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## Derrida's Umbrapolitics: Marrano "Living Together"

### Abstract:

This essay focuses on political implications of Derrida's *messianicité* as a form of Marrano messianism: a universal vision of community "out of joints" which, despite its disjointedness and inner separation, nonetheless addresses itself as "we" (although always in inverted commas). By referring to the generalized "Marrano experience" – the fate of those Sephardic Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity and, in consequence, became neither Jewish nor Christian – Derrida takes the Marrano as his paradigmatic political figure of a "rogue" (*voyou*) who escapes every identity politics. In Derrida's project of "living together" (*vivre ensemble*), the Marrano stands for the non-participatory remnant of otherness which is not just the other of this or that particular tradition, but becomes a bearer of a new universalism, based not on the abstract notion of human nature but on the non-identity, a distance-from-identity or what Yirmijahu Yovel calls the "non-integral identity."

### Keywords:

Derrida, political messianism, Marranism, new universalism, critique of totalitarianism, democracy to come

*The first [age] is in the servitude of slavery, the second in the servitude of sons, the third in freedom. The first in fear, the second in faith, the third in love. The first is the status of bondsmen, the second of freemen, the third of friends.*

– Ernst Benz, *Ecclesia spiritualis. Kirchenidee und Geschichtstheologie der franziskanischen Reformation*

This essay<sup>1</sup> focuses on political implications of Derrida's *messianicité* as a form of Marrano messianism: a universal vision of community "out of joints" which, despite its disjointedness and inner separation, nonetheless addresses itself as "we" (although always in inverted commas).<sup>2</sup> By referring to the generalized "Marrano experience" – the fate of those Sephardic Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity and, in consequence, became neither Jewish nor Christian – Derrida takes the Marrano as his paradigmatic political figure of a "rogue" (*voyou*) who escapes every identity politics. In Derrida's project of "living together" (*vivre ensemble*), the Marrano stands for the non-participatory remnant of otherness which is not just the other of this or that particular tradition, but is a bearer of a new universalism, based not on the abstract notion of human nature but on the non-identity; a distance-from-identity or what Yirmijahu Yovel, the Israeli scholar of Marranism, calls the "non-integral identity."

Whether synchronically or over time, a human self is capable – and should be allowed – to operate on several planes at once without fully coherent unification, and to balance different choices and allegiances without allowing any one to take over as the completing identity or "true self." Therefore, the non-integral identity that the Marranos throw into sharp relief, and that many others – from the Inquisition to modern nationalism and other ideologies, as well as fundamentalist communities – view as devious, illicit, illogical, or immoral, should rather be recognized as a *basic human freedom*.<sup>3</sup>

As we shall see, Derrida defends the libertarian aspect of all those "devious, illicit, illogical, or immoral" elements of the Marrano condition over against any form of political thought which would wish to get rid of secrets, specters, and shadows – most of all, modern utopian projects. In his outline of what I will call here *umbrapolitics*, Derrida first of all targets utopias – Marxism in particular – for being too rooted in the metaphysics of

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2) On Derrida's Marrano (non)identification, see my *Jewish Cryptotheologies of Late Modernity*; especially the introduction.

3) See Yovel, *The Other Within*, 348. In the preface, Yovel declares that he wants to tell the story of the Marranos but also "use it as a vehicle for a wider philosophical reflection" (Ibid., 9). He thus presents the Marranos, the Spanish and Portuguese *conversos*, who nonetheless preserved (or were assumed to preserve) the elements of their hidden Jewish tradition, as the first modern subjects who lost solid footing in their traditions and thus became "ineradicably other," not only to those who still enjoyed premodern fixed identities, but also to themselves (Ibid., 58). Split in their identities and loyalties, the Marranos either "confused the two rival religions" or "became equally indifferent to both" (Ibid., 61), thus giving way to the two typically modern tendencies: the pursuit of idiosyncratic forms of religiosity mediating between Judaism and Christianity on the one hand, and the "freeoscillating subjectivity" or a "type that lives beyond the spheres of conventional belief and mentality" (Ibid., 61), which does not identify with any tradition, on the other. It is not surprising, therefore, that for Yovel, the most interesting contemporary representative of Marranism is Derrida, whose "non-Jewish Jewishness," consciously turned into a universal condition, offers the split, non-integral and unfinished identity as a paradigm of the modern subject which, precisely because of that, can only be described in terms of a meta-identitarian remnant: "A modern Jewishness was created, one that is concerned with its new meaning and will not renounce it, even when incapable of defining it unequivocally. What could be more Marrano?" (Ibid., 366).

presence, which remains closed to spectral – "illicit, illogical" – alternatives that can never fall within the law and order of being and its science, ontology.

The accusation against Marxist utopia, as too close to the historical actuality of the already existing, is the main theme of Derrida's *Specters of Marx*. Just as Plato's ideal republic is a direct derivative of the Platonic ontology as the science of what is and what gives being – so is Marx's vision of the communist society an immediate reflection of his understanding of "social *physis*" and its scientific objective laws. Thus, while the Great Architect builds his utopian vision on the most secure ontological foundations – the Messiah, or any representative of *messianicité*, chooses the "rejected stones" of the seemingly non-existent "impossible."<sup>4</sup> In Derrida's terminology, however, this "impossible," which the messianic thought demands, is not a flat logical impossibility: it is not a simple antithesis to necessity, as, for instance, in the opposition to the sentence – "all men must die" – which results in the demand of instantaneous immortality. It is, on the contrary, an opening which chips into the seemingly necessitarian closure of ontological thinking that tends to see *what is* as *what must be* and then treat it as a normative model form the utopian projection of the future: Derrida's *messianicité* is, in that sense, the strongest voice against any kind of ontological fallacy.<sup>5</sup> This opening, therefore, aims at the disclosure of what Kierkegaard call *the possibility of possibilities*: the transcendental reserve of alternatives to the already actualized reality, indeed "the illicit and illogical," as demonstrated by the first impossible subjects without identity, the Marranos.<sup>6</sup>

In Derrida's "white mythology," the figure representing this reserve is a *specter* – a haunting guest, visiting the world from the regions of "otherwise than being," who can only be approached via a new science of *hantologie*, operating in the "Marrano" register of neither being nor non-being. This is how Derrida explains the ontological neither/ nor characteristic of the spectral condition in his "History of the Lie":

As we know, *phantasma* also named for the Greeks the apparition of the specter, the vision of the phantom, or the phenomenon of the revenant. The fabulous and the phantasmatic have a feature in common: *stricto sensu*, in the classical and prevalent sense of these terms, they do not pertain to either the true or the false, the veracious or the mendacious. They are related, rather, to an irreducible species of the simulacrum or even of simulation, in the *penumbral light of a virtuality that is neither being nor nothingness*, nor even an order of the possible that an ontology or a mimetology could account for or subdue with reason. *No more than myth, fable and phantasm*

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4) In the context of Derrida's mistrust toward all sorts of Great Architects and their utopian constructs, see Derrida's remark from "Des Tours de Babel": "The 'tower of Babel' does not merely figure the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompleteness, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing on the order of edification, architectural construction, system and architectonics." Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 104.

5) In the discussion with Thomas Assheuer, "Not Utopia, the Im-Possible," Derrida explains his mistrust toward the utopian and champions his version of the "impossible": "Utopia has critical powers that we should probably never give up on, especially when we can make it a reason for resisting all alibis and all 'realistic' or 'pragmatic' cop-outs, but all the same I'm wary of the word. There are some contexts in which *Utopia*, the word at any rate, can be too easily associated with dreams, or demobilization, or an impossible that is more of an urge to give up than an urge to action. The 'impossible' I often speak of is not the Utopian. Rather, it gives their very movement to desire, action, and decision: it is the very figure of the real. It has its hardness, closeness, and urgency." Derrida, *Paper Machine*, 131.

