, Polonius, who is often viewed as fatuous and long-winded. As a consequence of this unfortunate murder, Hamlet finds himself locked in a duel with his spurned lover's brother and dies, but not before he is actually able to carry out his father's wishes by murdering Claudius. For many, Derrida has the makings of a 20th century Hamlet, prone to thinking, failing to act, and, after deciding to act, butchering the legacy of an important political figure. Eagleton asks, "where was Jacques Derrida when we needed him, in

the long dark night of Reagan-Thatcher[?]" (83). According to Eagleton, it appears that Derrida's false sense of affiliation has misguided him into thinking that deconstruction has operated like a "radicalized Marxism," when it has ultimately operated

. . . as an ersatz form of textual politics in an era when, socialism being on the run, academic leftists were grateful for a displaced brand of dissent which seemed to offer the twin benefits of at once outflanking Marxism in its audacious avant-gardism, and generating a skeptical sensibility which pulled the rug out from under anything as drearily undeconstructed as solidarity, organization or calculated political action. (84)

Eagleton and others intimate that deconstruction functions as postmodern drivel and ultimately distorts classical Marxism and its commitment to effectual political action. Ahmad extends this critique to argue that Derrida seeks to replace our historic understanding of Marxism with his own "messianic" version in a move that Ahmad refers to as "anti-politics," a term to be construed as simply "non-political." Ahmad accuses Derrida of hoping to take advantage of an opportune moment in the collapse of historical Marxism, where the triumph of deconstruction will coincide smoothly with this collapse. This supposed transference plays nicely into Derrida's favor, as he structures *Specters* around the motif of mourning, especially apparent in his reading of *Hamlet*. If Hamlet mourns the death of his father, he also anticipates inheriting the throne relinquished by him, though he curses this responsibility, as Derrida would argue. In the same manner, Derrida mourns the dead father (Marx) and may expect to assume the throne that Marx has left behind; by Derridean logic, Derrida would too curse this responsibility to a Marxian legacy. Ahmad insists that this logic is flawed, in that the kingdom in *Hamlet* is inherited not by the son, Hamlet, but by Fortinbras, a right-winged usurper. Ahmad writes, "The Hamlets of this world are fated, it seems, to be besieged by usurpers and remain forever uncrowned" (94). The messianic or teleological function of this narrative of mourning and inheritance has the makings of a right-wing dogmatism, whose origins can be traced to the emergence of deconstruction in the late 1960s, which Ahmad believes was presented as an alternative to Leftist politics and

conservatism. Since then, however, Ahmad and other Marxists have argued that deconstruction has been waging an “unconditional war against political Marxism, in its antipathy toward working-class organizations and against *organized* politics of the Left, and in its advocacy of a global hermeneutics of suspicion [where it has] unwittingly *contributed* to openings for resurgence of a fully fledged right-wing intelligentsia” (Ahmad 98). Eagleton believes that if Derrida “thinks, as he appears to do, that there can be any effective socialism without organization, apparatuses and reasonably well-formulated doctrines and programmes, then he is merely the victim of some academicist fantasy which he has somehow mistaken for an enlightened anti-Stalinism” (86).

Tom Lewis argues also that this Derridean work of mourning undermines the activist strategies and tactics of Marxism and gives rise to two main concerns: first, the repudiation of historical materialism, and second, the renunciation of social revolution. He agrees much with Ahmad in that the display of right-wing triumphalism enables Derrida to mourn the death of Marx as if he were leading an open-casket funeral procession and staging rhetorically “the death he actually would have preferred Marxism to have died” (138). Lewis, unlike Ahmad, is very clear about how deconstruction fails to address social issues, which classical Marxism (and its tradition of revolution) proves more capable in addressing. Insisting on a class-based politics, Lewis examines three ways in which the foundation of class struggle has appeared to erode during various modal shifts (from commodities to information, Fordism to post-Fordism, production to reproduction, etc.) generally as a consequence of postmodern theorizing. First, the informational work of the Wall Street trader, the insurance claims adjuster, the Information Technology specialist, and the software developer still remain the production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of material commodities such as computer workstations, fiber-

optic networks and programs. That is to suggest that the machinic nature of telecommunications/mass media/trading/banking must not be overlooked. The centralization of capital occurs in these various industries, and technological change is contingent upon capitalist relations of production. Second, the number of working class individuals is not shrinking, but continues to grow, and that Marx anticipated the fall of living labor (workers) and rise of dead labor (machines). Lewis argues that “each individual blue collar worker who remains is now ten, twenty, or even a hundred times more powerful in terms of the ability to shut down production than each of the individual workers who were replaced by the machines operated by the remaining worker” (151). One need look no further than the early twenty-first century during which we became privy to the discussions between Enron traders and representatives of energy companies in California who were responsible for rolling blackouts across the entire state. Last, the working class is composed of “blue collar” and “white collar,” as the displacement of workers from industrial to service-sector jobs does not entail a “de-classing” of workers. Lewis reminds us of the conditions of the working class: (1) they must work for a living wage, as opposed to living off investments or inherited wealth, and (2) they have very little control, if any, over the conditions in which they work and what happens to the products or outcomes of their work. Citing a 1987 study done by Callinicos and Harman, Lewis remarks that 70 percent of an advanced capitalist society structurally belongs to the working class (151).

Put in such urgent and relevant terms, one can see the pressing demand to bring Derrida to task on his seeming erasure of complex relations between the working class and an emergent global politics. Indeed, one can also see how the very gesture of affiliating Marxism with deconstruction in the name of the hauntological, or vice versa, would sound off, albeit indirectly and unintentionally, one of a “great many attacks on political Marxism that have been launched

by deconstructionists” (Ahmad 98). For Lewis, another problem with deconstruction is that it seems to rehabilitate Stirner. Spivak sees this, too. She writes:

Given Derrida’s deployment of Marxian metaphors without any notice of industrial capitalism, Marx’s remark that “[i]f Saint Max seriously applies himself to exploit this ambiguity [that certain words are used both for commercial relations and for characteristic features and mutual relations of individuals as such], he may easily succeed in making a brilliant series of new economic discoveries, without knowing anything about political economy” cuts awfully close to the bone [Marx and Engels 231]. (“Ghostwriting” 73)

The problem with Stirner for Marx and everyone else in his camp is his notion of the “unique,” which enables us a certain “freedom” to act in the absence of coercive, totalizing, social relations. The Stirnian view aims to discredit the notion that socialism can be won only by means of a revolutionary class struggle. Aligning Derrida with the “post-Marxist” political philosophy of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Lewis argues that these three theorists are “abstracting a figure from the concrete circumstances of his or her debates with representatives of revolutionary currents within Marxism, and then claiming that the resurrected figure (or the analysis of the figure in Derrida’s case) allows reformist insights better suited to our own ‘new times’” (146).

For Spivak, the problem with Derrida is more than a disavowal of activist strategies and tactics of Marxism; it is that he completely misses Marx’s points.¹⁹ Her biggest issue with Derrida is that he refuses to honor the difference between commercial and industrial capital, which troubles her because she so “desperately” hopes that Derrida can get Marx “rightish.” The “mistakes” that Derrida makes, unfortunately, “do not allow for the peculiar half-mourning of something like a Father’s ghost that is the paraph of deconstruction” (72). In “Ghostwriting,”

¹⁹ In “Limits and Openings of Marx in Derrida,” Spivak argues that Derrida doesn’t seem to know Marx’s main argument. In this essay, which is an augmented piece that she originally presented at the first ten-day Derrida symposium at Cérisy-la-Salle in 1980, Spivak examines Derrida’s engagements with Marx prior to his address *Specters*. In “Ghostwriting,” she refers the reader to “Limits” to see where she has “laid out my trouble in print.”

Spivak mentions three “mistakes”: Marx on the spectral nature of money, Marx on use-value, and the notion that without the religious, the critique of ideology cannot operate.

The first error arises from Derrida’s reading of Marx’s *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and *The German Ideology*, in which Derrida seems to suggest that, since Marx prefers the ghost that he seems to want to exorcise, Marx would prefer that the ghostly body of the money-commodity (gold) to become a real body and adequate to itself. The real confusion lies with Marx’s quotation from *Timon of Athens* in *The German Ideology*: “The body of money is but a shadow” (qtd. in “Ghostwriting” 72). From this quotation, Derrida supposedly draws a connection among Marx, his adversaries, and ghosts, opining that Marx doesn’t like ghosts any more than his adversaries do. He writes: “But he thinks of nothing else. He believes rather in what is supposed to distinguish them from actual reality, living effectivity. He believes he can oppose them, like life to death, like vain appearances of the simulacrum to real presence” (*Specters* 47). Derrida seems to have a desire for Marx to wish for the body of money to become real, leave behind its ghostly form in order to be adequate unto itself. Spivak warns us that this reading of a young Marx fails to take into account one formula that he hadn’t yet discovered: the secret of industrial capitalism as the creation of surplus value through labor-power as commodity. Neither *The German Ideology* or *Critique of Political Economy* can have an adequate theoretical discussion on capital, and if we remain committed to this error, then we will have a large problem: the fetish-character of labor-power as “commodity in the transformation of capitalism into socialism—Marx’s signature contribution—will emerge in a chain of displacements where the transformation of money into capital is crucial” and made “possible precisely of the general equivalency of money” (“Ghostwriting” 73). If we want to see Marx

entertain spectrality, Spivak suggests that we consult his later texts, the *Capitals*, but we will certainly not find anything of use in *Ideology* or *Critique*.

Indeed, Marx argues in *Capital*, volume 3, that the “*true barrier* to capitalist production is *capital itself*” (250). The circulation of capital and its constitutive interruptions make visible to him the generality of a deconstructible economy. The circulation and expenditure of money, on the other hand, belong to a highly restricted sphere. As Spivak notes in “Limits and Openings of Marx in Derrida,” Derrida’s use of politicoeconomic vocabulary in his previous texts such as “Economimesis,” “The *Retrait* of Metaphor,” *Limited Inc.*, and *The Other Heading*, confined to money and interest-bearing capital, may not allow for the emergence of Marx’s original theses in Derrida’s arguments. For Spivak, capital is merely a supplement of the natural and rational teleology of the body, and its inherent contradictions are managed by capitalism. For socialism to manage these contradictions in the interest of the socially human, Marx must emphasize the opposition between work and commodity and also “their double common nature as commodity for the leverage necessary for an active calculus” (“Limits” 107). According to Spivak, Derrida’s “Force of Law” might prove more instructive on the issue of the relationship between justice and this active political calculus, though I will not pursue this idea here.

In speaking of work and commodity, one must recognize that labor-power distinguishes itself from other commodities insofar as its use creates value. And commodities, by their very nature, are said to be a use-value and value, a double thing. When a commodity possesses its own form, as distinct from its natural form, and acquires exchange-value, the commodity is said to have been set in relation to another commodity of a different kind. We cannot delude ourselves into thinking that we can truly know the nature of use-value. Spivak argues that “Indeed, use-value in Marx is a slippery idea, not necessarily connected to persons and things”

(“Limits” 107). She says that Marx left the concept of use-value “untheorized.” This fact, however, fails to deter Derrida from taking up the question of use-value in *Specters*, an engagement that contributes to his second error, which follows from Derrida’s selective readings of Marx’s most widely known text. Drawing almost exclusively from *The German Ideology*, *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, and *Capital*, after admitting that he had not read them in decades, Derrida is charged with portraying a “silly” Marx who “thinks use is good and exchange bad” and that use is “proper to man,” primarily as a consequence of Marx’s ontological response to spectrality. Where Derrida reads this ambiguity in Marx as a resistance to spectrality, Spivak notes that it arises out of an indispensable relation between capitalism/capital accumulation and socialism. She writes: “Capital is formed because capital uses the use-value of labor-power (average abstract labor), which is to produce more value than it needs. Thus one could say (though not to much purpose) that the mystical character (of the definitive commodity) owes everything (rather than ‘nothing,’ as Derrida writes [*Specters* 149]) to the possibility of use-value” (“Ghostwriting” 74). According to Spivak, Derrida fails to recognize the complexity of use-value in relation to exchange-value, and this failure may stem from Derrida’s belief that use is proper to man. She quotes a passage from *Capital* to dispute Derrida’s argument:

[I]f surplus labor and surplus product are also reduced, to the degree needed under the given conditions of production, on the one hand to form an insurance and reserve fund, on the other hand for the constant expansion of reproduction in the degree determined by social need; if, finally, both (1) the necessary labor and (2) the surplus labor are taken to include the amount of labor that those capable of work, or are no longer capable of working—i.e. if both wages and surplus-value, necessary labor as well as surplus labor are stripped of their specifically capitalist character—then nothing of these forms remain, but simply those bases [*Grundlagen*] of the forms that are common to all social modes of production. (qtd in “Ghostwriting” 74-5)

Spivak argues that if there is anything proper to man, it is the potential to create exchange-value in use. There is indeed a specter at work in use-value, but Marx wants this specter to be used in socialism. The ghost is what is rational, and without the rationality of the ghost, there is

no hope for socialism, according to Spivak. This is precisely where Spivak believes Derrida comes close to getting Marx right, but she seems to suggest that Derrida is so committed to an ontological Marx that for him to think otherwise would completely ruin his project.

Last, Derrida's conjuration of Marx seems to presuppose that the subject of Marxist cultural critique is not the "worker" but the academic or intellectual. Spivak intimates that this focus may be a consequence of the Frankfurt School, a powerful source of Marxist cultural critique, bringing ideology to the forefront, and Althusser, Derrida's friend and colleague, bringing ideology back into French Marxism. This trend allowed for psychoanalysis to emerge as the ideal tool for "correcting notions of false consciousness." However one wants to view "false consciousness," Spivak insists that the Marx in the age of the *Capitals* was committed to the worker, and his work differs significantly from the mystificatory moves of German ideology practiced by philosophy. The field of social agency, as opposed to philosophical speculation, consists of two very simple exhortations to the worker: "do not believe the money- or production-based explanations of the capitalist" and "do not understand capitalism in terms of empirical work experience; understand it through the 'spectrality of reason' (which shows you the inaccessible yet coexisting skeleton of truth even as the body misguides you) in order to change it" (78). The point in all this, for Spivak, is that we cannot allow Derrida to make the mistake of thinking that, without the religious, the critique of ideology cannot survive or operate, but nowhere in her intervention does she mention Derrida's notion of messianism, a non-theological messianicity capable of thriving in the absence of religion. We might assume that she is referring to this messianicity, though Pierre Macherey reminds us of a passage in *Specters* that speaks to an absolute privilege that Marx grants to religion and to ideology as religion,

mysticism, or theology, in his general analysis of ideology in *The German Ideology* (Macherey 22).

In addition to admitting her proprietorial feelings toward Marx and discussing the manner in which Derrida gets Marx wrong, Spivak notes something of crucial importance about *Specters*: in it, “woman is nowhere” (66). This fact puzzles her, for *Specters*, which poses as a corrective to Marxian dialectics, fails to redevelop Marx’s prescience on the question of the labor of women superseding that of men as presented in *The Communist Manifesto*. She argues that this prescience manifests itself in Post-Fordism and global housework, where the subaltern woman provides the bulk of the support of production (67). She offers in her analysis a taxonomy of the ways in which the labor of the patriarchally defined subaltern woman has been socialized, what she refers to as the “socialization of reproductive labor-power” rather than the “feminization of labor.” The taxonomy includes

1) reproductive rights (*metonymic* substitution of the abstract average subject of rights for woman’s identity); 2) surrogacy (*metaphoric* substitution of abstract average reproductive labor power as fulfilled female subject of motherhood); 3) transplant (displacement of eroticism and generalized presupposed subject of immediate affect); 4) population control (objectification of the female subject of exploitation to produce alibis for hypersize through demographic rationalization); [and] 5) post-Fordist homeworking (classical coding of the spectrality of reason as empiricist individualism, complicated by gender ideology). (67)

She follows this taxonomy with a very brief discussion of how the fetish character of labor-power as commodity might be rethought to push capitalism into a socialist state. In discussing the socialization of the female body/reproductive labor, Spivak notes where Marx originally misconceives the play between capitalism and socialism: between the self and the other, an agon which becomes clearest in birth and childrearing. As reproductive labor is socialized and “freed,” it will be unable to ignore that agon, for the commodity in question is children. Spivak unfortunately stops her analysis there, mentioning that “Since *Specters of Marx* cannot bring in women, I will not pursue this further here” (68). She does, however, use *Specters*

to read Assia Djebar's *Far from Medina* as "a ghost dance, a prayer to be haunted, a learning to live at the seam of the past and the present, 'a heterodidactics between life and death,'" a reading that I will not reproduce here. Suffice it to say that because Derrida fails to include women in his analysis, Spivak feels compelled to do it for him.

We should be content to note that Spivak, Ahmad, and Lewis all appear proprietorial about Marx and desire to see Derrida get Marx right, in a manner of speaking. David Bedgood, however, argues that Derrida's charge that his staunchest critics are "proprietal" about Marx is largely "undeserved," perhaps because he himself would, by definition, fall within that very category. Still, he believes that those critics, unlike himself, are unable to counter effectively Derrida's haphazard philosophizing on Marx because "they represent the flawed tradition of Western Marxism—the failure of materialist dialectics grounded in the ontology of living labor" (para. 3). He recognizes that Eagleton does not pursue Derrida's political purpose to expose his loosely formed dialectics and that Spivak's blind spot on Marx is her view that the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value is not a real contradiction that motivates the class struggle. In other words, she regards the role (value) of the philosopher more highly than she ought, for it is not the academy that should account for the insufficiency of reason in Marxian dialectics; the class struggle will prevail as a result of capitalism's flaws. Marxism is not just another Enlightenment teleology that we should expect to fail; the exploited masses will rise up. His comments on Ahmad are relegated almost exclusively to endnotes. In one endnote, he mentions his agreement with Ahmad that Derrida's motives for reclaiming Marx seem suspect, but in another, he appears disappointed that Ahmad's promise to devote a longer response to Derrida hadn't appeared by the time he was writing "Derrida and the Ghost of Marxism" in 1999. Bedgood's primary argument is that Derrida recuperates a young idealist Marx and in

doing so “regresses into the pre-history of Western Marxism and defaults into a form of liberal anarchism” (para. 31). Derrida’s motivation then appears more in line with Max Stirner than with Marx, and Bedggood pursues this argument through the course of his article. First, he relies on John Fletcher’s critique of Derrida, “Marx the Uncanny? Ghosts and their Relation to the Mode of Production,” to make a connection between Stirner and Derrida. For Bedggood, Derrida abandons historicity of social relations in his formulation of disjointed time to allow for “an ahistorical metaphysics of time,” which provides Derrida a framework to set up a “transcendental hauntology” against ontology. The problem with this hauntology is that it “is a subversive meta-narrative” that says “in history there is no objective or material reality such as the necessity of social relations, only a reality which is the production of the indeterminate (free will) ego” (Bedggood para 26). Derrida’s point for coining the term “hauntology” is to exorcise the ghosts of Enlightenment determinism, and to do so, Derrida must foreground ontological and epistemological assumptions about “being” while counterposing a radical “essence” of “nothingness.” Derrida finds Heidegger useful for this foregrounding, particularly his theorization of the gift as it relates to presence (the present) and lends itself to the phrase “Time is out of joint.” The most interesting point about the gift is that it has no market or exchange-value for Bedggood, and as such, social justice can be realized within this realm of that which is outside of

any horizon of culpability, of debt, of right, and even, perhaps of duty. . . . Beyond right, and still more beyond juridicism, beyond morality, and still more beyond moralism, does not justice as relation to the other suppose on the contrary the irreducible excess of a disjunction or an anachrony, some *Un-Fuge*, some “out of joint” dislocation in Being and in time itself, a disjunction that, in always risking the evil, expropriation, and injustice against which there is no calculable insurance, would alone be able to do justice or to render justice . . . (*Specters* 25-7)

In locating justice “beyond” right, debt, and culpability, Derrida sets up his characterization of justice as the messianic, that which will come, the coming of the other, “the

absolute and unpredictable singularity of the *arrivant as justice*" (*Specters* 28) For Bedggood, Derrida's use of Heidegger to read Marx merely indicates why Derrida finds Stirner so useful. To distance Marx from Derrida's characterization of him, Bedggood reminds us of Marx's disdain for Stirner's ideas with one particular passage from *The German Ideology* in which he criticizes Stirner for his brand of egoism and anarchy. It might be noted here that Marx established firmly his notion of materialism and made a complete break with idealism after responding to Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*, a text that exposes some of the weaknesses of the Left Hegelians by arguing that all religions, ideologies, and society's institutions rest on empty concepts. The remainder of Bedggood's essay devotes itself to examining the ideas of Derrida as they seem to replicate Stirner's notion of the "unique," ideas that include the messianic and the "New International," his answer to globalization and its ten plagues. Bedggood writes:

Derrida invokes, as a *counter-conjuration*, a worldwide social movement with no organizing features to reform international law! As an idealist fix, this is no more than a hollow call for social justice which joins with Soros and Giddens et al. in appeals to a spontaneous "millenarian" power of bourgeois citizens to fight "responsibly" for a democratic capitalism against the totalitarian specters of speculative capital, fundamentalist ideas and totalizing dogma. (para 68)²⁰

In a way, Bedggood may be right in arguing that Derrida resembles Stirner, if we take *Specters* to serve as a text that exposes weaknesses of Western Marxism, as Bedggood convincingly argues. He locates this failure in materialist dialectics in a split between objective and subjective reality that can only be reconciled in the program of the revolutionary party. Derrida's *Specters* cannot escape subjective idealism, for Bedggood, as it dehistoricizes the self-activity of the individual by abstracting from social relations. Indeed, I believe we must appreciate Bedggood's work for at least the following three reasons: he succeeds in criticizing

²⁰ Bedggood opens his essay with a critique of George Soros and Anthony Giddens, who he believes are the financial and the sociological architects of post-Marxism, respectively. He likens Derrida as the philosopher of such a movement, arguing that post-Marxism and the new liberalism of the center need a new priesthood in order to secure the flows of capitalism and deepen the exorcism of the ghosts of communism.

Derrida's Marxist critics (and the academy, for that matter), has located the split that prohibits Derrida's *Specters* from reaching its revolutionary potential as a program for political activity, and has effectively described the status of global relations from a Marxist perspective just before the 21st century. We might ask, "Now what?" Two facts remain: Outside of the declaration "We do not have to let capitalism destroy the planet,"²¹ Bedggood himself offers no real solutions or revolutionary advice, while Derrida's *Specters* has continued to attract the attention of numerous scholars who have found it useful to think through various problems. We must admit that, unlike Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*, Derrida's work has not been largely ignored by its contemporary audiences. In fact, theorists eagerly anticipated Derrida's *Specters*, while Stirner's work has been almost completely ignored by professional philosophers; Marx's ridicule of *The Ego and Its Own* has played a significant role in its marginalization. Indeed, we should be indebted to these Marxist scholars for reminding us of a later, more materialist Marx committed to socialism, but I believe that, ultimately, *Specters* ends up somewhere between Left and Right, like much of Derrida's work.

The key Marxist figure who seems to sketch this Derridean position rather proficiently is Fredric Jameson when he refers to Derrida's critique as "unmixed" or "what is somehow pure and self-sufficient or autonomous, what is able to be disengaged from the general mess of mixed, hybrid phenomena all around it and named with the satisfaction of a single conceptual proper name" (44). The pure constellation is spectrality, which opens up "new and unexpected lines of rereading." Jameson himself is looking for ways to recuperate the function of Husserl and

²¹ What follows is, "We can take power, expropriate the expropriators, and collectively plan to create a better, freer, and equal society called socialism. But to do this we need to mobilize and organize the working class. Not in Derrida's "spirit of Marxism" but against it, taking stock of Marx's method, recuperating the methods of the Bolsheviks, and taking state power. This is both necessary and possible, since the contradictions of capitalism make busting the ghost of alienation and collectivizing dead labor the only means of survival as well as emancipation of living labor" (para 87).

Heidegger in Derrida's work and to keep his reading (and Derrida's) free of current intellectual politics, described mainly by its preoccupation with multivalent readings. Jameson argues that Derrida's philosophical life's work can be "discovered in the tracking down and identifying, denouncing . . . of just such nostalgias for some 'originary simplicity,' for the unmixed in all its forms" (45).

In "Marx's Purloined Letter," Jameson locates several features of the Marxian heritage worth problematizing, one of which is the dialectic, privileged by many as a reflexive operation but stigmatized as one version of ontological thinking. Two other features include use-value and class. In the case of the former, we can say that it "has always already vanished by the time Marxism has begun: yet an uncertainty may well persist as to whether even its residuarity betrays ontological longing at the heart of Marxism, or at least at the centre of Marx's own writing" (46). In other words, as Spivak has already argued, the definition of use-value has been undertheorized since its inception. It is, like the function of the ghost in spectrality, a fleeting concept, no clearer than the wood or table upon which it rests. The second feature, class, is one that is bandied about among Marxist critics with little consistency. As Jameson sees it, even some Marxists denounce the concept obligatorily, as if race, gender, and ethnicity were more appropriate, fundamental concepts or experiences to use when thinking through issues that Marxists find endemic to capitalism and social disorder. The Left also tends to abandon class as the evolution of contemporary politics recognizes the obsolescence of old social classifications. His point is that class is not a simple-minded, reductive concept, and he argues that the most realistic Marxists will not fail to recognize this point. At present, one could say that

all points in which the classes come into public contact, as in sports, for example, are the space of open and violent class antagonisms, and these equally saturate the other relations of gender, race, and ethnicity, whose dynamics are symbolically reinvested in class

dynamics and express themselves through a class formation, when they are not themselves the vehicle for the expression of class dynamics as such. (Jameson 47)

As class tends to be reconstituted as internalized binary oppositions, much like gender and race, deconstruction emerges as the most appropriate method for detecting the operations of these oppositions and the manner in which these oppositions deconstruct themselves, according to Jameson. The remainder of Jameson's text examines the various dimensions of Derrida's *Specters* that prefigure the messianic, spectral function in Marx and Marxism where they intersect with tele-technologies, in the same manner in which Derrida remarks on the intersection of postal delivery and *tekhnē* in *The Post Card*. Jameson leaves us with this reflection: "Marx's purloined letter: a whole new programme in itself surely, a wandering signifier capable of keeping any number of conspiratorial futures alive" (65). For Jameson, Derrida provides us an alternative political calculus for conceiving a Marxism that adjusts to the varying dimensions of class (and gender and race for that matter) during times of constant change in our global economies. In other words, deconstruction should give Marxists something to look forward to.

Negri notes one term that fails to emerge in Derrida's *Specters* altogether, a term that may be ontologically out of date, on the surface, but one he believes has not been eliminated altogether: exploitation. In the way that Frantz Fanon recognizes that (the forms of) racism evolves with the times—where it "renew[s] itself, adapt[s] itself, to change its appearance. It has had to undergo the fate of the cultural whole that informed it" (*Toward the African Revolution* 32)—Negri posits that "in speaking of exploitation, it's necessary to take into consideration not so much the categories that, *post festum*, denounce exploitation, but rather the mechanisms that produce it" (10). Negri's point is that any form or logic of production, simply human labor, is implicated in exploitation. Despite the communicative networks and global capital flows that have developed in recent times, two things remain rather certain in Negri's formulation: capital

produces wealth and power for a few, and misery and discipline for the masses. Thus, the new paradigm or the new post-deconstructive ontology of exploitation consists in “intellectuality and cooperative force.” Negri believes that if we lead deconstruction into this new ontological terrain, we would find it incapable of producing any effectual critique. He argues that deconstruction “remains prisoner of an ineffectual and exhausted definition of ontology” (12). In other words, despite the fact that Derrida presents deconstruction in a way that assumes a timely arrival, according to Negri, it is itself “out of joint.” Negri continues:

When Derrida concludes his analysis of the Marxian ontology of value, ridding himself of its naïve ontology of presence—to the extent that it thinks of the possibility of dissipating spectrality from the starting-point of a consciousness representative of the subject—he does not produce an adequate ontological jump-start, aside from the correctness of his phenomenological approach. (13)

Negri believes that the genesis of Derrida’s “sad sidestepping” resides in his unwillingness to locate the spectral within the ontological, which would render his critique as ineffectual as the Marxian ontology he presumes to decry. But as exploitation is “real and intolerable,” we must fight against it. Deconstruction is simply insufficient as a model of praxis in Negri’s view, and *Specters* “turns back and loses itself in that which is ‘inaccessible to man,’ in the ‘infinitely other.’ The game is played out in mysticism, in the recognition of an irresolvable foundation of the law, in the definition of responsibility as committing to an ungraspable ontological ‘other.’ Why?” (14).

I certainly will not commit myself to speak on behalf of Derrida in answering the question “Why? Why this regressive step back?” but I might propose here one reason that Derrida does not mention the term “exploitation,” which will initiate my series of connections between him and Fanon. If I mentioned earlier that Negri’s formulation of exploitation resembles Fanon’s description of racism, I will further complicate this analogy by returning to Fanon on the question of exploitation. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon notes that all forms of exploitation

resemble one another. He argues that “[t]hey all seek the sources of their necessity in some edict of a Biblical nature. All forms of exploitation are identical because all of them are applied against the same ‘object’: man” (88). We see here that Fanon does not treat exploitation and racism similarly to the way in which Negri considers the issue of exploitation. Fanon perhaps takes a Derridean or deconstructionist approach to the problem by insisting that any attempt “to distinguish among various forms of exploitation simply means that one ignores the ‘major, basic problem, which is that of restoring man to his proper place’” (88). Much like Derrida, Fanon does not speak exhaustively on the subject of exploitation, possibly because we are well aware that it exists. The point is to restructure and reformulate the relations of man so that exploitation no longer remains.

Despite Fanon’s disdain for racism, it rarely preoccupies his thoughts to the extent that he feels the need to belabor the issue. Before the First Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Paris in 1956, Fanon argues that to “study the relations of racism and culture is to raise the question of their reciprocal action. If culture is the combination of motor and mental behavior patterns arising from the encounter of man with nature and with his fellow-man, it can be said that racism is indeed a cultural element. There are thus cultures with racism and cultures without racism” (*Toward the African Revolution* 32). He has argued elsewhere that to suggest that there are varying degrees of racism is to miss the point completely that fundamentally a larger social issue is involved. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon seems hardly willing to discuss the nuances of racism. In fact, he proposes a rather crude, reductive formula for racism: a “given society is racist or it is not” (85). His proposal is a response to Octave Mannoni, who wants to distinguish between different kinds of “racialism,” namely colonial and others forms. Fanon’s answer is that “colonial racism is no different from any other racism” (88). (He also links racism to anti-

semitism here, too.) He also notes, in nearly Marxian fashion, that there exists an economic component to racism. He writes, the “white [South African] proletariat’s aggression on the black proletariat is fundamentally a result of the economic structure of South Africa” (87). It is safe to assume that, for Fanon, racism is not the larger context to be addressed. Fanon’s interest lies in altering the colonial landscape, which consists in “universality” and the “decision to recognize and accept the reciprocal relativism of different cultures” (*TAR* 44). In other words, change does not come about by addressing exhaustively issues such as “class” and “exploitation,” but in “restoring man to his proper place” (*Black Skin* 88). If Derrida has not made clear this intention in his *Specters* project, he clarifies it in his response to his Marxist critics in “Marx and Sons.”

Derrida Responds to Marx’s “Sons”

In “Marx’s Purloined Letter,” Jameson’s extensive tracing of spectrality back through Heidegger’s master-narrative is generally impressive. His particular preoccupation with “context” extends only so far as his reading of *Specters*; he cannot decide whether spectrality represents another way for Derrida to avoid names or whether it might be viewed as a change in strategy for deconstruction and a turn toward a new figural direction. Despite the various trajectories of Jameson’s work on the constellation of spectrality—placing it within several philosophical traditions, primarily Heidegger’s but also Husserl’s, Lacan’s, and Benjamin’s—very little mention is made of what Derrida considers the most important context of *Specters*: “a lecture delivered at a specific moment, a lecture which ‘took a position’ in response to a significant invitation in a highly determinant context” (“Marx and Sons” 217). Derrida attends to this question in “Marx and Sons” recognizing that virtually none of his critics in *Ghostly Demarcations* took context in *Specters* “seriously or directly into account as a question.” He tells us that this question is in fact threefold:

1) the question of the ‘political’ (of the essence, tradition and demarcation of the ‘political,’ especially in ‘Marx’); 2) the question of the ‘*philosophical*’ as well (of philosophy *qua* ontology, particularly in ‘Marx’); and therefore 3) the question of the topoi all of us believe we can recognize in common themes beneath these names—particularly the name ‘*Marx*’—if only to indicate disagreement about them. (“Marx and Sons” 217)

Along with this threefold question summoned during this particular moment are two related valences that generate the possibility for several threads to run throughout *Specters*. The first, the possibility and the phenomenality of the political, combines with the possibility of a hauntology to produce a spectral movement to which Derrida takes responsibility in performative fashion. He points to the very phrase in “Marx and Sons” to remind us of this invocation:

This dimension of performative interpretation, that is, of an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets, will play an indispensable role in what I would like to say this evening. “An interpretation that transforms what it interprets” is a definition of the performative as unorthodox with regard to speech act theory as it is with regard to the 11th Thesis on Feuerbach.” (“Marx and Sons” 219; SM 50)

Derrida argues that three consequences follow this performative gesture. The first deals with what he refers to as the *question-form*, or the putting into question of the question. Throughout *Specters*, Derrida investigates several problems and concerns, all of which are generally intertwined and themselves need to be put to the larger question that presides over the smaller (but just as substantial) ones and that proceeds by a logic that assumes a seemingly irreconcilable discourse. On one hand, the question attempts to “reawaken questions mesmerized or repressed by the answer itself; but simultaneously and *on the other hand*, to assume the (necessary revolutionary) affirmation as well, the injunction, the promise—in short, the quasi-performativity of a *yes* that watches over the question, preceding it as an eve precedes the following day” (“Marx and Sons” 220). What seem to be at stake in any deconstructive interrogation are the possibility of the performative gesture, which I will discuss later in this chapter, and the affirmation of the messianic. One reductive way to look at this problem in relation to others more real and historical might be to ask, “Are we asking the right questions?”

Without taking into serious consideration the *question-form*, we can never expect to resolve any global, historical, or social crisis. So, the questions themselves are not at issue, but questioning the manner in which we present these questions seems to be the most pressing issue for Derrida.

