I have to admit it, without delay: these reflections will not merely be inadequate. That much was to be expected. The reader will also quickly recognize them in the form of inadequacy known as anachronism. The awaited answers will be at one and the same time – one more time – premature and belated.

Premature: they will, alas, often take the incomplete form of an experimental foreword, and display its rhetoric as well. This will remain the embarrassed preface to a 'response' I would like to adjust, some day far in the future, to the impressive, generous provocation of the texts preceding mine in this volume. These texts – most of them, at any rate – will continue to accompany me, each in a different way. They will sustain my reflections, and thus also my political commitments and evaluations.

At the same time – if one dare speak of a same time – I could be accused of being inexcusably late, and of yielding to the allure of another rhetorical fiction, another literary genre, the afterword or postscript – to, not Specters of Marx, but, rather, the 'response' that I have been preparing for too long, and in vain. And that I have also been planning to write for too long, from even before Specters of Marx. For, if I may recall this here, Specters of Marx was already meant to be, after its fashion, a kind of 'response', and only a response – as much to a direct invitation as to an urgent injunction, but also to a longstanding demand. To be sure, the 'yes' of a responsibility, however originary that yes may be, is still a response. It echoes, always, like the response to a spectral injunction: the order comes down from a place that can be identified neither as a living present nor as the pure and simple absence of someone dead.

This amounts to saying that the responsibility for this response has already quit the terrain of philosophy as ontology, or of ontology as a
discourse about the effectiveness of a present-being (ont), something we shall have to consider again at length. For, as will already have been noticed, all the debates initiated in this book intersect, at one moment or another, in and around a question that, although it takes apparently abstract and speculative form, is still a question there is 'no getting around', as they used to say in France a few decades ago, one that remains 'in the commanding position'. It runs as follows: what is to be said about philosophy as ontology in the inheritance left us by Marx? Is what has come down to us from Marx, or will yet come down to us, a political philosophy? A political philosophy qua ontology? And what are we to make of this apparently abstract question: Is it legitimate? Urgent? Why does everything seem to bring us back round to it, by way of the texts just read in this volume or the problematic realms known, for example, as 'politics', 'the political', 'ideology', the future-to-come (l'avenir) as 'messianic' 'revolution' or 'Utopia', the 'Party' or 'classes', and so on?

Whether my responses are belated or premature, I will not, in any event, have succeeded in properly adjusting the timing of them [à en ajuster le temps]. One would be justified in saying, then, that I might have anticipated this failure - might have seen this anachronism coming. Indeed, is a certain untimeliness not at once the temporality and the theme of Specters of Marx? Yes, I doubtless did dimly foresee what is happening (ce qui arrive) here. From the outset, I must doubtless have deemed it inevitable. But I did not dare dodge it, preterring, as the phrase goes, to rush headlong into defeat [courir à l'echec], as one says in French. I preferred facing up to a rout rather than disappearing the moment I expressed my thanks to the authors of this book - for that, above all, is what I wish to do here. I prefer to come before them disarmed and speak to them that way at the moment they do me the honor of addressing me, even if they do so in a critical vein, and even if what I am getting ready to tell them, in a way that is not merely inadequate, but also oblique and occasionally impersonal, can only be a disappointment - and, at times, cause still greater annoyance to those who already feel duty-bound to be annoyed.

In short, the matter is clear enough by now: I have not managed to respond here, I will not succeed in responding, and there is, perhaps, no need to do so here. This for a number of reasons I would now like briefly to lay out.

In the first place, it would have been too difficult a task. It would have been presumptuous of me, arriving after everyone else, in a position at once panoramic and central, to claim the right to the last word in the form of a precise reply to the measure of everyone, and every one of these texts. That would have been an unplayable scene. Which is all for the better, because it is not a scene I like. The reader will judge for himself - the reader of Specters of Marx and, now, of this book as well, and of all the discussions it engenders. There is a good deal of work in view, and that is the first thing I look forward to, gratefully. For, in my opinion, these texts are, from first to last, each in its own way and almost without exception, texts that work. And, as such, they call for something other than a 'reply'. Other work, another work, however, modest and inadequate, should go out to meet them - so as to cross paths with them, rather than merely respond to them. That almost all these texts are sites where original work is in progress is something I think no one who reads them can doubt. They are, almost all of them, and almost from first to last, remarkable for their concern to read rather than simply to turn the page and move on. Nearly all seek to analyze, understand, argue - to elucidate, not to obfuscate. Nearly all seek to discuss rather than insult (as one so often does today, to avoid asking oneself painful questions), to object rather than belittle or, in cowardly fashion, wound.