6) The difference between the mere-possible as fitting neatly the necessitarian view of reality, backed by the power of the *status quo*, and the hyper-possible as exploding this view is well explained by Derrida himself in the dialogue with Elisabeth Roudinesco: "All responsibility is revolutionary, since it seeks to do the impossible, to interrupt the order of things on the basis of nonprogrammable events. A revolution cannot be programmed. In a certain way, as the only event worthy of the name, it exceeds every possible horizon, every horizon of the possible and, therefore, of potency and power": Derrida, Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow...* 83.

*are doubtless not truths or true statements as such, but neither are they errors or deceptions, false witnesses or perjuries.*<sup>7</sup>

The concept of the messianic – deliberately as “no more than myth, fable, phantasm” – emerges as the alternative to the utopian for the first time in Derrida’s essay from 1997, *Specters of Marx*, and then in the response to his Marxist critics, “Marx & Sons,” published two years later. Derrida takes the modern notion of *messianicity without Messiah*, operative already in Levinas, and turns into an even stronger, seemingly paradoxical phrase of *messianicity without messianism*. In the Marrano manner, refusing to identify with any organized and explicitly named messianic ideology, Derrida speaks in favor of the de-nominated messianic idea of justice which resists full discursive capture. By remaining eternally elusive, it enjoys a modal form of a *specter*, which haunts the living who, riveted to the ontological horizon of what already exists, constantly fall into “the disgrace of adaptation.”<sup>8</sup> The messianic spectrality, therefore – *hantologie/hauntology* (from the French *hanter*, to haunt) – becomes distinctly opposed to being and *ontology* (even if, when spoken, you cannot really hear the difference, as in the original Derridean *différance*). This homophonic maneuver signals the asymmetry between the ubiquity of being which, according to Parmenides, was, is, and will be – and the elusive modality of “otherwise than being,” to which one has to be especially hospitable and attentive: we could say, following Malebranche, that this particular attention which hears the mute “h” in *hantologie* – being here an equivalent of the Hebrew aleph: the first letter uttered as a breath and, at the same time, a symbol of transcendence – is Derrida’s “natural form of prayer.” When heard and listened-to, the “h” of the haunting specter disturbs and disrupts the ontological process of being and does not allow it to fall back into self-repetitive totalities of the seemingly self-evident, self-necessitated, visible, natural, actualized. The mute “h” is in French called *ash* which in Derrida’s Babelian idiom immediately translates into those ashes/ cinders that remain of the world after the intervention of the fiery *ruah*: the spirit which destroys and rejuvenates simultaneously (interestingly, the “h” in *ruah* is exceptionally *not* mute and as such can be regarded as the characteristic signature of the Hebrew word for “spirit”). The specter as the avatar of Spirit/*ruah* is thus a figure of a pure *antinomian* possibility – antinomian, because it goes against the law of the reality principle, that is, against what establishes itself as a powerful law of what is and wants to remain in being: the world’s *status quo*. It can only manifest as a *trace*, which cannot find home in the conditions of immanence, for it is only due to this not fully ontologically present dimension of the messianic promise, that the specter can gain distance from *the extant* and press upon it in the name of *the (im)possible*, even if in the form of the haunting threat. The specter, therefore, is the transcendent halo of the immanence, the supranatural hovering over the “social *physis*.”<sup>9</sup>

In the self-commentary, delivered in the essay “Marx & Sons,” Derrida defends his position of *messianic spectrality* against more materialistically minded, traditional Marxists and their concept of the communist utopia (most of all Terry Eagleton and Antonio Negri):

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7) Derrida, *Without Alibi*, 28. My emphasis.

8) Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, esp. the chapter “Injunctions of Marx,” 1–60, which introduces the figure of Hamlet as torn between the allegiance to the haunting fatherly specter and the simple adaptation to the living present.

9) “In this regard, *communism has always been and will remain spectral*: it is always still to come and is distinguished, like democracy itself, from every living present understood as plenitude of presence-to-itself, as totality of presence effectively identical to itself. Capitalist societies can always heave a sigh of relief and say to themselves: communism is finished since the collapse of the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century and not only is it finished, but it did not take place, it was only a ghost. They do no more than disavow the undeniable itself: a ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back.” Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 123. My emphasis.

Nothing would seem to be at a further remove from Utopia or Utopianism, even in its "subterranean" form, than the messianicity and spectrality which are at the heart of *Specters of Marx*... Messianicity (which I regard as a universal structure of experience, and which cannot be reduced to religious messianism of any stripe) is anything but Utopian: it refers, in every here-now, to the coming of an eminently real, concrete event, that is, to the most irreducible 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 and irreducible amalgam of desire and anguish, affirmation and fear, promise and threat)... *Anything but Utopian*, messianicity mandates that we interrupt the ordinary course of things, time and history here-now; *it is inseparable from an affirmation of otherness and justice*.<sup>10</sup>

Here we get all the characteristic elements of Derrida's messianic (as well as deconstructive) position: absolute affirmation of otherness as an attentive anticipation of a coming-possible event and the paradoxical expectation of the non-expected, unbacked by any utopian calculation, staking on the event capable to interrupt the ordinary course of things, or the "social physis." There is nothing sure or calculable about the course of history which allegedly leads – through a series of "historical necessities" – to its utopian goal. Messianic expectation does not believe in *progress*, which sees history as already being on the right track and just needs to be pushed further; but it also does not believe in a *revolutionary change*, for this change is never radical enough: it only overturns one social order and reintroduces another within the untransformed conditions of being. Derrida, therefore, objects to Marx's being "too ontological," that is, wanting his revolutionary philosophy to stick too close to the actual and the present – "at the risk of restoring everything to order, to the grand order, *but to order*."<sup>11</sup> In his attempt to be "politically realistic," therefore, Marx conjures away the most valuable element of his own messianic thought, namely the famous "specter of communism" – the very *spirit* of utopia – that was supposed to "hover over Europe." In his full-fledged communist system as described in *The Capital*, nothing hovers or haunts anymore; there is no non-immanent dimension that would be able to subvert the mechanisms of being, which in Marx's case are the historical mechanisms of the subsequent economic formations. Derrida says:

I think it is the most problematic aspect of Marx, namely, the unrestrained, classical, traditional (dare I add "Platonic"?) desire to conjure away any and all spectrality so as to recover the full physical reality of the process of genesis hidden behind the specter's mask.<sup>12</sup>

Contrary to this, the specter is a *normative modality* which always hovers over being, but never coincides with anything fully present, and as such cannot fall prey to physical forces of actuality – for better or worse. It cannot – should not – be fully realized, but it also cannot – should not – be judged from the perspective of its

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10) Derrida, "Marx & Sons," 248–49. The distinction between the utopian and the messianic may not be, in fact, Derrida's invention. As Menachem Lorberbaum shows in his study on the medieval Jewish political thought, the gap between the two is also a frequent theme in Maimonides: Lorberbaum, *Politics and the Limits of Law*, especially the chapter, "The Messianic Age and the Utopian Vision," 87–88.

11) Derrida, "Marx & Sons," 257.

12) *Ibid.*, 258.

failed realizations, which tried to “betray better,” but ended up betraying full and simple.<sup>13</sup> As the call to radical justice, the messianic specter hovers above any historical situation, as, for instance, the disastrous existence of the Communist bloc, which has no power to invalidate it.<sup>14</sup> The specter remains separate from the historical process and – here Derrida speaks directly against Negri – there are dark moments in history when it has no “vessels” at all, no privileged group or class to carry the Blochian spark of hope: “one should not always be one with the people,” says Derrida, meaning that one should not always side with the extant social forces and give them full revolutionary credit just because they are. Sometimes one has to withdraw into the spectral “weakness” that lacks the immanent historicist power: the hiddenness of the inner secret which offers a space of retreat from the pressures of actuality.