Regarding the affirmation of the messianic or messianicity, Derrida takes great care to distinguish messianicity from both religious messianism and utopia. Derrida refers to messianicity as a universal structure of experience, which anticipates the coming of a

real, concrete event, that is, to the most irreducibly heterogeneous otherness. Nothing is more ‘realistic’ or ‘immediate’ than this messianic apprehension, straining forward toward the event of him who/that which is coming. I say ‘apprehension,’ because this experience, strained forward toward the event, is at the same time a waiting without expectation (an active preparation, anticipation against the backdrop of a horizon, but also exposure without horizon, and therefore an irreducible amalgam of desire and anguish, affirmation and fear, promise and threat). (248-9)

Derrida’s messianicity is not merely inseparable from an event or future moment, it also calls for the participation from the other, necessitates an undeconstructible notion of justice, and is contingent upon the extent to which one finds himself or herself responsible to this messianic commitment. This messianicity differs from Walter Benjamin’s “*weak* Messianic power” in that it attempts to dissociate itself from all forms of Judaism, unlike Benjamin’s version. Benjamin’s “*weak* Messianic power” refers to a power with which we have all been endowed like every generation that has preceded us, “a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of that” (“Theses on the Philosophy of History” 254). His version is linked tenuously to the figure of the Messiah. Derrida’s messianicity, however, attempts to do away with the religious figure of messianism *almost* completely, though he recognizes that the structure of the messianic has a rather complicated relationship with the Messiah. Derrida is arguably much less clear about this relationship in *Specters*, but clarifies for us the distinction between Benjamin’s formulation and his own (“messianic without messianism”) in “Marx and Sons” when he tells us that the messianic without messianism no

longer has an essential connection with the memory of a specific historical and religious revelation, and on the other hand, a messiah-figure. The structure of messianicity without messianism tries to exclude these two conditions at all costs. It isn't that Derrida believes we should reject these two conditions, but the possibility of a messianicity without messianism is contingent upon their impossibility.

We might say that the difference between messianism and messianicity without messianism is, like many of Derrida's examples of deconstructed binary oppositions, the movement of *différance*. Though I haven't the space here to elaborate much more on the sequence of these particular operations—that is, determining which operation precedes the other, messianism or messianicity *without* messianism—we can assume that Derrida has conceptualized these ordered operations, which would enable the promise that accompanies the event that then leads to justice.

The second consequence subtends a more articulate elaboration of the first and calls for both a depoliticization and a repoliticization of a certain kind of Marxism. If we attend to the theoretical and political disasters and the Marxists' response to them, we should find that Marxism has clearly not dealt with these disasters as effectively as it might have. Depoliticizing Marxism in light of these “*disastrous historical failures*” enables us to repoliticize a different inheritance of Marx. During this discussion of repoliticization, Derrida responds to his Marxist critics who aim to discredit his version of unorthodox Marxism. He charges Eagleton, one of the last statutory Marxists who defend traditional, orthodox Marxism, with maintaining an “imperturbably triumphal tone” and wonders where Eagleton finds his inspiration and “haughtiness.” He regards Spivak as one who has a “jealous possessiveness” in the name of the proprietary, and he wonders with amazement and amusement at those like Ahmad who claim

either openly or indirectly to inherit a specific Marx. Referring to a comment that Spivak makes in “Ghostwriting,” Derrida asks, “In the name of what, on the basis of what claim, exactly, does one even dare *confess* a ‘proprietorial reaction’? Merely making such a confession presupposes that a title deed has been duly authenticated, so that one can adamantly continue to invoke it in defending one’s property. But who ever authenticated this property right, especially in the present case?” (222). I find this line of questioning relevant not only in the case of Marxism, but also in the case of deconstruction, which I will address in the next chapter. Nonetheless, Derrida does not argue that the fall of Marxism can be attributed to those overzealous Marxists, for that would be “saying too much,” he says. He acknowledges, however, that their proprietorial attitudes on Marx certainly do not make matters any better or, in his words, “contribute to setting things right” (223).

The genius of *Specters* lies specifically in Derrida’s discussion of inheritance and messianicity, something that seems to be lost on those claiming proprietary feelings for Marx. Derrida argues that the text assumes multiple filiations and affiliations, many of them contradictory, either simultaneously or successively. In identifying itself as a book on inheritance, *Specters* “also analyzes, questions and—let us say, to save time—‘deconstructs’ the law of filiation, particularly patrimonial filiation, the law of the father-son lineage: whence the insistence on *Hamlet*, although this could be justified in many other ways as well” (231). If this intention was not clear to his Marxist critics after their reading of *Specters*, the title of Derrida’s response alone, “Marx and Sons,” should have clarified the issue. In reading the gesture of paternal filiation and affiliation in *Specters*, Derrida is, as he claims, emphasizing that “the question of woman and sexual difference is at the heart of this analysis of spectral filiation. Specifically, this question of sexual difference commands everything that is said, in *Specters of*

Marx, about ideology and fetishism” (231). He argues that this thread can be followed to his analysis of fetishism in *Glas* and especially to his reference to *Hamlet*, the paternal specter, and the “visor effect.” Presumptively, Derrida anticipates the question of inheritance and Marx, where we must consider that the rights to an inheritance (especially of one’s name, such as Marx) lie squarely with the father. One inherits the name of the father (Marx). When one claims exclusive rights to an inheritance, one is in essence arguing for possession of something. In the case of his Marxist critics, the “*presumptively* legitimate ‘Marxists’ and ‘communists’ and *presumptively* legitimate sons seem to complain . . . of having been dispossessed of his patrimony or ‘prioprietoriality’” (231). In this sense, Ahmad, Eagleton, and especially Spivak are, as exclusive heirs of Marx, “sons.” Derrida argues that this paternal filiation is merely a “legal fiction,” which applies historically not only to paternity but also to maternity. He underscores this point brilliantly in his invocation of messianicity without messianism. For if this gesture conjures the Messiah or Jewish figure, we should indeed recognize that Jewishness is handed down through the maternal line, not the paternal line. It is at this interstice, the paternal filiation with respect to Marx and the maternal filiation regarding the messianic, where we find a necessary negation, where the father (Marx) is undercut by the question of woman and sexual difference that has been all but silent, there yet not there. At this scene where the negation occurs, Derrida opens up the question of filiation, affiliation, and possession in a manner that encompasses the other. We are all heirs of Marx, as well as the multiple and contradictory orders that he has handed down. This argument that Derrida proposes will be most relevant in Chapter Four when I discuss what we might possibly inherit from Derrida.

The third juncture, the *perverformative*, consists of two relations necessary for any formulation of repoliticization. The first relation is simply taking into consideration a

performative dimension of the text, either in a linguistic sense or regarding trace and writing, all of which are always determined and overdetermined, the latter of which being the second relation. Derrida believes that the argumentation in his texts over the last quarter of century has been *overdetermined* primarily because he has always wanted to work outside of Austin's program or to attempt to

transform the theory of the performative from within, to deconstruct it, which is to say, to overdetermine the theory itself, to put it to work in a different way, within a different "logic"—by challenging, here again, a certain "ontology," a value of full presence that conditions (*phenomenologico modo*) the intentionalist motifs of seriousness, "felicity," the simple opposition between felicity and infelicity, and so on. (*Specters* 224)

He refers to several texts that attempt to pervert the performative, noting foremost "Signature Event Context" and ending with *Specters*. He does not say much about the extent to which he does this, but considering the texts that he mentions, we can assume that this perverformative project has a great deal to do with reversing the order of operations in various phenomena and history that we perceive to be rather natural. Before I discuss briefly how Derrida describes his approach to the performative in "Signature Event Context," I would first like to rehearse quickly Austin's notion of the performative.

In *How to Do Things with Words*, J. L. Austin problematizes a widely-held belief in philosophy at that time, a belief that to utter sentences is to state facts, which can either be true or false. Austin argues, on the contrary, that true/false sentences form only one particular range of utterances, what we might consider constative utterances. He suggests that there is another form of utterances, performative, which performs a certain kind of action. Through a rigorous philosophical approach, he attempts to distinguish between a constative and performative utterance. One initial distinction might be that while the former *reports* something, the latter *does* something. For example, in the case of marriage, the utterance "I do"—one of Austin's most famous examples of a performative—performs an action and carries with it a certain force,

whose effects are substantial. One of the effects is that those two parties involved in the marriage enter into a legally binding agreement in which both parties become not only responsible to each other, but also to the State. A constative version of “I do” might be a response to a question such as “Do you feel better?” If I were to utter, “I do (feel better)” I would not have entered an agreement, obligation, or contract. The utterance would not have carried with it a force similar to the one in the context of marriage. To respond “I do” in this case would be simply to report on the status of my health.

As Timothy Gould argues, this distinction might seem “quite simple and even simple-minded” (20), to characterize the constative and performative as simply to say something and do something. Austin himself recognizes the stakes in challenging the assumption in philosophy that to say something is to *state* something. If, for philosophy, statements can either be true or false, then Austin wants to consider the performative a statement that might fail or be *unhappy* (infelicitous). For a smooth, happy (felicitous) performative, six conditions must be satisfied:

There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,

the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and completely.

Where, as often, the procedure is designed for the use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further

must actually so conduct themselves subsequently. (14-5)

Austin notes that if we do not satisfy any one or more of these rules, our performative utterance will be unhappy. For Gould, Austin's strategy was "not to substitute performance and its various effects for truths. His strategy was rather to drag the fetish of true and false into the same swamp of assessment and judgment in which we find the dimension of happiness and unhappiness that afflicts our performative utterances" (23). Gould believes that Austin's motivation for decoupling the performative from the true/false dichotomy was that he wanted to locate in language those regions in which we might find (or fail to find) relations to the world and its inhabitants, or to locate what Derrida regards as the "difference of force." Austin is concerned with three forces, locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary, especially the latter two. A locutionary act, Austin explains, is "roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense" (108). It is the "utterance of certain noises, the utterance of certain words in a certain construction, and the utterance of them with a certain 'meaning' in the favourite philosophical sense of that word, i.e. with a certain sense and with a certain reference" (94). Austin defines illocutionary acts as utterances having a certain conventional force. These acts include informing, ordering, warning, and undertaking, and they involve the "securing of *uptake*" (116). The perlocutionary act, on the other hand, is "what we bring about or achieve *by saying* something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading" (108). So, if the illocutionary act is bound up with effects, the perlocutionary act produces effects. Of these two acts, Gould writes:

The locutionary act of saying, for instance, the words "I'm sorry" may have the illocutionary force of an apology. It might also have the force of a confession, or a provocation, or even a kind of oblique accusation. We must further distinguish between understanding that the words had the force of an apology and the fact that the apology was *accepted*. When the former occurs, then Austin says that what he calls "*uptake*" has been secured. The latter, on the other hand, is that sort of thing that Austin calls the perlocutionary force or effect of the utterance. Such effects might include mollifying, or indeed, further irritating the offended party. (29)

In “Signature Event Context,” Derrida argues that Austin’s analysis seems to have one root, despite his attempt to locate language beyond the true/false dichotomy in an analysis that is “patient, open, aporetic, in constant transformation, often more fruitful in the recognition of its impasses than in its positions” (322). The common root is that Austin’s notion of locution and its structure fail to take into account a system of predicates called “*graphematic in general*,” which presupposes the value of context. What Austin calls “total context” depends significantly on the series of “infelicities” that might affect the event of the performative, a series that always returns this element of total context. One of these essential elements is consciousness, “the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject for the totality of his locutory act” (322). Performative utterances are contingent upon the conscious intentionality of the one who utters and the one who receives the utterance. The consequence of this intentionality, for Derrida, is that, teleologically, no *remainder* escapes the present totalization of language. In other words, both the infelicitous and felicitous remain within the total structure of language and make possible the performative utterance. The performative takes context and the *graphematic* of writing into account. Derrida cites two passages from *How to Do Things with Words*. The first passage explains that appropriate circumstances are necessary for the performative to be happy, and in the second passage, Austin discusses the six possibilities and origins of the infelicities of the performative utterance, which I have noted above. Derrida argues that these six criteria are typical of the philosophical tradition that Austin wants to avoid. Of this tendency for Austin to invoke the totalizing context where intentionality remains the organizing principle, Derrida writes:

It consists in recognizing that the possibility of the negative (here, the *infelicities*) is certainly a structural possibility, that failure is an essential risk in the operations under consideration; and then, with an almost *immediately simultaneous* gesture made in the

name of a kind of ideal regulation, an exclusion of this risk as an accidental, exterior one that teaches us nothing about the language phenomenon under consideration. (323)

Derrida's point is that Austin seems so consumed with making his argument regarding the performative utterances and illocutory acts that he fails to engage the conventionality of the locutory act itself, which precedes illocution. The arbitrariness of the sign and of language precedes the possibility of the constitution of the performative. Without language and its originary relation to meaning, the performative does not exist. This point raises Derrida's second argument, that the risk or failure of the performative is just as essential a predicate as the conventions that make possible the felicitous statement. The possibility of failure and risk, that which constitutes an accident, is necessary for the success of the performative, and we cannot speak of the success and failure of illocution or perlocution without accounting for the structure of locution in a general, systematic manner. Derrida refers to this risk or failure of language as a certain structural parasitism inherent in language. This structural parasitism will play its most important role in what Austin excludes as "anomalous, exceptional, 'non-serious,' that is, *citation* (on the stage, in a poem, or in a soliloquy), the determined modification of a general citationality—or rather, a general iterability—without which there would not even be a 'successful' performative" (325). Derrida then recognizes that a successful performative is an impure performative, which Austin himself concludes. The utterance "I do" can only be authentic in certain circumstances. Out of context, this utterance functions merely as an impure citation. Derrida sets up this problem of citationality in order to approach the performative from another aspect, not necessarily from the side of the positive, happy performative or the negative, infelicitous utterance, but from the indispensability of the graphematic structure of language. An event or an occurrence during which a performative succeeds, presupposes not only its citational double that must fail, but also the coded, iterable statement which becomes identifiable as a

citation. In this gesture, the intentionality of the speaker of the utterance becomes secondary to “different types of marks or chains of iterable marks,” whereby “the intention which animates utterance will never be completely present in itself and its content. The iteration which structures it a priori introduces an essential dehiscence and demarcation” (326). From this formulation, Derrida does not wish to conclude anything outside of the following: the effects of speech, of the performative, of writing, and of ordinary language “do not exclude what is generally opposed to them term by term, but on the contrary presuppose it in dissymmetrical fashion, as the general space of their possibility” (327). The logic by which Derrida is “authorized” to posit the notion of dissymmetrical effects of language is *differance*, that which signifies the difference between specter and spirit, where the “specter is not only the carnal apparition of the spirit, its phenomenal body, its fallen and guilty body, it is also the impatient and nostalgic waiting for redemption, namely, once again, for a spirit” (*Specters* 136). *Differance* then names the subtle difference between the successful citation/iterable mark (spirit) and its failed citational double (specter), which awaits the redemption of the felicitous performative.

I would now like to return to “the particular moment” that Derrida mentions in “Marx and Sons,” the lecture during which he addresses “specters of Marx.” At this crucial point, we arrive at the term “inheritance.” If the lecture presents itself not in the present on the question of inheritance, but as a response to the 11th of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, we might generally regard this moment as one where Derrida takes a position on “responsibility” in an un-timely, performative fashion. In this performative context, we might substitute the terms felicitous-infelicitous with faithful-unfaithful, terms suggested by Derrida himself, and consider performatively how one is to be faithful to Marx’s heritage. Derrida hints that *Specters* in fact is a book about being faithful, or “unfaithful *out of* faithfulness” to Marx and tells us

straightforwardly that it is a book about inheritance and applies to everyone, man and woman.

Specters is also about about what an inheritance can “enjoin” in a manner both contradictory and binding. What exactly is our responsibility in responding to a heritage that hands us contradictory orders?

Please permit the following digression in the form of a question: Is Derrida’s characterization of contradictory orders not similar to what Fanon encountered in attempting to reconcile the prodigious theses of Europe with how Europe chose to apply (and not apply) those very theses to its colonial occupations? How was Fanon to respond to and feel responsible for both the humanism and Enlightenment about which he had learned as a student of the lyceums and universities of Martinique and France, especially after the discrimination he experienced as a soldier fighting for France and as an Algerian revolutionary? Jean-Paul Sartre explains the difficulty of Fanon’s response in his Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* when “[the golden age of whitewashing] came to an end; the mouths opened by themselves; the yellow and black voices still spoke of our humanism but only to reproach us with our inhumanity. . . . We did not doubt but that they would accept our ideals, since they accused us of not being faithful to them” (7-8).

He continues:

A new generation came on the scene, which changed the issue. With unbelievable patience, its writers and poets tried to explain to us that our values and the true facts of their lives did not hang together, and that they could neither reject them completely nor yet assimilate them. By and large, what they were saying was this: ‘You are making us into monstrosities; your humanism claims we are at one with the rest of humanity but your racist methods set us apart. . . [Still,] “what native in his senses would go off to massacre the fair sons of Europe simply to become European as they are?” (8-9)

If Negri presumes that Derrida’s (deconstruction’s) approach is insufficient as a Marxian response to evolving global politics, then how are we to situate the revolutionary politics of Fanon, the one who argues that Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched? In conceiving of the various possibilities for responding to contradictory orders, we have on the one

hand Derridean deconstruction that anticipates the possibility and the phenomenality of the political and also the possibility of a hauntology or discourse on spectrality that makes possible ontology, theology, and positive or negative onto-theology (the question of the philosophical). On the other hand, we have Fanonian deconstruction, a new humanism, which I will discuss in more detail in chapter six, that presupposes the political in the form of a disruption to the ontological—the only way to escape the Manichean delirium of colonization is to deconstruct it, to destroy it—and the philosophical, which recognizes the indispensability of rationality. Both versions have Marxian dialectics as a foundational base from which to start, but both recognize that strict adherence to its orthodox principles will not be sufficient for their respective contexts. What seems to distinguish these two deconstructions is the same thing that distinguishes spirit from specter, speech from writing, and the performative from the constative: *différance*. I raise these points in this digression about Derrida and Fanon in order to suggest that Derrida's insistence on the performative context of his lecture may be more relevant than his critics and he himself seem willing to admit, and that his connection to Africa and Marx by way of Chris Hani should not be taken lightly. I will explore this idea in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

ACT III: . . . AFRICAN . . .

If Jacques Derrida has argued in “Marx and Sons” that many of his Marxist detractors have conveniently overlooked the performative context of his *Specters* lecture, Christopher Wise is one critical sympathizer of deconstruction who certainly has not missed this point. Ultimately, his critiques represent the filling in or closing up of fissures left open by many responses to *Specters*. Where many of these responses to the text range from engagements with the constellation of spectrality to the New International or from “messianicity without messianism” to justice and law, Wise has examined more closely Derrida’s relation not only to Marx and Marxism but also to Africa. He has also pondered Derrida’s failure to engage more fully on the question of Palestine, but I will not consider extensively the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in this dissertation. In this chapter, I will focus primarily on a more manifest connection between Derrida and Africa via several critiques by Wise: “Saying ‘Yes’ to Africa: Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*,” “Deconstructionism and Zionism: Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*,” “The Figure of Jerusalem: Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*,” and “Derrida and the Palestinian Question.” In looking at these texts, I would like to propose an alternative perspective on the “highly determinant context” in which Derrida presented *Specters*, one that opens up the possibility of Derrida deepening a solidarity with Africa, but also one that eventually leads us back to Fanon, Algeria, and “Cogito et histoire de la folie.”

To emphasize this approach, I will draw upon Geoffrey Bennington’s “Mosaic Fragment: if Derrida were an Egyptian . . . ,” take a brief look at Gayatri Spivak’s “Philosophy” from *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, and re-examine the Derridean terms *differance*, deconstruction, and spectrality to re-imagine Derrida’s performative act in the “highly determinant context” of the “Whither Marxism?” conference.

First, I would like to establish the rationale for opening up the question of Derrida as one who deepens his solidarity with Africa, a question that expresses an attempt to test the limits of deconstruction. As a form of intellectual and cultural decolonization, deconstruction is concerned with decolonization and Africa, a term I use to refer to the continent and its continuous quest to decolonize. Sanya Osha identifies four areas of reflection with respect to Africa's decolonization efforts: (1) "the changing sociopolitical conditions within the African continent"; (2) the inclusion of "global configurations within the contemporary movement and how they impact on the conditions in the African continent"; (3) the meditation on the "historical transformations in the discourse of decolonization itself in order to keep track of its turns and changes"; and (4) the reconceptualization of the "project and discourse of decolonization where and when necessary with a view to doing away with them altogether if old conceptual models fail to describe adequately present realities" (135). In this project, I am concerned with the fourth area, examining the manner in which Derrida and Fanon attempts to reconceptualize or renegotiate not only decolonization, but also that which may remain afterward. Furthermore, Osha mentions several African philosophers committed to the task of developing discourses on decolonization—Messay Kebede, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Kwasi Wiredu, and V. Y. Mudimbe, to name a few—and I would like to assert here that Derrida, in aligning himself with Africa, extends his intellectual currency to this cause.

The Specters of Derrida and Property Rights

Christopher Wise's orientation to and enthusiasm for *Specters* developed as early as April 1993 at the "Whither Marxism?" conference, where he was an attendee. Though Wise publicly discusses this orientation very little, one might gather that his initial enthusiasm originates with Derrida's dedication of his "Specters of Marx" lectures to Chris Hani and his mention of still-then-existent South African apartheid in an intellectual environment that promised Marxist

scholarship from all over the globe but failed to produce a single black African theorist on its roster of distinguished thinkers and participants. Therein lies the nature of his earliest disappointments, with the conference itself, not so much with Derrida's lectures. In truth, Wise considers *Specters* one of the most important texts of cultural theory to appear since the end of the Cold War. He writes, "Its literary virtuosity is as remarkable as its value in suggesting new directions for radical politics in the 'post-Marxist' dispensation, especially on an international scale" ("Saying 'Yes'" 124). His appreciation for Derrida's text converges at the place or "highly determinant context" that has been ignored by many, especially Derrida's Marxist critics. Of this context, Wise writes:

What must be emphasized is that *Specters of Marx* functioned in the first instance as a voiced performance at a specific place and time. Not unlike the Platonic dialogues Derrida has famously subverted, *Specters of Marx* must be construed as a book that seeks to subvert its own status as a merely reified and spatial artifact. Although surprisingly few commentators have remarked upon this book's deconstruction of the book form, it is finally impossible to divorce *Specters of Marx* "performativity" and stubbornly anti-logocentric basis in temporality. (124)

Wise attributes the lack of critical attention of *Specters* as an example of the deconstruction of the book form and as a performance at a particular place and time to Derrida's status as a "uniquely *African* theorist of Sephardic, Maghrebian, and Judaic experience." In "Deconstruction and Zionism," Wise has remarked that many theorists, especially those included in Michael Sprinker's *Ghostly Demarcations*, have failed also to analyze Derrida's discussion of the Middle East, "his remarks on the state of Israel and 'a certain Jewish [i.e.] Zionist discourse on the Promised Land" (56). The myopic range of Marxist critique becomes even more regrettable when we consider that *Ghostly Demarcations* omits not only Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Ghostwriting," but also any other feminist analyses of *Specters*, which is actually a text that problematizes patriarchal filiation and affiliation. Regarding the contributors to Sprinker's volume, Wise notes that they offer impressive analyses of Derrida's formulation of

spectrality, but none of them puts forth convincing counterarguments to show how Derrida errs in his assertion that Marx remains stuck in a mythology of the real. Wise writes, “The best that critics in Sprinker’s volume seem able to muster is that Derrida, like Marx, equally remains ‘a prisoner of ontology’ [Negri 13], or that Marx may be more ‘sensitive’ to spectrality than Derrida suggests [Jameson 58], adding very little to Jameson’s by now thirty-year-old argument that deconstruction promotes a metaphysics of the text, or a ‘dogma of the signifier’ [*Prison-House of Language* 195]” (“Deconstruction and Zionism” 57). According to Wise, Spivak is perhaps one of the only critics who has challenged Derrida’s critique of Marx in any productive manner.

For Wise, very few (if any) criticisms touch upon anything remotely close to the political, namely the question of Africa or of Palestine. He argues that anyone unwilling to suspend his or her preconceptions of Derrida’s work as being exclusively Western, therefore outside of the scope of the Africa and the Middle East, will undoubtedly blunt the coup de force of *Specters* that is his critique of metaphysics latent within Marxist theory. Ultimately, Wise is challenging those who are proprietorial about Derrida in a manner consistent with Derrida’s analysis in both *Specters* and especially “Marx and Sons” regarding the proprietary nature of Marxists unwilling or unable to see, hear, or accept more than one specter of Marx, for there are always several specters, Derrida reminds us. To put this point another way, anyone unwilling to entertain critical possibilities outside of traditional deconstructionist criticism would be practicing something akin to proprietoriality or, more pointedly, “jealous possessiveness,” a phrase Derrida uses to characterize “so many Marxists” (“Marx and Sons” 222). Indeed, are there not several specters of Derrida that haunt us? I reproduce here Derrida’s reaction to Spivak, who professes her proprietoriality for Marx, to speak more directly about this point: “In the name of what, on the

basis of what claim, exactly, does one even dare *confess* a ‘proprietary reaction’? Merely making such a confession presupposes that a title deed has been duly authenticated, so that one can adamantly continue to invoke it in defending one’s property. But who ever authenticated this property right, especially in the present case?” (“Marx and Sons” 222). Who can lay claim to know Derrida more than the others? We know that he was never particularly enthusiastic about those critics who have never opened a single text of his, but for those of us who have been devoted readers of Derrida, why have we been more than willing to accept these one-sided, Eurocentric narratives of Derrida’s work, simply because he himself has followed this trajectory? Wouldn’t this sort of occult following be akin to serving in the interests of author intentionality? I certainly do not want to discredit any of the work on Derrida that has appeared over the last thirty years, but I do want to raise the possibility that “the general economy of the system” in which Derrida’s work “appears” is perhaps much larger than has generally been considered.

I preempt Derrida’s own line of inquiry into property rights and “proprietary reaction” in order to allow for a general consideration of Wise’s critique to enter into this system. This Derridean logic, turned against or onto itself rather, is indeed an example of deconstruction, not necessarily auto-or self-critique, as self-presence is impossible, Derrida tells us. Derrida’s critique of property rights invites his critics *and* followers alike to recognize the various specters that manifest themselves in his work, especially if these specters are not explicit. Wise’s approach arguably represents an acceptance of this invitation, which would enable deconstruction to challenge its own scope, extend its parameters, and open itself more to the possibility of the other. Counter to what his Marxists critics have proposed when arguing that deconstruction grants itself immunity while deconstructing Marxism, Derrida genuinely invites his readers to point out the fissures that may be implicit or apparent in his critiques. Indeed, it

would be disingenuous of him if he refused to accept de-constructive criticism, especially given his relationship to deconstruction and his open acceptance of an Hegelian unhappy consciousness as early as his “Cogito et historie de la folie” that inspires one to challenge the master in good faith. This consciousness seems more than simply a responsibility to the text, but furthermore an obligation, one that summons someone like Derrida to critique his mentor Michel Foucault in “Cogito” on the subject of Reason. As highly as Wise regards Derrida, much of his enthusiasm for *Specters* began to erode during the 2001-2 and 2002-2 academic years when he taught U.S. foreign policy and cultural studies at the University of Jordan, Amman, during which time the Israelis conducted military operations in Ramallah, Jenin, Gaza, and elsewhere. The majority of his students were of Palestinian origin, as was true of most of the residents at that time. Of this period, he writes in “Derrida and the Palestinian Question,” “it was possible to hear raucous protests, marches, flag-burnings (of US and Israeli flags) from the seminar room where we met” (para. 2). His concerns about the questions raised in *Specters* were further shaped by this experience, and in this particular article on the question of Palestine, his hope is that the reader might hear the echo of his students’ voices and disappointments in his work.

Based on the previous considerations, I proceed with the following critique of *Specters*, which is framed particularly around the concerns of those who wish to see the scope of Derrida’s work extend beyond the usual Western paradigms, and those who have neither an authentic, original orientation to Western intellectualism nor an affinity for it. (Here, I am thinking of Wise’s Palestinian students and others similar to them.) Also, this critique represents a challenge to the limits of deconstruction. It is to ask, Will deconstruction forever remain a “prisoner of metaphysics” or an unorthodox philosophy relegated to the confines of Western and/or Greek history? Or can it exist as uniquely other than or prior to metaphysics and philosophy, which

Derrida has repeatedly insisted? Or, better yet, can deconstruction be something inherently African and/or Egyptian analogically?

Affirmation

Wise argues that deconstruction, despite its limitations, may be commensurate with traditional “African” concerns, more specifically “the European stigmatization of illiteracy, the iconoclasticism of Judeo-Muslim hermeneutics, and the orality-aurality of traditional African culture” (124). Looking back at the context of the “Whither Marxism?” conference, which did not engage a single black African theorist or barely made any reference to an African nation, Wise remembers two guests who could claim African identity: Jacques Derrida and Abdul JanMohammed, whose paper on Michel Foucault’s indebtedness to Marx proved largely irrelevant to the question of Marxism’s future in Africa. The sole, relevant connection to Africa is Derrida’s dedication to Hani at the outset of his lectures, a dedication which represents a “violent rhetorical strategy” or “deconstructive intervention” for Wise. The intervention begins with the first sentence of *Specters*: “One name for another, a part for the whole: the historic violence of Apartheid can always be treated as a metonymy” (xv). The metonymic displacement of this historic violence functions on at least two levels: (1) for me, it signifies the violence endemic not only to apartheid, but also to other oppressive systems. Using this formulation, Derrida seems to suggest that we can locate violence (in a general sense) in places such as South Africa and the “Promised Land,” where “Middle-Eastern violence” is “an unleashing of messianic eschatologies” and “infinite combinatory possibilities of holy alliances” (*Specters* 58). Violence can also be found in “economic wars, national wars, wars among minorities, the unleashing of racisms and xenophobias, ethnic conflicts, conflicts of culture and religion that are tearing apart so-called democratic Europe and the world today” (*Specters* 80). (2) For Wise, the metonymic displacement consists largely on the level of apartheid as a rhetorical strategy and

deconstructive intervention where justice and the other is something *beyond* deconstruction. He writes, “If apartheid, which is said to be defunct but which flourishes today in places like Israel, Mauritania, and the Sudan, is evoked for its metonymic value, the historic violence of apartheid seems to justify Derrida’s usurping of Chris Hani’s rightful place” (“Saying ‘Yes’” 126). Wise believes that Derrida, claiming Hani’s place, ultimately serves as a “stand-in” for Hani and, in doing so, emphasizes the “undeconstructible alterity of Hani.” According to Wise, the problem with and fortunate thing about this strategy is not simply that Derrida risks dislodging Hani, but that we do not know if justice will be delivered in such a gesture of standing in for Hani, as justice is something for which one awaits. The dedication amounts then to Derrida’s affirmation of his solidarity for a fellow African, rather than “‘speak[ing] for’ that absent black African voice” (126).

This affirmation of solidarity tends to get lost when Derrida’s readers ignore the racial and ethical dimensions of his oeuvre. For an apparent example of these dimensions, Wise points us to Derrida’s “White Mythology,” where he defines metaphysics as “A white mythology which assembles and reflects Western culture: the white man takes his own mythology (Indo-European mythology), his logos—that is, the mythos of his idiom, for the universal form of that which it is still his inescapable desire to call Reason” (11). Derrida then defines white mythology as a metaphysics that has “effaced in itself that fabulous scene which brought it into being, and which yet remains, active and stirring, inscribed in white ink, an invisible drawing covered over in the palimpsest” (*ibid*). We see here, in a style atypical of what Negri refers to as Derrida’s “sad sidestepping,” that Reason, metaphysics, mythology, and logos are all Western, European constructions, each contingent upon its ability to fold into itself its “fabulous scene” of origin. After this constant folding, we are always left with this fabulous scene, which is always

screaming out to be deconstructed. These two citations from “White Mythology” return us curiously to the citation taken from Derrida’s “Cogito et histoire de la folie” that forms the basis of this work: “A bit like how the anti-colonialist revolution can only liberate itself from a *de facto* Europe or West in the name of transcendental Europe, that is, of Reason, and by letting itself first be won over by its values, its language, its technology, its armaments; an irreducible contamination or incoherence that no cry—I am thinking of Fanon’s—could exorcise, no matter how pure and intransigent it is.” If Reason is the white man’s mythology reflecting and assembling his culture, and sites of colonial occupation are sites that experience the inculcation of Reason, we can see precisely how problematic it may be for the anti-colonialist revolution to liberate itself from a framework which constantly evokes the scene of metaphysics and mythology. This “Cogito” reference, in the context of Wise’s discussion, points us toward the indissociability of Reason and revolution, much like the mutually inclusive combination of madness and reason in the reference’s original context. It also leads the way for conceiving a “pure and intransigent” cry in the infinite loop of Reason, in which Derrida positions not only Frantz Fanon but also himself. One could say, then, that his original affirmation of solidarity with Africa coincides with his initial invocation of Fanon in “Cogito,” which emerges as a “fabulous scene,” only to experience a dissolution in subsequent publications with the effacement of the Fanon reference.

If we follow Wise’s argument, that Derrida is always seeking to undermine the metaphysical and religious biases built into Western understandings of the real, we might conclude that Derrida unveils this disentanglement in *Specters* by invoking Hani. To illustrate this point, Wise does not invoke Derrida, the African, but Derrida, the jewgreek, who “appeals to the Greco-Roman as the dark brother.” He continues, “It is no exaggeration to think of this

prodigal son of a Greek father as engaged in a form of parricide, as a Maccabean slayer of Zeus” (“Saying ‘Yes’” 127). To make sense of the jewgreek figure in relation to the racial and ethical dimensions of Derrida’s critique, as well as language (alphabetic writing versus hieroglyphic writing), it might be more instructive to consult Geoffrey Bennington’s “Mosaic Fragment: if Derrida were an Egyptian . . . ,” Derrida’s “The Pit and the Pyramid,” and Gayatri Spivak’s “Philosophy.”

Pyramids, *Aufhebung*, Signs (P a S)

Bennington begins his “Mosaic Fragment” with the following association: “Jewgreek is greekjew: but greekjew is Egyptian” (97). He devotes the remainder of his fragments to exploring Derrida’s identity as one who is neither wholly Jew nor Greek, but one who arrives prior to those designations: an Egyptian. He argues that Egyptian motifs appear regularly at important moments in Derrida’s text, more specifically Derrida’s readings of Plato and Hegel, and asks, “What is the place of ‘Egypt’ in deconstruction? Is there any sense in insisting on Derrida, greekjew or jewgreek, as North African, analogically Egyptian?” To begin to answer these questions, Bennington suggests that one need look no further than Derrida’s “definition” of deconstruction, “the systematic interruption of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*” and that which attacks and criticizes “such things as totalization and absolute knowledge” (“Mosaic Fragment” 98). Bennington points to several texts, particularly “The Pit and the Pyramid,” in which Derrida opposes philosophy, dialectics, metaphysics, logos, alphabetic writing and Reason to hieroglyphic writing, which resists the movements of the aforementioned. Deconstruction finds itself in a position similar but more difficult than hieroglyphic writing as it attempts to resist metaphysics, but deconstruction can only do so by searching for the remainders discarded by philosophy. As such, deconstruction finds itself “playing an interminable game” with Hegelianism, “which it is desperately important not to seem to have won, at risk of having to

accept the end of any ‘foundationalist’ philosophy, and therefore the uselessness of such erudite questioning of it” (“Mosaic Fragment” 99). Derrida begins this game in “The Pit and the Pyramid” by “mark[ing] effectively the displacements of the sites of conceptual inscription” and “articulat[ing] the systematic chains of the movement according to their proper generality and their proper period, according to their unevenesses [*sic*], their inequalities of development, the complex figures of their inclusions, implications, exclusions, etc.” (72). For Derrida, it is rather “foolish” to think that one could produce a reductive account of any given concept by eradicating differences or that one could locate an origin or overlook “long sequences and powerful systems.”

In “The Pit and the Pyramid,” Derrida attempts to develop an account of metaphysics by examining the presence of the theory of the sign on the basis of being-present in Hegel’s work, specifically “Philosophy of Spirit,” the third part of Hegel’s *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. I have not the space here to develop this sequence as adequately as Derrida, but will sketch briefly the components of Derrida’s argument. In Hegel’s speculative semiology, the sign is understood according to the structure and movement of *Aufhebung* (often translated as “sublation” or “subreption”), “by means of which the spirit, elevating itself above the nature in which it was submerged, at once suppresses and retains nature, sublimating nature into itself, accomplishing itself as internal freedom, and thereby presenting itself to itself for itself, *as such*,” according to Derrida (76). Derrida describes three movements of the development of spirit—subjective, objective, and absolute. The subjective spirit refers to the spirit’s relation to itself and is an “ideal totality of the Idea” (concept). Subjective spirit exists in the form of internal freedom, as Being-near-to-itself. The objective spirit refers to a world that produces and is produced in the form of reality. Freedom in this movement becomes a present *necessity*

(*Notwendigkeit*). The final movement of spirit, absolute, unifies objective and subjective spirit.

The unity produces itself eternally and bears absolute truth. Derrida notes that the first two movements are finite, in that they are transitory.

One way that we might understand the function of the three movements of spirit is to consider them in the larger scheme of reconciliation in the Hegelian system, which emphasizes the completion of a cycle of assertion, negation, and elimination or elevation (*Aufhebung*), or in other words, the transitions of the dialectical process. For example, in the case of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, if we accept that Hegel's intention is circumscribed/written within the dialectical experience and moments described therein, those moments are to be performed by the reader of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Each moment in it is said to present itself to the reader as an immediate appearance of the truth of a phenomenon. Jacques Lezra explains that this immediate appearance only offers us an impoverished sense of truth that excludes reflection, primarily because the “‘initial,’ ‘empirical’ moment when thought takes account of the experience of the senses” or every term at issue

bears not only upon ‘my’ concrete experience, but on the general possibility of being-experienced of the phenomenon, and on the *abstractness* of the subject experiencing: the ‘here’ and ‘now’ of ‘my’ experience of ‘this’ object *both* locate and particularize the experience, *and* make it comprehensible beyond that particularism, as ‘I’ can serve to indicate now one, now another grammatical person, and ‘here’ and ‘now’ shift in this or that circumstance. (21)

In other words, the initial moment brings to consciousness the experience of truth being made available to me at a particular moment. This moment also makes me aware that I am no longer simply “I,” that there is another object before me that denies me an immediate knowledge of myself.²² Once this particular experience presents itself on condition of historicity and as a

²² If we recall, it is this particular moment that Max Stirner recuperates from Hegel and finalizes into a radicalized oneness/ownness, nearly securing his place as the last Hegelian for several Hegelian philosophers.

general form of negation proper to the structure of historicity itself, the second moment extends this initial account to the sphere of social relations or to the world, as Derrida writes. In this sphere, one enters into relations with others, the State and Religion attempt to formalize and legislate this realm, and the “slow-moving” and “self-mediating” process of History (*totality*, the meditatively identical-with-itself, “Absolute Knowing, or Spirit that knows itself as Spirit”) begins under the auspices of *necessity* (Lezra 22). Historical necessity is simply concrete historical events that become manifestations of the *necessary* movement of *Geist* through natural history. The third moment, then, would consist in unifying both the initial and secondary moments, the movement through the first epistemological level, through the conception of historical necessity, to the *totality* of thought to absolute truth.

In Hegelian speculative semiology, the sign serves as the site of the transition between two moments of full presence, Being as presence, or presence in the form of the object, and self-presence under the rubric of consciousness. The sign shuttles from the “here” and “now” of “my” experience when I know I am no longer “I” through the sphere of social relations when “my” weakness moves through the “self-mediating” procession of consciousness up the scale of generalities until I reach the moment of Absolute truth and knowledge. The sign defers this sequence of self-presence in the following manner, according to Derrida:

The process of the sign has a history, and *signification* is even history *comprehended*: between an original presence and its circular reappropriation in a final presence. The self-presence of absolute knowledge and the consciousness of Being-near-to-itself in logos, in the absolute concept, will have been distracted from themselves only for the time of a detour and for the time of a sign. The time of the sign, then, is the time of referral. It signifies self-presence, refers presence to itself, organizes the circulation of its provisionality. (“Pit” 76)

In essence, the sign announces itself, twice: first attesting to its self-presence and later circulating to affirm its final presence. The circularity or movement of the sign denotes both deferral and difference between self and final presence.

Traditionally, this history of the sign has conformed to the metaphysical gesture that governs philosophy, in which semiology falls under the jurisdiction of psychology. Derrida traces this model back to Aristotle, as does Hegel, who writes, “Aristotle’s books *on the soul*, along with his essays on particular aspects and states of the soul, are for this reason still the most admirable, perhaps even the sole, work speculative interest on this topic” (*Philosophy of Mind* 5). Hegel believes that the primary aim of the philosophy of spirit can only be to reintroduce the unity of idea and principle into the theory of mind. Derrida argues that not even Saussure deviates from the idea that semiology proceeds from psychology.

Semiology also is a part of the theory of the imagination, which links representation (*Vorstellung*), intelligence (*Intelligenz*), and sensible intuition/immediacy in Hegel’s formulation. Since sensible immediacy is subjective, intelligence must lift and conserve (*Aufhebung*) this immediacy to be both internal and external. Intelligence then “*recalls itself* to itself in becoming objective. . . . By means of *Erinnerung* the content of sensible intuition becomes an image, freeing itself from immediacy and singularity in order to permit the passage to conceptuality. The image thus interiorized in memory is no longer *there*, no longer existent or present, but preserved in an unconscious dwelling, conserved without consciousness” (“Pit” 77). As intelligence keeps these images in reserve, we can conceive of these reserves as an unconscious or dark pit. From this pit, we are led to the Egyptian desert where the pyramid stands as an enigma and is used to designate the sign for Hegel. The sign then becomes a kind of incarnation, a unity of the signifying body and the signified ideality. The opposition of soul and body, and the opposition of the intelligible and the sensory condition the difference between the signified (an animating activity) and the signifier (a body). The body, for Hegel, is not only animated, but also a tomb and a sign of death. In a sense, it preserves life in consecrating its

disappearance. It shelters life from death. The body of the sign becomes monumental in the manner in which it encloses, preserves, and maintains the soul. At the heart of the monument, the soul keeps itself alive, by, ironically, exposing itself to death in “its living relation to its own body.”

According to Derrida, Hegel insists that the pyramid is a sign rather than a symbol. Signs, known particularly for their arbitrary nature, show no resemblance, participation, or analogy between the signified and the signifier. As a sign, the pyramid emphasizes the condition for the arbitrariness of the sign in two ways. First, the soul consigned to the pyramid is *foreign*, Derrida emphasizes (84). In simpler terms, the soul that emerges in the pyramid neither belongs to nor resembles the architecture in which it is kept. The soul also does not bear any strong relationship to the body from which it emerges or from which it distinguishes itself. In this sense, the heterogeneity of the soul and the body is irreducible, much like the irreducibility of the intelligible and the sensory or the concept or signified ideality and the signifying body. The second manner in which the pyramid emphasizes its arbitrary nature is in its relationship of absolute alterity, in which the immediate intuition of the signifier “*represents an entirely other content* than that which it has for itself, entirely other than that whose full presence refers only to itself” (84). In this way, the sign is distinguished from the symbol, which Hegel clarifies in the “Introduction” devoted to “Symbolic Art” in *Aesthetics*, according to Derrida. In *Aesthetics*, Hegel remarks on the extent to which the Egyptians “went further than” the Hindus in expressing the concept of relations between the natural and the spiritual and the immortality of the soul. For Hegel, the Egyptians express this idea of immortality of the soul in *Aesthetics* as a “symbolic art-form” in the form of pyramids and labyrinths, “corridors more than mile long, rooms covered with hieroglyphs, built with the greatest of care” (14).

Inscribed within this model of the pyramid is Hegel's theory of the sign, in which alphabetic writing emerges as the privileged phonetic sequence. In the opposition of the intelligent and the sensory, alphabetic writing represents in the Hegelian philosophy of language the more intelligent. Derrida quotes Hegel at length on this point, which I will reproduce here:

Alphabetic writing is in and for itself the more intelligent form; in it the *word*, the worthiest mode, peculiar to the intelligence, of expressing its representations, is brought to consciousness and made an object of reflection. . . . Alphabetic writing thereby also retains the advantage of spoken language, that in written as in spoken language representations have genuine names; the name is the simple sign for the genuine, i.e. *simple* representation, not resolved into its determinations and compounded out of them. (*Philosophy of Mind* 197)

Hegel argues that the features of hieroglyphic writing are antagonistic to the “fundamental desideratum of language,” which is “the name.” This form of hieroglyphic writing for Hegel arises from an “antecedent analysis of ideas,” whereby its composition can be reduced simply to strokes, like the Chinese *Koua*, and is tied to the sensory representation of the thing that it represents. Hegel argues that hieroglyphic writing remains “too symbolic” and “has no relation to the sonorous sign.” It holds back the spirit in its quest for circumlocution and stands largely as a poor model for science and philosophy. Deconstruction, for its part, highlights the contradictions inherent in Hegel’s thought on this subject, especially with respect to Chinese grammar. Chinese syntax, supposedly in a state of stagnant primitiveness, remains counter to its formalism of mathematical abstraction. Derrida attributes this movement of contradiction to Hegelian speculative dialectics, which manifests itself particularly in “unnoticed contradictions, contradictions without concepts” (“The Pit” 102). The initial contradiction consists in determining the nature of the sign (pyramid) as symbol or symbolic, given that it appears as sign and not as symbol in Hegel’s earlier formulation. In fact, for Hegel, the symbol in Egypt is an ensemble of symbols, a polysemy, belonging necessarily to the structure of the hieroglyph, which works as mystery. The mysterious symbolism of the Egyptians is manifest directly as the

riddle, the objective riddle *par excellence* more specifically. Hegel, referring to the symbolism of the Sphinx in Greek myth, writes, “The symbol’s explanation lies and is to be sought in its self-contained meaning, in its spirit, just as the famous Greek inscription cries out to all mankind: Know Thyself! The light of consciousness is the clarity with which consciousness makes its own substantive content shine straight through the shape appropriate to it and in the existence of which it reveals itself alone” (*Aesthetics* 15).

It should be no surprise to Derrida’s readers that he ends his ruminations on metaphysics, Hegelian speculative dialectics, and the theory of the sign with Heidegger’s meditations on calculation and machines, both of which can be viewed as posing the same problem regarding function. Simply put, Hegel could never conceive of the place of a machine, which functions, does work, by itself. A machine is defined primarily by its pure functioning, not by its *telos* or meaning. The language of philosophy, philosophy itself, cannot think the machine, and it would be disingenuous to put an apparatus in place, as if it had already been anticipated. Derrida here is envisioning a system of constraints that repeats the “living,” “thinking,” and “speaking,” a system that protests against repetition. As such, this system can “no longer simply be included in metaphysics, and even less in Hegelianism.” Derrida encourages to look at the following passage from Heidegger’s *Identity and Difference*: “The time of thinking . . . is different from the time of calculation that pulls our thinking in all directions. Today the computer calculates thousands of relationships in one second. Despite their technical uses, they are inessential” (41). Derrida tells us that, to resolve this problem, we cannot reverse the direction of the hierarchy and attribute an essentiality to technology to change the machinery, the system, or the terrain. What we are left with, essentially, is a system that privileges speech over writing and one that privileges alphabetic writing over hieroglyphic writing. It is a system that subordinates the hieroglyph and

Egyptian architecture to Greek philosophy and science, which remain the highest achievement for the sign.

Bennington to the Rescue, or Spivak with the Last Word

Derrida traces the history of metaphysics from Aristotle through Hegel to the present, and enables us to view the problematic subordination of hieroglyphic writing and the possibility of its success in a system of constraints. Despite Derrida's adequate sketches in "The Pit and the Pyramid," one may still emerge with the sense that deconstruction has truly drawn itself in a corner. To rescue Derrida and deconstruction from this fraught position, Bennington takes a Kantian approach and reads Derrida as an "Egyptian." The Kantian exercise of recuperating Derrida from metaphysics begins with Bennington situating him between Kant the Jew and Hegel the Greek, and also Levinas the Jew, against whom Derrida apparently has never really objected, and Heidegger the Greek, without whom deconstruction could not be possible. I will now characterize these figures briefly. To broach the relation between Kant and Hegel, Bennington refers to Derrida's *Glas*, where the Kantian position is linked to that of the Jew, as Hegel conceives it. In Hegel's formulation, the Jew is condemned to alienation, cut from Mother Nature and any fixed domicile, and bound to the cut itself. He wanders the earth as a nomad and is in "touch not with a transcendent truth but with quasi-transcendence which can only take the (formless) form of a command and of a law one cannot understand—which cannot therefore be rational—but which is suffered, without mediation, in its letter rather than its spirit" ("Mosaic" 101). Wise reminds us that Judaic theology celebrates the world coming into being after a divine act of speech. God speaks the world into existence, and for the orthodox Jew, the world is "always already saturated with the linguistic" ("Saying 'Yes'" 132). This dynamic places Kant and the Jews in a paradigm of oppositional thinking, in which they are stuck between a formalism of the law and an empiricism of events, namely the coming about of the law through

the divine speech act or, in other words, the experience of the spirit that produces effects and takes on the material form. Once these boundaries of formal law and event become apparent, the Jew, Kant specifically, can then fix the boundaries of what is knowable and distance himself from the infinite and unknowable, to which he remains enslaved. Bennington then tells us to imagine Derrida first as Kant, not the Kant of the Enlightenment but Hegel's Kant whose YHWE is Hegel. Hegel as God puts Derrida (who is actually the "stand-in" for Kant the Jew) in his sufferable place and imposes limits upon what is knowable and what remains an unknowable absolute knowledge. As suffering Jew, Derrida is subjected interminably to an "elaboration of a law always in retreat and mystery, jealous of its truth that we can never know, but whose traces we can follow, at best, never arriving at a present perception or an experience" (102).

Bennington's next move is quite interesting though rather complicated. He argues that if Derrida is to follow the Hegelian track, which permits yet another reading of metaphysics, Derrida will assume the role of Hegel's shadow or double, thus becoming both Hegel and Kant. The move also permits Derrida to make Hegel his "doubly mysterious God." As Kant, Derrida the Greek, an advocate of metaphysics, finds himself perpetually trying to cut himself from Hegel, and as Hegel, Derrida finds himself attached to the cut from which he's tried to cut himself. Bennington writes, "Show that Hegel never really escaped from Judaism by making him your YHWE. Striving for finite mastery of the letter of philosophy, enslave yourself to the infinite you admit you cannot understand. Whence deconstruction's vertigo, fascination and repulsion, nomadic wandering in the desert, failure to announce any truth or promise any knowledge" (102).

For Bennington, Derrida is most Greek in his "Violence and Metaphysics" when he defends Heidegger against Levinas, "insisting on the absolute necessity of speaking alterity in the language of the Greek *logos*, claiming thereby that if Jewish thought is other than Greek

thought, it can nonetheless not be absolutely external to it, but folded back in via the non-dialectical figure of invagination, non-identical same which is not different from *différance*, but the *milieu* of history in general” (“Mosaic Fragment” 103). The necessity of speaking alterity in the language of Greek *logos* seems to be a clarification of an elaboration of Bennington’s earlier formulation of Derrida as both Hegel and Kant. Simultaneously, Derrida recognizes both a truth we can never really know but the indispensability of logos in explaining this point of unknowable truth. Given that Derrida cannot be Hegel’s Kant or Jew exclusively, especially if he agrees with Hegel regarding the extent to which *différance* must be thought of as “the name for the impossibility of difference ever being absolute or pure,” Derrida as Greek makes it further implausible for him to offer an authentic Jewish reading of any text.

Bennington argues that the problem of attempting to label Derrida “essentially” Jewish is “already a Greek gesture: the Jewish reading is a Greek reading” (104). He also reminds us of the importance of this position and how it plays out in Derrida’s defense of Heidegger and Paul de Man. This perhaps might be why Wise’s attempts to make Derrida essentially Jewish in “Deconstruction and Zionism” and “The Figure of Jerusalem,” though quite convincing, loses a great deal of force. Wise regards the Jewish/Greek conflation as the “Shylock Complex,” or the “violent conversion of the Jew to logocentric modes of interpretation” (“The Figure of Jerusalem” 73). His concern, however, is that the critics whose readings rely on the Shylock Complex discount the possibility of non-European belief systems. Wise argues that Derrida, for his part, promotes a Jewish concept of the Messiah in his reading of the “universal concept” of messianicity. Later in the essay, Wise notes that Derrida associates messianicity with “a stylistic Heideggerian gesture,” but he reads this gesture as reinforcing the “hegemony of Judaic belief systems, promoting a spiritualist theology rather than a logocentric one” (“The Figure of

Jerusalem” 79). This move on the surface seems rather strange given both Heidegger’s affiliation with the Nazis and the nature of the Heideggerian gesture of the gift of the *Dikē*, Greek for justice, the paradoxical gift without debt and without guilt. I find these two points rather difficult to reconcile with Wise’s claim that Derrida is a Jewish thinker who is doing the reader a disservice by not making this fact more manifest. Indeed, the deconstructive analysis that Wise offers us in the way of bringing to light the implicit omissions in *Specters* is helpful in that we can begin to understand the extent of Derrida’s Judaic exegesis. But if Wise finds that Derrida’s readings are not Jewish enough, then it confirms Bennington’s assertion, that Derrida indeed is still a little too Greek. If we are looking to place Derrida, our alternative is to consider something before the opposition of Jew and Greek, which I believe Wise has tried to do with “Saying ‘Yes’ to Africa.” Bennington’s analysis overall subsists in making a general connection among Derrida, Sigmund Freud, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau around the figure of Moses through a sophisticated pastiche of quotes taken from all three writers, as well as Warburton and James Joyce. In focusing on Moses, Bennington intends to construct him largely as a legislator, one who

speaks a language incomprehensible to those for whom he legislates: only his law will make the people capable of understanding his law. In the absence of understanding, the legislator must act violently, illegally, to get the law accepted: he pretends it was given by God. In the absence of understanding, the people cannot know that this is the legislator and not a charlatan—what indubitable signs could there be of a real legislator? (110-1)

The legislator acts as a figure of absolute exteriority, and his logic can be extended to writing and thinking in general. Bennington argues that any event of thought involves an undecidability, and thus, in any event, the legislator always risks being made a charlatan. Bennington offers us an example of the uncertainty inherent in the role of the legislator when he invokes Martin Bernal, whose *Black Athena* project has invited criticism and has “potentially condemned [him] to expulsion” from academia. Arguing against what he views as the systematic

repression of Afroasiatic roots of Ancient Greece, Bernal might be viewed as a legislator.

According to Bennington, Bernal says that new approaches tend to come from the outside, though this privileged space also raises the possibility that the outsider might be a “quack.”

Bennington writes:

Academics, Bernal says, academically nervous of his own “amateur” status, quite typically accept that their discipline was founded by amateurs (as it necessarily must have been, insofar as what counts as a “professional” in this sense can be determined only after that foundation, which is constitutively illegitimate), but reject any new input from the amateurish outside, just as Moses, once accepted as legislator, orders the putting to death of any new aspirant arrivals. (115)

Simon Critchley argues that one of the most challenging aspects of reading Bernal’s work is that manner in which he “traces the genealogy of the invented historical paradigm upon which Husserl bases his remarks” from his 1935 Vienna Lecture, “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity” (“Black Socrates” 146). The paradigm to which Critchley refers is the “Aryan Model” of ancient history, dating back to early nineteenth century, which rendered the question of an “African philosophy” nearly moot, according to Robert Bernasconi (“African Philosophy’s Challenge to Continental Philosophy” 183). Prior to this time, the “Ancient Model” predominated, suggesting that the Egyptians invented philosophy. Critchley uses Bernal to good effect, allowing him to place Derrida within the Greek tradition, as does Bennington. Drawing also from Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics,” Critchely argues that Derrida’s thinking of tradition is dominated by the problem of closure, “that play of belonging and non-belonging to the Greco-European tradition, which asserts both the necessity and impossibility of such a tradition. . . . Closure is the double refusal of both remaining within the limits of the tradition and of transgressing that limit. Closure is the hinge that articulates the double movement between the philosophical tradition and its other(s)” (151). Like Bennington, Critchley concurs that there is no pure Greek inside the European tradition; there is only and always contamination.

I end this section on Bennington's reading of Derrida as an Egyptian with the following consideration: if Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is correct in her assumption that Kant, Hegel, and Marx are merely influential figures in the formation of the European ethico-political subject, not necessarily as imperative as we may believe in the dismantling of third-worldist talk, then how exactly are we to take Bennington's Kantian reading and Derrida's Heideggerian reading of Hegel? To pose the question another way, can we really expect to recover the marginal while engaging in European discourse? In "Philosophy," the first part of her *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak argues that postcolonial writing and theorizing should be mindful that its self-styled discourse is indeed a product of the texts of European ethico-political self-representation, especially texts offered by Kant, Hegel, and Marx, whom she considers to be "the last Three Wise Men of the Continental (European) tradition." Spivak calls for more self-reflexivity, in which we might recognize the "too-easy West-and-the-rest polarizations sometimes rampant in colonial and postcolonial discourse studies" (39). She continues, "To my mind, such a polarization is too much a legitimization-by-reversal of the colonial attitude itself." Deconstruction enables us to point out this polarization and to understand that there can be no mere reversal of binary oppositions, such as between the West and the rest, or between master and slave. One of the tasks of deconstruction "might be a persistent attempt to displace the reversal, to show the complicity between native hegemony and the axiomatics of imperialism" (37). As Derrida has argued elsewhere, we can attempt this displacement of the reversal by "mark[ing] effectively the displacements of the sites of conceptual inscription" and by "articulat[ing] the systematic chains of the movement according to their proper generality and their proper period, according to their unevenness, their inequalities of development, the complex figures of their inclusions, implications, exclusions, etc." ("Pit" 72).

For Spivak, the exercise of reading Kant, Hegel, and Marx calls for the production of a counternarrative that makes visible the foreclosure of the subject, namely the native informant, “whose lack of access to the position of narrator is the condition of possibility of the consolidation of Kant’s position” (9), but we might suggest here that the exercise applies to all three theorists. In Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, which charts the operation of reason that cognizes nature theoretically, Spivak looks at the superiority of the rational and how, in the moment of the Sublime, the subject accedes to the rational will and opens the floodgates to the superiority of reason. Spivak follows with remarks on Hegel’s discussion of the *Srimadbhagavadgītā* and the manner in which Hegel tends to place not only all of history and reality upon a diagram, but also Time (of the Law) itself. Last, in Spivak’s reading of Marx’s reading of the “commodity-form as the locus of the homeopathy that would monitor the *differance* of capitalism and socialism,” she remarks: “That imperialism introduces mobility toward socialization has proved itself, I would suggest, in the cases of both international communism and international capitalism. And in the new international economic order after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it is the labor of the patriarchally defined subaltern woman that has been most effectively socialized” (“Philosophy” 67). In this last description, we can gather that the figure of the native informant is generally woman. Kant writes how the “naturally uneducable” is woman. In post-Fordist Marxist critique, the subaltern woman emerges, fulfilling Marx’s prediction that the labor of men would be superseded by that of women, which he speculates in *The Communist Manifesto*. But the native informant is not simply always woman. In the case of Hegel, the informant is an implied reader “contemporary” with the *Srimadbhagavadgītā*, a reader or listener who “acts out the structure of the hortatory ancient narrative as the recipient of its exhortation” (“Philosophy” 50).

Spivak suggests that one of the ways that the foreclosure of the native informant may become apparent, might require the work of a critic or teacher who has gone through the trouble of learning other languages and histories “to be able to produce [a contemporary reader] in the interest of active interception and reconstitution; rather than to teach the producers of neo-colonialist knowledge to chant in unison, ‘one cannot truly know the cultures of other places, other times,’ and then proceed to diagnose the hegemonic readings into place” (“Philosophy” 50). Though she has listed this requirement in the context of locating that informant in Hegel’s reading of the *Gitā*, I suggest that her call represents generally a deconstructive exercise in which one can interrogate the terms of binary oppositions. So, although Geoffrey Bennington’s Kantian reading of Derrida is indeed sharp, we undoubtedly recognize that he is perhaps not one who has taken the trouble to study the language and history of Egypt. Bennington himself possibly recognizes this shortcoming, as the strength of his criticism lies not in his engagement with Hegel and Kant, but with his invocation of Martin Bernal, who Bennington considers a legislator or one who may be “potentially condemned to expulsion” from academia. I would suggest that, in Spivak’s formulation, Bernal fits precisely the role of the critic or teacher who has done his homework in language and history. Another such figure is Christopher Wise, having spent a significant amount of time and preparation with various African and Arabic cultures. The strength of my argument therefore lies not with my reading of Derrida, Hegel, Kant, Bennington, or Spivak, but with my use of Wise, with whose critiques I do not agree wholeheartedly, but ones that I appreciate and consider thoroughly nonetheless. In the next section, I will return to Wise’s critique of Derrida.

Différance Deferred

If Spivak is correct in her assessment that deconstruction attempts to displace binary terms, we should recognize then that Derrida, in reversing the speech and writing binary in particular,

would seem to challenge our understanding and prioritizing of the those binaries. I will focus on those two terms primarily because Wise's argument relies significantly on them. Derrida's reversal of speech and writing is most apparent in his essay "Différance," which was presented before the Société français de philosophie on January 27, 1968. According to Martin McQuillan, *différance* makes possible the presentation of the system of difference. When we attempt to deconstruct a binary opposition, we are attempting to think through the complexities of *différance*. The most obscure aspect of *différance* is "the economic action of delay in which the element of the same aims to come back to the deferred pleasure of presence, and it is the impossible relation to a presence which can never be" (McQuillan 19). *Différance* makes every system possible and impossible, and the logic behind this play is generally conceived as supplementarity: the difference of difference. We might define supplement as that which escapes the system and simultaneously installs itself within the system to demonstrate the impossibility of the system. Nicholas Royle defines supplement as that which is "added on to something in order to further enrich it *and* what is added on as a mere 'extra' (from the Latin for 'outside'). It is both 'a surplus and a plenitude enriching a plenitude,' *and* it makes up for something missing, as if there is a void to be filled up" (49). In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida defines the supplement as something that is "not simply added to the positivity of a presence . . . its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness" (144-5). In the closing pages in *Of Grammatology*, he considers "the strange essence of the supplement not to have essentiality: it may always not have taken place. Moreover, literally, it has never taken place: it is never present, here and now. If it were, it would not be what it is, a supplement" (244). The figure that represents best the supplement is the ellipsis or three dots, which "always signify a logic of the supplement," according to Royle (48). The ellipsis marks both what is left out and what is implied. Derrida

demonstrates this logic in *Of Grammatology* with the chapter titled “. . . That Dangerous Supplement . . .” I have chosen to reproduce that same logic for each chapter of the dissertation, broaching the possibility that what may be missing or implied before and after each chapter is perhaps the preceding one, though clearly in a non-linear order. Indeed, there is an overlap, an enrichment of one by another, a constant folding of the terms onto themselves.

We must apply a similar logic to “Différance,” in which Derrida, at the outset of the essay, compares the letter *a* to a pyramid, conjuring not only the Egyptian pyramids (drawing clearly from Hegel), but also the Greek term for home, *oikēsis*, which is similar to the Greek *oikos*—house—from which the word “economy” is derived. For Derrida, “*a*” represents not only economy and tomb, but also family, death, law, and inscription. Derrida attempts to reassemble all of these concepts in the figure of a *sheaf*, which represents both the *general system of its economy*, but also marks “more appropriately that the assemblage to be proposed has the complex structure of a weaving, an interlacing which permits the different threads and different lines of meaning—or of force—to go off again in different directions, just as it is always ready to tie itself up with others” (“Différance” 3).

But I am moving too fast with the analogies. The figure of the sheaf will be important later in the chapter, but I should first discuss the pyramidal silence of the graphic difference between the *e* and the *a*, a silence that functions only within the system of phonetic or alphabetic writing. It is this silence that, for Derrida, should convince us that the traditional binary of speech versus writing is false and that there is no “purely and rigorously” alphabetic writing. He writes,

So-called phonetic writing, by all rights and in principle, and not only due to an empirical or technical insufficiency, can function only by admitting into its system non-phonetic “signs” (punctuation, spacing, etc.). And an examination of the structure and necessity of these nonphonetic signs quickly reveals that they can barely tolerate the concept of the sign itself. (“Différance” 5)

The graphic difference signals not only the difference between signs—namely the *e* and the *a*—but also a difference between two phonemes, which, like its written counterpart, does not exist purely. The differences in French between the phonemes—*ance* and *–ence*—remain in and of themselves inaudible.

The graphic and phonetic differences thus can never be sensed as full terms, and their differences are thought to vanish into the night. The difference eludes both hearing and vision, which would mean that the order to which this difference belongs no longer belongs to sensibility. It belongs neither to intelligibility nor to understanding. The order to which these differences belong is *différance*, a movement that does not belong to the voice or to writing, but is located between the two, reassuring us that they are indeed two purely separate terms.

As *différance* remains that which cannot be exposed, it can be rendered present during particular moments, whereby a “being-present in its truth” is made apparent, though it exceeds the order of truth. These next two “definitions” of *différance* will resemble two other terms that I have been discussing in this dissertation: the first definition enables us “to delineate . . . everything that [différance] is not, that is, *everything*; and consequently that it has neither existence nor essence. It derives from no category of being, whether present or absent” (“Différance” 6). If one recalls Derrida’s “Letter to a Japanese Friend,” one will remember that Derrida defines deconstruction as such: “What deconstruction is not? Everything of course!” but also “What is deconstruction? Nothing of course!” We must remind ourselves that deconstruction is *différance*, though we must strike out the verb “to be” (“is”) so as to emphasize the non-present being of *différance*. The second definition involves the recourse to the language that Derrida uses to describe the term. Derrida admits that this language resembles that used to discuss negative theology. He argues, “*Différance* is not only irreducible to any ontological or

theological—ontotheological—reappropriation, but as the very opening of the space in which ontotheology—philosophy—produces its system and its history, it includes ontotheology, inscribing it and exceeding it without return” (“Différance” 6). This definition should remind us of another constellation that I have addressed previously, specifically spectrality. In *Specters of Marx*, when Derrida distinguishes between hauntology and ontology by noting that hauntology also concerns a future to come, not only the past, he conjures that this “future can only be for ghosts. And the past” (37). As no one can anticipate the coming or returning of a ghost, the *revenant*, which nullifies the possibility of the specter appearing present to itself or becoming present in the form of a body, we can also never predict a present reality in which the specter comes, and we have no control over how long the specter may wish to remain among us. The unpredictability of spectrality has implications for justice, the delivery of such, in the future. Indeed, Derrida’s description of spectrality seems to resonate with the religious figuration of the Messiah, which is why he attempts to bind religion with ontology and suggests that hauntologically we might speak of a messianicity without religion, messianic/-ity without messianism.

We arrive now at a system of difference within Derrida’s own “detours, locutions, and syntax,” where we might feel the need to distinguish now between *différance*, deconstruction, and spectrality. We know that in the delineation of *différance*,

everything is strategic and adventurous. Strategic because no transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not a simple strategy in the sense that strategy orients tactics according to a final goal, a *telos* or theme of domination, a mastery and ultimate reappropriation of the development of the field. Finally, a strategy without finality, what might be called blind tactics, or empirical wandering if the value of empiricism did not itself acquire its entire meaning in its opposition to philosophical responsibility. (“Différance” 7)

If *différance* is both strategic and adventurous, the same must be said for the exercise of deconstruction and spectrality. We should establish here that in all three, especially spectrality, there “appears,” for lack of a more appropriate term, to be an uncertainty and unpredictability. For example, with spectrality, we certainly attempt to grasp at moments when we perceive the presence of the specter or ghost. We certainly cannot anticipate its coming. The same must be stated for deconstruction and *différance*: only at certain moments can we appreciate its appearance, though it derives from no category of being, neither present nor absent. Furthermore, the manner in which we choose to invoke these terms succeeds on the level of the strategic and adventurous. In this particular play of difference—among deconstruction, *différance*, and spectrality—only a blind tactics²³ will suffice, enabling or allowing for a certain wandering in the tracing of one term above the others. Derrida tells us that the concept of play keeps itself beyond the opposition of empirical discourse and philosophical discourse, where one can expect the “unity of chance and necessity in calculations without end” (“Différance” 7).

Which Came First, Speech or Writing, or Both and/or Neither?

It is at this point where we return to Christopher Wise’s “Saying ‘Yes’ to Africa” and the context or particular moment of *Specters* as an address or performative context. Wise writes, “Derrida’s prioritizing of the oral-aural dimensions of this event is worth emphasizing here not only because such a gesture is wholly coherent in terms of the project he has called deconstruction, but also because it deepens his solidarity with those Africans who were not invited to this highly literate, academic, and decidedly white conference setting” (127). In this quote, we find both the strategic invocation of deconstruction, as well as the summoning of binary oppositions, notably, speech versus writing. Inherent in this discussion is the European

²³ I am thinking here of the visor effect, the manner in which the ghost appears, exits, and reappears without warning and according to its own strategic or tactical logic.

stigmatization of illiteracy, precisely where it collides with the oral-aural tradition of African culture. At this crucial interstice, Wise reminds us that the European and Euro-American peoples have always identified themselves as superior on the basis not only of skin color but also according to their degree of literacy.