Should Derrida’s hauntology, therefore, be read as the last chapter in the history of the messianic “powerless power,” which guards the purity of the ideal at the expense of its actual efficiency? This may sound as an objection – a typically Hegelian accusation against the political idleness of “beautiful souls” – but it was not meant that way by Derrida. He would always claim that the betrayal is the necessary form in which the ideal manifests itself on earth – the only question then is the manner in which this treason was committed, as a “better” or a “simple” betrayal.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the difference between Hegel and Derrida on the issue of *schöne Seele* indeed designates the point of the most intense divergence between the utopian and the messianic: while the former insists on the full incarnation of the idea here and now, in the conditions of historical immanence, the latter resists the temptation to incarnate/immanentize and preserves the alterity of transcendence, which cannot be captured in any actual terms. Theologically speaking, this opposition may be seen as yet another avatar of the difference between the Jewish mode of revelation, with its antithetical notion of radical transcendence which resists material realization – and the Christian one, with its utopia of the divine incarnation which affirms material *phusis* as the place of the potential embodiment of the sacred ideal. Derrida, by choosing the Marrano option, dialectically mediates between the Judaic rigid dualism (best represented by Levinas) and the Christian preference for actualization without remainder (best represented by Hegel): while corruption and contamination is inevitable, the deconstructive mind always reminds us to be aware of it. We could thus paraphrase Beckett and say that Derrida’s political slogan is: *betray, betray again, betray better...*

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13) Comp. Derrida in conversation with Roudinesco on “The Spirit of Revolution”: “*Specters of Marx* is perhaps first of all a book on justice, on a justice that is not to be confused with harmony, proportion, order... I tried to be faithful not only to a complex concept of heritage but also to one of the ‘spirits of Marx,’ a spirit inspired by an idea of justice irreducible to all the failures of communism. This book was written shortly after the fall of the Berlin wall, but I constantly refused to posit a symmetry between Nazi totalitarianism and Soviet totalitarianism. And I did this even though I believe that the *gulag*, the figure of Soviet violence, is at least equal to the Nazi barbarity... On the ‘communist’ side, the totalitarian evil took the form, terrifying indeed, of a corruption of the project – or of the ‘ideal.’ *But the corruption of a plan is not the plan*, even in the hypothesis according to which the plan allowed itself to be perverted in its original form. Nazi totalitarianism, on the contrary, was the plan itself as perversion, perversion accomplished.” Derrida, *For What Tomorrow*, 80, 81, 82–3. My emphasis.

14) Here Derrida might seem to sound like Badiou about the eternal and non-falsifiable “idea of communism,” but in fact they cannot be more different. While for Derrida, the “spectral communism” is an undying precious ghost, the “totalitarian communism,” to the contrary, is a dangerous form of perverted spectrality “turned inside out,” which “felt sufficiently within itself to precipitate the monstrous realization, the magical effectuation, the animist incorporation of an emancipatory eschatology.” Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 131.

15) On this, see Derrida’s polemic with Levinas: Derrida, “Word of Welcome,” in *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, especially 112–13, where Derrida talks about the worldly realization of the ideal in terms of something only “less bad,” resulting from the inevitable “perjury of justice.”

## Radical Community and Its Traces

But what is this "we" – always in inverted commas – which Derrida evokes as the non-belonging members of the new community to come, free of the utopian architectonic temptation and fully open to the messianic horizon of justice? Perhaps, the first step to approach it would be to refer to the conception from the outside of the Francophone sphere: while a lot has been said on Derrida's relation to Blanchot's and then Nancy's versions of "inoperative community," no one so far associated Derrida with Victor Turner and his seminal work on the difference between *communitas* and *societas*. In fact, Turner's anthropological reflections on liminality and rituals of transgression fit perfectly well Derrida's thinking on the messianicity and its peculiar form of "we," by giving it concrete, though simultaneously spectral, shape. As Turner rightly points out, *communitas* – this special festive moment of bringing down of all social hierarchies, which allows a universal sense of solidarity come to the fore – cannot be sustained as such: it is only a break, interruption, and temporary release from the pressures of *societas* with its hard laws of hierarchical subjection, differentiation, and identification. *Communitas* comes suddenly as if in a flash and vanishes equally mysteriously, precisely as the Derridean spectral *revenant*. Any attempt to prolong its state of de-differentiation ends either in violent crisis or confusion: the egalitarian "treasure of revolution" is soon inevitably lost and once again *societas* cools everything down, by rebinding the released energy into fixed social roles. Yet, despite its elusiveness and effervescence, *communitas* indeed is a "treasure": in no other state of social life is universal equality and solidarity felt with such intense liberating joy.<sup>16</sup>

The most obvious difference between Derrida and Turner is that the former, by assuming the messianic perspective, teaches that this alternation of *communitas* and *societas* – the momentary flash of freedom followed by the "restoration of order" – does not have to turn in an idle cycle, as it is portrayed in all anthropological descriptions of traditional carnivals, from Bachtin to Turner. *Communitas* can also become a guiding ideal, but not exactly in the form of a regulative one. In *Rogues*, Derrida says, by pointing to the real effect of *communitas*: "This impossible is thus not a (regulative) *idea* or *ideal*. It is what is most undeniably *real* and sensible. Like the other. Like the irreducible and nonappropriable difference of the other."<sup>17</sup> The intangible presence of the radical community is, therefore, also the radical singularity of every other; only seemingly paradoxically, the "we" is a *community of strangers*, living together neither unified nor completely dispersed, just next to one another – and it is precisely this *nextness* as opposed to *oneness*, which, for Derrida is also the sign of real friendship.

Yet, such radical *communitas* cannot be fully actualized and maintained in its *entelechia*. This, as Derrida says in agreement with Turner, would only lead to an "absolute evil":<sup>18</sup> the ultimate perversion of the fluid freedom granted by the revolutionary moment into a newly fixed order. The goal of the "objective fantasy" of *communitas* is not to become *real*, it is to make possible truly *possible*: to constantly subvert the institutions and laws of *societas*, to undermine them from its "subterranean" below, make them less rigid and more flexible, less natural and thus more open to historical change. For Turner, this is precisely the epochal difference introduced by modernity: the long-lasting transformation of modern social reality whose laws and institutions – instead of mirroring the hierarchical metaphysics of the universe as in all feudal systems – bend along the curve of the revolutionary ideal of radical equality, fraternity, and liberty. Because of that constant law-bending tendency, modernity is called by Turner *liminoid*, that is, always at the borderline between law and anarchy, hierarchy and carnival, *societas* and *communitas*.<sup>19</sup> This is precisely what Derrida sees as the messianic promise of the

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16) See most of all Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

17) Derrida, *Rogues*, 84.

18) Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 220.

19) Turner, "From Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual," 69.

Marrano modernity: not the utopian full actualization of *societas* as *communitas*, which is essentially contradictory and because of that infinitely destructive – but the unceasing haunting subversion of all the laws of society, with its rigid hierarchies and identities. Such *communitas* can never become a positive utopian model: it must remain an eternal negativity, the Goethean “spirit which always says no,” or the social *daimonion* of liminoid subversion. Whenever *societas* begins to present itself in feudal terms, as if all its laws and hierarchies came from the divine King of the Universe himself as part and parcel of the created human nature – the *daimonion* of *communitas*, in modernity louder than in any other epoch, raises the voice of protest. This protest, however, fuelling the “spirit of revolution,” must forever “exceed every horizon of the possible and, therefore, of potency and power.”<sup>20</sup> This *ergo*, which implicates the category of the possible into the root family of words related to *potestas*, explains why this protest must locate itself in the domain of the *im-possible*. It cannot freeze in any societal representation of power: it must remain deconstructive, constantly working through “delayed destruction” of rigid social forms, yet without annihilating them altogether.