Wise is convinced that Derrida remains largely critical of the historical privileging of writing/logos over speech and argues that Derrida's *Specters* "advances an arguably African critique of Western thought systems with reference to the eye, the optic lens where Marx's specters make their appearance" (129). To illustrate this point, he focuses on Derrida's critique of the complex subject-object dialectic via his discussion on specter and spirit in *Specters* (see the section on Stirner in Chapter Three for Derrida's critique). Wise also points out Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, in which he posits that "the presence-absence of the trace . . . carries in itself the problem of the letter and spirit" ("Linguistics and Grammatology" 71). Speaking of trace and spirit as interchangeable terms, Wise argues that Derrida affirms the trace and spirit as present at the world's origin and that spirit is never subject to deconstruction. Even if one wants to argue that deconstruction can locate spirit, we should note that spirit itself may be undeconstructible, much like justice. We also know that spirit is never construed as ontological substance. As that which is outside of materialization, spirit, or Derrida's approach to it, converges rather nicely "with Judaic theology celebrating a world that comes into being following a divine act of speech. From the Book of Genesis, God speaks the world into existence" ("Saying 'Yes'" 132). But it is precisely this convergence that Derrida cautions us to avoid making.

Rather than speaking of "the visor effect" in relation to speech versus writing specifically, Wise argues that the figuration illustrates the notion that there exists a spiritual reality that can never be described in ontological terms, something beyond the human eye. From this, Wise

makes a connection to the other, or what Derrida presumably draws from Levinas, and refers to this connection as “the relation without relation” where we do not relate as centered, logocentric subjects or dialectical opposites, but as wholly others, for we do not really see who sees us.

According to Wise, Derrida’s critique of logocentrism remains of limited value in the African context, not only for its perverse approach, but also because “of significant omissions implied by its critique” (“Saying ‘Yes’” 134). Rather than locate the thrust of Derrida’s critique in *Specters* or “Différance,” Wise reopens *Of Grammatology* to find more pronounced versions of the implied omissions, particularly Derrida’s critique of Claude Levi-Strauss’s *Triste Tropiques*, in which Levi-Strauss describes the Nambikwara Indians of South America. In Derrida’s critique, which elides important differences in oral-aural and written languages, he deconstructs Levi-Strauss’s avowed “Marxist” theory of writing and ethnography, denouncing the Marxism operative in the writings of both Levi-Strauss and Rousseau who supposedly share a prejudice against writing, preferring the orality of primitive societies. For Derrida, no society is without writing, and anyone who does not believe so betrays his own misguided longing for the “plenitude and . . . self-presence” of speech (“The Violence of the Letter” 110). For Wise and other critics of Derrida such as Walter Ong and Geoffrey H. Hartman, however, there remain fundamental differences between speech and writing. The most critical distinction between European languages and various indigenous languages would be the extensive record-keeping of the European languages, which would be regarded as “grapholects” during the 18th century. These grapholects contained hundreds of thousands of written texts, including dictionaries, thesauruses, and encyclopedias, unlike the indigenous languages such as the Moré and Djoula, which could not have included more than a few thousand words. As Wise puts it, grapholects can perform wide-ranging destructive services for those who possess them. If we may speak so broadly, the primary linguistic difference between West African and

European peoples consisted *not* in the possession of chirographic and alphabetic writing, but in the impact of moveable-type print, developed more than four hundred years before Park's arrival in Bamako. The main psychological effect of this development is the word's increasing reification in the dimension of space, the illusory transformation of the word as visual spectacle, or an object that, like any other object, may be allegorically recorded as commodity fetish. ("Saying 'Yes'" 136)

For Wise, Derrida's insistence that writing precedes speech graphically and that ethnographers who separate speech and writing is disingenuous at best, given the Africans' tenuous relationship with the written word. One might argue that, according to Wise, perhaps the only way that Derrida can redeem his reversal of speech versus writing would be to privilege the oral-aural dimensions of language, much like his earlier targets in *Of Grammatology*, which, as we know, Derrida is careful not to have done. In "Différance," Derrida speaks of trace and the outside or excess of the ontological, which he identifies as an archi-writing, an originary figure which precedes the oral form that it will take. It is in this way that speech and writing differ and defer. In this way, one can posit that, if Derrida does indeed privilege orality, sight is not very far behind. In fact, Wise himself points out that for Jews, "the law encompasses both the written and oral traditions that were believed to have been transmitted simultaneously" ("Saying 'Yes'" 129). If anything, Derrida indeed replicates the syntax of theology, offering us a negative theology in his reversal.

This connection to Judaism brings us to another omission, Derrida's position on the Abrahamic religion, especially with respect to his insufficiently articulated defense of the "literate" orality of the Nambikwara, according to Wise. Though Derrida has often repeated that he has no stable position, Wise remains convinced that Derrida's formulation of writing and speech is ineluctably connected to Judaism and its varieties of imperialism, a critique that Wise pronounces in "Deconstruction and Zionism: Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*." In "Deconstruction and Zionism," Wise bemoans Derrida's supposedly repeated disavowals of "any

explicit affiliation with Judaism as religion,” a disavowal that is “implausible if not altogether disingenuous” (56). One might locate the origins of this comment in Derrida’s *Writing and Difference*, where Derrida speaks of God’s silence or God separating “himself from himself in order to let us speak.” He continues, “Our writing . . . starts with the stifling of his voice” (67). Wise regards these comments as theological speculation, which have “far more limited appeal for those who do not share his affinities for Judaism” (“Saying ‘Yes’” 138).

As much as I am reluctant to admit that Derrida holds an affinity for Judaism, it is a critique that I must accept, especially if I am to accept Wise’s argument that Derrida’s critique represents an affirmative solidarity with Africa. What I recognize in accepting Wise’s argument is that, though Derrida seems to disavow both Algeria and Judaism, these two identifications represent the notion of trace as manifested in the writing of Derrida. If Derrida disavows both identities, I argue that he must do so for two reasons: First, in openly affirming both of these identities, the thread of Derrida’s argument comes undone. The complex interweaving and lacing that he meticulously draws together falls apart. In affirming Judaism, the scope of deconstruction remains limited to ethnocentric critique, rather than “its very actuality as a theory,” where its viability “depends upon it remaining at all times the deconstruction of unmerited privilege whenever and where its manifestation” (“Saying ‘Yes’” 138-9). In affirming Africa (or even Algeria), deconstruction risks marginalization and perhaps expulsion. It is here where we return to the citation that once appeared in 1963, but no longer bears its presence: “A bit like how the anti-colonialist revolution can only liberate itself from a *de facto* Europe or West in the name of transcendental Europe . . .” If we return to Bruce Baugh, we find that this quote explains Derrida’s intractable difficulties as a French Algerian intellectual in the early 1960s on the subject of Algerian independence, a difficulty that Derrida suffers in the predicament of Hegel’s

“unhappy consciousness”: wavering between the opposites of independence and dependence, affirmation and negation, Europe and Africa, without reaching some reconciliatory synthesis. We know that, in Hegelian terms, to negate Europe is to affirm the other, and to affirm Europe is to negate the other. Derrida, as a French Algerian by language and culture and a North African Jew by birth, finds himself then in a difficult, “very Derridean position: both inside and outside of Africa, neither inside nor outside of it, caught in an aporia that places him, too, in the position of Hegel’s unhappy consciousness” (Baugh 41). In such an awkward position, “can any European or Western intellectual speak on or to African concerns without framing them within European theory, without invoking European moral and political values? And if Africa speaks, can a Europe hear?” (Baugh 41). If deconstruction were to affirm itself as African, would Europe accept it equally? And as for Judaism, we know via Geoffrey Bennington that a “Jewish reading is a Greek reading” (“Mosaic Fragment” 104), whereby the gesture is to fold the Jewish question back into the Greek. Wise would say that this Jewish/Greek conflation arises as a result of a “violent conversion of the Jew to logocentric modes of interpretation,” what is termed the “Shylock Complex.” To explore this conversion further, I will examine the figure of the Marrano in Chapter Six.

The second reason that Derrida must disavow identity has much to do with deconstruction and the manner in which it operates. Ultimately, it solicits or calls for disavowal or elimination of names and designations in order to open itself up to the other. Derrida also says that the “unnameable is the play which makes possible nominal effects, the relatively unitary and atomic structures that are called names, the chains of substitutions of names in which, for example, the nominal effect *différance* is itself enmeshed, carried off, reinscribed, just as a false entry or a false exit is still part of the game, a function of the system” (“Différance” 27). As there is no

master-word or unique word, what could one possibly be conjuring with the name “Judaic/Jewish” or “Algerian,” for they are all names in a chain of substitutions? This view indeed derives from Heidegger’s “The Anaximander Fragment,” in which he describes a possibility of the uniqueness of Being. Heidegger writes, “Therefore, in order to name the essential nature of Being, language would have to find a single word, the unique word. From this we can gather how daring every thoughtful word addressed to Being is. Nevertheless such daring is not possible, since Being speaks always and everywhere throughout language” (52).

What is most interesting is that the last sentence in the previous citation is one that affirms both the philosophical tradition, but also Derrida’s identity as an African, for Wise, when Derrida isolates the terms of the phase as such: “Being / speaks / always and everywhere / throughout / language.” In doing so, Derrida seems to highlight speaking, deconstruct the mythological basis of universalizing constructions of the other, and “[emphasize] the problem or question of listening rather than seeing, insisting upon a concept of the other as wholly other or different” (“Saying ‘Yes’” 140). Wise believes that the name of Chris Hani is absolutely crucial to *Specters* primarily because of this insistence on the other as wholly other, as unique Being. What remains to be seen for Wise is the extent to which the saying “yes” to Africa is truly a deconstructive event, for deconstruction always implies both a promise and a to-come. Wise concludes the essay, “Whatever its limitations (or latent theological motivations), such an effort should and must be acknowledged as a thoughtful and significant intervention on behalf of African peoples everywhere, no matter how impatient one might be at its historical necessity, especially at a conference of Marxist theorists” (“Saying ‘Yes’” 141). What Wise fails to emphasize is that this meaning perhaps has already arrived, as Derrida would remind us. While “Hani” as unique Being and proper noun is an affirmation, it certainly does not serve as an

inauguration. One could locate a more originary affirmation in the name “Fanon,” to which Derrida attributes a “pure and intransigent” cry. The invocation of Fanon is also a deconstructive event, which calls into question absence/presence through the eventual disappearance of the name. Like language, speech, and the written word, the name “Fanon” appears and reappears, if even in one obscure reference or citation. The name, like the ghost that returns and leaves at will and speaks to whomever it wishes, also hides in the shadows, waiting for someone to stumble upon it, to make sense of its presence. The shadows begin to take the shape of “Negroid forms,” like men who are too generous with generality and who are preoccupied with ghosts, according to Marx, who claims that these men obscure conceptuality. As Jason Powell tells us, Derrida values shadows, and if we could envision the fate of shadows governed by *différance*, it might take the form of an allegory, “Plato’s Cave,” where the enchainèd man (philosopher) sees shadows reflected upon walls and discovers, once liberated, that the light yielding the shadows is the light of *différance*, according to Powell. The true objects are shadows, and the world itself is neither sensible nor intelligible. For Powell, the liberation from the cave allows the philosopher to find ghostly things that do not exist in the present and do not have “life,” but the philosopher hopes one day to locate these things in a pure form. Is it possible that this pure form exists or once existed in Africa? And if this is true, how are we to search for or await the arrival of this gift? For Powell, the role of deconstruction has been to show that the light of *différance* is beyond the cave, and in reading the history of philosophy, we understand that philosophy has not discovered the destiny of thinking beyond the cave (232). This task of deconstruction, however, has never been a simple, non-violent one. If I were to extend Powell’s characterization further, I might locate the figure of justice as that which liberates the chained man to discover true shadows and the light of *différance*. It is the impossibility of the promise or undeconstructible

justice that maintains man's hope. Justice is indeed the key element missing from Powell's argument, as there is inherently violence associated with deconstruction and *différance*. I will explore deconstruction as justice in the following chapter and Frantz Fanon as a shadow²⁴ in the final chapter.

²⁴ I am aware of the criticisms that this designation might invite, but I want to remain steadfast in my conviction that the term "shadow" has less to do with race and more to do with spectrality. In some ways, the shadow is perhaps the closest visual representation of the specter that we have, and I wish to emphasize this here.

CHAPTER 5

ACT IV: . . . JUSTICE . . .

In chapter two, I offer a brief definition of deconstruction that begins with a discussion of its relation to Martin Heidegger's term "Destruktion," its resonance with structure (and structuralism), and its responsibility to the text, a responsibility that acknowledges the heritage and legacy from which it "originates" in order to examine critically that heritage. I also remind the reader of one of Derrida's own definitions of deconstruction—that it is both not everything and yet nothing—and suggest four limits of deconstruction: (1) that it must always be open to the other and attempt to understand this otherness, (2) that it is more than a method of literary criticism or reading, (3) that it is an attempt to understand difference by examining assumptions about binary oppositions, and (4) that it assumes violence. Throughout the remainder of the dissertation, I have attempted to demonstrate the ways in which deconstruction has tried to remain open to the other, to perform something more than literary criticism, and to understand difference. In this chapter, I will explore the violence inherent in deconstruction by tracing three key components that will serve as another significant movement of difference in this deconstructive analysis of Derrida's affirmation of solidarity with Africa and more manifest connection to Frantz Fanon since the disappearance of Derrida's reference to Fanon in "Cogito et histoire de la folie": (1) deconstruction is justice, which is different from law; (2) justice is linked to the performative and its force, which assumes a certain violence; and (3) the affirmation of the performative yields "a number of yes," which opens itself to the other.

Justice Must Be Something Other than Law

The first component in this analysis assumes that deconstruction is justice. To support this simple declarative statement, one need look no further than Derrida's "Force of Law: 'The Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" Adam Thurschwell reminds us, in which he claims as much:

“Deconstruction is justice” (945). But we would be too hasty indeed to accept this argument at face value, for such a position assumes a paradoxical figuration that requires unpacking. Allow me to quote this figuration at length:

[I]t is [the] deconstructible structure of law (*droit*), or if you prefer of justice as *droit*, that also insures the possibility of deconstruction. Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructible. No more than deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists. . . . It is perhaps because law (*droit*) (which I will consistently try to distinguish from justice) is constructible, in a sense that goes beyond the opposition between convention and nature, it is perhaps insofar as it goes beyond this opposition that it is constructible and so deconstructible and, what's more, that it makes deconstruction possible, or at least the practice of a deconstruction that, fundamentally, always leads to questions of *droit*. 1. The deconstructibility of law (*droit*), of legality, legitimacy or legitimization (for example) makes deconstruction possible. 2. The undeconstructibility of justice also makes deconstruction possible, indeed is inseparable from it. 3. The result: deconstruction takes place in the interval that separates the undeconstructibility of justice from the deconstructibility of *droit* (authority, legitimacy, and so on). (945)

From this formulation, we gather that justice, unlike law, is undeconstructible, and that the deconstructibility of law makes deconstruction possible. We also learn that this opposition between law and justice always leads to questions of *droit*, a consideration that calls into question what is ultimately at the heart of this discussion: language and idiom. The question of language and idiom returns us to the first sentence in “Force of Law,” which begins “C'est ici un devoir, je dois *m'adresser à vous en anglais*” (921). Mary Quaintance translates this sentence as “This is an obligation, I must *address* myself to you in English” (921). The sentence is Derrida’s response to a particular colloquium in which he was invited to speak on “Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice” at the Cardozo Law School in 1989. The problem of addressing an audience of English-speakers on deconstruction and justice plagued Derrida for several months prior to his presentation at the colloquium, during which he began to develop reservations about feeling compelled to speak the language of the majority, especially since it grants the foreigner the right to speak. For Derrida, it is more *just* to speak the language of the other. Still, to speak the language of the other requires the translation of idioms, which assumes an “always possible

but an always imperfect compromise between two idioms,” despite how excellent the translation may be (925). In terms of *droit*, we can see initially how tangled this problem of language and idiom can be. To illustrate this problem, Derrida cites two English idiomatic expressions that have no strict French equivalent: “to enforce the law” and “to address a problem” (945). In the first expression, “to enforce the law,” we are reminded that law is an authorized force that justifies itself. The enforceable nature of the law is neither supplementary nor exterior, but essential, implied in the concept of justice as law (*droit*) or justice as it becomes law. Laws are to be enforced or applied by force, and each law works under the presupposition that it tends toward enacting justice. The nature of law is such that its force assumes the role of justice. The French translation of this first expression, “appliquer la loi,” loses the direct, literal reference to force, hence the term *loi* rather than *droit* in this instance. When we factor in the force that accompanies the law, we begin to see the transformative potentialities of law in the inscription *droit*, which I will briefly discuss later.

The second expression, “to address a problem,” also has no true French equivalent. In French, one can address a letter or a person—even without ever quite knowing if the letter will arrive at its destination or if the person will understand completely the message to which he or she is being directed—but one cannot address a problem as one can in English. For Derrida, to address a problem is to assume or to accept that we must address an infinite number of problems, not because these problems are numerically, historically, or culturally infinite, but because they are related to an experience of the aporia. As a full experience of the aporia seems rather impossible, we might conceive of the problem of justice similarly, as an impossible experience but one worthy of the attempt. Derrida argues that there is no justice without the impossible experience of the aporias. Justice is simply an experience of the impossible, and any desire, will,

or demand for justice without accounting for its impossibility will always fail. But if we were ever to have the good fortune of experiencing the reasonable application of a particular rule to a particular case, we would only experience law (*droit*), which is not justice. Derrida writes, “Law is the element of calculation, and it is just that there be law, but justice is incalculable, it requires us to calculate with the incalculable; and aporetic experiences are the experiences, as improbable as they are necessary, of justice, that is to say of moments in which the decision between just and unjust is never insured by a rule” (947). In other words, the law is certainly useful and necessary, but it can never be a substitute for justice, which is something that one could never calculate.

According to Derrida, deconstruction finds its “privileged” site of instability in the aporias located between both law and justice. He clarifies later in the essay that there is actually one aporia that distributes itself infinitely, rather than an infinite number of aporias. Deconstruction then, generally practiced in two ways, attempts to distinguish between justice and *droit* (or the “infinite, incalculable, rebellious to rule and foreign to symmetry, heterogeneous and heterotopic” and “the exercise of justice as law or right, legitimacy or legality, stabilizable and statutory, calculable, a system of regulated and coded prescriptions”) (959). These two ways or styles of deconstruction—one is an ahistorical and formal demonstration, the other, a historical reading and meticulous interpretation of texts—graft one onto the other in their approach toward justice, which Derrida hesitantly compares to Levinas’s notion of justice as the relation to others or more specifically “*droiture de l’accueil fait au visage*” (“equitable honoring of faces”) as defined in *Totalité and Infiniti*. Derrida reminds us that Levinas also speaks of an infinite right, what he refers to as a “Jewish humanism,” whose basis is not “the concept of man,” but rather the other. Derrida compares this Levinasian notion of justice to the Hebrew equivalent of “sanctity,” but he abruptly stops the association between deconstruction’s justice and Levinas’s

at this point, risking further confusion. *Droit* always claims to exercise itself in the name of justice, but justice sometimes manages to establish itself in the form of a law that must be enforced. Deconstruction finds itself caught between these two poles, estranged in this aporia.

Derrida offers the reader three examples of aporias with which deconstruction struggles. In the first aporia, *épokhè* and rule, Derrida attempts to distinguish between the application of a rule (law) and the exercise of justice that induces a “fresh judgment” (Derrida borrows the phrase from Stanley Fish’s article, “Force”). Derrida explains that the “fresh judgment” can “very well—must very well—conform to a preexisting law but the reinstating, reinventive, and freely decisive interpretation, the responsible interpretation of the judge requires that his ‘justice’ not just consist in conformity, in the conservative and reproductive activity of judgment” (961). For a decision to be just, it must be both “regulated and without regulation.”

This difficult decision remains within the order of another aporia, the ghost of the undecidable. The undecidable, a theme generally associated with deconstruction, does not oscillate between two contradictions or determinate rules. It is rather the experience of that which is foreign to the calculable and the rule, but remains obliged to give itself to the impossible decision, while considering law and rules. If the decision does not go through the ordeal of the undecidable, it is not a free decision, but an application of the calculable or programmable. Because we can never know quite when such a decision has taken place, we suppose that the undecidable remains caught as a ghost in every event of decision. Derrida writes, “Its ghostliness deconstructs from within any assurance of presence, any certitude or any supposed criteriology that would assure us of the justice of a decision, in truth of the very event of a decision” (965).

Though the figuration of the ghost and spectrality seems to resonate with the religious figuration of the Messiah in *Specters*, Derrida is much more cautious in “Force of Law” to distinguish between religious messianic horizon, including Judaic, Christian, or Islamic messianism (or any other horizon for that matter, such as the Kantian regulative idea or the eschato-teleology of the neo-Hegelian, Marxist, or post-Marxist type), and this ghostly idea of justice. Deconstruction remains guarded against these other horizons precisely because of their status as such. Derrida reminds us that horizon, in the Greek sense, refers to an opening and a limit that defines an infinite progress or period of waiting. The third aporia that Derrida describes, the urgency that obstructs the horizon of knowledge, can be misleading. Justice, though impossible, is something that cannot wait; it must be immediate. Anyone who must make a just decision does not have the time to gather and sift through an infinite series of facts and conditions, precisely because any decision requires disclosure at a precise moment. Of this moment, Derrida writes:

[It] always remains a finite moment of urgency and precipitation, since it must not be the consequence or the effect of this theoretical or historical knowledge, of this reflection or this deliberation, since it always marks the interruption of the juridico- or ethico- or politico-cognitive deliberation that precedes it, that must precede it. The instant of decision is a madness, says Kierkegaard. This is particularly true of the instant of the just decision that must rend time and defy dialectics. It is a madness. (967)

Simply put, the moment of the just decision is a madness, given that justice, which is impossible, is something that cannot wait, something that we need in the present. Ernesto Laclau’s “Time Is out of Joint” might be instructive here on this point of the moment of decision as madness. If the first movement of deconstruction portends undecidability with respect to social relations, the consequence is that the area of responsibility becomes enlarged and an operation of grounding, which would reinscribe “something within the terrain of the undecidables (iteration, re-mark, difference, etc.) that makes [the emergence of grounding]

possible” (94). For Laclau, undecidability is that from which no course of action should follow, and democracy cannot be grounded. For these reasons, there can never be a beginning or an end of time. The present moment, which never arrives, constantly awaits a constitutive succession of decisions that serves as a “plurality of acts of democratization.” Laclau notes that that we can only move to a more democratic society through this plurality of acts, which is a maddening consideration. What’s also maddening about justice is that an incalculable justice always requires us to calculate because, when left on its own, “the incalculable and giving (*donatrice*) idea of justice is always very close to the bad, even to the worst for it can always be reappropriated by the most perverse calculation” (“Force of Law” 971). According to Derrida, we must negotiate between the calculable and the incalculable and engage in juridico-political battles, although justice exceeds law and calculation. It is precisely this bind in which Hamlet finds himself caught. Christopher Prendergast explains: “Hamlet does not curse the corruption of the world, but also the mission to redeem it. He is thus punished by virtue of being appointed as the punisher, the avenger, inserted into the impossible chain of violent reprisals against actual, alleged or perceived wrongs, the chain that has no beginning and no end, and so in turn he is no different—apart from his consciousness of the dilemma—from anyone else caught up in the cycle of violence” (47). This dilemma leads Hamlet to madness. In some sense, through his reading of *Hamlet*, Derrida is asking us to dance with madness if it is justice that we want to see served.

Performative, Force, Violence

In chapter three, I refer to Derrida’s “Signature Event Context,” in which he argues that J. L. Austin’s discussion of performative and constative utterances, the locutionary force and its structure specifically, fail to take into account a system of predicates called “*graphematic in general*,” which presupposes the value of context. If what Austin calls “total context” depends

significantly on the series of “infelicities” that might affect the event of the performative, Derrida deduces that the infelicitous and felicitous both remain within the total structure of language and make possible the performative utterance. For Derrida, Austin seems so consumed with making his argument regarding performative utterances and illocutory acts that he fails to engage the conventionality of the locutory act itself, which precedes illocution, and that the arbitrariness of the sign and of language precedes the possibility of the constitution of the performative. Without language and its originary relation to meaning, the performative does not exist. According to Derrida, the risk or failure of the performative is just as essential a predicate as the conventions that make possible the felicitous statement. This consideration leads us to Derrida’s argument that a successful performative is impure: an event or an occurrence during which a performative succeeds, presupposes not only its citational double that must fail, but also the coded, iterable statement that becomes identifiable as a citation. In the performative, speech, writing, and ordinary language, the citational doubling or presupposition of failing and successful terms are coded in dissymmetrical fashion, whose effects can be anticipated by *differance*.

Examining further the “just decision” is one way we might begin taking up the role of the performative in law and justice. As I mentioned earlier, the decision always remains a finite moment of urgency and precipitation. Derrida attributes this irreducibility of precipitate urgency to the performative structure of speech acts “in general as acts of justice or law, whether they be performatives that institute something or derived performatives supposing anterior conventions” (“Force of Law” 969). In Derrida’s formulation, a constative can only be *juste* (right) but never in the sense of justice. A performative, however, cannot be just in the sense of justice unless it founds itself on conventions and other anterior performatives, thus maintaining within itself an irruptive violence and no longer responding to “the demands of theoretical rationality.” Since all

constative utterances rely on performative structure, the dimension of truth of the theoretical and constative utterances presupposes the dimension of justice of performative utterances, whose essential precipitation never proceeds “without a certain dissymmetry and some quality of violence.” It is at this interstice that the problem of violence, justice, and law become tangled in various ways. Roberto Buonamano locates this dissymmetry and violence in three “Derridean” propositions about the law: it always tends toward universality, it operates to maintain rights, and it is bound up with the silence of its own force, thus making it self-preserving. In essence, these three determinations attempt to render law applicable to everyone, to keep the discourse of rights at one’s disposal, and to clarify the relation of law as founding, justifying, and preserving force, respectively. The last point is perhaps most crucial in distinguishing further between law and justice and understanding the role of the performative in each.

Buonamano explicates three assertions about the third proposition—“the law as force, the silence of this force, and the self-preserving quality of this silence” (170)—and traces all three to the phrase “to enforce the law.” Insofar as law must be enforced, it must also be authorized *as* and *through* force, more specifically, as founding, justifying, and preserving force. The law then functions to legitimize itself through this force in the context of a system of laws. It is the founding and instituting moment that is most important because the founding act is one of self-preservation and serves dually as a point of origin of the authority of law. Successfully enforced, the law becomes “a performative and therefore interpretative violence that is itself neither just nor unjust” (“Force of Law” 941-3). Buonamano reminds us that Derrida sees this as a “mystical foundation of authority,” a phrase Derrida borrows from Montaigne, who also sought to distinguish laws from justice. The foundation of law is “mystical” in the sense that it conceals a certain silence in the violence of its founding act. Derrida sees this violence as not having a

ground, but he also suggests that this groundless foundation is neither just nor unjust, neither legal nor illegal in the founding moment. It exceeds the opposition between founded and unfounded. Derrida writes:

Even if the success of performatives that found law or right (for example, and this is more than an example, of a state as guarantor of a right) presupposes earlier conditions and conventions (for example in the national or intentional arena), the same “mystical” limit will reappear at the supposed origin of said conditions, rules or conventions, and at the origin of their dominant interpretation. (943)

The flexibility of this groundless foundation of violence allows for injustice, thus making accessibility to justice more difficult. Law exacts violence against individuals in the moment or act it legitimizes itself. Drawing from Walter Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence,” Derrida distinguishes between two types of violence in law: the first is founding violence, the “one that institutes and positions law,” and the other, the one that conserves, maintains, confirms, and insures the permanence and enforceability of law (981). The law-making violence is the very condition of violence. Violence unleashed must be accounted for; thus, legal conditions are modified, existing laws are replaced, or the state’s power is destroyed in favor of another mode of power. Law-preserving violence is that which continues and maintains the hegemony of the juridical order and is viewed as the administrative corollary to law-making violence. When combined in one institution, these two types of violence yield one of the most extreme cases of legalized perversion for Benjamin. The modern police force, as law-making and law-preserving, is capable of extending its own influence by re-inventing itself over and again. In essence, the police blur the distinction between the two types of violence. For Derrida, however, what threatens the clarity of distinction between the two is the paradox of iterability. Iterability requires the origin to repeat itself originally, “to alter itself so as to have the value of origin, that is, to conserve itself,” as Derrida says (1009). He continues: “This iterability inscribes conservation in the essential structure of foundation.” Derrida argues that this trope has existed

for centuries, though Benjamin is correct to produce the example of the modern police force. Interestingly, in this formulation of iterability, there can be no pure or great founders, initiators, or lawmakers. Despite the necessity of citing an origin, there can be no true, pure point of origin, which makes it difficult to criticize violence. Because law-making violence cannot precede the performative act, we are reduced to identifying the law-preserving antecedent in the collapse of this double bind.

Buonamano suggests that this double bind is akin to what Derrida refers to as the “economy of violence,” where the “violence involved in discourse generally, and specifically in every practice of metaphysics, stages a war in which the task of deconstruction is to counteract the aggression of speech as presence. The peace envisaged is that of a certain silence (‘a certain beyond speech’)” (175). He urges us to consider Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics” as an example: “But since *finite* silence is also the medium of violence, language can only indefinitely tend toward justice by acknowledging and practicing the violence within it. Violence against violence” (117). Following the logic of the performative, the violence inherent in discourse contains two types within its general system of economy: the violence that represses discourse and the one able to combat the repressive violence, the violence of *otherness*. The strategic and adventurous *différance* keeps in play the possibility of the violence of *otherness* overcoming the repressive violence and the possibility of justice. Derrida works arduously through this problem in “Force of Law” when he takes up Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence,” specifically Benjamin’s distinction between “mythical violence” of the law (Greek) and “divine violence” of justice (Jewish). Derrida sketches the two types of violence as follows:

on one side, decision (just, historical, political, and so on), justice beyond *droit* and the state, but without decidable knowledge; on the other, decidable knowledge and certainty in a realm that structurally remains that of the undecidable, of the mythic *droit* of the state. On one side the decision without decidable certainty, on the other the certainty of the

undecidable but without decision. In any case, in one form or another, the undecidable is on each side, and is the violent condition of knowledge or action. But knowledge and action are always dissociated. (1035)

Derrida then asks where deconstruction lies within this Benjaminian schema, on the more Jewish side (he includes Christianity and Islam within this distinction) or the Greek side? Is deconstruction more religious, more mythic, or more philosophical? The “simple” answer for Derrida is that deconstruction participates in something rather “impure, contaminating, negotiated, bastard and violent,” what he refers to as “*Judaeo-Greek* to save time.” Indeed, Derrida confirms what Bennington has said all along about deconstruction, that it attempts to go beyond the Jewish and Greek schemas to become something else, to perform something other. It is here where I would like to take this discussion into two different directions with the hopes that they will both lead toward Frantz Fanon: First, I would like to continue my discussion of the performative as justice with regards to language. I will follow my discussion of the performative with Buonamano’s assertion that “at the heart of each of Derrida’s treatments of law is the question of revolt” (177).

Overflow of the Performative

As I mentioned earlier, all constative utterances rely on performative structure, and the dimension of truth of the theoretical and constative utterances presupposes the dimension of justice of performative utterances, whose essential precipitation never proceeds without dissymmetry and violence. In “Force of Law,” Derrida argues that the overflow of the performative is the reason that justice has no horizon of expectation, be it messianic or regulative, but it may have an *avenir*, a “to come,” which Derrida distinguishes from a future that always reproduces the present. I quote Derrida at length:

Justice remains, is yet, to come, *à venir*, it has an, it is *à venir*, the very dimension of events irreducibly to come. It will always have it, this *à venir*, and always has. Perhaps it is for this reason that justice, insofar as it is not only a juridical or political concept, opens up

for *l'avenir* the transformation, the recasting or refounding of law and politics. “Perhaps,” one must always say perhaps for justice. There is an *avenir* for justice and there is no justice except to the degree that some event is possible which, as event, exceeds calculation, rules, programs, anticipations and so forth. Justice as the experience of absolute alterity is unrepresentable, but it is the chance of the event and the condition of history. No doubt an unrecognizable history, of course, for those who believe they know what they’re talking about when they use this word, whether it’s a matter of social, ideological, political, juridical or some other history. (969-71)

We may recall that Derrida has also named this structural dimension of justice, *à-venir*, a democracy to come (*la démocratie à venir*), which is the search for a pure, intransigent, and undeconstructible moment, though deconstruction itself is “impure, contaminating, negotiated, bastard and violent.” This democracy to come, all politics for that matter, is arch-structured by the undecidability of the double bind of possibility and impossibility, via *difference* and its spatio-temporal chain of deferral, which makes the fully present an impossibility and the “to come” of the promise. Indeed, we understand the Derridean formulation of justice as overflow of the performative and that both justice and politics are in the order of *à venir*, but how are we to understand the function of the performative in the context of politics? Judith Butler offers an instructive hermeneutic for making this connection more fully.

Butler maintains that the speech act is a bodily act and that the force of the performative is never fully separable from bodily force. This performative force is “derived precisely from its decontextualization, from its break with a prior context and its capacity to assume new contexts” (“Speech Acts Politically” 259). A performative operates precisely because it is iterable, despite the context in which it might be repeated. She argues that Derrida focuses precisely on the structural features that define the performative apart from its context. One such feature is the logic in which the performative operates, similar to written marks, which carry with them “a force of breaking with [their] context. . . . This force of breaking is not an accidental predicate, but the very structure of the written text” (“Signature Event Context” 217). According to Butler,

Derrida links the force of rupture to spacing or the paradox of iterability, insofar as the necessity of citing an origin remains tethered to the impossibility of locating any true origin whatsoever. In particular, the sign is the differential, iterable mark that is cut off from its origin. The force of the performative, according to Butler, is not exactly inherited from prior usage, but is derived from its break with any and all prior usage, “beyond all question of truth or meaning.” This formulation becomes important when we consider Derrida’s remark that “[t]he semantic horizon which habitually governs the notion of communication is exceeded or split by the intervention of writing” (“Signature Event Context” 329). The semantic here is distinguished from the intervention of writing, or the iterable mark, more specifically. In this sense, we understand that for a mark to be a mark, it must carry with it the structural characteristic of iterability. But the dissemination of every mark, as repeatable as it may be, cannot be reducible to the sign’s capacity to bear multiple meanings, to polysemy. The sign or its dissemination then takes place at a structural rather than semantic level. Butler argues that the structural and the semantic in Derrida’s schema appear to work “always and only at cross-purposes.” She asks, “What guarantees the permanence of this crossed and vexed relation in which the structural exceeds and opposes the semantic, and the semantic is always crossed and defeated by the structural?” (260). Butler suggests that if we approach the question from a variety of political scenes, we should encounter “a reading of the speech act that does more than universalize its operation on the basis of its putatively formal structure” (261). Ultimately, because all marks and utterances are vulnerable to failure, the challenge is to discover how certain utterances break from prior contexts more easily than others or why certain utterances carry the force that they do. While we recognize that every utterance and written mark has a break, which serves as its structurally

necessary feature, we have yet no account of the social iterability of the utterance, according to Butler. Derrida's formulation of the break paralyzes any social analysis of forceful utterance.

Performative utterances can fail. This fact, however, is essential to its success. As Butler reminds us, all performativity “rests on the credible production of ‘authority’ and is, thus, not only a repetition of its own prior instance and, hence, a loss of the originary instance, but its citationality assumes the form of mimesis without end” (261). To see how this constellation functions in the present context, let us return to the “Cogito” quote that forms the basis of this dissertation: “A bit like how the anti-colonialist revolution can only liberate itself from a *de facto* Europe or West in the name of transcendental Europe, that is, of Reason, and by letting itself first be won over by its values, its language, its technology, its armaments; an irreducible contamination or incoherence that no cry—I am thinking of Fanon’s—could exorcise, no matter how pure and intransigent it is.” The “origin” of this performative utterance is presumably 1963, just one year after Algeria gained independence and two years after the death of Fanon. As Butler suggests, we have not the resources to speculate comfortably on the social aspects of this forceful utterance. But we can suggest that this quote had not the “authority” it might have needed to succeed in later publications (*L'Écriture et la différence*, 1967, and *Writing and Difference*, 1978). It is here in this context, ripped from its previous and actually more timely context, that this quote, which had always been citable, begins to recover its own prior instance. And we might attribute the opportunity for this performative to succeed to the credible authority that Derrida has established over the years, coupled with the political stances that he has taken, “beginning,” for lack of a better term, with *Specters*. If in *Specters*, Derrida speaks of a certain promise and a politics to come, in a word “justice,” we might begin to understand that his deconstructive analysis of *à-venir* “originates” with his association with Fanon’s cry, a pure and

intransigent one possibly. But it is this association that has been lost in the shadows of philosophy for decades, repeating itself to itself yet inaugurating contexts yet to come. How can Derrida possibly be associated with a revolutionary like Fanon? Indeed, we might consider this question against Buonamano's assertion that the question of revolt remains at the heart of Derrida's ideas on justice and law.

Derrida and Revolution

Buonamano argues that the question of revolt sustains each of Derrida's treatments of law, two of which include *Specters* and Derrida's dedication to Nelson Mandela. On *Specters*, Buonamano reads Derrida as having made “an explicit desire to *account* for the legacy of Marx’s philosophical revolution, seeing it as indispensable to any critique of current political, legal, and moral domains, particularly in light of the hegemonic presence of global-economic and neo-liberal discourses” (177). On “The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, In Admiration,” Buonamano sees Derrida remarking on the inability to transcend the history of existing and former politico-legal systems while attempting to transform them. As I have already discussed *Specters* at length, I will take a brief look at “The Laws of Reflection” before I proceed with Buonamano’s argument.

Derrida’s main point in “The Laws of Reflection” appears to be that “Admirable Mandela” forces exemplarity and admiration precisely because he himself admires. That is to say, friends and enemies alike admire Mandela, a man of reflection, because he knows how to admire. What Mandela admires most, according to Derrida, is the law, specifically “the tradition inaugurated by the Magna Carta, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man under their diverse forms (he frequently calls upon ‘human dignity,’ upon what is human and ‘worthy of that name’); it is also parliamentary democracy and, still more precisely, the doctrine of the separation of powers, the independence of justice” (16-7). Mandela champions democratic rights, has great respect for

British political institutions, and for South Africa's system of justice. Despite having conversed with Marxists and having read Marxist literature that intimates the parliamentary system of the West is undemocratic and reaction, Mandela claims in *The Struggle Is My Life* that the "independence and impartiality of [the British Parliament's] judiciary never fail to arouse my admiration" (176). We learn that Mandela's respect for law extends further than the arrival of whites in South Africa, when he was raised in Transkei listening to the elders of his tribe tell stories of the days before the white man's arrival. Mandela writes: "Then our people lived peacefully, under the democratic rule of their kings and their amapakati [those of highest rank next to the king], and moved freely and confidently up and down the country without let or hindrance. Then the country was ours, in our own name and right" (149). He claims that the structure and organization of early African societies in this country fascinated him and greatly influenced the evolution of his political views. But not only does Mandela admire the Western parliamentary judiciary and the organization and structure of pre-colonial African society, but also the "idea of a classless society, an attraction which springs in part from Marxist reading" (175). Let us now recall the impurity that defines Mandela's political outlook: he admires both Marxism and the order of law in the West, two systems that appear almost antithetical to each other. Indeed, they are the two systems through which Derrida attempts to work in *Specters* when he speaks of various ghosts of Marx circulating among us during these times of globalization. Mandela also admires what the West has to offer (in the form of law and Marxism) and the organization and structure that governed the African society that his elders once knew well. And perhaps this is similar to what deconstruction envisions, both Western rationality and what Derrida calls "the figures of African society [that] prefigure, they make visible ahead of

time, what still remains invisible in its historical phenomenon, that is to say, the ‘classless’ society and the end of the ‘exploitation of man by man’ (“Laws of Reflection” 25).

But before Mandela may feel comfortable working within the legal tradition to return to a more peaceful Africa, he studies jurisprudence. Derrida considers this “a question of mastering Western law, this weapon to turn against the oppressors. These do not finally realize, in spite of all their legal ruses, the true force of law that they manipulate, violate, and betray” (“Laws of Reflection” 29). Mandela must take courses by correspondence, since he does not have immediate access to direct personal conversation. In fact, Mandela and others in the ANC must resort to writing because none of them has access to direct contact. The white government, however, does not respond. When Albert Luthuli, as president of the ANC, addresses the first minister Strijdom and requests a response, he receives nothing. Mandela himself writes to Verwoerd to inform him of a resolution voted on by the action committee of the ANC and to request that Verwoerd convoke a national convention before the deadline determined by the resolution. Mandela receives neither an answer nor acknowledgment of receipt. He articulates in *The Struggle Is My Life* what he sees as the cause of this problem, which I will reproduce here:

We have been conditioned by the history of White governments in this country to accept the fact that Africans, when they make their demands strongly and powerfully enough to have some chance of success, will be met by force and terror on the part of the Government. This is not something we have taught the African people, this is something the African people have learned from their own bitter experience. . . . Already there are indications in this country that people, my people, Africans, are turning to deliberate acts of violence and of force against the Government, in order to persuade the Government, in the only language which this Government shows, by its behavior, that it understands.

Elsewhere in the world, a court would say to me, “You should have made representations to the Government.” This Court, I am confident, will not say so. Representations have been made, by people who have gone before me, time and time again. Representations were made in this case by me; I do not want again to repeat the experience of those representations. The Court cannot expect a respect for the process of representation and negotiation to grow amongst the African people, when the Government shows every day, by its conduct, that it despises such processes and frowns upon them and will not indulge

them. Nor will the Court, I believe, say that, under the circumstances, my people are condemned forever to say nothing and to do nothing. (155-56)

Again, we return to the problem of Africa being heard (or not heard). What is the point of addressing an audience if it never intends to listen or take up one's concerns? And if the Africans understand that even if they articulate their concerns eloquently, what alternatives exist for them, might we suppose? Must someone else speak on their behalf? Or is violence the only means necessary to encourage the other to understand that he is not applying his rules of order equally and appropriately? Mandela understands the necessity of violence, as well as Derrida and Fanon. But these three also have not given up on the judiciary, rationality, the rights of man, a certain humanism that does not necessarily privilege man as center. For Mandela, the goal is to return to an organized and structured African society that his forefathers once knew. For Derrida and Fanon, justice requires a reworking of the Enlightenment, a more equitable distribution of rights to everyone. These rights, however, cannot be granted without recourse to violence; this fact is unmistakable, for Fanon and Derrida, though the degree to which one must proceed with violence is contingent upon circumstances, upon the force of an "original" event. In the case of South Africa, apartheid upheld the segregation and oppression of the black majority. The ANC responded tactically with methods of sabotage, though there were casualties. In the case of Algeria, the French violated the natives through both decrees and excessive physical violence. The FLN and other groups responded with physical violence, but the Front had no ideology to replace the former one after a successful revolt, a point that Fanon raises in *Toward an African Revolution*. Buonamano acknowledges that Derrida maintains a relation between justice and revolution, but it is one that can be reduced simply to the dominant "theory-praxis" paradigm. Buonamano writes,

It may be that the act of revolt is, in certain circumstances, a condition for the exercise of justice, perhaps even a pre-condition; nonetheless, they cannot be simplistically reconciled.

Revolt exists within law, albeit at its limit, rather than beyond it. In this sense, the revolution is never *anarchic*, if this term is understood in its ideological connotations. (177)

Because one can never be outside the order of law, one must always speak and act within to overturn the legal system. In this sense, revolution is regarded as a final act in a process of *affirmation* of discontent, where one questions the law. But revolution is neither the beginning nor the end of counter-violence, but it is the possibility of an event that mediates violence. The act of revolt attacks the violent structure of law and surrenders itself to the violence, which it appropriates for its own use. Buonamano argues that the problematic of revolt is similar to that of justice, in that there exists no purity in either order. Just as justice must attempt to experience the impossible, the ultimate aporia, revolution must challenge the law and state without becoming entirely co-dependent on the force and the self-preserving violence of authority of the state since it must strike at this authority with the latter's weapons. We clearly begin to see the repetition that emerges here—"A bit like how the anti-colonialist revolution can only liberate itself from a *de facto* Europe or West in the name of transcendental Europe, that is, of Reason"—with respect to deconstruction. The fact is, Derrida has identified with Nelson Mandela and Chris Hani, both of whom fought by violent means to secure freedom from the apparatuses of apartheid. And Derrida has spoken of the cry of Fanon several decades earlier, but one has to wonder why it is that the performative utterance of "Fanon" has been relegated to an "originary" position, despite Butler's assertion that to ask such questions is pointless. Still, we must recognize that this performative indeed exists and that a certain affirmation with Africa precedes this performative. I will conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of this affirmation, and in the final chapter, I will explain why I believe Fanon resonates with/for Derrida.

Oui, Oui, Africa

In “A Number of Yes,” Derrida speaks across Michel de Certeau’s *La Fable Mystique*, which teaches Derrida that memory can be encapsulated in a single word: *yes*. The utterance invokes immediately a foreign land, memories of foreign lands, but the word is also a promise. Conclusively, Derrida argues that *yes* is both a “promise of memory” and a “memory of promise” in an event that precedes all presence and all being. But because of the *yes*, this memory itself must forget in order to satisfy its mission, which remains inseparable from the promise of a *yes*: incalculability itself, as a *yes* can never be counted. Furthermore, *yes* “engages the ‘performative’ of an originary affirmation and thus is supposed by every utterance *about* the *yes*. Indeed—to put it aphoristically—for Michel de Certeau there is no subject of any kind which does not arise from the scene of the *yes*” (98). Derrida proposes two types of *yes*, which, like many of Derrida’s figurations, are not homogeneous but similar. The first *yes* is archе-originary, in that it “engages, promises, acquiesces before all else.” It is initially a response, but it also binds itself to the next or other *yes*, which is already there and enveloped in the first. The first *yes* is and is not of language, belonging without belonging to the totality that it simultaneously institutes and opens. In some sense, it is “before” language, marking the promise or an engagement to come to language. In fact, such an event can only occur by the force of this *yes*. This first *yes* “gives breath to every utterance,” makes possible every constative and performative. As a word, it confirms yet remains silent, always doubling and redoubling. As an absolute performative, it makes possible all other performatives, even if they are radically negative. *Yes* can never be reduced to any simplicity, as it is “neither empirical nor ontic.” It “does not fall within the province of any specific science, ontology or phenomenology, nor finally of any predicative discourse. Presupposed by every proposition, it cannot be confused with the position, thesis or theme of any discourse. It is through and through the fable which,

almost before the act and before the *logos*, remains *almost* at the beginning,” Derrida insists (104).

On the surface of this figuration, one might discern at least two resemblances between *yes* and justice, and between *yes* and *différance* that I will identify here quickly in order to make a point about *yes*. In terms of incalculability, we might say that justice and *yes* are similar. Both also fall outside of the aegis of science and should be associated with a certain beyond-ness. In terms of spatio-temporal dimensions, a *yes* functions similarly to *différance*, in that it identifies two moments at the least, an original moment and an arche-original one. Where a *yes* prefigures both a first and a second *yes*, repeatedly doubled into each other, *différance* anticipates an arche-writing that precedes or makes possible the writing that we see. Wedged between these two types of writing is orality, which tends to efface the memory of the arche-originary writing of *différance*. Orality motivates or inspires one to forget arche-originary writing. It is this “forgetting” that interests me most, especially in the context of *yes*. Returning to memory of promise or the promise of memory, I would like to recount what Derrida says about the “first” and “second” yeses:

Promised simultaneously with the “first,” the “second” *yes* must come as an absolute renewal, again absolutely, once again absolutely inaugural and “free,” failing which it could only be a natural, psychological or logical consequence. It must act as if the “first” were forgotten, far enough past to require a new, initial *yes*. This “forgetting” is not *psychological* or accidental, it is structural, the very condition of fidelity, of both the possibility and the impossibility of a signature; it is the divisibility against which a signature extends. (104-5)

Might one make the connection here among this formulation here, Christopher Wise’s argument in “Saying ‘Yes’ to Africa: Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*” that Derrida affirms his solidarity with Africa, and Derrida’s dropping of the Fanon reference in “Cogito et histoire de la folie”? I submit now the following proposition using this Derridean logic of *yes*: Derrida conveniently uses the “lapsus of history” to serve as the forgetting between the experience of

invoking the name of Frantz Fanon, which acts as the “first” yes or affirmation of solidarity with Africa, and the event one could describe as *Specters*, which acts as the “second” yes. The initial yes has been forgotten long enough to require a “new, initial yes,” which some of us have accepted as his so-called political turn. *Specters* serves as Derrida’s faithful countersignature to the first yes, the naming of Fanon. The memory of the promise and the promise of memory enable us to keep this connection between Derrida and Fanon intact, even if it requires the treating of “a cut and a contamination simultaneously.” Of the two repetitions of yes, Derrida writes:

The “first” would not take place without the project, the bet or the promise, the mission or the emission, the send-off of the second, which is already there in it. This last, this first, doubles itself in advance: *yes, yes*, previously assigned to its repetition. Since the second *yes* resides in the first, the repetition augments and divides, distributing *in advance* the arche-originary *yes*. This repetition, which figures the condition of an opening of the *yes*, menaces it as well” mechanical repetition, mimetism, therefore forgetting, simulacrum, fiction, fable. (104)

The dropping of the reference to Fanon signifies at once a cutting and a contamination, which remains vulnerable to the forgetting inherent in a *yes*, one that does not exclude separation. Drawing from de Certeau’s “The Scene of Utterance” in *La Fable Mystique*, Derrida identifies an originary separation of the *yes*: the Christly “*yes*” and the ““I am (the Other)’ of the burning bush” (Jew). Faced once again with making a choice between Jew and Greek, Derrida wonders if it is not possible for the identity between both affirmations to touch upon “an event or an advent of the *yes* which might be *neither* Judaic *nor* Christian, not yet or no longer simply one or the other? And does this *neither-nor* bring us [to some possibility that] could harmonize the originary eventness of the event with the fabulous narrative or with the fable inscribed in the *yes* as the origin of every word?” (100). Could this event or advent of *yes* (in a word, deconstruction) have anything to do with Africa?

If we recall, Christopher Wise argues that deconstruction may be commensurate with traditional “African” concerns, more specifically “the European stigmatization of illiteracy, the iconoclasticism of Judeo-Muslim hermeneutics, and the orality-aurality of traditional African culture” (124). Wise is convinced that Derrida’s dedication to Chris Hani is proof of Derrida’s affirmation of solidarity with Africa. The dedication, which Wise views as a “violent rhetorical strategy” or “deconstructive intervention,” also functions as metonymic displacement that consists largely on the level of apartheid, where justice and the other are envisioned as something *beyond* deconstruction. Wise believes that Derrida ultimately serves as a “stand-in” for Hani and, in doing so, emphasizes the “undeconstructible alterity of Hani.” According to Wise, the problem with and fortunate thing about this strategy is not simply that Derrida risks dislodging Hani, but that we do not know if justice will be delivered in such a gesture of standing in for Hani, as justice is something for which one awaits. The dedication amounts then to Derrida’s affirmation of his solidarity for a fellow African, rather than “‘speak[ing] for’ that absent black African voice” (126).

In my argument, I propose that Wise is correct to assume that Derrida’s dedication to Chris Hani and his work on Nelson Mandela support the assertion that Derrida affirms his solidarity with Africa in a manner consistent with deconstruction, suggesting perhaps that the conceptualization of justice, much like deconstruction itself, is as much African (or other) as it is European. This idea encapsulates the “second” *yes* in Derrida’s formulation. But the more archеoriginary “yes,” the “first” *yes*, consists in identifying this affirmation with African earlier in Derrida’s invocation of Fanon. This connection circumscribes something that I have suspected for several years, that Derrida and Fanon have something fundamentally in common. The commonality that I have in mind is deconstruction, the origins of which may be located in

Africa. I argue that Fanon's new humanism is a deconstructive call for justice. It is plausible that Derrida must have understood this possibility, given his reference to Fanon in the early 1960s, but an inevitable forgetting has severed this tie momentarily, long enough for the requirement of a new, initial *yes*. Derrida signs two *yeses*, indeed, the first, or the "Cogito" that locates the necessity of Reason in any revolution, and the second, or the *Specters* that insist on a certain revolution for any justice to be served. In the next and final chapter, I will explore Fanon's new humanism, which resonates with these two *yeses*.

CHAPTER 6
ACT V: . . . (A) NEW HUMANISM . . .

. . . and this is why I am addressing myself here to God, the only one I take as a witness, without yet knowing what these sublime words mean, and this grammar, and to, and witness, and God, and take, take God, and only do I pray, as I have never stopped doing all my life, and pray to him, but I take him here and take him as my witness, I give myself what he gives me, i.e. the i.e. to take the time to take God as a witness to ask him not only, for example, like SA, why I take pleasure in weeping at the death of the friend, *cur fletus dulcis sit miseris?*, and why I talk to him in Christian Latin French when they expelled from the Lycée de Ben Aknoun in 1942 a little black and very Arab Jew who understood nothing about it”

--Jacques Derrida, “Circumfession” (57-8)

It was my philosophy professor, a native of the Antilles, who recalled the fact to me one day: “Whenever you hear anyone abuse the Jews, pay attention, because he is talking about you.” . . . Later I realized that he meant, quite simply, an anti-Semite is inevitably an anti-Negro.

--Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (122)

O most pernicious woman!

O villain, villain, smiling, damnèd villain!

My tables—meet it is I set it down

That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain—

At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark.

--Hamlet

Throughout this text, I have attempted to sketch various blueprints of deconstruction, noted appropriately by the ellipsis. Permit me here an improper substitution of the verb *to be* (designated by the double strikethrough) to attempt to make sense of the supplementary allusions: deconstruction ~~is~~ learning to live, ~~is~~ (not) Marxism, ~~is~~ additionally African, and ~~is~~ justice. Beneath these sketches, I have attempted to explore an underappreciated relationship

between Jacques Derrida and Frantz Fanon, which begins tentatively with Derrida's reference to the latter in "Cogito et histoire de la folie." The reference has been excised from later versions of the article, but the connection or the affirmation remains just as solid as it was when the article was first printed, like the promise of memory or the memory of promise. In this chapter, I would like to reinforce this connection and conclude by turning the focus to Fanon and his idea called new humanism, which is a concept that I have felt to be deconstructive since I first began reading both theorists as an undergraduate student of English. To put this point more boldly and simply, deconstruction ~~is~~ also a new humanism.

Deconstruction Is Not What You Think

I borrow the subtitle from Geoffrey Bennington's essay of the same name, in which he offers several points about deconstruction. In the essay, originally published in *Art and Design*, he writes that "Deconstruction is not (what you think if you think it is) essentially to do with language" (217). He also suggests that "Deconstruction is not a theory or a project. It does not prescribe a practice more or less faithful to it, nor project an image of a desirable state to be brought about" (218). Though Bennington intended these words for a more artistic audience, we should understand through his insight that deconstruction cannot be anticipated and that it is more than language. Considering these precepts, one might arrive at Fanon's new humanism, which he initially describes as a state that requires man to "take on the universality inherent in the human condition" (*Black Skin* 10). By *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon begins to regard a revolutionary component to a new humanism. In his last full-length text, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon describes a new humanism that is a consequence of decolonization, which "brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. [It] is the veritable creation of new men" (36). In this search for a new humanity, we are told that we must not imitate Europe, for Europe, incapable of showing us humanness,

equality, and justice, has only shown us “a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders” (312). Fanon writes, “It is a question of the Third World starting a new history of Man, a history which will have regard to the sometimes prodigious which Europe has put forward, but which will also not forget Europe’s crimes, of which the most horrible was committed in the heart of man, and consisted of the pathological tearing apart of his functions and the crumbling away of his unity” (315).

When Fanon refers to the term “humanism,” we must understand that he is not referring explicitly to the humanism in a traditional or even Levinasian sense (Jewish humanism). Fanon’s concept refers generally to a system that has offered the world the Declaration of Rights of Man, the Bill of Rights, the Magna Carta, and other forms of inalienable rights based upon Reason. In truth, I believe he uses “new humanism” primarily because there exists at that time no word or concept that could capture precisely what he wished for the present and the future of humankind. Indeed, Fanon’s last words in *The Wretched of the Earth* encourage us to “turn over a new leaf . . . work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man” (255). Ultimately, Fanon stresses the term “new” more than any other term in this phrase, which expresses an ambiguous desire to experience a new state of affairs to come. I argue that this concept, new humanism, aligns rather nicely with deconstruction’s democracy to come (*la démocratie à venir*), which I will explain later.

Still, one question we must constantly ask ourselves is, “What is deconstruction?” especially because deconstruction can be both nothing and not everything. What then are the limitations of deconstruction? Are we really ready to accept the answers to these questions? In truth, to read Derrida isn’t to accept wholeheartedly his version of things; it is to accept a provisional argument or departure, with the understanding that the argument or departure is still

open to conjecture: we are expected to contribute something to his work. So, for example, if his aim in *Specters* is to open up Marxism to a certain reading via Shakespeare in the spirit not only of Marxism but also of deconstruction, then my goal might be to open Derrida and deconstruction to an alternative reading rooted deeply in Africa in the spirit of deconstruction.

To “stabilize” these readings, I will rely on Derrida’s reading of *Hamlet* in *Specters*. In this reading, Derrida establishes a spectral logic by which we are to regard Marx as something beyond ontology, while problematizing the scholar’s understanding of and engagement with politics, philosophy, and change. Derrida is not interested in how we can use Marx today, but he is concerned with how we ourselves can become revolutionary thinkers in the way that both Marx and Feuerbach might have wanted from philosophers. In other words, we might ask, “How can we speak to and with the specters of Marx to think about change? How are we to listen to the specters of Marx?” Ultimately, *Specters* is a book about this inheritance, and Derrida is interested in understanding how one is to respond to or feel responsible for a heritage that hands one down contradictory orders. He is consumed by a particular moment when there existed *on the one hand*, “the very possibility . . . and the phenomenality of the political,” or, again, “that which makes it possible to identify the political”; and, *on the other hand*, the possibility of a “hauntology,” in which a discourse on (I do not say a science of) spectrality remains “irreducible . . . to all that it [a ‘hauntology’] makes possible: ontology, theology, positive or negative onto-theology,” which also means, even before one begins to speak of “Marxist philosophy,” the “philosophy” whose limit Marx was, in my opinion, never able to thematize. (“Marx and Sons” 219)

I want to resume this discussion of responsibility, heritage, contradictory orders, and specters in thinking about Fanon and Derrida as complementary revolutionary intellectuals, joined particularly at “Cogito et histoire de la folie,” but I will propose my own reading of *Hamlet*: 1) Though Derrida makes no clear or explicit reference to the ghost of Hamlet as being Marx, some readers generally read the ghost in this manner; my reading will be no different; 2) Marxist Aijaz Ahmad insists on characterizing Derrida as one who has inserted himself in the

place of both Hamlet and the ghost of Hamlet's father. I accept provisionally this characterization, preferring to read Derrida as Hamlet only, for the sake of simplicity; 3) Where my reading of *Hamlet* will differ from other deconstructive readings is in my rendering of Fanon as Horatio, despite three ontological inconsistencies: a) Derrida and Fanon were never considered friends or colleagues, though they were certainly contemporaries of each other; in *Hamlet*, however, Hamlet and Horatio are colleagues at Wittenburg; b) Fanon dies several decades before Derrida, but in *Hamlet*, Hamlet dies before Horatio, upon whom Hamlet asks to carry on his legacy; and c) Marx is not in any biographical sense Derrida's father. I make these provisional conjectures by way of spectral/*differential* logic that problematizes both origin and the prioritizing of first and second. In other words, this logic recognizes a temporal disjunction, invoked in the following phrase in *Hamlet*, "Time is out of joint." On the subject of the specter and time, Derrida argues that that guise of the specter does not belong to present time, especially considering the fluidity of the ghost of King Hamlet: "Enter Ghost . . . Exit Ghost . . . Re-enter Ghost" (*Hamlet* 2-5). The ghost is always leaving and returning, and thus is beyond time. This beyond-ness is significant in terms of justice and responsibility, as

justice carries life beyond present life or its actual being-there, its empirical or ontological actuality: not toward death but toward a *living-on* [sur-vie], namely, a trace of which life and death would themselves be but traces and traces of traces, a survival whose possibility in advance comes to disjoin or dis-adjust the identity to itself of the living present as well as of any effectivity. There is then *some spirit*. Spirits. And *one must* reckon with them. One cannot not have to, one must not not be able to reckon with them, which are more than one: the *more than one/no more one* [*le plus d'un*]." (*Specters* xx)

It is my hope that, by this temporal disjunction, we may allow a deconstructive reading of *Hamlet* that permits us to speak *of* or *with* various specters of Derrida and Fanon, which is, in any event, my aim. By shedding light on Derrida, I hope to cast an alternative image of Fanon, and vice versa. I will argue that if we must always (already) place Derrida in the "spotlight," we ought to recognize that Fanon is always never very far from him. In other words, we might

regard Fanon as Derrida's devoted shadow, a reading inspired by Francis G. Schoff's interpretation of Horatio in *Hamlet*. Schoff argues that

judged by his speech and actions, it remains true that Horatio is very nearly a nobody. It is only through Hamlet that we are made aware of him as an individual; only through Hamlet that we feel that his presence on stage supplies Hamlet with one decent and loyal associate in the mad and rotten world in which he finds himself: one person on whose reports or testimony he can rely; one person to whom he can speak openly and freely. Otherwise, Horatio would remain for the audience merely a "Messenger," a "Nuncio." (55)

Conclusively, Schoff regards Horatio as Hamlet's devoted shadow or confidant. Though I do not regard Horatio as "very nearly a nobody," I believe that Schoff's argument underscores quite well the fact that we are never made aware of Horatio's intellectualism and potential, thus leaving the focus on Hamlet. In the same way, I conclude that we are often defensive about our regard for Derrida and deconstruction, and, in doing so, we fail to direct our attention toward a figure such as Fanon who is just as integral to deconstruction. One way that we might rethink the extent of Fanon's contribution to deconstruction is to regard him as Jacques Derrida's devoted shadow. This characterization becomes more important when we consider Derrida's "Cogito et histoire de la folie," which, as I have argued earlier, describes the manner in which Foucault embeds the true historical ground of the Decision—that which, through a single act, links and separates reason and madness—"in the shadows" (39). "Cogito" also preempts the figuration "in the shadows" to describe a certain philosophical process of repression, forbiddance, or concealment, a process that can be said to characterize deconstruction, beginning perhaps with the excising of Fanon's name. If Fanon (Horatio) is in the shadows of deconstruction, it is Derrida (Hamlet), not necessarily the reader, who forces him there. Before I focus on Fanon's new humanism, I will first draw out several implications among Derrida, Fanon, and *Hamlet*.

The Play's the Thing

The inclination to associate Derrida with Hamlet begins with the latter's inability to act, his tendency to think too much, and his feigning madness. Whence does this inability to act and madness usher forth? If we are to accept Derrida's ideas on justice, we might conclude that the moment of the just decision is the cause for both hesitancy and "a madness," given that justice, which is impossible, is something that cannot wait. Derrida himself recognizes this problematic in *Hamlet* when he speaks of responsibility and justice in *Specters* as a "*non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*," where justice is "*beyond therefore the living present in general*" (xx). Our responsibility to this disjointed, incalculable sense of time begins at birth or, in other words, the inheritance of a responsibility. According to Derrida, this inheritance signifies the originary wrong from which Hamlet suffers, the bottomless wound experienced at birth, "an irreparable tragedy, the indefinite malediction that marks the history of the law or history as law: that time is 'out of joint' is what is also attested by birth itself when it dooms someone to be the man of right or law only by becoming an inheritor, redresser of wrongs, that is, only be castigating, punishing, killing" (*Specters* 21). If we recall, it is the ghost of king Hamlet that reminds us of this responsibility and inspires this madness. Hamlet, however, is not the first to see the ghost. Horatio sees it before him (Fanon was first to engage in Communist politics, though he never became a member [1949-51]. He is reported to have been close to the student branch Parti Communiste Francais, but he did not become a member, even though he was active in student politics and took part in anti-colonialist demonstrations"), and it is Horatio who is ready to act, to strike at the ghost ("I'll cross it, though it blast me"), an interesting fact considering Horatio does not initially believe in the ghost. Horatio's most difficult challenge, however, lies in attempting to speak to the ghost. As Derrida argues, what "seems almost impossible is to speak always of the specter, to speak to the specter, to speak with it, therefore

especially to make or to let a spirit speak” (*Specters* 11). This feat is especially difficult for “a reader, an expert, a professor, an interpreter, in short, for what Marcellus calls a ‘scholar.’” Derrida believes that because scholars, observers, intellectuals, witnesses, and theoreticians privilege sight, they are not in the best position to speak to the specter. So when Marcellus implores Horatio to speak to the ghost—“Thou art a scholar; speak to it” (3)—we might understand why it appears to us, especially to Derrida, that Horatio wants to “inspect, stabilize, arrest the specter in its speech.” For Derrida, it is as if Marcellus “were taking part in a colloquium. He appeals to the scholar or to the learned intellectual, to the man of culture as a spectator who better understands how to establish the necessary distance or how to find the appropriate words for observing, better yet, for apostrophizing the ghost, which is to say also for speaking the language of kings or of the dead” (*Specters* 12). After Marcellus implores Horatio to speak with the ghost, Horatio speaks, but the ghost is “offended” and leaves. When the ghost returns, Horatio is certain that the ghost will speak to Hamlet. Hamlet also knows the ghost will only speak to him, primarily because it may “assume my noble father’s person” (16). The ghost does not speak immediately to Hamlet, but beckons him to “go away with it” (24). Both Marcellus and Horatio respond negatively, telling Hamlet not to go with it, lest the ghost may encourage Hamlet to commit suicide or deprive Hamlet of his ability to reason and draw him into madness. Hamlet, however, does not follow their advice and leaves with the ghost to another part of the platform where the ghost confides in Hamlet. The ghost tells him, “I am thy father’s spirit” and that he must wander the earth until the crimes he committed as a mortal are purged. He cannot tell the secrets of the prison-house because they are not appropriate for “ears of flesh and blood” (26). The ghost wants Hamlet to revenge his wrongful death.

It seems, then, that thinking the possibility of and addressing the specter require more than being a scholar; thinking and addressing specters require “f(am)ilial” relations. The ghost will not speak to Marcellus and Horatio, but to them, it will merely make itself known, will itself appear only to be seen but not spoken to. The ghost, however, will only speak to the one with whom he identifies, his son, and he will not do so in public but in private. Does this issue not return us to the problematic of being heard, which occupies the question of the scholar or intellectual speaking on behalf of Africa? If Hamlet knows that his familial relations will guarantee that the ghost will speak to him, he must also realize the privilege that these relations afford him. Derrida too must surely recognize that to identify as Western will afford him a certain privilege to be heard that the Africans, who clearly lack the familial relations with the specters of Europe, will certainly not have access to. The contexts in which these conversations take place seem most interesting. If the ghost will only speak to Hamlet in private, then how are we to make sense of the question of inheritance and filial relations in general? Derrida argues that one always inherits from a secret, “which says, ‘read me, will you ever be able to do so?’ The critical choice called for by any reaffirmation of the inheritance is also, like memory itself, the condition of finitude” (*Specters* 16). When one thinks of inheritance, one thinks of family, but because inheritance is not “given, natural, transparent, univocal, if it did not call for and at the same time defy interpretation,” it is heterogeneous. Neither Derrida nor Hamlet, however, is able to deal with this inheritance rather effectively, as both rationalize too much “to act” in a general sense. Who is then called upon to act, to carry on the legacy of Hamlet? Before his last breath after falling at the poisoned sword of Laertes, Hamlet passes on the responsibility of inheritance to Horatio, who shows his allegiance by offering to drink poison so that he may die with Hamlet. Hamlet tells him no, that he must live and deliver the truth about all that has

happened. Hamlet entrusts his colleague of Wittenburg, the center of rationalism and the Protestant Reformation, with “truth.”