In that sense, the subversive antinomian influence of *communitas* as the ideal of radical justice follows the logic of the Derridean *pharmakon*: when implemented as an antidote, the messianic justice is a healing (im)possibility – when applied as the utopian model of social reality, it turns into a poison. But what is also crucial here is the temporal dimension of the messianic promise: its structural futurity, it is *not-yet*, the Blochian *noch-Nicht*.<sup>21</sup> The possibility as possibility must be opposed to the actual as the already existing, but, at the same time, it cannot be opposed to it in a manner of some irresponsible “subjective fantasy” which can *never* be realized on purely logical grounds (as, for instance, the famous childish dream of Saint-Simone, wishing that in the ideal world all melons should grow immediately ripe and sweet). The validity of the messianic expectation locates itself precisely in the realm between *never* and *not-yet*: while the former contains the wish-lists of all “subjective fantasies” that populated utopian thought of all ages, the latter consists only of the Blochian “objective fantasies” pointing to the Real-Possible, which, as *communitas*, reveals itself merely in flashes, on the borderline between actuality and possibility, the social immanence and its transcendent lining, its liminal transgressive opening onto the other of *societas*. This is precisely what Derrida means by his metaphor of the specter: a haunting opening which pierces the fixity of the “eternal return of the same” and lifts the Koheletian curse of “nothing new under the sun,” by breaking out of the cycle of carnivals and order restorations (which he sees as precisely the cycle still plaguing the utopian thinking where the “architectonic” desire betrays the messianic, chaotic and lively, moment of *communitas*). While one cannot live and survive in the state of perpetual grace, as Saint Paul famously described the messianic fulfilment,<sup>22</sup> one cannot – and should not – forget or neutralize completely those liminal experiences. They constitute the spectral *limes* that gives orientation to our historical and political practice aiming toward just society, where the ideal of justice will *survive* in the laws becoming gradually less rigid and more informed by the egalitarian lesson of *communitas*.<sup>23</sup> Hence, the Marrano associa-

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20) Derrida, *For What Tomorrow*, 83.

21) Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, 227.

22) See *Letter to the Romans*, 3:21–3:31.

23) In his penultimate seminar devoted the death penalty, in the section on psychoanalysis and Theodor Reik, Derrida speaks in favor of *souplesse*: a flexibility which, as I surmise here, derives from the fluid element of *communitas* and stays preserved in our attitude toward the law: “Not that one forgive, since forgiveness is a reaction formation, but that *one become benevolent, tolerant, flexible, in order to avoid the rigidity of the ideal...* . No excessive rectitude in law, in short, no absolute correctness. For inflexibility, rigidity, correction are essential attributes of what is right... . *Flexibility is incalculable*; it is that for which there is no objective rule, as there is for law. But this is perhaps what Reik is suggesting: without an objective rule, one must be benevolent toward the other as other, by finding each time, and this is perhaps what benevolence is, by each time inventing the flexibility, the form and degree of flexibility, of *relaxation of the law*, the good rule (without rule, then) of flexibility. Otherwise we get cruelty; *the inflexible law is what produces*



tion: just as the Marrano is a survivor, who chose life-in-betrayal over against the glorious death for the sake of his tradition, the mundane justice is also a survivor: it inevitably betrays the spirit/specter of radical *communitas*, yet also preserves its memory in the legalistic condition of *societas*.

The main danger to this version of Marrano/messianic dialectics – Judeo-Christian, but *not* Pauline-Christian – is its potential fall into a static dualism: of, on the one hand, rigid societal hierarchy, which defends against any possibility of subversion, by presenting itself as eternal and natural – and, on the other, the utopian impatience which cannot endure the long *durée* of dialectical transformation and demands fulfillment here and now, by attempting to turn the fantasy of *communitas* into reality of *societas* (according to the rule of all desire: "I want it all, I want it now!"). The first danger is the legalistic form of conservatism, which is now adopted by all late-modern religious fundamentalisms under the banner of what Derrida in *Faith and Knowledge* terms as the "return to religion."<sup>24</sup> Suspicious of any kind of subversive *anomie*, it elevates the concept of the law to the sublime heights of direct divine legislation which cannot ever be transgressed; as such it does not tolerate any kind of exception or carnivalesque respite and, because of that, constitutes a much more rigid and repressive form of *societas* than any premodern social formation. The second danger is the utopian urge to replace society with community: to install the fluid "promiscuity of all things" as a new rule, which, as I tried to prove here, is a contradiction in terms. There is no architecture of *communitas*: no Great Architect can construct anything on its an-archic non-ground, *Un-Grund*, or non-foundation; no "restoration of order" can be drawn out of this "drunk and disorderly," ecstatic moment of social coexistence. Which, again, is the lesson we could draw from the life of Saint Paul who, in order to create Christian society, had to withdraw from the radicalism of his earlier position on love and grace, and begin to act as the *katechon*: the "restrainer" introducing new laws.<sup>25</sup> The dangers, therefore, lie in the simplification: the Marrano dialectics of betrayal/survival deteriorating into rigid dualism. Yet, despite those potential threats, Derrida maintains that the messianic dialectical game is still worth playing. To "pluck the living flower of religion" and its central "objective fantasy" of equality – the true "specter of Marx"<sup>26</sup> – is to render the fleeting experience of *communitas* operative within the conditions of *societas*, by making the societal laws remember/ internalize (*erinnern*) the communal sense of egalitarian dedifferentiation and freedom. The result of this internalization would be an introduction of *new* laws, always more "bent" and "supple" and because of that more just. They truly are to be *new*: innovative and liminoid,

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cruelty." Derrida, *The Death Penalty*, Vol. 2, 205–06. My emphasis.

24) See Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," especially the first section called "Italics," 42–60. According to the Cambridge Vocabulary definition, italics is the type that "leans to the right," which is also an apt characteristic of this particular return to religion that Derrida describes as the triumph of religious fundamentalism.

25) The *katechon* (in Luther's translation, *der Aufhalter*, "the restrainer") derives from Paul's Second Letter to Thessalonians (2:3–2:8): "And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the *one who now restrains it* is removed": Anderson, Metzger, and Murphy, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, my emphasis. In *Nomos of the Earth*, Carl Schmitt creates a whole new political theology based on the concept of the *katechon* as the one which withholds the advent of the Antichrist representing the forces of lawlessness and disorder and as such is a true fulfillment of Christian religion; see most of all the chapter; Schmitt, "The Christian Empire as a Restrainer of the Antichrist," (*Katechon*), *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 59–61; where Schmitt says: "I do not believe that any historical concept other than *katechon* would have been possible for the original Christian faith. The belief that a restrainer holds back the end of the world provides the only bridge between the notion of an eschatological paralysis of all human events and a tremendous historical monolith like that of the Christian empire of the Germanic kings" (*ibid.*, 61). The claim that Paul, unable to wait for the Second Coming any longer, suffered a failure of the messianic nerve and because of that turned toward the figure of the *katechon*, derives from Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, 103.

26) Compare Marx's famous lines on religion: "Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that man shall continue to bear that chain without fantasy or consolation, but so that he shall throw off the chain and pluck the living flower." Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right,'" 131.

capable to be in-spired by the fleeting memory of the radically communal mode of living together. As such, Derrida's project joins the family of similar ones which has grown out of Blanchot's *unavowable community* where living-together is not founded on any tangible common ground. Derrida's *impossible community* of "we" stands next to Nancy's *inoperative community* and Agamben's *coming community* as a separate proposition: the unavowable non-ground is the memory/anticipation of the impossible state of human togetherness called radical *communitas*. Hence the Blanchotian title of Derrida's essay in which he announces his teaching of living-together (*vivre ensemble*): "Avowing – The Impossible."<sup>27</sup>