Let us pause for a moment to consider Wittenburg not only as a metaphor for rationality and Reason, but also religiosity. Wittenburg becomes more significant when we consider that Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher—his work deals with religious problems such as the nature of faith, the institution of the Christian Church, Christian ethics and theology, and the emotions and feelings of individuals when faced with existential choices—would be regarded as the first existentialist philosopher and Derrida would read his work, along with the work of Heidegger, back in 1948 after he passed the *baccalaureat*. Heidegger, too, would be regarded by many as an existentialist, despite his denial. Research into the history of Wittenburg also yields another name, Martin Luther, to whom we might attribute an originary anti-semitism. If Derrida as Hamlet becomes scholar at Wittenburg, we might posit that his occupation represents not a reconciliation, but a coming to terms with discrimination. By default, Fanon as Horatio is also dealing with a heterogeneous but deceptively similar discrimination, especially if we are to take the words of Fanon’s philosopher professor to heart: “It was my philosophy professor, a native of the Antilles, who recalled the fact to me one day: ‘Whenever you hear anyone abuse the Jews, pay attention, because he is talking about you.’ . . . Later I realized that he meant, quite simply, an anti-Semite is inevitably an anti-Negro” (*BSWM* 122). The black and the Jew, the black and the little black and very Arab Jew contending side by side against an originary violence, both men tending to a responsibility as scholars, attempting to speak with specters. But it is somehow Derrida (Hamlet) passing this responsibility to Fanon (Horatio). How is this possible?

We can see the possibility of the passing of responsibility in this moment if we return to *diffrance* and temporality, where we must conceive of a second term folding back onto the first

term, where an arche-originary proponent makes possible any subsequent ones. A more aphoristic expression would be that the second is always implied within the first, as Derrida tells us. In the case of *différance* itself, an arche-originary writing precedes orality which precedes writing. If we were to substitute Derrida and Fanon within this system of a general economy, system of differential marks, to label each man as first or second, we might arrive at the following calculus: Fanon/Horatio as arche-originary precedes Derrida/Hamlet. It is Fanon (Horatio) who “sees” Marx (the ghost) before Derrida (Hamlet), and he is implored to speak to it. It is Fanon (Horatio) who acts first, taking up arms with National Liberation Front (offering to strike at the ghost). The ghost, however, does not affirm this gesture, deferring instead to Hamlet, with whom it speaks. It is in this sense that the specter (of Marx, of Europe) hears and communicates with Hamlet. But how is Derrida (Hamlet) to pass the responsibility back onto Fanon (Horatio)? Deconstruction indeed permits us a reading that allows Fanon to assume a certain responsibility, to tell us about truth in a most pure and intransigent manner, after the death of Derrida. Deconstruction then is a new humanism, for which violence functions integrally to permit (the promise of) a future where justice can occur. This dissertation represents a modest gesture to make this possible, to allow Fanon to carry a burden of responsibility after Derrida.

Enter Hamlet and Horatio.

Smile

The conversation between Derrida and Fanon begins with a smile, with a Marrano’s smile or maybe even the smile of a villain, a renegade, or infidel. In “A Marrano’s Smile,” John Leavey proposes that the smile is one way that Marranos can recognize one another on and over the *topos* of a particular shibboleth. A simplistic definition of Marrano would tell us of a Spanish or Portuguese Jew who is forced to convert to Christianity, usually under the threat of death or

persecution, a sort of Shylock conversion. Derrida looks at this conversion from the perspective of the convert, defining Marrano not as someone who has chosen to relinquish an integral aspect of his or her life, his or her religiosity in particular, but as “anyone who remains faithful to a secret that he has not chosen, in the very place where he lives, in the home of the inhabitant or of the occupant, in the home of the first or of the second *arrivant*, in the very place where he stays without saying no but without identifying himself as belonging to” (*Aporias* 81). The Marrano keeps a secret, or, more appropriately, the “secret keeps the Marrano even before the Marrano keeps it. Is it not possible to think that such a secret eludes history, age, and aging?” (Derrida, *Aporias* 81). If the secret is to remain a secret, then it would necessitate a shibboleth that would assist in the concealment of the secret. Hence, not only is the smile encoded, but the shibboleth also encodes, as it “divides and cuts in the word that can and cannot be said,” as Leavey explains (“A Marrano’s Smile” 14). For him, a certain pragmatics of the shibboleth and the evocation of a smile enable Derrida and Antonio Negri to have a conversation that has not yet taken place and “will not have taken place even when conceived from a future point, as if Derrida were still alive, as if his ghost had now returned to have this conversation” (“A Marrano’s Smile” 8). Leavey can speculate on what these two (will) have (already) said, but what remains certain is the implication or necessity of a two-fold responsibility. This speculative conversation has no immediate regard for an order(ing) of events or the privileging of primordial terms, as it has not yet taken place. The futurity implicated within the event(-uality) is structured, misaligned, or disordered on the basis of a responsibility or an inheritance of a two-fold “before.” We quote Derrida’s *For What Tomorrow* at length to explain this point:

The concept of responsibility has not sense at all outside of an experience of inheritance. Even before saying that one is responsible for a particular inheritance, it is necessary to know that responsibility in general (“answering for,” “answering in one’s name”) is first assigned to us, and that it is assigned to us through and through, as an inheritance. One is

responsible before what comes before one but also before what is to come, and therefore *before oneself*. A double *before*, one that is also a debt, as when we say *devant ce qu'il doit: before* what he *ought to do* and *owing* what he *owes*, once and for all, the heir is doubly indebted. It is always a question of a sort of anachronism: to come before [*devancer*] in the name of what came before us, and to come before the name itself! To invent one's name, to sign otherwise, uniquely in each case but in the name of the name passed down, if that's possible! (5-6)

Derrida's words here do nothing more than reinforce what has already been established throughout this work: our conversation with the ghost implies a responsibility that is out of joint. Leavey figures that the conversation between Derrida and Negri takes place through the shibboleth of a new practice, namely a new ontology. In "A Specter's Smile," Negri proposes a "new—post-deconstructive—ontology" that would enable deconstruction to escape the prison of "an ineffectual and exhausted definition of ontology" where it remains.

Humanism → A New Humanism

If Negri's intent in "A Specter's Smile" is to help Derrida escape the prison of ontology and to lead deconstruction onto "new ontological terrain," my goal here is also two-fold: to examine deconstruction's role in humanism via Bill Martin's *Humanism and Its Aftermath* and locate Fanon's proposal for a new humanism within the shibboleth of a new practice that we might refer to as a new humanism. This examination will then lead us to questions of identity, which will further reinforce Derrida's connection to Fanon.

Martin argues straightforwardly that Derrida enacts a transformation of humanism by engaging with problems of modernity. At the heart of his essay are two fundamental questions: 1) what is human, or "what is it to participate in humanity"? And 2) what is universalism, and what are its possibilities today? Recognizing that humanism is generally framed as a universalistic ideology, Martin acknowledges two distinct versions of humanism. We identify Immanuel Kant as the figure who most thoroughly articulated the Enlightenment version of ethical universalism. The second version can be attributed to René Descartes, whose humanism

thrusts the “I” in the center of the universe. Martin speculates for several reasons that Kant, more than Hume or Spinoza, should be credited with moving beyond self-centered Cartesianism, which “has every right to claim the mantle of humanism. Its highest aspiration is self-knowledge, though defined as self-assertion” (50). The highest aspiration of the Kantian circuit seems to be a general regard for the other. Martin argues that some thinkers, most specifically Marx, are caught between these two circuits, which makes understanding Kantian culture difficult.

In order to situate Derrida within this discussion, Martin turns to Susan Bordo’s *The Flight to Objectivity* to explore the dominance of Cartesian culture and the manner in which it encourages us to reflect inward and to purify our minds by purging the mother, the feminine, the body, and the dirt of labor. Martin explains: “Such are the Cartesian roots of the boot camp, where one is made over into a man. This last comment is not merely gratuitous; just as a society’s politics are concentrated in war, so is its culture concentrated in its war-making machineries” (52). The narrator of Albert Camus’s *The Last Man* reminds us of the concentration of war in society: “‘There’s always been war,’ said Veillard. ‘But people quickly get accustomed to peace. So they think it’s normal. No, war is what’s normal’” (184). War, then, is the enterprise of men and, as such, requires us to reflect by purging ourselves of the feminine. Though we might recognize masculinization in Kant’s work, we must also acknowledge the “reversal of the Cartesian reaction-formation, the memory of the mother” (53).

Martin returns us to Derrida’s essay, “Cogito and the History of Madness,” which serves as the basis for this work. In “Cogito,” Derrida attempts to clarify the manner in which Descartes struggled to attain mental purity and to charge Foucault—Enter Bernardo—with a “naïve” historicized reading of Descartes’ *cogito* as that which subsumes an a priori madness. Martin points to Derrida’s criticism of Foucault’s methodology to emphasize the crisis of reason that

“both logically precedes and underwrites all temporality; [Derrida] is carrying through to its logical conclusion a Cartesian critique of Foucault” (56). This crisis is not only energized by a culture of positivism, it is also brought on by the “decision” between an “access to reason” and an “attack” of it. Martin wonders if Derrida “describes a universal structure in which all who are human participate” (57).

The brief reference to Derrida’s “Cogito” allows Martin to position Derrida against Habermas, Nietzsche, and Kant to extract a more poignant Derridean stance on reason. Habermas decries young conservatives like Derrida for promulgating Kant’s project in a one-sided, Nietzschean way, which allegedly remains on the level of pure reason, eliding its connection to pure judgment and the practicality of ethics. For Habermas, Nietzsche and others like him, especially Derrida, never deal with practical reason. Martin then points to Habermas’s “The Idea of the University—Learning Processes” and Derrida’s “The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils” to challenge Habermas’s claim that the Nietzschean variant of the Kantian project has no regard for the convergence of the practical/political and reason. What the examination of the two texts ultimately reveals is that Habermas himself lacks an international dimension and that Derrida’s work highlights aporias that are “points of repression” in Habermas’s essay. Another crucial distinction between the two texts is the placement, or understanding rather, of an “outside” with respect to reason. For Habermas, the attack on the principle of reason and the university will come from the outside. For Derrida, this crisis develops from within the university.

If Kant initially placed philosophy at the center of the faculties of the university, Martin laments the marginalization of philosophy and its being replaced by fields such as marketing and advertising. It is here where Martin’s argument loses traction. Although he speaks rather

awkwardly for “people of color, women, gays, and others” and of the intellectual sanctuary, or “generally pleasant and privileged spaces” that are also a “kind of padded cell, where we realize that we are only permitted to raise relevant questions in irrelevant circumstances and irrelevant questions in relevant circumstances” (120), we should not overlook the fact that Martin himself seems to repress the university’s earlier role in marginalizing the voices of “people of color, women, gays, and others.” He mentions ideologues such as Dinesh D’Souzas, Roger Kimballs, and George Willeses who hack the scholarship of lesbian, deconstructionist, or Marxist writers, but spends little time describing the manner in which this repression historically organized itself to exclude marginal voices within the university itself. Before disciplinary interests such as “feminism, Afro-American literary studies, deconstruction, Marxism, gay studies, and other critical approaches” even saw the light of day at institutions of higher learning,²⁵ these interests fought (and continue to fight) at these highly contested sites of reason/rationality. It is relatively only recent that the academy has allowed for a certain level of self-reflexivity that would enable a space for questioning the system. In fact, Martin locates this movement in the sixties when “specific questions . . . [concerning] patriarchy, ideologies of racial (especially white) superiority, capitalism, and other oppressive hierarchies” were “given especially powerful expression” (118). He argues that these questions “were taken into the colleges and universities and developed in theoretical terms.” Did not these questions emerge from within the walls of the university? If we pay particular attention to V. Y. Mudimbe’s analysis of Africa, to which I shall briefly return later, we can understand an approximation of how these institutions have come to

²⁵ One wonders why Martin spends so much time focusing on blacks, gays, and women, neglecting to mention other racialized categories such as Hispanic or Asian Americans. Aside from a few references such as the Vietnam War and Paolo Freire, Martin’s essay lacks an international dimension, much like the Habermas essay he discusses.

circumscribe a narrative of superiority and delimit the right to question, which Martin believes is “itself under attack” (118).

Indeed, Martin is correct to point to Derrida as someone who attempts to transform humanism by examining reason, especially with respect to the university. Martin also deploys a critique of Richard Rorty—who credits Derrida’s experiment writing as aiming at new ways of being human—to arrive at the following conclusion: “The difference [between Rorty and Derrida] is that Derrida goes to great length to thematize the risks involved in encountering the ‘invention of the other,’ and he also urges that these risks must be taken, of necessity. This necessity is our possibility and the possibility of the other” (112). But Martin’s sketch of Derrida falls short of illustrating accurately the problematization of the notion of an “outside.” The neo-conservative ideologues that Martin decries have done nothing more than take up, albeit aggressively and in extreme fashion, the concerns of its conservative counterparts within the university. If Derrida’s “The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils” centers around the figure of the “gorge” in the midst of Cornell University, a figure that runs both inside and outside, we should have no problem understanding how ideologue Ann Coulter, the poster child for irrational thought, could emerge from its prestigious halls.

Martin treats fairly the question “what is it to participate in humanity?” but his discussion of universalism and its possibilities today, with the exception of a brief reference to Paolo Freire, remain largely a question of the West. It is here where I should take on Fanon’s notion of a new humanism and return to the question of Derrida and universalism to examine the confluences between Derrida’s and Fanon’s positions.

Fanon Envisions a New Humanism

Fanon’s new humanism went through several transformations throughout his short publishing career. Beginning with the first page of *Black Skin, White Masks (BSWM)*, Fanon

introduces us to the notion of a new humanism, which requires man to “take on the *universality* inherent in the *human condition*” (10, emphasis added). If the white man fails to recognize the Negro, or if the Negro feels inferior and finds himself faced with a neurotic situation, it is because the world needs to be restructured (82). This restructuring requires both the white man and the black man to “turn their backs on the inhuman voices which were those of their respective ancestors in order that authentic communication be possible. Before it can adopt a positive voice, freedom requires an effort at disalienation” (231). Fanon’s position appears to run counter to Derrida’s, who believes precisely in taking on the voices of our “respective ancestors” in order to move forward or to generate a new practice. We must clarify, however, that Fanon does not suggest turning our backs on all of our ancestors, only those whose voices are “inhuman.” His interest can be purportedly reduced to communication, freedom, and disalienation. Nowhere in this early formulation do we see the term “violence,” as Fanon believes naively that in order to eliminate the psychology of oppression and its concomitant terms such as “superiority” and “inferiority,” we must attempt “to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself” (231). He recognizes that the Negro who toils in fields has only one solution: to fight (224), but the extent of his discussion on war is limited to the double process of an inferiority complex, namely economic and the internalization (or epidermalization) of this inferiority. Fanon argues that the “black man must wage his war on both levels” (11). Conclusively, we might concede that Fanon is familiar with the plight of the Negro in a white world, and his theses are profoundly structured around a Manichean delirium that he believes can be corrected only through a successful struggle with disalienation.

Much like deconstruction, the architecture of *BSWM* is “rooted in the temporal” as Fanon realizes that “[e]very human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time” (13).

Fanon believes that the present always contributes to the building of the future, but he regards the future as immediate, “of my century, my country, my existence. In no fashion should I undertake to prepare the world that will come later. I belong irreducibly to my time” (13). He also insists that his analysis will be valid only for the Antilles, his *home*. On the surface, these statements might appear counterintuitive to deconstruction, in that they attempt to delimit history and time, or to plot time linearly, and to identify one particular locale (the Antilles) for his analysis. The sentiment expressed at the outset of *BSWM* should be viewed as disingenuous at best for two reasons: First, regarding time, Fanon is convinced that “the body of history does not determine a single one of my actions,” and yet he cannot escape the logic that insists that man is “drowned in contingency” (231). He insists that he will not derive his basic purpose from the past of the peoples of color, but he declares that, as a man, “what I have to recapture is the whole past of the world” (226). We then are not clear how he could resign himself to conclude that the possible correspondence between a Negro philosopher and Plato has no relation to the destitution of children working the cane fields in Martinique or Guadeloupe. An impatient Fanon consistently gets temporality incorrect, which is why Derrida serves as an important interlocutor here on behalf of his Marrano counterpart. If Fanon refuses to recognize that justice must arrive, that the future moment is not as immediate as it is desirable, it is because he would like to experience justice in his lifetime. Henry Louis Gates has argued that Homi Bhabha and others have conveniently ignored Fanon’s proviso—“In no fashion should I undertake to prepare the world that will come later. I belong irreducibly to my time”—when they attempt to create a poststructural, postmodern Fanon. I want to argue here that this proviso indeed encapsulates deconstruction insofar as it is understood as necessary and, in Derrida’s words, as something needed immediately. This proviso also enjoins Fanon and Derrida uniquely, especially when we

consider Derrida's argument in "Force of Law" when he writes that anyone who says "‘our time,’ while thinking ‘our present’ in light of a future anterior present does not know very well, by definition, what they are saying. It is precisely in this ignorance that the eventness of the event consists, what we naively call its presence" (991). My guess is that Fanon writes this proviso hastily, not necessarily in ignorance, but insistent on the fact that justice is needed now.

His frustration apparent throughout *BSWM*, Fanon in a "final prayer" eventually comes to terms with the prospect of not experiencing justice in his lifetime: "O my body, make of me always a man who questions!" (232). Indeed, this declaration converges on an aspect of deconstruction that would return us to our discussion in Chapter Two on spectrality: the notion of "prayer" emanating from Fanon should suggest a messianicity without religion. Nowhere in *BSWM* do we see any representation of religion, which makes the last words of the text all the more curious. Fanon is not a religious man, so what is the need for prayer? Fanon himself awaits the arrival of a "Messiah," a salvation that will lead to equal treatment for all. But we should not identify this "Messiah" with the typical religious figuration, but with spectrality that assumes no religious affiliation. For Derrida, the messianicity without messianism has no doubt a profound importance for the coming of the specter and justice, the unpredictability of their arrival. In the meantime, Fanon must accept this itinerary, but he also wants to remain a "man who questions!" In choosing to be a "man who questions," Fanon ultimately tells us that he is ready *to learn to live*, the "strange watchword" that indicates "the sententious injunction that always feigns to speak like the just" (*Specters* xviii). Fanon prepares to treat more seriously questions of memory, inheritance, generations, responsibility, and justice. He prepares to speak with/for/to ghosts/specters. If we return to the first line of *BSWM*, we can make more sense of this particular explosion that "will not happen today. It is too soon . . . or too late" (7).

The second reason why we should view Fanon's initial sentiments expressed in *BSWM* as disingenuous has to do with his willingness to expand his analysis to include those he originally felt authorized to discuss. In some sense, he opens the questions of memory, inheritance, responsibility, and justice when he agrees to "show why the Negro of the Antilles, whoever he is, has always to face the problem of language," yet he also broadens "the field of this description and through the Negro of the Antilles include *every colonized man*" (18, emphasis added). Fanon universalizes the experience of the black man to include those who have "lived in France for a length of time" only to return "radically changed" (19), "the *R*-eating man from Martinique" (21), "people born in Dahomey or the Congo who pretend to be natives of the Antilles" (25), the Senegalese, the black proletariat of South Africa, and the Negro in America. In these characterizations, he recognizes himself, but he also does not "have the duty to be this or that. . ." (229). He wants to break free of the "lasso of existence" to which he has been confined, and he only has one right: to demand human behavior from the other. We see Fanon at the conclusion of *BSWM* attempting to redefine not only humanism, the Cartesian self-centeredness that led to the designations "superiority" and "inferiority" in the first place, and ontology ("I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it"). In doing so, in traveling the world, he is "endlessly creating [himself]."

These exclamations represent humble expressions of deconstruction. In them, Fanon understands how he has been made Negro, but he refuses to accept those terms. He wants to create himself. Can we not hear in his words something akin to Derrida's criticism of what it means to be a Jew? In "Abraham, the Other," Derrida becomes witness to the deconstruction of the phrase "I could think of another Abraham for myself." With this phrase, we can assume, imagine, or conceive of more than one Abraham, according to Derrida. We can call this other

Abraham a “fiction,” and in fictionalizing Abraham, we can move to make sense of at least two orders and to respond to them, with a *yes* perhaps. (Before I begin Derrida’s critique of “Abraham,” let me not waste any time in pointing out that at the time of Fanon’s death, he had taken the name “Ibrahim.”) These two orders can be summed as follows, and I quote Derrida at length here:

How, and by what right, can one distinguish, for example, between that which, in my experience, touches *in part* my “being jew [*être juif*]” at its most intimate, its most obscure, its most illegible (however one takes this “being-jew,” and later I will in fact complicate the stakes of this expression—one cannot do everything at once) and *in part* that which, let us say, seems to belong in a more legible fashion to my work, the public work of a good or a bad student, which does not necessarily, nor always, bear visible traces of my “being-jew,” whether it concerns itself with writing, teaching, ethics, law or politics, or civic behavior, or whether it concerns itself with philosophy or with literature. (2-3)

These two orders, recognizing the intimacy of “being-jew” and the obscurity of “being-jew,” always requires the affirmation or a response, a *yes*, which either accepts affirmatively the terms of one’s being-jew or disavows being jew, even under the cloak of secrecy, like a Marrano. In short, as Derrida says, it is a matter of responsibility, but also a matter of dissociations, which do not necessarily threaten social bonds but threaten love, “Of living love and of lifelong love of life, the lively and exposed affirmation of life. So it is that evil, risk, as well as opportunity, have to do neither with dissociation nor with its opposite, but with the experience of a dissociation that is at once possible, necessary, *and* impossible. An alternative at once promised and denied” (5). Fanon might suggest a dissociation of what it means “to understand and to love. . . .” (7). We can better understand this sense of dissociation by considering three different figures, which I will rehearse briefly here: 1) a dissociation between *persons* of a particular ethnic/racial/religious identity. How does one (I am Jewish) ultimately come to identify with an other (She is Jewish)? 2) the dissociation between *authenticity* and *inauthenticity*. How do we identify the authentic and the inauthentic Jew? and 3) the dissociation between *judeity* [jewishness] and *judaism*. What

ultimately is the difference between the two terms? If we refer to Fanon's philosophy professor, we can simply substitute being-negro, negro-ness, and negritude for a few of the terms above, as Fanon once learned from him that “‘Whenever you hear anyone abuse the Jews, pay attention, because he is talking about you.’ . . . Later I realized that he meant, quite simply, an anti-Semite is inevitably an anti-Negro” (*BSWM* 122). But before Derrida examines these three dissociations, he whispers a secret (to Fanon): one is entrusted to a certain “determined silence” that “keeps and guards so long as one keeps and guards it.” The secret “keeps *from* judaism, but keeps as well a certain jewishness in oneself—here in me. . . . As if—a paradox that I will not stop unfolding and that summarizes all the torment of my life—I had to keep myself from judaism in order to retain within myself something that I provisionally call jewishness” (6). In guarding himself from being jewish, Derrida is guarding the jew in himself. Thus, the disavow is not a negation, but an affirmation. In saying no to overdetermined identities, one is responding to the overdetermination itself, saying yes to the one who overdetermines. But one should not accept this overdetermined identity wholeheartedly. Fanon understands this secret.

Derrida has always had a strange relationship with the word *Jew*. The first time he heard it was not at home, in the context of a particular peoples, but at school in El Biar as an insult, a wound, an injustice. He explains:

I received this word like a blow, a denunciation, a de-legitimation prior to any right, prior to any legality. A blow struck against me, but a blow that I would henceforth have to carry and incorporate forever in the very essence of my most singularly signed and assigned behavior. . . . This word, this performative address (“Jew,” that is, almost inevitably, as if it were readily understood as “dirty Jew!”), this apostrophe was, remains, and carries, older than the claim, more archaic than any constative, the figure of a wounding arrow, of a weapon or a projectile that has sunk into your body, once and for all and without the possibility of ever uprooting it. (10-1)

Derrida's orientation to the word Jew serves as a moment of trauma, hurled against him as an insult in the early 1940s. How is one to accept this name, Jew, dirty Jew, in good faith,

without reservation? Derrida will tell us that the suffering has “killed” in him “an elementary confidence in any community” (15). We would then expect Fanon to feel something similar after being called “Dirty nigger!” or simply, “Look, a Negro!” by a young boy in France. Discovering that he is merely an object among other objects, Fanon is shattered into fragments, which are then “put together again by another self” (*BSWM* 109). The experience leads him to disavow ontology, which he believes “does not permit us to understand the being of the black man” (110). Fanon’s description of this traumatic experience is much more vivid: “What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood?” (112). He, however, does not want to accept “this revision, this thematization.”

Interestingly, both Derrida and Fanon turn to Sartre to help them understand their traumas—Enter Marcellus. Both Fanon and Derrida believe that, in some ways, Sartre errs in his universal onto-phenomenological assessment of “man,” particularly the authentic and inauthentic Jew, and the black man expressing his pride through negritude. Pointing to Sartre’s reflections on the Jewish question in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, based significantly on his ruminations in *Being and Nothingness*, Derrida argues that Sartre’s definition of the authentic Jew has a way of transforming the concept of Jew into a non-concept, “without any attribute that a Jew could attribute to himself, that is to say, that he could assume or claim” (25). For Derrida, Sartre’s formulation leaves no space for the Jew to define himself without misunderstanding. The Jew is ultimately defined by what Sartre refers to as “semblance of unity,” which relies significantly on the common situation of the Jew, the community itself. Sartre writes, “It is neither their past, their religion, nor their soil that unites the sons of Israel” (*Anti-Semite and Jew* 67). Derrida argues that Sartre has no answer to the question “What keeps the semblance of unity?” and “even deprives himself of the principle that would enable such an answer, since all the reasons that

would be available to non-Jews for calling anyone jew are unacceptable and justly discredited by Sartre” (26). Sartre resigns the Jew to a quasi-authenticity and leads us to believe that the inauthentic Jew has no problem assimilating to “national society.” In his willingness to assimilate, the inauthentic Jew contributes his “rationalism,” “critical spirit,” and “humanism” to create “a contractual society” and “universal brotherhood” (146). One can see how those who consider themselves authentic Jew might be offended at this characterization.

Derrida does not intend to criticize Sartre and believes he deserves credit for his work. His point in examining Sartrean logic is to highlight the essential difficulty “in signing (and what one demands of a responsible signature is that it be original and authentic), in underwriting and in countersigning an utterance of the type: ‘Me, I am jew’ (authentic or inauthentic—or quasi-authentic), in knowing and meaning what one appears to be saying” (28). Derrida recognizes that it is “very difficult and vertiginous” to pronounce that one is Jew while knowing and meaning it. He cautions us not to convince ourselves that we know what we are saying, especially when we do not know. It is precisely the aporetic experience of undecidability between the authentic, the inauthentic, and the quasi-authentic that Derrida holds “to be the very condition, in truth, the milieu or the ether within which decision, and any responsibility worthy of the name (and perhaps worthy of the name and of the attribute *jew*) must breathe” (31). The undecidability of naming and signing emphasizes responsibility. To reinforce this point, Derrida ends the essay with the possibility that there might be another Abraham (Ibrahim): more than one, more than jewish, otherwise jewish, other than jewish, the most jewish. We cannot pretend to know which one; we must know undoubtedly.

Sartre presents us with another aporetic experience with respect to negritude and humanism. In the Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre writes, “there is nothing more

consistent than a racist humanism since the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters” (22). While Sartre remained steadfast in his repudiation of an old humanism, it is his existential honesty that would insist a stark reality for Fanon. According to Sartre, *négritude*, though a celebratory affirmation of black identity, was merely “the weak stage of a dialectical progression,” where “the theoretical and practical affirmation of white supremacy is the thesis” and *négritude* “as antithetical value is the moment of the negativity . . . dedicated to its own destruction” (*Black Orpheus* 60). *Négritude*, best expressed as poetry, is a means to an end. Aime Césaire realizes the ephemeral nature of *négritude* in his *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, the text where the term appeared for the first time. He writes: “And in the midst of all this I cry hurray! my grandfather is dying,/I cry hurray! the old negritude is gradually cadaverising./There is no denying it: he was a good nigger” (127).

Sartre argues that *négritude* is not a state but a pure surpassing of itself, and it is love. He continues: “It is at the moment that it renounces itself that it finds itself; it is at the moment that it consents to lose that it has won” (62). Leopold Senghor gives Sartre’s argument perhaps its most moving testimony. In “Elegy of the *Saudades*,” Senghor expresses love in a renunciation of blackness and a nostalgic turn toward Portugal:

“My flower is open, my more-than-brother, to my
handsome Prince, the Bee. But butterflies,
beware!”

“Your weapons are useless my brother—how foolish
the warrior is!”

“I die and am reborn as I will. My love is a miracle.”
. . . But I have no taste for magic. Love is my marvel. (48)

The breast, which represents nudity without color, is what best symbolizes négritude, according to Sartre (62). Senghor, in a collection of poetry whose title draws from Sartre's *Black Orpheus*, invokes the figure in a number of contexts: it is Earth that allows Senghor to rest his "head on the shore of your breasts" (11), those same "firm breasts" that will "tremble under the Conqueror's caress" (17). It is after the renunciation of itself that négritude can ask, "But when shall I see again my homeland, the pure horizons of your face? When shall I sit down again at the table of your dark breasts?" (*Poems of a Black Orpheus* 26).

Though Sartre argues that négritude poetry is rather beautiful, he indeed refers to négritude as a rather ugly term and "one of the only black contributions to our dictionary." If the term is definable, it would correspond to the "immediate gifts of the Negro consciousness" (23). Sartre's unintentional association of ugliness and Negro consciousness, however, is not inaccurate. Césaire writes: "Through an unexpected and beneficent [sic] inner revolution I now honour my repulsive ugliness" (103). But this ugliness is precisely why négritude's only end is its destruction. Senghor explains that he must "die a sudden death to be reborn in the revelation of Beauty" (*Nocturnes* 33).

As Sonia Kruks suggests, Fanon's objection to Sartre is not that he erred in assessing négritude as a transitional movement, but that "Sartre's mistake, in fact, is to have told the truth!" (131). We should note Fanon's disappointment in *BSWM* when he reflects, "I needed to lose myself completely in negritude . . . I *needed* not to know" (135). He continues, "What is certain is that, at the very moment when I was trying to seize my own being, Sartre, who remained the Other, gave me a name and thus shattered all illusion" (137). Though Sartre may have been telling the truth, Fanon argues that Sartre had forgotten that the black man suffers in his body differently than the white man, an assertion that, as Lou Turner insists, encouraged

Fanon “to locate the dialectic of lived-experience of the black at the sensuous level where self-consciousness is counterposed to its life-world” (137). The suffering of the black body appears as a “moral aporia condemning the black man to a ‘feeling of nonexistence’” (Marriott 87). For Fanon, sin is to Negro, as virtue is to white. The black man always feels an unknowable sense of guilt and wretchedness. Fanon was joined by Es’kia Mphahlele, Wole Soyinka, Mamadi Keita, and Amilcar Cabral in disavowing *négritude*, all of whom “elaborated lengthy critiques intended to encourage the re-orientation of African intellectuals away from the metaphysics of a black soul” (McCulloch 57). According to Jock McCulloch, the failure of *négritude* arose from a lack of direction at the heart of its movement; colonialism was not the only force at fault.

According to David Marriott, Fanon uses Richard Wright’s *Native Son* to describe the aggression the black man feels, part of which is “the reaction, by black men, to the open hatred of the democracies they were being asked to die for, a conflict which soon leads to another: a black man at war with himself, locked in inexorable combat between a desire for ‘transcendence’ and moral self-abnegation” (87). The narrator in *Native Son* explains the frustration Bigger Thomas experiences when he is in the car with Mary Dalton and her escort Jan, the communist:

He was very conscious of his black skin and there was in him a prodding conviction that Jan and men like him had made it so he would be conscious of that black skin. Did not white people despise black skin? . . . they [Jan and Mary] made him feel his black skin by just standing there looking at him, one holding his hand and the other smiling. He felt he had no physical existence at all right then; he was something he hated, the badge of shame which he knew was attached to a black skin. . . . He felt naked, transparent; he felt that this white man, having helped to put him down, having helped deformed him, held him up now to look at him and be amused. And at that moment he felt toward Mary and Jan a dumb, cold, and inarticulate hate. (58)

About Bigger, Fanon writes, “He is afraid, but of what is he afraid? Of himself. No one knows yet who he is, but he knows that fear will occupy the world when the world finds out. And when the world knows, the world expects something of the negro. . . . In the end, Bigger Thomas acts” (BSWM 139). It isn’t until Bigger murders Mary that he feels a sense of existence

and protection “in his fear-ridden life” (Wright 90). He has created a new life for himself and “added to him a certain confidence which his gun and knife did not. . . . And he had done something which even he had not thought possible” (90). What is most instructive about Fanon’s comments on Bigger Thomas is that they return us to Derrida’s caveat regarding the “very difficult and vertiginous” impulse to name and to sign (and mean it) without actually knowing. The fear that Bigger develops is a consequence of the overdetermination that propels him toward an ontological existence that destroys an identity before he actually has a chance to create one for himself. Even sympathizers such as Jan and Mary are responsible for this overdetermination. Bigger responds by murdering Mary, by signing and naming, which leads to a sense of freedom and salvation. It isn’t actually the act of violence, which seems rather imperative, that resolves for Bigger the question “what is it to be a man in black skin?” The gun and knife never give him a sense of confidence. It is the decision to act that creates the confidence and allows Bigger to understand who he is, to create himself. The violence is merely an unfortunate though irreplaceable means to an end. Emmanuel Hansen argues that we can understand Fanon’s advocacy for the use of violence and the liberation of Bigger if we conceive of violence in terms of a baptism, a “symbolic termination of the individual’s past life and the beginning of a new one” (121). He continues:

This rebirth of the individual has also a direct bearing on the nature of the political system after decolonization. The individual who has gained consciousness of himself as a liberated individual, in the same way that he will no longer submit himself to the tyranny of the colonial oppressor, will also not submit himself to the native tyrants but will hold his leaders accountable for their actions. Hence democracy will ensue. (122)

In some sense, violence serves as a cleansing, in which a “thing” such as Bigger, previously an object on which others acted, becomes a man or one who acts.