Fully aware that this may sound like a heresy in Derridologist circles, I cautiously propose to call Derrida's political position as a *Marrano messianic variant of modern liberalism* – but liberalism widely understood, rather as a mood (in terms of Heideggerian *Einstellung*, general attitude) than the classical doctrine. Often declaring sympathy for the republican tradition of the Left, but equally often antipathy for any form of realized communism and collectivism, Derrida always was on the side of the modern individual who can exercise her rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness the way she sees it fit, ready to defend them against the totalising claims coming either from the radical Left or the radical Right.<sup>28</sup> Yet, the manner in which he perceives the individual differs from the classic foundational texts of liberal tradition, invariably presenting it as the Cartesian *cogito*: an insular *res cogitans*, safely rooted in its self-reflexive and thus fully transparent thinking-being, a new human absolute reflecting the former absoluteness of God.<sup>29</sup> Contrary to this, Derrida's individual derives from the fleeting and effervescent experience of (im)possible *communitas*: she is neither a self-knowledgeable participant of the social contract, nor an abstract insular unit of liberal law, but a living singularity, stripped of her social determinations in the unique moment of the communal *flow*, when all rigid roles and identities become temporarily liquidated. She is a *living abstraction* of a "man without qualities," momentarily deprived of its content – as opposed to the dead "indeterminate abstraction" of the classical-liberal subject of contract and law. As such, she is indeed *individuus*: no longer divisible absolute kernel of singular existence, singular and universal at the same time – absolutely exemplary. This universalism, therefore, does not annul singular difference, as it is the case with the classical-liberal notion of the rational subjectivity – but it also presents this difference in a manner without and beyond the particular qualities: it is not them which make the individual truly indivisible, but solely her status as a *remnant* – a nameless remainder of the societal operation of naming and classifying. This de-nominated remnant, baring the irreducible kernel of singularity, is thus an exemplary singular: a *universal Marrano*.

Indeed, the Derridean individual is simultaneously an *arrivant* and a *revenant*: the one coming from the future "age of friends" in which the inalienable rights will have belonged to truly "neither Jew, nor Greek,"

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27) See Derrida, "Avowing – The Impossible."

28) On Derrida's critique of the far too enthusiastic collective spirit of the Parisian 68-ers, see most of all his conversation with Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, 50–51. Comp. also his reply to Elisabeth Roudinesco: "It is true that in *Specters of Marx* I was able to make a gesture from which I had previously thought I should refrain. For many years, for reasons that become more legible in this book (even though they already were in other ways), I could neither subscribe to the Althusserian gesture (a certain return to Marx) nor denounce or critique it from any position that would have been seen as anticommunist, anti-Marxist, or even as that of the communist party. So for a long time I was virtually reduced to silence, a silence that was also assumed, almost chosen, but also somewhat painful with regard to what was happening right in front of me." Derrida, *For What Tomorrow*, 79–80.

29) On the insular absolution of the Cartesian *cogito* as reflecting the same process of the "indeterminate abstraction" that created God as the Absolute, see also Derrida's remark in *The Beast and the Sovereign*, where he compares Descartes to Robinson Crusoe: "the *cogito ergo sum* is a hyperbolic Robinsonade, particularly at the moment of hyperbolic doubt that absolutely insularizes the self-relation of the *cogito sum*, and we could go a long way analyzing this affinity or this analogy between the Philosopher-voyager Descartes and Robinson Crusoe" as the two parallel paradigms of a modern individual imagined as an island of one's own; Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. II, 33. This is also the reason why Island and insularity of abstracted absolutes, both divine and human, appear in *Faith and Knowledge* as the third territory next to the Desert and the Promised Land.

a nameless guest – but also the one who “comes to mind,” constantly reminding us that modern history already knows such a figure of non-identitarian singularity:

*To that which lives without having a name, we will give an added name: Marrano, for example. Playing with the relative arbitrariness of every nomination, we determine this added name [surnom], which a name always is, in memory of and according to the figure of the Marrano (of the crypto-judaic, and of the crypto-X in general). As we suggested just a while ago, it is said that the history of the Marranos has just come to an end with the declaration by the Spanish court. You can believe that if you want to.*<sup>30</sup>

Against the apology of the Spanish Court in 1992, which made all the Marrano rulings in Spain null and void, Derrida wants to maintain Marrano as an “agelessly” valid figure: “a *universal Marrano*, if one may say, beyond what may nowadays be the finished forms of Marrano culture,”<sup>31</sup> because “in spite of appearances, this exceptional situation [of the *conversos*] is, at the same time, certainly exemplary of a universal structure; it represents or reflects a type of originary *alienation*”<sup>32</sup> – or the primary non-belonging which, for Derrida, constitutes the crux of any healthy community.

It is, therefore, the antinomian Marrano abode of the radical de-nomination, which lends its features to the modern individual – and not the classical liberal hypostasis of the universal human nature, which, as Derrida reminds us in *Faith and Knowledge*, remains a wrong kind of abstraction. What becomes captured in the structure of the liberal modern law is not a fixed essence of an abstract human being, but a fleeting moment of the communal *flux* which is being remembered and preserved – “forgotten without being forgotten” (*oublié sans oublié*) – within the structure itself. A moment of the *fluxus* in the *fixus*, therefore: a highly dialectical solution which, according to Victor Turner, makes modern societies permanently *liminoid*, that is, in crisis and on the edge – yet, not in the negative sense of the encroaching chaos and anomie.<sup>33</sup> The idea that the liberal law is not some eternal law of nature, but can always be re-negotiated and re-constituted as a *new* law, derives precisely from its liminoid character: the semi-fluid condition which, in the dialectical manner, *er-innert*, (that is, preserves and internalizes), the communal experience of the flow. Richard Sennett perfectly spotted the gist of this modern dialectic which, according to him, is the unique capability to make a “use of disorder”:

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30) Derrida, *Aporias*, 77; my emphasis. This “neither/ nor” Derrida describes as “the negativity of just anyone”: the friend and non-friend at the same time, a fellow human being and a complete stranger, while he also pleads that this *aporia* should not be too easily reconciled, rather maintained as a “serious” thought underlying any possible “politics of friendship”: Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, 234. By stressing the non-tangible freedom of radical *communitas*, Derrida distances himself from the letter of the liberal theory of subjective freedom, yet remains loyal to its guiding/ haunting spirit of radical singularity which is to be found – only seemingly paradoxically – in the living midst of the radical *communitas* where subjects become “de-nominated” in the Marrano kind of way and stripped of all “civil identities”: “If freedom is no longer the attribute of a subject, of a mastery [*maitrise*] or a measure [*metrique*], the unit of calculation can no longer be the *civil identity of a citizen with a patronym*, nor the equality of one person to another, nor the equality of one *ego* to other equal *egos*, nor even, in case one wanted to hold on to the grammatical and ontological power of saying ‘I,’ the equality of one conscious, voluntary, and intentional I to another”: Derrida, *Rogues*, 52; my emphasis.

31) Derrida, *Aporias*, 74

32) Derrida, <BTL>*Monolingualism of the Other*, 63.

33) Comp. Turner: “Liminality may be the scene of disease, despair, death, suicide, the breakdown without compensatory replacement of normative, well defined social ties and bonds. It may be *anomie*, alienation, *angst*, the three fatal ‘alpha’ sisters of many modern myths ... but is both more creative and more destructive than the structural norm.” Turner, “From Liminal to Liminoid,” 78. According to Turner, the liminoid formula integrates the negativity of the liminal stage into a modern mode of living, where it becomes a source of creativity – but always inescapably precarious and endangered by destruction.

the utilization of the anarchic subversion of the law in the name of radical justice, but, at the same time, for the sake of the reinvention of the law, which determines the legalistic arrangement of Western liberal societies, able to internalize and memorize the experience of *crisis* in the form of internal *critique*.<sup>34</sup> This is also what, according to Yovel, characterizes the “Marrano experience”: the manner in which all those suspect – “illicit, immoral” – vices of betrayal and living in permanent crisis “without qualities” turn into potential virtues of “basic human freedom.”

On Derrida’s rereading of Marx, therefore, it is the specter of *communitas* rather than communism – of the intangible experience rather than a socio-scientific project – that truly haunts modern Europe. The memory of *communitas* is strictly a-temporal and in that sense also properly u-topian, non-placeable; (as opposed to philosophical utopias which can always be easily located within the structures of being). It comes to mind as the “unchallenged night” – precisely the non-identitarian de-nominated night where all cows are black and all people are equal – to disturb the hierarchy of *societas* the way the Marrano is always an anachronistic *arrivant* from “elsewhere” (*l’ailleurs*) who comes to disturb the order of home and exile, us and them:

How can one have an age among others? How does one calculate the age of a Marrano, for example? Let us figuratively call Marrano 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. In the unchallenged night where the radical absence of any historical witness keeps him or her, in the dominant culture that by definition has calendars, this 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? Thanks to this anachronism, Marranos that we are, Marranos in any case, whether we want to be or not, whether we know it or not, Marranos having an incalculable number of ages, hours, and years, of untimely histories, each both larger and smaller than the other, each still waiting for the other, we may incessantly be younger and older, in a last word, *infinitely finished*.<sup>35</sup>

The Marrano, therefore, is an *example*: always an exemplary singularity of a remnant which belongs only to the night of de-nomination and de-differentiation. It is precisely this association of the Marranos with the ageless night of the Hegelian *Indifferenz* which explains why Derrida juxtaposes universal Marranism with the secret of death: that which finishes us all in the infinite number of ways and bestows our finitude with infinitely unique traits:

Death is always the name of a secret, since it signs the *irreplaceable singularity*. It puts forth the public name, the common name of a secret, the common name of *the proper name without name*. It is therefore always a shibboleth, for the manifest name of a secret is from the beginning a private name, so that *language about death is nothing but the long history of a secret society*, neither public nor private, semi-private, semi-public, on the border between the two; thus, also a sort of *hidden religion* of the *awaiting* (oneself as well as each other), with its ceremonies, cults, liturgy, or its

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34) See Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life*. The use of disorder is also the main subject of Derrida’s *Rogues*, where the eponimic *rogues/voyous* refer to the “odd ones” who, because of their highly irregular oddity, can never form a well-organized collective.

35) Derrida, *Aporias*, 81. My emphasis.

Marranolike rituals. A universal Marrano, if one may say, beyond what may nowadays be the finished forms of Marrano culture.<sup>36</sup>

But why exactly death, which finishes "us" in the infinite number of ways, makes "us" all universal Marranos? Whence this talk of secret societies and crypto-religions with their "Marranolike rituals"? Derrida clearly suggests that the Marranolike hidden religion of mortality constitutes the en-crypted secret of the seemingly secular modernity: its secret semi-religious life. And he is not far from the findings of the best historians of early *modernitas*. As Johan Huizinga shows in his *Waning of the Middle Ages* (first published in 1924), the *danse macabre* – the dark parade of the plague victims, all, despite their social status, led in one horizontal dance by the skeleton – became the paradigm of radical equality in which death played the role of Grand Equalizer.<sup>37</sup> In face of death, this "unchallenged night," all proves ultimately dedifferentiated: whether prince or serf, all were taken equally swiftly by the plague. It was, therefore, the radical *communitas* of death, which shook the feudal hierarchy of the middle ages, by demonstrating that – in the eyes of God who gives Death – its hierarchical laws were not set in stone: they were nothing but mere conventions. The moment of *communitas*, therefore, is not just simply a happy one: it is also deeply ambivalent, lined with a dark apprehension of radical equality in face of death and decay, both "threat and promise." Derrida, although highly aware of this ambivalence, still stakes on the positive outcomes of the *communitas* experience, even if lined with mortal anxiety. His aim is to utilize it for the idea of a new *societas* of life which will have realized – or, at least, come close to the realization of – the Joachimite prophecy of the "age of friendship."

Early modern history indeed begins with this particular "messianic reversal" – of death turning into more life. What, in the thirteenth century, started as a bleak *danse macabre* transformed into something much more joyful and positive only one century later: the *love parades* which imitated the democratic form of the death-dances, but celebrated love and life instead. Perhaps the word *instead* is too strong here: as Huizinga and Denis de Rougemont quite rightly remark, Eros wore here a merely thinly disguised mask of Thanatos.<sup>38</sup> Free love uniting masters and servants, the universal sense of equalizing friendship, as well as a sense of an ending, of an epochal entropy which were dissolving the feudal society without giving anything tangible instead – all this was exercised by the *morituri* who were walking into death joyfully, enjoying the world's Last Days.

Love parades, therefore, were more like an awakening of ancient pagan traditions of the funeral orgies. One can clearly see it on the deservedly famous painting of Botticelli, *Primavera*: the love parade celebrating the coming of Spring is rendered here in the funeral manner which gives the whole *oeuvre* its uncanny mesmerizing effect. Even the Spring herself resembles the corpse (and not only because she bears the features of the painter's already dead beloved, Simonetta): pale, expressionless, and weirdly static, as if suspended in the air, she is a *transi*, a figure in the in-between state of decomposition, partly a cadaver and partly already a haunting specter. Yet, the early modernity, which once again pulled the vital forces out of the decaying "Autumn of Middle Ages" – Botticelli's *Primavera* is decidedly autumnal – and, for the first time, made the paradigmatic "use of disorder," *turned* the tables for good: the new democratic arrangement of the post-reformation West used the lesson of radical *communitas*, by creating a new idea of the individual – free, dynamic, "Marranolike": no longer determined by social status, now as ready to rise within the social hierarchy as before he was ready to go down, to join the fated end of us all. Love, rediscovered by the waning middle ages as the equally egalitarian reverse of death – *love strong as death*, the famous line from *The Song of Songs* was originally the phrase used

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36) Ibid., 74. My emphasis.

37) See Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* most of all the chapter "The Vision of Death."

38) See also de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*.

during ancient Hebrew funeral rituals – has slowly, but surely, paved its way toward modern vision of the “age of friends.”<sup>39</sup>

But that does not make Derrida a partisan of sacred anarchy while justice belongs to the “ageless” and intangible moment of *communitas*; *societas* needs laws. The dialectically better form of “betrayal” which makes modern law lies precisely in this novelty – the focus on the singularity as its nominalistic *limes*, or what Rosenzweig calls a “meta-ethical remnant” and Derrida a “rogue” (*voyou*). Imagined as a “universal Marrano,” the individual is “neither this nor that,” never coincides with any form or identity, and must be defended against any kind of collective coercion. As such she becomes a legalistic avatar of the “likeness”/*tselem*: a singularity emulating the uniqueness of God, the one and only “unique one”/*echad* who transcends any order of general categories and laws.<sup>40</sup> The dialectical evolution of the law, therefore, entails a subsumption of the antinomian element: the role of the law is not to create a general *ethos* of “parts and wholes,” but to protect the “deviant” meta-ethical singularity in its right *not* to participate in the totality, to remain “entirely other” and preserve a distance toward communal belonging.<sup>41</sup> Before the law always spoke in the name of the ethical whole and

39) The idea that the pro-democratic transformations of early modernity may have something to do with the rediscovery of mortality and finitude and the waning of middle ages’ belief in eternal absolutes – the experience of death as simultaneously a threat of destruction and a promise of radical equality, as well as a trigger of the “violent affirmation of survival” – is well confirmed by Martin Hägglund’s interpretation of Derrida’s “democracy to come”: “If one desires democracy, one cannot desire a state of being that is exempt from time. To desire democracy is by definition to desire something temporal, since democracy must remain open to its own alteration in order to be democratic.” Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 204–5.