Deciding to Act, or the Role of Violence in Preparing for a New Humanism

By the time Fanon writes *A Dying Colonialism*, his patience to experience or influence the development of a new humanism in his lifetime is waning. While Fanon's original thesis centers on a universalized Manichean schema of European colonizers (whites) and the colonized (blacks around the world), his first real step in escaping this Manichean dilemma lies in his insistence on taking up the problems of the Algerians, a group with which he identifies fully. He is French, European. But upon visiting France, he realizes what he's always sensed: "that I was not French, that I had never been French. Language, culture—these are not enough to make you belong to a people. Something more is needed: a common life, common experiences and memories, common aims. All this I lacked in France. My stay in France showed me that I belonged to an Algerian community, showed me that I was a stranger in France" (175). It is at this moment when Fanon declares himself an Algerian, an African, choosing to identify more with his paternal African ancestry. This disavowal—"I am an Algerian," yes, but does Fanon really know what he is saying?—creates a more impassioned Fanon, who begins to understand the imperative nature of violence. Hence, a shift in the possibility of a new humanism occurs, assuming a more violent aspect. Fanon believes that a new humanity in Algeria will be possible, but with a cost: "the innocent blood" that has flowed onto its national soil (*A Dying Colonialism* 27-8). To the Algerian Revolution he attributes the characteristics that will "[change] man and [renew] society." The revolution is "oxygen," which "creates and shapes a new humanity" (181). I remain convinced that his interest in new humanism, still underdeveloped at this point, becomes sustained largely by his vigor for the Algerian revolution and his disappointment in the French. He explains a recent visit to France after working in Algeria:

In France I thought I would find rest. I found only a bad conscience. Every day the newspapers brought news of arrest and of firings of friends of mine. Every fresh item of news depressed me more. I felt even more useless. I tried to fight, to stir up reactions of

protest among those around me, to make them understand. It was wasted effort. The Parisians had their minds only on their vacations that had to be planned three months ahead of time. I found myself detesting them, despising all those Frenchmen who sent their sons off to torture people in Algeria and cared about nothing but their little shops. I rejected any feeling I had about belonging to the French nation. My people were certainly not those bourgeois devoid of any ideal. They were the people who suffered and died every day in the *djebels* and in the torture chambers. (175)

It takes a great deal of effort and contemplation on the part of Fanon to come to these conclusions. In fact, before he commits himself to the Algerian cause, he proclaims, “I refused to accept the validity of violence. . . . I was greatly shaken by this profession of faith” (165). We see through this quote that Fanon, although he has faced sharp discrimination, never considers violence until he realizes after “endless discussions and mountains of reading” that “To fight for the humanization of the repression was futile! It was necessary to fight in order to impose a political solution. But *what* solution? It soon became clear to me that if even the embryo of a social revolution was to be created in Algeria, the colonial links with France would have to be broken” (168). For years, Fanon views violence as illegitimate until he finds himself embroiled in the Algerian conflict.

It is also during this time that Fanon begins to establish more links not only with the Algerians, but also the Algerian Jews, whom he views as a heterogeneous group. He identifies at least four types: (1) Certain tradesman, those whose fate is tied closely to colonial domination, like the powerful European, and who believe that the “end of the colonial regime is looked upon as the end of prosperity” (154); (2) Tradesmen who maintain close contacts with the Algerian population and might furnish the A.L.N. with military supplies; (3) Civil servants who believe that educating Algerians would mean loss of privileges; and (4) Three-fourths of the Algerian Jewish population, who have a poor knowledge of French and consider themselves by tradition and sometimes by dress as authentic “native.” (We need not posit which groups might constitute authentic, inauthentic, or quasi-authentic here.) He writes, “They are in the Algerian territory the

homologues of the Tunisian Jews of the Moroccan Djerba or the mellah. For these Jews, there is no problem: they are Algerians” (155). Indeed, it is a Jew who convinces Fanon that certain problems must be addressed. (Hamlet returns after meeting with the ghost and confers with Horatio.) Fanon decides to aid the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*), an Algerian revolutionary group seeking independence from France.

After having served the FLN for several years, Fanon develops his thesis a bit further, describing decolonization as that which “brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. [It] is the veritable creation of new men” (*Wretched of the Earth* 36). He warns us that in our search for a new humanity, we must not imitate Europe, for Europe has only shown us “a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders” (312). Europe has been incapable of showing us humanness, equality, justice. Fanon writes, “It is a question of the Third World starting a new history of Man, a history which will have regard to the sometimes prodigious theses which Europe has put forward, but which will also not forget Europe’s crimes, of which the most horrible was committed in the heart of man, and consisted of the pathological tearing apart of his functions and the crumbling away of his unity” (315). His thesis echoes his sentiments in 1958, when he invokes new humanism as that which can only be achieved if the colonial peoples “redouble their vigilance and their vigor” to end colonialism. He continues, “Imperialism must be blocked in all its attempts to strengthen itself. The peoples demand this; the historic process requires it” (*Toward the African Revolution* 126). In short, a new humanism and a new humanity require decolonization, but Fanon clearly notes that not only is violence necessary, but also thought/reason/rationality are imperative; on these ideals, he has not given up. In fact, violence relies on reason, insofar as revolutions cannot function by force alone. We might see here a

confluence between Derrida's thesis on madness and reason, and Fanon's idea that violence and reason are similarly symbiotic. His growing concern for the decolonization efforts of the oppressed was that it might be devoid of ideology. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes, "The enemy is aware of ideological weakness, for he analyzes the forces of rebellion and studies more and more carefully the aggregate enemy which makes up a colonial people; he is also aware of the spiritual instability of certain layers of the population" (137). Lou Turner argues in "Fanon and the FLN" that Fanon's concerns regarding ideology lay with Ramdane Abane, one of the leaders in the Front who was responsible for developing perspectives of the group. Turner sees as pivotal the Soumman Valley Congress, which convened in August 20, 1956, during which time 50 delegates and 200 militants failed to develop a program for a post-independent Algeria. After Abane's death, the "ideological void would be filled by Arab nationalist and Islamicist tendencies" ("Fanon and the FLN" 379). Four years later, Fanon's anxieties about this absence for Africa as a whole has not subsided: "Colonialism and its derivatives do not, as a matter of fact, constitute the present enemies of Africa. In a short time this continent will be liberated. For my part, the deeper I enter into the cultures and the political circles the surer I am that the great danger that threatens Africa is the absence of ideology" (*Toward the African Revolution* 186). His fears should not go unnoticed in light of the current problems that plague Africa, such as the genocide in Sudan, the problematic elections in Zimbabwe, and the slow development of racial equality in South Africa nearly 15 years after apartheid.

We must be careful, though, when we consider reason, as it "hesitates and refuses to say which is a true decolonization, and which a false" (*Wretched of the Earth* 59). We know, however, that the "idea of compromise is very important in the phenomenon of decolonization, for it is very far from being a simple one" (62). Denis Ekpo cautions us similarly against

logocentric trappings, which would be a consequence of the framing of the African mind via two events, “European colonialism and the African reaction to it in the form of African nationalism and cultural awakening” (125). For this reason, we must be sure not to suggest that the formation of an ideology in postcoloniality would constitute a new humanism. The respondent ideology to European colonialism and African independence would be merely a step or phase toward the development of a new humanism.

Nigel Gibson, one of the most recent, outspoken, and forthright scholars on Fanon, seems to insist in “Radical Mutations” and “Beyond Manicheanism” that Fanon’s liberatory call for a new humanism ends at his conception of ideology, his prescriptions of violence for colonialism, and his dialectical response to the Manichean logic inherent in colonialism. I highlight Gibson’s insistence in order to contrast it with Robert Bernasconi’s description of Fanon’s new humanism, which he says has been misunderstood by theorists primarily because Fanon’s relative silence about that new humanism “has not been properly appreciated” (“Casting the Slough” 113). Both men arrive at their conclusions based on Fanon’s last words in *The Wretched of the Earth*: “For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man” (255). Although forcefully argued, Gibson’s point falls short because it fails to consider Fanon’s earlier call for a new humanism, which was accompanied by a call for “understanding among men.” He urges, “Mankind, I believe in you” (*BSWM* 7). Fanon was interested in more than simply advancing humanity “a step further” and bringing “it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it.” So, his new humanism does not end at the elimination of colonialism; it begins with that elimination, necessitating a violent response to the Manichean logic employed by the colonialist who seeks to legitimize colonization, as Albert Memmi suggests (45). In *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Memmi

anticipates the colonialist logic carried to its most succinct conclusion: “[E]very colonial nation carries the seeds of fascist temptation in its bosom,” whereby the “entire administrative and political machinery of a colony has no other goal” but to create a “regime of oppression for the benefit of a few” (62). He argues that only a complete liquidation of colonization would allow the colonizer to become free and serve as a prelude to complete liberation and to self-recovery. The free colonized must be a nationalist, having fought for the emergence and dignity of his nation, but he must also have a free choice and exist not only through his nation. Memmi articulates a colonial counter-violence.

Indeed, Memmi’s formulation of counter-violence lies at the heart of Fanon’s new humanism, though to what extent Fanon proposed a violent liberation is debatable. Hannah Arendt argues in *On Violence* that “the new undeniable glorification of violence by the student movement” of the late 1960s could only be explained by “the ignorance and nobility of sentiment of people exposed to unprecedented events and developments without any means of handling them mentally,” for which Fanon is largely to blame (122). In response, Samira Kawash and others have taken to defending Fanon from these accusations. Kawash argues that Fanon’s violence of decolonization “is always in excess and elsewhere to the instrumental violence of the colonized in struggle. And it is this excess—which is not reducible to or identifiable as particular violent acts—that portends the decolonization that will be a rupture with, rather than a re-formation of, the colonial past” (237). L. Adele Jinadu acknowledges Fanon’s indebtedness to Georges Sorel’s *Reflections on Violence*, as have Aristide Zolberg, Henry Bienen, and Arendt, and argues that both men “condemn liberal illusions about, and prejudices against, physical violence” (92) and also “believe in the regenerative role of physical violence” (93). Through violence, revolutionary violence, the oppressed engender a new moral

ground and force and are empowered to recreate themselves. Though Arendt may have acknowledged that Fanon's prescriptions were complex and nuanced, what she may have failed to consider is the evolution of Fanon's thought on violence from the time he wrote *BSWM* to the time he finished *Wretched of the Earth*. Hussein Bulhan reminds us that Fanon's early writing was dominated by a belief in the potency and prevailing of reason, even in dealing with irrational matters such as racism. By the time Fanon became involved in the Algerian resistance, he saw that only violence could transform the oppressive order. What is pivotal to Fanon's theory of violence, Bulhan argues, is the notion that a Manichean psychology makes possible human violence and oppression. In *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*, Bulhan explains:

A Manichean view is one that divides the world into compartments and people into different "species." This division is based not on reciprocal affirmations, but rather on irreconcilable opposites cast into good versus evil, beautiful versus ugly, intelligent versus stupid, white versus black, human versus subhuman modes. . . . Its logic is a categorical *either/or*, in which one of the terms is considered superfluous or unacceptable. (140)

Gibson argues that Fanon's dialectical engagement is merely an extension of this Manichean mutual exclusivity. For Gibson, Fanon's conceptualization of a liberatory ideology—that is, an ideology that "should enlighten the social experiences and bring out their meaning" and one that "is constructed in a social relationship between the militant intellectual and the mass movement" ("Beyond Manicheanism" 3)—is contingent upon a dialectical logic whose generative power is not in the evolution of a synthesis but in its "absolute diremption." Gibson writes: "Hegel's absolutes end in syntheses whereas, like Marx, Fanon's absolute ends in 'total diremptions—absolute, irreconcilable contradictions'" (Dunayevskaya 1988, 93). Irreconcilable contradiction is at the heart of the programme of 'complete disorder' put forward by decolonization" ("Beyond Manicheanism" 4; "Radical Mutations" 409-10).

What should interest us here is the connection between Marx and Fanon that Gibson makes. It is precisely these so-called "irreconcilable contradictions" that must be worked out

through new concepts, and revolution is indeed the means by which we are to achieve justice. Kawash asks, “Does revolutionary violence liberate its agents to a new level of humanity? or does it further enslave its agents in animalist passions which can never contribute to history or be historical?” (235). Before we answer these questions, we must first acknowledge that the elimination of systems of domination and oppression through nationalist liberation represents the first step of advancing Fanon’s new humanity. So, violence does not necessarily guarantee the emergence of a new humanity, but it will aid in the liberation of the colonized. This much should be obvious, as most countries that have gained their independence have used violence to do so.

Our question about the role of violence in achieving a new humanity should encompass the role of the nation. Neil Lazarus posits that, for Fanon, “the *national* project . . . has the capacity to become the vehicle—the means of articulation—of a *social*(ist) demand which extends beyond decolonization in the merely technical sense, and which calls for a fundamental transformation rather than a mere restructuring of the prevailing social order” (163). A new humanism must assume a nationalist agenda before we can arrive at a point of transformation. Deconstructive justice also assumes nationalist agendas, if only to extend beyond their scope. Take, for example, Derrida’s New International, which “refers to a profound transformation, projected over a long term, of international law, of its concepts, and its field of intervention,” a transformation that exists “beyond the sovereignty of States and of the phantom-States” (*Specters* 84). The democracy-to-come is contingent upon the reflections of an international law, a law that mobilizes effectively at least one of the spirits of Marx or Marxism as it “calls to the [eventual] friendship of an alliance without institution,” a spirit of Marx(ism) that can only be derived from deconstructive thinking, which is only made possible by Marxism itself and by the deconstruction of Marxist ontology, which is not a methodical or theoretical procedure. In

Fanon's words, we are to "stretch Marxist analysis a bit further" (*WE*?). Indeed, our work consists in working through seemingly irresolvable contradiction, through, over, and above the dialectic.

In short, we might argue that a new humanism encompasses, is motivated by, or begins with "love" and "understanding among men." Fanon argues that every consciousness seems to have the capacity to demonstrate either "a movement of aggression, which leads to enslavement or to conquest" and "a movement of love, a gift of self, the ultimate stage of what by common accord is called ethical orientation" (41). A new humanism also requires ideology, violence, and revolution. Still, outside of these components, we are not quite sure how a new humanism might operate. We only know the several steps one must take in order to achieve it. Ultimately, Fanon's contribution consists in his willingness and ability to act, with every intention of making good on the 11th thesis of Feuerbach: changing the world. Derrida, on the other hand, hesitated; he thought through the act and, in thinking through, discovered a performative element that should not be overlooked. It might be instructive here to return to Derrida and his conception of violence to understand Fanon's new humanism as both predicated on violence and reason.

Derrida and Violence De-/Re-Contextualized

In chapter five, I discuss Derrida's "Signature Event Context" to foreground the idea that a successful performative is contingent upon the possibility of its failure. A performative presupposes that not only may its citational double fail, but also the coded, iterable statement that becomes identifiable as a citation. The citational doubling or presupposition of failing and successful terms are coded in dissymmetrical fashion, whose effects can be anticipated by *differance*. I also examine the "just decision" as one way that we might begin taking up the role of the performative in law and justice, where the performative cannot be just unless it founds itself on conventions and other anterior performatives and maintains within itself an irruptive

violence and no longer responds to “the demands of theoretical rationality.” It is at this interstice that the problem of violence, justice, and law become variably tangled. I rehearse Roberto Buonamano’s response to this dissymmetry in his discussion of the three “Derridean” propositions about the law: it always tends toward universality, it operates to maintain rights, and it is bound up with the silence of its own force, thus making it self-preserving. In its very foundation, law has a “mystical” element in the sense that it conceals a certain silence in the violence of its founding act. Derrida sees this violence groundless, but neither just nor unjust. Although the violence exceeds the opposition between founded and unfounded, the flexibility of this groundless foundation of violence allows for injustice, thus making accessibility to justice more difficult. Law then exacts violence against individuals in the moment or act it legitimizes itself. What problematizes the force of law particularly is the paradox of iterability, which requires the origin to repeat itself originally. Despite the necessity of citing an origin, there can be no true, pure point of origin, which makes it difficult to criticize violence. Because law-making violence cannot precede the performative act, we are reduced to identifying the law-preserving antecedent in the collapse of this double bind. For Buonamano, this double bind is akin to what Derrida refers to as the “economy of violence,” where the “violence involved in discourse generally, and specifically in every practice of metaphysics, stages a war in which the task of deconstruction is to counteract the aggression of speech as presence. The peace envisaged is that of a certain silence (‘a certain beyond speech’)” (175). Following the logic of the performative, the violence inherent in discourse contains two types within its general system of economy: the violence that represses discourse and the one able to combat the repressive violence, the violence of *otherness*. The strategic and adventurous *diffrance* keeps in play the

possibility of the violence of *otherness* overcoming the repressive violence and the possibility of justice.

The structural dimension of justice, *àvenir*, a democracy to come (*la démocratie à venir*), becomes the search for a pure, intransigent, and undeconstructible moment. This democracy to come, arch-structured by the undecidability of the double bind of possibility and impossibility, via *difference* and its spatio-temporal chain of deferral, makes the fully present an impossibility and the “to come” of the promise. To anchor this discussion of deconstructive politics onto something a little more pragmatic, I deploy Judith Butler’s reading of the performative, in which she maintains that the speech act is a bodily act and that the force of the performative is never fully separable from bodily force. The force of the performative force can be derived from a break with prior contexts and its ability to assume new ones, or one could say its capacity to decontextualize and recontextualize. I extend this formulation to Buonamano’s argument that the question of revolt sustains each of Derrida’s treatments of law, expressly his *Specters*, in which Derrida attempts to take responsibility for Marx’s philosophical and revolutionary heritage. I also present for consideration Derrida’s “The Laws of Reflection,” his ruminations on “Admirable [Nelson] Mandela,” as a way to rethink Derrida’s connection to Africa and to the problem of Africa not being heard (or not heard).

I would like to turn briefly to Chung-Hsiung Lai’s “On Violence, Justice, and Deconstruction” to tie up some loose ends of this particular thread. Let me point out here that Derrida’s acknowledgment of violence can be traced back to *Of Grammatology*, one of three texts published in 1967. Lai reminds us that in “The Violence of the Letter: From Levi-Strauss to Rousseau,” Derrida attempts to examine a “genealogy of violence” and locates three types of originary violence (in writing): the first, the “arche-violence,” is “the originary violence of

language which consists in inscribing within a difference, in classifying, in suspending the vocative absolute. To think the unique *within* the system, to inscribe it there, such is the gesture of the arche-writing” (112); the second, a reparative and protective violence, prescribes a concealment of writing and obliteration of the proper name, which renders the possibility of a third violence; the third is one of reflection, as it implicates the first two levels of violence and enables the scene of proper names to be written on this level. Lai notes that, as effects of *arche-writing*, these three levels of violence together constitute the endless cycle of the violence *against* violence phenomenon or what Derrida calls an “economy of violence” (117). For Derrida, this “economy of violence” is imperative for violence to negate itself. Lai examines Derrida’s critique of Levinas’s ethics oriented toward non-violence, which privileges peace over war, to establish the “economy of violence” as “a violence of revolutionary action against a violence of police action. It is this endless cycling, or the tertiary structure, of violence, which makes the economy of violence *irreducible*” (5). It is in this context that we can begin to make sense of Derrida’s position that one cannot escape the economy of war (“Violence of the Letter” 117).

While Lai’s treatment of Derrida and Levinas appears reasonably sound, the strength of Lai’s reading can be found in the following rumination:

It is *perhaps* the nature of deconstructive decision: any deconstructive reading (which chooses a lesser violence as a resistance against the violent oppression of the Said in the name of justice for the Unsaid) in the economy of violence is always already subject to other deconstructive readings *to come*. In other words, one may state that the refusal to meet the Other in the face-to-face relation (or a deconstructive relation) actually results from the refusal or inability of the Self to see and examine its own blindness, which makes the violence possible. (7)

Is this sentiment, deconstructive readings *to come*, not what Leavey anticipates when he speaks of moving on in order to take on inheritance? With respect to Derrida, Leavey argues that “the question of how or whether to read Derrida should be out of date.” The point then is to

“move on to the next position, reaction, affair” (3). Derrida himself seems well aware that if there are “people [who] have not even begun to read me, that if there are many very good readers (a few dozen in the world, perhaps), they will only do so later” (*Learning to Live Finally*). With respect to justice, the decision must follow the structure of *avenir* (to come). Justice is a performative, which is “irreducibly thoughtless, unconscious and does not respond to the demands of theoretical rationality because of its irruptive internal violence” (12). With justice, there is only one *aporia*, which renders justice incalculable, an aporia of singularity that multiplies itself infinitely. Lai posits that justice is a performative in the sense that its structural incalculability makes possible transformation. As such, justice as a performative is “wide open to abuse,” according to Lai (13). He reminds of Derrida’s warning, that justice, if left unguarded, “can always be reappropriated by the most perverse calculation” (“Force of Law” 52). Implicit within this sort of incalculable, irrational, non-regulative idea of justice is a madness; “deconstruction is mad about this kind of justice. Mad about this desire for justice” (“Force of Law” 46). Derrida tells us that, according to Kierkegaard, the instant of a decision is madness (48). (Could the decision, the instant of a decision, have driven Hamlet [Derrida] mad? Could Horatio [Fanon] have possibly gone mad, consumed by an “economy of violence” or the aporia of justice?) Lai writes, “the *aporia* of justice signifies both the impossibility of deconstructive experience and ‘the promise of the future,’ which is always *there—a messianism without Messiah*” (13). Justice prefigures a messianism without messianicity, a messianism without religion. As always, there is more than one Abraham. And yet there is still another Abraham, one who will teach us what it means to live finally. We will, one day, learn (what it means) to live, to be human.

I say “We will, one day, learn (what it means) to live, to be human” with reservation. Up to this point, it may appear that I have represented Fanon, Derrida, and my own work from a masculine perspective, failing to take into account the question of the feminine, though I have tried to present this question via Gayatri Spivak and her critique of Derrida, and Derrida’s response to Spivak in “Marx and Sons.” I could easily reinforce this critique by referring to Diana Fuss’s “Interior Colonies: Frantz Fanon and the Politics of Identification” to suggest that “Fanon’s otherwise powerful critique of the scene of colonial representation does not fundamentally question the many sexualized determinations of that scene” (36). Indeed, my discussion raises an important question: If a new humanism and deconstruction are predicated on violence, and war signifies not only violence, but also masculinization, where does this leave Fanon and Derrida with respect to women? I would argue that the masculinization of this project remains a symptom of ideology and the knowledge and power structure of otherness. In *The Invention of Africa*, V. Y. Mudimbe traces with acuity the development of African thought, or the difficult possibility of its development, after the colonizing structures of the West have been largely responsible for its emergence. He explains:

Modern African thought seems somehow to be basically a product of the West. What is more, since most African leaders and thinkers have received a Western education, their thought is at the crossroads of Western epistemological filiation and African ethnocentrism. Moreover, many concepts and categories underpinning this ethnocentrism are inventions of the West. When prominent leaders such as Senghor or Nyerere propose to synthesize liberalism and socialism, idealism and materialism, they know that they are transplanting intellectual manicheism. (185)

If we consider the omnipresence of the West in much of what we think and do, then we can certainly understand that “To invoke ‘the Other’ [an ideological construct] as an ontological or existentialist category paradoxically risks eliding the very range and play of cultural differences that the designation is intended to represent. Reliance upon the Other as a categorical imperative often works to flatten rather than to accentuate difference” (Fuss 22). If Fuss can argue that

“‘White’ operates as its own Other, freed from any dependency upon the sign ‘Black’ for its symbolic constitution” and that “Black” functions diacritically as a negative term in a Hegelian dialectic, why does it seem that we have a more difficult time accepting the fact that “Man” historically has tended to operate as its own Other, while “Woman” has served as a negative term. If we follow this line of thought to its ideo-logical conclusion, we might rethink Fanon’s “Algeria Unveiled,” in which he describes the role of women in the revolution, or even his chapters on the black woman and the white man, and the white woman and the black man in *BSWM*. We may also come to respect the rather ambiguous manner in which Derrida attempts to recover sexual difference in *Specters* and “Sons of Marx,” and his other works. By no means am I apologizing for what we might rightfully regard as problematic readings of the role of women in Fanon’s analyses or the possibility of his homophobia. I am not attempting to justify Derrida’s traditional “omission” of women in his analyses. In *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, he explains precisely why, with respect to democracy, we seem to speak of brothers or men rather than people or humans: “democracy has always wanted by turns and at the same time two incompatible things: it has wanted, on the one hand, to welcome only men, and on the condition that they be citizens, brothers, and compeers, excluding all the others, in particular bad citizens, rogues, noncitizens, and all sorts of unlike and unrecognizable others, and, on the other hand, at the same time or by turns, it has wanted to open itself up, to offer hospitality, to all those excluded” (63). In this sense, hospitality remains limited and conditional, and democracy has struggled to reconcile both excluding and including women and the Other. Let us here recognize that Fanon attempted to engage women in this complicated fold, beginning with *BSWM*. Derrida, for his part, acknowledges this problematic history of exclusion throughout his writing career. Foremost, what I hope to raise here is that both men are acutely aware of the problems of

ontology and ideology and how they consistently reinscribe the primary and derivative terms upon which difference and colonization have historically operated. If we recall Homi Bhabha's "Interrogating Identity," we understand precisely that colonial desire is articulated "always in relation to the place of the Other . . . the phantasmatic space of possession that no one project can singly or fixedly occupy, and therefore permits the dream of the inversion of roles" (44). It is at this uncomfortable nexus that Fanon calls for a refashioning of concepts or for new concepts under the auspices of a new humanism that work through the issue of exclusion or the "disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness" (Bhabha 45). As Judith Butler explains²⁶, the rethinking of human does not necessitate a return to humanism. She writes: "When Frantz Fanon claimed that 'the black is not a man,' he conducted a critique of humanism that showed that the human in its contemporary articulation is so fully racialized that no black man could qualify as human" ("Acting in Concert" 13). She charges that his critique is one of masculinity, which I would like to extend to my own, and also suggests that the category of "human" is "crafted in time, in which norms encode differentials of power and conceals that which it excludes. To different though similar effect, I would like to explore this notion of working out new concepts that would enable alternate categories of "human" and the possibility of a new humanism, which would neither entail a return to humanism nor exclude the projected Other.

Working Out New Concepts

In an attempt to establish yet another connection here between Derrida and Fanon, I will consider both theorists in relation to Heidegger, to whom we attribute deconstruction (and now the possibility of a new humanism). One of Fanon's most recognizable prescriptions for a new

²⁶ I would like to thank Nishant Shahani for bringing this passage to my attention.

humanism comes from the last few words in *The Wretched of the Earth* where he pleads, “For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man (316). Considering Heidegger’s “Letter on Humanism,” we might posit that to “work out new concepts” is to “think” and that to explore possibilities for a new humanism is to learn to think. Given the violent nature of the sign or the letter, one might extend the formulation “learn to think” to include or signify “learn to live.” If rationality and madness are concomitant terms within the framework of justice and the decision, we can clearly see a connection between what it is to “think” and to “live.” A word that encompasses or embodies adequately this conceptualization is “humanism”—what is it to be human?—but we know that previous claims to the truth of humanism have been, if not negated or completed wrong, challenged. Heidegger asks, Is it possible to restore to the word “humanism” a sense that is not metaphysical, to humanism an “historical sense that is older than its oldest meaning chronologically reckoned?” (224). For Heidegger, the earlier conceptions of humanism are metaphysical. The problem with metaphysics, though, is that it “represent[s] beings in their Being, and so it thinks the Being of beings” (202), it is not capable of thinking of the difference of both. As Heidegger points out, even Sartre’s existentialist declaration that existence precedes essence is simply a metaphysical question that reverses Plato’s original metaphysical statement, *essentia* precedes *existential*. Heidegger argues that metaphysics is incapable of the “thinking that thinks from the question concerning the truth of Being” (230). Before we can decide if it is possible to recover a humanism that is not metaphysical, however, I should have the responsibility of explaining briefly the terms “thinking” and “Being.”

When or if one is to speak of action, one must ponder the relationship of thinking to Being. Thinking “accomplishes the relation of Being to the essence of man. It does not make or cause

the relation” (193). In thinking, then, Being comes into language. Thinking, on the other hand, does not guarantee that an action will occur. Thinking is itself the act or action, and when thinking happens, it is “claimed by Being so that it can say the truth of Being” (194). It is only through the liberation of language from grammar that we can employ thought and poetic creation, and we can liberate ourselves through thinking. The thinking in which Heidegger is interested, however, is not a technical act, nor does it lead to technical interpretations. These interpretations, he reminds us, began with Plato and Aristotle, who took thinking itself to be a *technē*, a process of reflection in order to do or to make. Reflection from this perspective, according to Heidegger, is already seen as *praxis* and *poiēsis*, two processes that will not allow us to experience language in a liberating sense. And when thinking is characterized as *theōria*, it reproduces the “technical” interpretation of thinking. In order to keep up with the natural sciences, philosophy has had to justify its existence and has attempted to elevate itself to the rank of a science. When philosophy allows thinking to remain a technical endeavor, it abandons thinking. The written word is also capable of abandoning thinking. As Heidegger puts it, “in writing it is difficult above all to retain the multidimensionality of the realm peculiar to thinking” (195).

Pure thinking is the thinking of Being. When pure thinking occurs, Being belongs and listens to itself, and this type of thinking remains committed to its essential origin. Heidegger continues: “To embrace a ‘thing’ or a “person” in its essence means to love it, to favor it. Thought in a more original way such favoring [*Mögen*] means to bestow essence as a gift. Such favoring is the proper essence of enabling, which not only can achieve this or that but also can let something essentially unfold in its provenance, that is, let it be” (196). At present, “[e]very humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one” (202).

Heidegger believes that we can revive humanism if we think purely and leave philosophy to itself. What philosophy has become is not what originally thinking set out to do. Philosophy remains committed to logic, physics, and ethics, disciplines that arose when thinking was becoming philosophy. Heidegger argues that we must abandon logic, which produces and provides for simple negation. In the event that we leave logic behind, thinking will open “other vistas.” He writes: “To think against ‘logic’ does not mean to break a lance for the illogical but simply to trace in thought the *logos* and its essence which appeared in the dawn of thinking, that is, to exert ourselves for the first time in preparing for such reflection” (227).

A scientific, logical philosophy or thinking is precisely what Lewis R. Gordon articulates as the problem that has plagued the humanities and Western man, and he points to Husserl’s *Crisis of European Sciences* to describe this crisis of the humanities. In *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*, Gordon argues that Husserl’s complaint is that “practitioners of the human sciences, philosophy, and cultural criticism often identify the symptoms, but they shrink cowardly from the task involved in identifying the disease” (7). For this crisis, Heidegger prescribed “less philosophy” and “more attentiveness in thinking; less literature, but more cultivation of the letter” (242). Cultivation of the letter demands that thinking gather language into “simple saying. In this way language is the language of Being, as clouds are the clouds of the sky. With its saying, thinking lays inconspicuous furrows in language. They are still more inconspicuous than the furrows that the farmer, slow of step, draws through the field” (Heidegger 242). For Heidegger, the truth of Being remains unthought and concealed as the destiny that sends truth, a destiny that can be found in poetry. Drawing from Aristotle, Heidegger argues that poetic composition is truer than any exploration of beings. Responding to Jean Beaufret, he argues that thinking is considered an *aventure* or *l'aventure*, the arrival of some unforeseen

challenge, and *l'avenir*, what is to come. If Being arrives, we must attribute its arrival to thinking, where both thinking and Being present a challenge and an adventure for each other. And if any form is able to capture the arrival of thinking and Being, that form is ultimately poetic.

We arrive now at an aporia: if the poem is supposed to represent the arrival of thinking and Being, why does negritude poetry fail? Why is it unable to overcome its position as the negating term in the dialectical progression? The assumption that the poetic is able to arrive at thinking and Being is perhaps where Heidegger's argument could use revision. I argue that Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* could be rather instructive in this regard. In *Poetics of Relation*, we notice a significant overlap between Glissant's thought and Heidegger's. Glissant writes that the "thought of the Other is sterile without the other of thought" (154) and that poetry is "driven by another poetic dimension that we all divine or babble within ourselves. It could well be that poetry is basically and mainly defined in this relationship of itself to nothing other than itself, of density to volatility, or the whole to the individual" (159). For Heidegger, thought and poetics are bound to Being in challenging, unthought ways. Where the theorists differ is on the importance of the poetic in relation to Being. For Heidegger, Being is that which arrives, whereby thinking and cultivation of the letter contribute to the revelation of Being. He is quite explicit about the importance of Being in allowing man to find his way home. For Glissant, however, Being is too self-important. He writes:

We reassure ourselves with this overly vague idea: that Relation diversifies forms of humanity according to infinite string models infinitely brought into contact and relayed. This point of departure does not even allow us to outline a typology of these contracts or of the interactions thus triggered. Its sole merit would lie in proposing that Relation has its source in these contacts and not in itself; that its aim is not Being, a self-important entity that would locate its beginning in itself. (160)

Glissant argues that Relation does not partake of Being, primarily “because Being cannot bear having any interaction attached to it. Being is self-sufficient, whereas every question is interactive” (161). He later qualifies that Relation does not necessarily function exclusively without Being but that it encompasses the “idea of Being” and “scatters abroad from Being-as-Being and confronts presence” (186). That is, the being of the world, “total and limited,” realizes Being in beings. Relation is the knowledge in motion of beings, where the risk is being in the world. Totality is imagined through a poetics of Relation. Glissant insists that

Thought of the Other is the moral generosity disposing me to accept the principle of alterity, to conceive of the world as not simple and straightforward, with only one truth—mine. But thought of the Other can dwell within me without making me alter course, without ‘prizing me open,’ without changing me within myself. An ethical principle, it is enough that I not violate it. (154)

Glissant’s notion of totality differs from that of Emmanuel Levinas, who argues that the illumination of the totality is an “unpredictable creative collection or arrangement.” He continues: “The totality of being must produce itself to illuminate the given. It must produce a being that can be reflected in a thought. . . . The function of the one who must be there to ‘receive the reflection’ is at the mercy of that illumination,” which is a process of collection of being (14). For Levinas, the illumination and collection of a totality is not some kind of pileup of objects, whereas for Glissant, the imaginary construct of totality allows us to “transmute for ourselves this mad state of the world into a chaos that we are able to contemplate” (155). An aesthetics of chaos enables us to conceive, imagine, and act, and the other of thought is the aesthetics that we implement. Within an aesthetics of chaos, the world’s poetic force infinitely reveals lines of force. Glissant writes, “The expression of this force and its way of being is what we call Relation: what the world makes and expresses itself” (160). And though Relation comprehends violence by marking its distance, this is “the work I am to undertake, the road I am to travel” (155).

Glissant's formulation is important for two reasons: first, it reveals two terms relevant to our discussion, force and violence, about which we have already spoken; but it also identifies Fanon as a striking example of Being or, if we would be generous to make another connection here, a new humanism. Glissant refers to this relation of Being as errantry, which I will describe briefly.