40) In *Litteature au secret*, Derrida explains his notion of secrecy as absolute uniqueness of every other, starting from the Great Other or the divine *Echad*: “For the secret of the secret of which we are going to speak does not consist in hiding some thing, in not revealing the truth of it, but in respecting the *absolute uniqueness, the infinite separation* of that which *ties* me or exposes me to the unique, to the one as to the other, to the One as to the Other”: Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 122–23; my emphasis. The link connecting the “rogue,” whom Derrida envisages as the future citizen of the democracy-to-come, also called *voyoucracy*, with the Marrano who also distances himself from any communal belonging and preserves his sense of “shadowy inwardness,” has also been noticed by Shmuel Trigano. While criticizing radical republicanism of the French 68-ers (not unlike Derrida himself), Trigano writes: “Against what the Marxists say, the limit which separates interiority and exteriority – one of the distinctive features of the Marrano (non)identity – could be affirmed as a positive quality of great importance in safeguarding the human element in politics ... provided that the politics does not constitute a totality of what it means to be human... . The shadowy retreat [*le retrait ombragé*] (‘God’s image,’ *tselem Elohim*) which contains the secret of being a human can never be treated as a pretext to the unleashing of violence of the State which would like to *see* what’s there. It is a singular human being which is in the centre of the State, but he/she will always be hidden like the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple – in the heart of the Polis – and never the other way round. The centre of the individual is unreachable... *This is the teaching which was given to us by the modern experience of Marranism, gradually turned from negative into a positive one*”: Trigano, “Le Marranisme, un modèle multidimensionnel,” 268–9; my emphasis. Compare also a great insight of Marc Goldschmit: “The marrano hypothesis announces itself as the being, the unconscious, and the deconstruction of present democracy – and its future, and its specter beyond its being”: Goldschmit, *L’hypothèse du Marrane: Le théâtre judéo-chrétien de la pensée politique*, 11. On the shadowlands of the Marrano “infrapolitics,” see also: Moreiras, “Infrapolitical Derrida: The Ontic Determination of Politics beyond Empiricism,” 116–136. To emphasize a small difference between Moreiras’ and my terminology, I choose the term *umbrapolitics* as the politics of the shadows, strictly opposed to the politics of light as absolute visibility, though obviously not against light as enlightenment. In the Latin *umbra*, there should also reverberate the Hebrew *tsel* – a “shadow” which is simultaneously *tselem*, “God’s likeness.”

41) According to deconstruction’s sacred formula: *tout autre est tout autre*, “every other is entirely other”: see the title of Chapter 4 in Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 82–88. On the paradox of the modern law, which commands to recognize the transcendent alterity of the other, see also Derrida’s comment in his *Politics of Friendship*: “In principle this double dimension maintains the absolute singularity of the other and that of ‘my’ relation to the other, as a relation of the other to the other I am myself, as its other for itself. But the relation to the singularity of the other also passes through the universality of law. This discourse on universality can determine itself in the regions of morality, of law or of politics, but it always appeals to a third instance, beyond the face-to-face of singularities... . Does not my relation to the singularity of the other *qua* other, in effect, involve the law? Having come as a third party but always from the singularity of the other, *does not the law command me to recognize the transcendent alterity of the other who can never be anything*

preserved its indemnity – now it should speak in the name of the separated “Marrano” remnant “beyond any social bond”<sup>42</sup> and protect its precarious life. This antinomian “use of disorder,” which bends and transforms the law from within, is strictly analogical to the dialectical utilization of apocalypsis in Derrida’s figure of *différance*. The impatient messianic watchword – “Lo, I make all things new!” – here becomes harnessed to the most patient of works, which consists in making new laws. “Lo, I make all laws new,” therefore, constitutes the gist of the Marrano-messianic version of Derrida’s revision of Paul: not a sad resignation of a *katechon*, but the positive dialectical messianicity inscribed into the very structure of modern legislative process. The old law dies in order to liberate a meta-ethical life which now, patiently and *little by little*, transforms life again into Scripture.<sup>43</sup>

By choosing Marrano *voyou* as the true *tselem Elohim* of his new *voyoucracy*, Derrida places himself firmly on the anti-totalitarian position which combines the best, messianically inspired, elements of both modern traditions, liberal and leftist. The insistence on the “awaiting of the impossible” is here the same as the resistance to the “restoration of order,” which allows the moment of *communitas* to linger a little longer in the form of a spectral afterimage. *The leftist specter hovers over liberal society*: the radical justice, possible only in the unstable conditions of *communitas*, haunts the liberal law-oriented *societas*, yet, at the same time, it is also pushed away – and, with it, “spectralised” – by this very *societas* which rightly fears totalitarian, all-too-collective closures. To realize *fully* the state of *communitas* here and now equals “absolute evil” – but not to realize it *at all* is to give up on the ideal of justice, which should remain our constant “in-spiration.”<sup>44</sup> This *in-spiration* must be understood here quite literally as the coming of the spirit in the form of the haunting – *revenant et arrivant* – specter which is, like Marrano, “ageless”: simultaneously past and future, but never present. It is thus, at the same time, a vigilant anticipation and a living memory of this unique fleeting modality of our social being that cannot last and make itself truly present within the structures of reality which, for Derrida, are synonymous with the Heideggerian *Anwesenheit*, the dogmatic ontological privilege granted to everything “presencing itself” and “coming into unconcealedness” as solid being. And although Western metaphysics indeed prioritizes presence – whatever actualizes itself in durable ontological structures – the passing modality of *communitas* should not be deemed as negligible or *simply* impossible. Lasting, durability – although essential from the point of view of social structures – are not the sole criteria that should govern our political life which not only is but also

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*but heterogeneous and singular, hence resistant to the very generality of the law?”* Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 276–77; my emphasis. Derrida formulates this dilemma for the first time in “Force of Law” (in the first version of the essay delivered as a lecture in 1989): “How to reconcile the act of justice that must always concern singularity, individuals, groups, irreplaceable existences, the other or myself as other, in a unique situation, with rule, norm, value, or the imperative of justice that necessarily have a general form, even if this generality prescribes a singular application in each case?”: Derrida, “Force of Law,” 255.

42) Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 298.

43) Derrida defines the rule of *little by little* when he juxtaposes Shakespeare’s *Mercy seasons justice*, falling on it with a gentle rain of Christ’s blood, with a similar line in Hugo: “the gentle [*douce*] law of Christ will finally permeate the legal code and radiate out from there.” And comments: “It is going to irrigate the law, the written legislation. Little by little, Christ, the spirit, the soul, the gentle law, the gentleness of Christ, charity, the blood of Christ, is going to *irrigate the legal code and transform legislative writing* ... the heart is going to transform the written and positive, historical law. *Little by little, the legal code, written law, historical law, will be irrigated, inspired, vivified, spiritualized, by gentleness, the gentle law of Christ*”: Derrida, *The Death Penalty*, Vol. 1, 201; my emphasis. This gentle and fluid law of the heart is here the same as the law of radical *communitas*, which also can be said to *irrigate* and *inspire* the rigid hierarchies of *societas*. The idea of transforming life into Scripture derives from Benjamin: for Derrida, it means most of all a creation of a new law that would no longer punish/ kill life (as in Paul), but become its “supple” protective expression.

44) Derrida summarizes this dialectics in the following way: “One must constantly remember that this absolute evil (which is, is it not, absolute life, fully present life, the one that does not know death and does not want to hear about it) can take place. One must constantly remember that it is even on the basis of the terrible possibility of this impossible that justice is desirable: *through* but also *beyond* right and law.” Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 220.

ought to be “full of specters.” Perhaps, this is the true meaning of the 68-ers’ slogan – *demandez l’impossible!* – which Derrida sometimes adopts by giving it an ironic spin: yes, demand it precisely as impossible, but not as *simply* impossible, rather as the impossible which renders all the exciting modern possibilities – of making and un-making of the social law as always *new* – possible in the first place. The non-simply impossible of the radical *communitas* would then constitute the “quasi-transcendental condition” of the future “democracy to come,” which will have never completely erased its “objective fantasy”: the joyful festivity of life imagined either as “messianic peace” or, to use Derrida’s own coinage in *Rogues*, the “*khora* of the political.”<sup>45</sup>

In Derrida’s interpretation of this Platonic notion, *khora* is a nocturnal space the role of which is to give place and let be: all beings coming to exist in the element of *khora* are ontological rogues – “shadowy,” deviant, and meta-ethical singularities or, in other words, original remnants. This nocturnal surrounding is also the right element of the political as opposed to the full sun of “heliopolitics” which scorches all the secrets and drags naked individual into the public agora of forced belonging: the *tsele/tselem* (shadow/likeness) can exist only in an *eucalyptic darkness*, hidden away from the *apocalypsis* of truth, law, and order. In his interview with Ferraris, Derrida formulates his defense of the singular uniqueness of each and every singular other in terms of the “right to the secret”:

I can rephrase this in terms of political ethics: if a right to the secret is not maintained, we are in a totalitarian space. Belonging – the fact of avowing one’s belonging, of putting in common – be it family, nation, tongue – spells the loss of the secret.<sup>46</sup>

But already in his early essay on Levinas, *Violence and Metaphysics*, Derrida denounces the “heliocentric” principle of modern philosophy of politics, which compels us to live in “a world of light and of unity.”<sup>47</sup> While referring to Levinas’ essay, “The Time and the Other,” Derrida writes:

In this heliopolitics “the social ideal will be sought in an ideal of fusion ... the subject ... losing himself in a violence and metaphysics collective representation, in a common ideal... . It is the collectivity which says ‘us,’ and which, turned toward the intelligible sun, toward the truth, experience, the other at his side and not face to face with him... . *Miteinandersein* also remains the collectivity of the with, and its authentic form is revealed around the truth.”<sup>48</sup>

And instead of this sun-oriented collectivity, he proposes:

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45) Derrida, *Rogues*, 44.

46) Derrida, Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, 58–59. Catherine Keller explicitly links Derrida’s cryptophilia/*eucalyptis* with his dislike toward the apocalyptic mode of thinking as the blueprint for all totalitarian models: “In the space of the apocalyptic utopia, the displacement of space itself, darkness, ocean, and death have been eliminated. ‘God is the light’ of the New Jerusalem, ‘and its lamp is the Lamb’ (Revelation 21:23). A ghost-white transparency of goodness and security rule: a neon panopticon, shining through the lamb-lamp. For the seven spectral eyes do not just see but shine.” Catherine Keller, “Derridapocalypse,” 200.

47) Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 111.

48) *Ibid.*, 111–12. Although Levinas refers here to Heidegger, for Derrida, the paradigmatic heliopolitics is Marxism without ghosts, specters, and shadows – a diagnosis confirmed by Marx himself who in his notebooks famously compared the modern bourgeois individual to a moth, a creature of night and secret: “Thus, when the universal sun has set, does the moth seek the lamp-light of privacy... He who no longer finds pleasure in building the whole world with his own forces, in being a world-creator instead of revolving forever inside his own skin, on him the Spirit has spoken its anathema.” Fischer, *How to Read Karl Marx*, 39.



*A community of nonpresence, and therefore of nonphenomenality.* Not a community without light, not a blindfolded synagogue, but a community anterior to Platonic light. A light before neutral light, before the truth which arrives as a third party, the truth "which we look toward together," the judgmental arbitrator's truth. Only the other, the totally other, can be manifested as what it is before the shared truth, *within a certain nonmanifestation and a certain absence.*<sup>49</sup>

This *nonphenomenal community to come* will not be deprived of light – the way in which the Christian prejudice imagines the Jews as blindly following the law. But it will be a different light, resistant to the *Lichtzwang*,<sup>50</sup> the light-compulsion instituted by the Platonic topos of the Sun or St John's apocalyptic topos of the Lamb-Lamp, at which we look together: the dark light of the secret watched secretly by every rogue in separation and absence. This is precisely why Derrida needs the figure of the Marrano: the first modern subject who fell out of the identitarian grids and became an irreducible remnant, invisible to the inquisitory sun of "heliopolitics."<sup>51</sup> The new community of "we" is thus made of universal Marranos: the "illicit" rogue inhabitants of political shadowlands, who oppose the Platonic-utopian politics of sun with their messianic secret-friendly *umbrapolitics*. According to Virgil, *exul umbra*, "the exiled is a shadow" – and although he, banned from Rome, saw his exile as the terrible condition of someone deprived of light, life, and fame, Derrida – again, in the typically Marrano maneuver of reversal, turning vices into virtues – advocates the Marranolike experience of universal exile as liberating for the modern subject. Thus, in the late essay, "Living Together," Derrida describes his own version of *vivre-ensemble* as a community of strangers: the only form of community that he could have accepted in his Algerian childhood:

The only belonging, the only "living together" that he [young Derrida] judged then bearable and worthy of that name already supposed a rupture with identitarian and totalizing belonging, assured of itself in a homogeneous whole (*ensemble*). In a manner as unreflective as reflective, the child felt at his core two contradictory things as to what this "living together" could signify: on the one hand, that he could betray his own, his close ones, and Judaism, and that he had to avow this within himself, even before others, even before God, but also on the other hand, that by this

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49) Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 112. My emphasis.

50) *Lichtzwang* is the title of Paul Celan's last collection of poems, on which Derrida also commented.

51) As Erin Graff Zivin rightly points out in her book on Inquisition, the main crime against the Marranos was to force them to come out into the light and "take a stand within the field of the revealable: as either this or that, Jewish or Catholic, one of us or outsider, friend or foe." Zivin, *Figurative Inquisitions*, 10. What the inquisitional practice targeted, therefore, was the logic of the remnant, represented by the Marrano irreducible difference: the shadowy secrecy of the inner self which resists the "phenomenalizing demands" telling it to show itself. The anti-heliocentric, anti-apocalyptic, anti-phenomenalist, and anti-identitarian principle of Derrida's new politics is also very well described by Patrick Dove who elaborates on Graff Zivin's findings: "Moving against the grain of a powerful phenomenalism that would define the public or political sphere as a space of unmediated transparency the marrano insists, at the very limits of phenomenal referentiality, on an *inalienable right to secrecy or silence*: secrecy as prior to and irreducible to any identitarian position or content, prior to and irreducible to any ipseity or whatness of a subject. The marrano acts as a restrainer against what Derrida describes as the 'absolute hegemony of political reason [and] a limitless extension of the region of the political,' against a hegemonic logic that includes both the history of nationalisms with their fetishistic quests for cultural and biological 'purity' and the history of redemptive identitarian emancipations of those who have been excluded by nationalist projects. The marrano secret insists on a limit for the state and its representational mandate, and more generally for what, following Derrida, we might call politicism understood as the tendency to equate the political with the entirety or essence of the social. In marking a limit for politicist totalization, moreover, the marrano may in fact also preserve the possibility for politics as such, assuming that one accepts that *politics begins when a limit is drawn for the hegemony of state reason, or when a crack opens up in the edifice of hegemonic reason.*" Dove, "Two Sides of the Same Coin?," 82; my emphasis.

separation, this rupture, this passage toward a kind of universality beyond symbiotic communitarianism and gregarious fusion, beyond any citizenship, in this very separation, it could be that he was more faithful to a certain Jewish vocation, at the risk of remaining the only, the last, and the least of the Jews [*le seul et le dernier des Juifs*], in the most ambiguous sense of this expression with which he played without playing – elsewhere and fifty years later, presenting himself or sometimes also hiding himself as a kind of *paradoxical Marrano* who ran the risk of losing even the culture of his secret or the secret of his culture. For, at the core of this solitude, this child had to begin believing, and he no doubt never finished thinking, that any “living together” supposes and guards, as its very condition, the possibility of this singular, secret, inviolable separation, from which alone a stranger accords himself to a stranger, in hospitality. *To recognize that one lives together, well then, only with and as a stranger, a stranger ‘at home’ (chez soi)... – here is the justice of a law above laws.*<sup>52</sup>

By protesting, already as a child, against the “symbiotic communitarianism and gregarious fusion” of the Sephardic community in his native El-Biar, Derrida learns what it means to be a Marrano: the last of the Jews – the despised “rejected stone” and a misfit – but, at the same time, paradoxically, the first of the Jews, because “more faithful to a certain Jewish vocation” which later on he will understand as the messianic teaching of *vivre-ensemble*. For Derrida, only the Marrano paradox of simultaneous belonging and non-belonging can carry and preserve the community of friendship, which guards the separation, secrecy, and the inalienable right to be (in) the shadow.

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52) Derrida, “Living Together,” 28. My emphasis.

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