In order to understand errantry, Glissant suggests that we must begin with the following phrase: "Roots make the commonality of errantry and exile, for in both instances roots are lacking" (11). He reminds us that Gilles Deleuze and Feliz Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, having criticized notions of the root and being rooted, propose the rhizome, a thickened, horizontal underground stem that stores food-producing roots below and leafy shoots above. The notion of the rhizome maintains the idea of a root system but "challenges that of a totalitarian root," that is, the European spirit, which "has strange roots" (*Wretched of the Earth* 253). In a Derridean sense, we might conceive of these roots as generations, upon which questions of justice, memory, and responsibility are put forth. As Michael Azar argues, the "journey towards a [new] humanism must have as its point of departure a new foundation, a new spirit that may overcome the antinomies of the European spirit, without neglecting the 'prodigious theses which Europe has put forward'" (21). Glissant proposes that rhizomatic thought is the principle behind errantry, in which identity is extended through a relationship with the Other. Deleuze and Guattari extol nomadism, which supposedly liberates Being, as opposed to a settled way of life, whose law is based upon the intolerant root. Considering Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in which he finds similarities between skeptics and nomads, Glissant acknowledges that the rhizome concept seems interesting for its anticonformism, but rhizomatic thought is not necessarily subversive and it cannot "overturn the order of the world . . . because, by doing so,

one reverts to ideological claims presumably challenged by this thought” (12). The nomad, both the invading nomad and the nomad who moves via the principle of circularity, is overdetermined by the conditions of existence, according to Glissant. This overdetermination can be characterized as colonization, where “whole populations have had to assert their identity in opposition to the processes of identification or annihilation triggered by [invading nomads/colonizers]” (17). Glissant understands that decolonization will have done its real work when it goes beyond the limit of overdetermination, that same limit which fixes blackness for Fanon and Jewishness for Derrida, forcing them both to face a condition that Sartre expresses in *Anti-Semite and Jew*: “overdetermined from without.” In other words, the colonizer determines the colonized. The colonizer/colonized relationship demands a dualism of self-perception that the thought of the Other cannot escape until the time when differences become acknowledged, though this acknowledgement does not guarantee that one will not take as its basis a generalizing universal. The next step before one really enters the dialectic of totality is driven by the thought of errantry.

If we will agree with Glissant that the histories of the West have passed through the following stages—the thinking of territory and self, which is ontological and dual, and the thinking of voyage and other, which is mechanical and multiple—the next step in the historical progression is the thinking of errantry and totality, which is relational and dialectical. He writes: “We will agree that this thinking of errantry, this errant thought, silently emerges from the deconstructing of compact national entities that yesterday were still triumphant and, at the same time, from difficult, uncertain births of new forms of identity that call to us” (18). In this context, identity is contingent upon a search for the Other (through circular nomadism) rather than an expansion of territory (an invading or arrowlike nomadism). Errantry leads us away from

anything totalitarian. It does not proceed from a renunciation of a deterritorialized situation of origin, and it is not a rejection or repudiation of ideology. Errantry can be taking up problems of the Other, which enables one to find oneself. Fanon's insistence on taking up problems of the Other leads him from Martinique to France to Algeria, continually traversing these borders and others until his death in Bethesda, Maryland, in 1961, a path that makes him an exemplar of errantry, for Glissant. His movement resembles the image of the rhizome, which "prompt[s] the knowledge that identity is no longer completely within the root but also in Relation" (18). The thought of errantry is a poetics, which infers that it (a poetics) is told at some point; it is a tale of Relation, which is not an absolute but a totality (35). Glissant writes, "the thinking of errantry conceives of totality but willingly renounces any claims to sum it up or to possess it" (21). That is, errantry is not concerned with putting forth a claim of universality, a concept that Europe has failed in its mission to carry out. That the thought of errantry is a poetics of Relation indicates that it "remains forever conjectural and presupposes no ideological stability. It is against the comfortable assurances linked to the supposed excellence of language. A poetics that is latent, open, multilingual in intention, directly in contact with everything possible" (31).

Still, errantry would be yet another phase in establishing a new humanism, occurring after decolonization and the destracturing of compact national and international entities. Justice is yet something that exceeds these designations. In Derridean terms, we might argue that errantry epitomizes a certain "violent deterritorialization," a disadjustment that appears as a promise, making possible justice to come. Catherine Malabou explains:

The *disadjusted* present allows one to trace a strange and improbable line of separation between what arrives or happens (the "plagues" of the "black picture") and non-arrival, the non-place as promise. This non-place would outline, like a negative, the territory of those who suffer, and exist as the paradoxical site of a "New International" comprising all those travelers who consent to experience a dis-jointed time and space, thus opening themselves to the resource of such a dis-adjustment. (100)

Here, we should consider a brief sketch of Fanon's life to verify how he experienced a sense of dis-adjusted time toward the end of his life. The fifth of eight children, Fanon was born July 20, 1925, on the Caribbean island of Martinique into a middle-class family that belonged to an emerging black bourgeoisie of small business owners and civil servants. His father was a customs inspector and the descendant of African slaves, and his mother was a shopkeeper and said to be an illegitimate child of mixed race, whose white ancestors came from Strasbourg in Alsace. Both of their earnings kept the family in relative comfort and enabled Fanon to attend the all-black Lycée Schoelcher. We lack detailed accounts of Fanon's life in early childhood, aside from a few anecdotes, but those who knew him insist that he was a "person of unusual courage, of strong will, relentless in play and work, given to practical jokes, but serious in purpose, a born leader who, early in life, took up the theme of freedom and self-sacrifice" (Bulhan 20).

Most of what we know about Fanon begins during his teenage years when he volunteered to fight to liberate France. Still in high school, Fanon heard the broadcasts de Gaulle made from London, calling for the liberation of France from German occupation. Fanon then tried twice to escape to Dominica to volunteer with the Allied forces but failed. At age 17, Fanon eventually succeeded in escaping to Dominica on his older brother's wedding day. While there, he trained for six months and returned to Martinique, where recruiting had begun. It was when Fanon and other recruits were transported to North Africa that they began to experience personal humiliation and disillusionment. They were racially discriminated against, facing "more blatant and hardened expression of bigotry from white settlers, the 'Pied Noirs'" (Bulhan 27). After training in North Africa, the soldiers were deployed to the battlefields of Europe, where Fanon began to realize that the soldiers of the Antilles suffered humiliations similar to that of the

African soldiers, with whom he never identified. Considering himself French, he was quite shocked to find that the Europeans made very little distinctions between Africans and Antilleans.

Fanon returned a decorated war veteran, but had serious doubts about his identity as a Frenchman. He immediately worked in the election campaign of Aime Césaire, the Communist candidate. In 1947, Fanon's father died and his family suffered financially. Despite these setbacks, he won a scholarship to study abroad in Paris, but could not decide on a field of study. Taking the advice of a friend, he took up dentistry, which was short-lived. Fanon's intellectual abilities desired more, so he left for Lyons to take the one-year preparatory training in the natural sciences. While there, he became involved in political debates, left-wing meetings, and workers' strikes. Bulhan notes that it was also during these years that "he experienced a psycho-existential crisis threatening not only his medical studies, but also his sanity" (29).

Fanon eventually parted with Césaire, when the latter supported total integration with France instead of committing himself to an independent Martinique. After having briefly worked in Martinique as a general practitioner, he returned to France to specialize in psychiatry where he worked at the *Hôpital de Saint-Alban* with Professor François Tosquelles. In the spring of 1953, he sat for an intense medical examination, *Le Médicat de hopitaux psychiatrique*, and finished in July. Immediately after the exam, he attempted to contact Leopold Senghor in Senegal but never received a response. He had no other option but to accept a position at a psychiatric hospital in Normandy. It was during this time that Fanon wrote his first book, *BSWM*, which is considered by many as part manifesto and part analysis. In it, he presents his personal experience as a black intellectual in the Western world and describes the effects of the colonizer/colonized relationship on the black psyche.

In November, he heard of an opportunity to work in Algeria as the *chef de service* of the Blida-Joinville Hospital, the largest psychiatric hospital in Algeria. While there, he introduced innovative treatments, wrote articles, and began to articulate new perspectives on healing practices. Meanwhile, the struggle for national liberation grew more intense, and Fanon soon began working secretly for the FLN. In January of 1957, Fanon received a warning to leave Algeria in 48 hours. He then worked in Tunis as a spokesman for the Algerian liberation movement, an editor of its major paper *El Moudjahid*, a doctor in FLN health centers, and a traveling ambassador soliciting support and resources from other African countries. While traveling on one of his frequent trips to refugee camps near the Algerian border, the jeep in which he was riding was blown up by a land mine. He sustained 12 fractured spinal vertebrae and was treated in Rome, where he received death threats, and in one incident, two masked men entered a room from which he had just transferred and “sprayed the bed with a Browning automatic” (Geismar 144). After recovering, Fanon returned to Tunis, but only “revolutionary commitment and profound conviction could have sustained him through his peculiar predicament, confronted as he was with Arab prejudice against his color and with African discomfort in the presence of his white wife” (Bulhan 34). It was around this time that his second book, *A Dying Colonialism*, was published. In it, he examines his observations of and his involvement in the Algerian revolution.

While exploring new supply routes in Mali, Fanon suddenly became ill. In December 1960, it was clear that Fanon was suffering from leukemia and had only a few months to live. He was taken to Moscow and was treated for granulocytic leukemia. Instead of going to the United States to receive treatment, as advised by his physicians in Russia, Fanon returned to Tunis to write in ten weeks his last book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, considered perhaps the most

important work on decolonization yet written. In it, Fanon defines decolonization as a violent phenomenon, where the “proof of its success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up” (35). It is also a “program of complete disorder” and a “historic process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content” (36). The initial conflict of decolonization can be described as the meeting of two forces that are opposed to each other, but the result of this clash is a natural rhythm that comes into existence. Fanon hopefully predicts that a new language and a new humanity will follow this natural rhythm.

During the writing of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon’s health had deteriorated considerably. His Algerian comrades insisted that he seek treatment in the United States, the place to which he referred as “the nation of lynchers.” Peter Geismar notes that the American CIA and FLN representatives arranged for Fanon to visit a U.S. hospital, where he spent ten days without medical attention in a hotel room. He eventually was admitted to a hospital, where he showed symptoms of acute anemia and, after several blood transfusions, contracted double pneumonia. He died on December 6, 1961, without having the opportunity to realize his plans for writing texts on the history of the Algerian revolution and the psychology of the death process (Bulhan 35). His body was taken to Tunis then to Algeria to be buried.

Despite Fanon’s constant declaration of an Algerian identity, he never quite retains any formal sense of identity. Having abandoned Martinique at the thought of total integration with France, rather than independence, Fanon has come to be resented by the Martinicans. Eduoard Glissant once remarked that “years could go by without the author of *Les Damnés de la terre*

being mentioned in even left-wing newspapers in Martinique” (Macey 14). The French have largely ignored him and his work. David Macey explains:

There is no “Avenue Frantz Fanon” in metropolitan France. Even though some psychiatrists who work with immigrants acknowledge, like Robert Berthellier, that Fanon’s clinical writings provide at least a starting point for reflections on transcultural psychiatry, no psychiatric institution bears his name. . . . Almost ten years after Fanon’s death, a critic noted that Fanon had been forgotten because France wanted to forget something else, namely a war in Algeria that last for eight years. France wanted to forget “one million dead, two million men, women, and children in camps, police raids and torture in Paris itself and, at the same time, apart from rare fits of indignation, the passivity of the masses and the spinelessness of the entire Left.” (15)

With respect to Algeria, Fanon has never really become a part of its history. As Macey notes, the country’s standard history schoolbooks contain photographs and biographies of the heroes of the FLN’s revolution, but Fanon was not considered. Although the hospital where he worked in Blida, an avenue in Algiers, and a lycee on the edge of the city’s Bab El Oued district bear his name, his placement in Algeria’s cultural memory has been obscured, due partly to the insistence that the revolution had only one hero: the people (8). Because Fanon was not a Muslim, he will never be considered an Algerian. Because the question of Fanon’s identity has been a long-standing one, Macey argues that Fanon “remains a surprisingly enigmatic and elusive figure” (7). It is precisely this ambiguity that illustrates for us Fanon’s desire to create himself in a way that expresses dis-adjustment, a between-ness represented by arrival and non-arrival, or the non-place as promise. This non-place not only denotes the suffering of others who experience a dis-jointed time and space, but it also opens us to the possibility of justice. In order to rejoin Fanon and Derrida, let us now consider Derrida and his relation to non-place.

One Conclusion by Way of a Non-Arrival

Some readers of Jacques Derrida may insist that his life in biographical form, as well as his work, defies convention. Like Fanon, we lack detailed accounts of Derrida’s childhood life, aside from the few oblique anecdotes that Derrida himself provides in texts like “Circumfession,” but

there indeed exists a traceable chronology of his life and works. Derrida was born in El Biar, Algeria, 15 July 1930, into a Sephardic Jewish family, and was the third of five children, two of whom died in infancy. Very little is known about Derrida's father, who was a salesman, and mother, Georgette, about whom Derrida generally speaks lovingly. As a child, Derrida was quite emotional and, by his accounts, prone to weeping; he was the "child whom the grown-ups amused themselves by making cry for nothing, who was always to weep over himself with the tears of his mother" ("Circumfession" 118-9). In 1941, Derrida entered the nearby Lycée de Ben Akoun, which had already been subjected to anti-semitic Vichy laws. On the first day of school the following year, he was expelled as a Jew and experienced severe verbal abuse from his French peers. In 1943, Derrida began attending the Lycée Emile-Maupas, which was formed by displaced Jewish teachers, but he found the experience unbearable and skipped school for a year. According to Derrida,

No doubt these are the years during which the singular character of J.D.'s "belonging" to Judaism is imprinted on him: wound, certainly, painful and practiced sensitivity to anti-Semitism and any racism, "raw" response to xenophobia, but also impatience with gregarious identification, with the militancy of belonging in general, even if it is Jewish. In short, a double rejection. ("Circumfession" 327)

Derrida commenced regular schooling in 1944, but his focus was more on soccer than on studies; he wanted to be a professional football player. At the same time, however, Derrida read intensely the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, André Gide, Friedrich Nietzsche, Paul Valéry, and Albert Camus. After failing his *baccalaureat* in June 1947, he studied the works of Henri Bergson and Jean-Paul Sartre at the Lycée Gauthier in Algiers. It was also during this time that he realized his passion for literature and began envisioning a career as a teacher. This realization had a profound effect on Derrida, as he passed the *baccalaureat* in June 1948, after which he began reading the philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger at the Lycée Bugeaud in Algiers.

Derrida first visited Paris in 1949 as a boarding student at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, where he read the works of Simone Weil. After hearing a radio broadcast, he set his sights on the Ecole Normale Supérieure, the leading French institute for literature and philosophy. The main requisite for study at ENS was two years of preparatory classes at the Lycée Louis-le-grand in Paris, although it took Derrida longer as he suffered physically and psychologically in the new environment. (It was the first time he had been out of Algeria.) After a series of failed examinations due to poor health, Derrida was finally admitted to the ENS in 1952, where he explored (unsuccessfully by his accounts) psychology and ethnology, and became an intermittent militant in non-Communist far-left groups. While there, he studied under and became friends with Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault, and met Marguerite Aucouturier, whom he married in 1957.

Derrida continued to experience failures in his schooling until 1956, when he passed the philosophy *agrégation*, an examination that qualifies candidates for lifelong tenure in a teaching job at a state school, and received a grant as a *special auditor* at Harvard University, where he began translating Edmund Husserl's *Origin of Geometry* into French. For his introduction to this book (published in 1962, the year Algeria gained independence), Derrida was awarded the Jean Cavailles Prize in modern epistemology.

During the Algerian Revolution between the years 1957-59, Derrida taught French and English in a school in Kolea, near Algiers, to children of soldiers in the Algerian war for independence in lieu of actual military service. Between 1960-64, Derrida taught philosophy and logic at the University of Paris (Sorbonne) and published essays in the journals *Critique* and *Tel Quel*. In 1966, Derrida made his debut among American intellectuals at a conference at Johns Hopkins University where he announced the death of French structuralism with his paper

“Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.” The effect of Derrida’s paper was such that by the time the conference proceedings were published in 1970, the title of the collection had become *The Structuralist Controversy*. The conference was also where he met Paul de Man, who would be a close friend and source of great controversy, as well as where he first met the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, with whose work Derrida enjoyed a mixed relationship. This conference also inaugurated a long relationship with English departments in the United States, where he was made more welcome than anywhere else in the world. (The French academic establishment never accepted him fully, and academic philosophers everywhere were generally uncomprehending.)

In 1967, Derrida published his first three texts, *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Speech and Phenomena*. These three books contained readings of the work of many philosophers, including Foucault, Rousseau, Husserl, Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Georg W. F. Hegel, Georges Bataille, René Descartes, Claude Levi-Strauss, Sigmund Freud, Ferdinand de Saussure, and others. It was in this trinity of works that the “principles” of deconstruction were set out, where he showed that the arguments promulgated brought forth by their subject matter exceeded and contradicted the oppositional parameters in which they were situated. Also in 1967, Derrida lectured to the Société français de philosophie on his concept “Différance,” one of his most famous elocutions and displays of deconstruction. As Derrida notes in his “Curriculum Vitae” in “Circumfession,” much of what follows 1967-8 “can be reconstituted on the basis of publications” (331). Still, it must be said that much of his work in the next twenty years would be devoted to deconstruction.

During the 1970s, his work was arguably at its most playful and most radical: his crucial works, *Glas* and *The Post-Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, set the tone for his

deconstructive project, particularly by emphasizing his form of close reading. In 1974, Derrida founded the Groupe De Recherche Sur L'enseignement Philosophique, which was dedicated to improving the teaching of philosophy in schools. He was also traveling often to various institutions and establishing important friendships. A few of those productive friendships formed during his annual visits to Johns Hopkins and Yale, where he worked closely with J. Hillis Miller and Paul de Man, a group that later came to be known as the Yale school of deconstruction.

In 1980, Derrida defended a doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne, based on his publications, and, that same year, he was the focus of a 10-day Cerisy-la-Salle conference organized by two friends whose work was to remain in close proximity with his, Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. The following year, Derrida experienced an event that would haunt him for the rest of his life: returning from a seminar in Prague, he was arrested on false drugs charges and imprisoned. The French government protested his arrest and he was released.

In order to encourage developments in philosophy outside the traditional canons, Derrida contributed to the establishment of the Collège International de Philosophie, of which he became the first director in 1983. That same year, he also participated in the creation of an anti-apartheid foundation and a writers' committee for Nelson Mandela. In 1993, Derrida's work took a decidedly "political turn," heralded by *Specters*. Derrida and many of his supporters, however, have argued that much of the philosophical work done in his "political turn" can be dated to earlier essays, though the tone of his work changed and his effort to examine political issues more openly became apparent. His "ethical turn" followed not long after with works such as *The Gift of Death*, in which Derrida applies deconstruction to the relationship between ethics and religion. In *The Gift of Death*, Derrida reads Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* and argues that a leap of faith is required in many aspects of life, not only religion. We can also see in this phase

of Derrida's career his professed indebtedness to Friedrich Nietzsche's genealogy of morals, especially evident in Derrida's discussion of responsibility, guilt, and the genesis of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Derrida continued to travel widely and held a series of visiting and permanent positions at institutions including New York University and The New School for Social Research. Derrida was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and received the 2001 Adorno-Preis from the University of Frankfurt. He was awarded honorary doctorates by Cambridge University (after a great deal of controversy), Columbia University, The New School for Social Research, the University of Essex, University of Leuven, and Williams College. In 2003, Derrida was diagnosed with aggressive pancreatic cancer, which reduced his speaking and traveling engagements. He died in a Parisian hospital on the evening of Friday, October 8, 2004.

By the time of Derrida's death, he had come to embrace his extensive traveling. In Glissant's terms, Derrida too epitomizes the errant, satisfying the requirements of errantry by not remaining connected physically or emotionally to one particular location. In fact, Derrida conceives of an arrival without derivation or a non-arrival, which he refers to as "destinarrance." As such, the event always escapes teleology by way of a surprise. These lines of flight during travel rely upon what has never arrived, what may never arrive, but they are determinants for anything to arrive, happen, or be produced. Marabou writes:

[O]ne could say that everything that happens owes its chance to non-arrival. "Owes its chance": this expresses at the same time a debt (every event is indebted with respect to non-arrival) and the relation of a possibility to its condition of possibility (what happens or arrives derives from nothing, owes its existence to non-arrival). (61)

Derrida and Fanon differ in these lines of non-arrival in the acknowledgment of a heritage, accepting responsibility for the contradictory orders handed down by fathers and mothers. Where Fanon dedicated his life to Algerian independence, denounced France and the French language

and culture that he once loved so well, and made little to no mention of Martinique, Derrida insisted upon multiple heritages. In “Geopsychoanalysis: ‘. . . and the rest of the world,’” Derrida writes, “I am a foreigner . . . because I am neither an American . . . nor a European, Northern or Southern. I am not even really a Latin. I was born in Africa, and I guarantee you that I retain something of that heritage” (204). In “Taking a Stand for Algeria,” Derrida reifies this heritage by claiming that he was

inspired above all and after all by a painful love for Algeria, an Algeria where I was born, which I left, literally, for the first time only at nineteen, before the war of independence, an Algeria to which I have often come back and which in the end I know to have never really ceased inhabiting or bearing in my innermost, a love for Algeria to which, if not the love of citizenry, and thus the patriotic tie to a Nation-state, is nonetheless what makes it impossible to dissociate here the heart, the thinking, and the political position-taking—and thus dictates all that I will say.

In *The Other Heading*, however, he boasts, “I am European, I am no doubt a European intellectual, and I like to recall this, I like to recall this to myself, and why would I deny it? In the name of what? But I am not, nor do I feel, European *in every part*, that is, European through and through. By which I mean . . . I do not want to be and must not be European through and through, European *in every part*” (qtd. in Marabou 91-2). This highly fraught position, however, does not discourage Ross Benjamin and Heesok Chang to declare that Derrida is “The Last European.” They write, “Derrida’s national and cultural hybridity might have made him ‘not quite European,’ but he was also in some sense the ‘last’ European—someone who marked, in his texts and in his person, the limits of what European thought has had to offer the rest of the world” (142). The one thing that remains constant for both Derrida and Fanon, despite their struggle to account for or forge their own identities or non-identities, is their relation to the French language. Derrida captures this ambivalence best in *Monolingualism of the Other* when he speaks not only of an inability to call French his “mother tongue” (34), but also a language of origin such as French that can lose someone, which he derives from Abdelkebir Khatibi’s *Amour*

Bilingue. Derrida explains: “Khatibi holds the voluble couch of a double language against his ear. . . . He keeps what has lost him. And naturally, he was also still keeping what he has not lost. As if he could guarantee its salvation, even from his own loss. He had only one mother and, no doubt, more than one mother, but he indeed has *his* mother tongue, a mother tongue, a single mother tongue *plus* another language” (36). Fanon could never escape being French, his mother tongue, despite his attempts to learn Arabic; he would always have his first name to remind him of this fact. Instead of occupying or claiming a land or peoples who may not authorize or accept this association, Derrida chooses to identify with the Marrano, who is “anyone who remains faithful to a secret that he has not chosen, in the very first place where he lives, in the home of the inhabitant or of the occupant, in the home of the first or the second *arrivante*, in the very place where he stays without saying *no* but without identifying himself as belonging to” (*Aporias* 81).

Only something like deconstruction could orient Fanon toward a non-place, in a way that deconstruction could not operate for Derrida. While Derrida no doubt represents deconstruction structurally, linguistically, and performatively, Fanon serves as the ultimate performative embodiment of deconstruction. If Derrida has hesitated to act, it is primarily because he has been prone to thinking, learning to think and learning to live. Derrida needs Fanon, as a person of action, to represent the violent legacy (of deconstruction and beyond). Both yearned to see a transformation of Man and History and both understood the implications of this transformation as something larger than or in excess of a combination of ideology, metaphysics, Reason, madness, and violence. This transformation must remark something new, as yet to arrive, but must remain contingent upon the refashioning of Western ideals (an old humanism, in Heidegger’s words). If deconstruction is a neither-nor, both and yet not one or the other, if it is both a repudiation and acknowledgment of an indebtedness to that which it repudiates, how can

it not be reflected accurately in the phrase a “new humanism,” which anticipates the arrival of justice without saying much necessarily about what that justice will encompass? In the dark night, a new humanism acts as a shadow to deconstruction, both of which are formed on the basis of not only general intellectual concerns about the crisis of reason, but also an uneasy smile to an originary discrimination, the wounding of a “dirty Jew” and the amputation of a “dirty nigger.”

Horatio: Never believe it:
I am more antique Roman than a Dane:
Here's yet some liquor left.

Hamlet: As thou 'rt a man,
Give me the cup: let go; by heaven, I'll have 't.
O good Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent see from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story. . . .

 O, I die, Horatio;
The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit:
I cannot live to hear the news from England;
But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice;
So tell him, with the occurrents, more and less,
Which have solicited. The rest is silence. [Dies]

Horatio: Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince;
And flights of angels sing thee to the rest! (137-38)

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: DECONSTRUCTION AND SHADOWS

As an undergraduate student of English in the late 1990s, I encountered two texts that altered my understanding of the world in a most profound manner: Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon's first published text, *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Algerian philosopher Jacques Derrida's infamous essay "Différance," on the deconstruction of the speech and writing binary. My energy and enthusiasm for this project have been haunted constantly both by the formative impact of those texts and by a simple question that my dissertation director once asked during the exam process that I could not really answer at that time: "What sustains your interest in a project that focuses primarily on Frantz Fanon and Jacques Derrida?" In truth, I have been intrigued by the attention that Derrida and deconstruction have received over the years—and that attention is well warranted, for he has contributed greatly to literary theory, literature, the arts, and arguably philosophy, to name just a few disciplines—but rather confused by Fanon's relegation to either a postmodern or poetic Third World theorist of black consciousness or an incensed warmonger for his contributions to the Algerian revolution. I suspect that my initial attraction in studying Fanon and Derrida arises from a realization that both had spent time in Algeria, a country that has been described by William Spencer as "one of paradox. That is, things are not just the way they seem, and usually the opposite of what you expected" (105). In a sense, what we have in Algeria is a place "out of joint," creating at least two possibilities for becoming: (1) a "non-person," which characterizes "[m]ost of the FLN heroes of the war years . . . [T]hey were never seen or mentioned in public again. Not only political figures but technicians and civil servants, whose only crime was competence, disappeared" (Spencer 109), or (2) a renegade, an infidel or a Marrano whose smile encodes a secret maintained by a shibboleth. The Marrano exemplifies the

undecidability of politics, which opens the possibility of justice, while the “non-person” is rendered silent and inoperative

The observations presented in this dissertation represent a minor and rather rough composite of what links these men. Foremost, as I have tried to illustrate, what Derrida and Fanon had most in common is, not homogeneously but deceptively similarly, a commitment to justice and revolution. This commitment is fashioned by their respective responses to the discrimination they faced as French-speaking minorities in French territories and departments. Both men initially found consolation in intellectual achievement and philosophical engagement, but ultimately found themselves encountering aporias from which each tried to liberate himself. Fanon challenged these aporias through resistance against French forces as an Algerian insurrectionary. Derrida wrote exhaustively about and through the ambivalences of a heritage unrelenting in its pursuits to maintain its privilege. I have also tried to demonstrate or remind readers of two often overlooked points: (1) Derrida understood the inevitability or necessity of violence in justice, and (2) early on, Fanon never prescribed or accepted violence as a solution to the colonial condition, believing that reason could prevail. In less than a decade after publishing *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon, as if being handed down knowledge and contradictory orders, began to understand what Derrida had “always already” known about violence. Eventually, the convergence of what Derrida and Fanon developed on the basis of an inheritance from Marx culminates with the evolution of both deconstruction and a new humanism.

Let us recall momentarily the outset of *Hamlet* when both Hamlet (Derrida) and Horatio (Fanon) are able to see the ghost of the king (Marx), but the ghost acknowledges only one of them. The responsibility to carry on the legacy through the contradictory orders lies not only with Hamlet, who has a proclivity for thinking, but also Horatio, the brave scholar willing to

strike at a moment's notice. We might think of Horatio then as one who leads the battle cry, or the search for the pure and intransigent. I have tried to capture a similar, performative connection between Derrida as a man of thought and Fanon as a man of action by tracing the reference of the latter by the former in "Cogito et histoire de la folie," in which Derrida seems to whisper a secret to Fanon posthumously, from one renegade or Marrano to another: the only effective way to critique is from the inside, but make no mistake: violence is inherently necessary.

For this dissertation, my motivation is similar to Derrida's in "Cogito," which begins with a disciple's consciousness. Where Derrida mobilizes this consciousness to examine three pages of Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* and the specific passage in Descartes' *Meditations I* that Foucault considers, I use the omission of the reference to Fanon in "Cogito," an originary deconstructive event, as my point of departure. I open with "Cogito" also to reinforce the argument that both reason and philosophy historically repress, hide, forbid, leave in the shadows, and render absent what indeed is endemic to them. I have tried to show that Derrida, by distancing himself from Fanon, leaves Fanon in the shadows and represses this relationship in a performative gesture of critical import. In order to make the connection more salient between Derrida and Fanon, I focus on another deconstructive event, *Specters of Marx*, a deferred event performed and structured around an undecidable politics. Essentially, Marx serves as the first (Marrano) interlocutor who enables us to make this intial connection between the two. My return to *Specters of Marx* also reestablishes Derrida's status as a uniquely African theorist and attempts to problematize Marxism and deconstruction's relation to it. We could easily compile a list of African theorists and Marxists, but we would certainly be hard pressed to find one among that list who has made as significant an impact on the university (universality, reason, philosophy, etc.) as Derrida. If no one usually hears Africa, it is for this reason that we must

situate Derrida as African, among his other voluntary and involuntary designations. In essence, Derrida emerges from his tomb, the letter A, in order to tell other Marranos a secret, or several secrets, that are encoded in a way that enables good readers to crack the code of the shibboleth yet leaves the others to irresponsible readings of deconstruction.

I then focus on deconstruction as justice, predicated on violence and force, based on the German existential phenomenology of Martin Heidegger, and “rooted” in Africa. I explore these qualifications in order to lead us back to Fanon where he has articulated a similar “concept”—deconstruction is neither a word nor a concept—a new humanism. I draw out the implications for a new humanism by engaging Heidegger’s “Letter on Humanism.” Heidegger then becomes a second Marrano interlocutor through which we are able to decode this shibboleth between Derrida and Fanon. I propose that deconstruction, if it can “be” several things, is also a new humanism. The word “deconstruction” appears shortly after Fanon’s death in 1961 and his posthumously published *The Wretched of the Earth*, which offers us a splendid Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, who cautions Europe to listen to Africa. Although Fanon was indeed influenced greatly by Sartre, the world that Fanon envisioned exceeds the dialectical progression that Sartre attributed to him and his negritude poets. Sartre becomes the third Marrano interlocutor when I examine Derrida’s critique on Sartre and his views on jewishness in chapter six.

Underlying the questions regarding deconstruction that I have addressed, I have also attempted to install a brief reading of Derrida’s reading of *Hamlet* and extend Marxist Aijaz Ahmad’s reading of *Specters of Marx* to identify Derrida as Hamlet and Marx as the ghost of King Hamlet. I develop Ahmad’s performative reading by introducing Fanon as Horatio and alluding to Sartre as Marcellus. (So as not to trivialize matters, I refrained from placing Spivak, Butler, Heidegger, Wise, and others central to this dissertation in my performative reading of

Hamlet, but I envision a *topos* in which this reading is possible.) I would like to be clear here that Fanon's work, nearly as much as Derrida's, has experienced a history of radical interpretations. Indeed, not long after the death of Frantz Fanon in 1961, debates over his work began to surface. Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renée T. White propose that these Fanon studies or "Fanonisms" perhaps might be divided into five stages.²⁷ Recounting the various political vicissitudes of "Fanonisms" since the 1960s, Nigel Gibson argues that the "Critical Fanonism" of the post-Cold War 1980s truly marks a shift from radical politics to a liberal, "almost wholly institutionalized" field of cultural studies. Fanon's work, he suggests, is also experiencing a rebirth in the English-speaking world, in contrast to the lack of discussion in French of Fanon. Henry Louis Gates offers an explanation for this trend in his essay "Critical Fanonism": "Fanon's current fascination for us has something to do with the convergence of the problematic of colonialism with that of subject formation" (458). Terry Goldie reminds us of another, not so widely quoted phrase from Gates's essay:

It may be a matter of judgment whether his writings are rife with contradiction or richly dialectic, polyvocal, and multivalent; they are in any event highly porous, that is, wide open to interpretation, and the readings they elicit are, as a result, of unfailing *symptomatic* interest: Frantz Fanon, not to put too fine a point on it, is a Rorschach blot with legs. (458)

What seems rather interesting is that Cedric Robinson implicates Gates, who seems to be re-centering Fanon within cultural and Fanon studies, along with Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Abdul JanMohamed, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Benita Parry in charging them with

²⁷ In the first stage, revolutionary thinkers such as Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Huey Newton, and Paulo Freire were said to have applied and reacted to Fanon's work. In the second stage, beginning in the early 1970s, David Caute, Peter Geismar, and Irene Gendzier began publishing biographies on Fanon. In the mid-80s, writers such as Hussein Adam, Emmanuel Hansen, Renate Zahar, and L. A. Jinadu undertook intense research projects on Fanon's significance in political theory. The fourth stage, characterized by the ascent of postcolonial and postmodern cultural studies in the academy, includes figures such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Abdul JanMohamed, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Benita Parry, Henry Louis Gates, and Cedric Robinson, who, the editors complain, represent a "literary-critical bias" marked "by a tendency to attack Fanon 'under a number of fashionable political designations'" (qtd. in Alessandrini 5). The most recent stage, inaugurated by Hussein Bulhan, Tsenay Serequeberhan, Lewis Gordon, and Ato Sekyi-Otu, "consists in engagements with the thought of Fanon for the development of original work across the entire sphere of human studies" (*ibid.*).

imagining a Fanon “in their self-referential debates on colonial discourse” (79). I concede here that Fanon has received a considerable amount of attention over the years, but we must neither reduce Fanon to a Rorschach blot with legs, nor “employ him as merely a background device” (Robinson 79). He should be regarded as highly as Derrida, I believe, for his “richly dialectic, polyvocal, and multivalent” writings. But if we feel that we do not have enough material with which to make more thoroughly critical judgments about Fanon, just as we haven’t enough to speak exhaustively about Horatio, then we might simply read Fanon through Derrida, who has all the speaking parts in this play. I believe that whenever we hear or see Derrida, Fanon is not so far away, like his darker shadow. Fanon serves as an example of one always prepared to act at any moment, and this is perhaps how Derrida in “Cogito” accounts for Fanon’s ipseity. Let us remember that various circumstances during the 1940s and 1950s contribute to what we “know” as deconstruction (a new humanism). When we read Derrida and Fanon, we cannot neglect to situate them both properly within these historical interstices. In doing so, we realize that Derrida’s supposed “come-lately association” with Marxism and Fanon’s supposed predisposition toward violence are fictional, at best. I suggest that there is more work to be done on the connection between the two, specifically with respect to love and revolution, but for now, we should content ourselves with the following formulation: Frantz Fanon “acts” as Jacques Derrida’s Devoted Shadow.

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