But it will also have been noticed that each does so, each time, setting out from a different axiomatics, a different perspective and a different discursive strategy. I would even say, raising the ante, that each sets out from a different political philosophy and politics. Let me emphasize those two words, so as to put the accent on what I called, a moment ago, the busiest point of intersection, the most common passageway for all the questions raised again here: how are the words 'philosophy' and 'political' to be understood and thought from now on? And, first of all, Marx's thought, the one we are heirs to (or which, on a perhaps bold, albeit apparently commonplace hypothesis, we would or should be heirs to), as if we were 'Marx's sons'? Is Marx's thought essentially a philosophy? Is this philosophy essentially a metaphysics qua ontology? Does it hold a more or less legible ontology in reserve? Should it? What fate ought we ourselves to deal out, today, in an active (and therefore also political) act of interpretation, to what it essentially is? Is that a given, or a promise we should make about? Or displace? Or make again, or reinterpret differently, sometimes even going so far as to abandon the very value of essentiality, which runs the risk of being too closely bound up with a certain ontology? Voluminous works ought to be devoted to this flurry of questions alone (what, in sum, is to be said of philosophy in Marx or since Marx?'). It would be hard for all those who have collaborated on this book to reach agreement on that subject, for it seems to me that no one agrees with anyone else on that subject here. For example, to mention some of the most compelling essays in this book, where does Negri, who would like to see the chance for a new ontology in Marx's thought, agree with Jameson, who seems, in contrast, in a gesture I shall come back to as
well, to take it for an established and fortunate fact that ‘Marxism has never been a philosophy as such’. I will try to show why I am not prepared to subscribe to either of these two conclusions. Yet another – at least one more – of these numerous books would be required to clarify the debate launched in the final lines of the section of Jameson’s essay entitled ‘The narrative of theory’ (about the matter – inevitable, inseparable, permanently on the agenda – that Althusser called ‘ideology’ and that Heidegger and Derrida, according to Jameson, call ‘metaphysical’ in discourses whose ‘motti’ have in some cases been ‘reified’ and thus become ‘theory’). The same goes, I think, for the concept of the political, but also for that of political philosophy, and, especially, between ‘philosophy and politics’, for the concept which is undoubtedly the hardest to situate throughout all these texts, the concept of ideology.

Yet there is something more, something other than this difference in philosophies and political philosophies. If we raise the ante a little higher – a move that makes things more interesting but, I think, that much more difficult as well – the texts brought together here in a polylogue by Michael Sprinker (to whom I would like to express, at the outset, my deep and cordial appreciation for the opportunity he has thus provided us, provided me) put divergent ‘styles’, practices, ethics and politics of ‘discussion’ to work, along with different rhetorics and diverse ways of writing theory. It would be absurd, and, indeed, insulting, to attempt to level out those singularities by pretending to address all the contributors in one and the same voice, one and the same mode, so as to respond to each and every one equally – and, consequently, to respond to none.

I have, then, just raised the ante. I have effectively suggested that the difference in ‘political philosophies or politics’, the differences – which others would also label ‘ideological’ – as to political position, and, accordingly, the differences between the various 'theses' are not the most serious, however difficult they may sometimes be to overcome or even discuss. In my estimation, that is not where the distances or contradic- tions separating us ultimately lie, even assuming that they exist. For these differences and points of contention, if they existed and could be regarded as such, would presuppose, at a minimum, a basic agreement, a common axiomatic concerning the thing or things under discussion: philosophy, politics, political philosophy, the philosophical, the political, the politico-philosophical, the ideological and so on. It would be taken for granted, or presupposed, that there was common accord about the fact that the stakes of these discussions, assessments and interpretations bear legitimate names ['nomes'], common or proper nouns ['nomes'] – ‘philosophy’, ‘politics’ or ‘the political’, ‘political philosophy’ or the ‘philosophy of the political’. ‘Marx’ – so many words and things about which, today, ‘heirs’ (‘Marxist’ or not, ‘Marxists’ of this or that ‘family’, belonging to this or that generation, this or that national tradition, with this or that academic background, etc.) would proceed to conduct debates bearing on the proper name ‘Marx’ (that is, on Marx’s heritage, spectral or not, and his ‘filiation’) – but in the same language, and setting out from a common axiomatics.

As one can imagine, such is not the case in this book. A circumstance which may make it that much more interesting for some, necessary or tragic for others, a babel of tongues verging on meaningless for still others. Whence, in any event, the difficulty of the task of whoever comes along last, claiming, not that he should have the last word, but that he has read all these texts before writing his own. How can one undertake to formalize all these idiomatic, untranslatable differences, even while pretending to speak to one and all from, as it were, a metalinguistic position, the position at once the most advantageous and the hardest to find, the most absurd and the least tenable, and, at any rate, the most unjust? Whence the defeat I am rushing headlong into, the defeat to which, as another French expression has it, my discourse is doomed [les promis].

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 his address were organized; but, today, it seems to me that virtually none of the texts in this volume have taken it seriously or directly into account as a question. It is, 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. These three questions (‘the political’, ‘philosophy’, ‘Marx’) are indissociable. If there were a ‘thesis’ in Specters of Marx, or a hypothesis, it would, today, presuppose this indissociability. The three themes of this thesis (or hypothesis) are, today, one. They are in search of the common topos which they already have, which theirs even if we do not perceive it, the locus of their historical articulation.

The thesis (or hypothesis) of Specters of Marx expressly links these
three themes in presenting itself. But this self-presentation is not a manifesto. It is not the auto-manifestation of any Manifesto, in the tradition of the political Manifesto as analyzed by Specters of Marx, in connection with, precisely, the Manifest of the Communist Party. Although I have resolved to quote myself as rarely as possible here, I would nevertheless like to cite a passage drawn from the analysis of the ‘Manifesto’ form [la forme ‘Manifesie’] of the text that opens: ‘Er den Gepenst lebt im in Europa – das Gepenst des Kommunisten.’ The attempt to explain Marx’s title made it necessary to discern in it, intertwined in one and the same performative event of a signature (the ‘proper name’ of Marx or anyone else associating himself with it or allowing himself to be represented by it), the political (in the guise of the Party or International) and the ontological (the philosopheme of present-being, of the present of a living reality, etc.). Here the spectral is regarded, by Marx, as being nothing more than an ideologeme, a phantasm to be expelled.

When, in 1847–48, Marx names the specter of communism, he inscribes it in a historical perspective that is exactly the reverse of the one I was initially thinking of in proposing a title such as The Specters of Marx. Where I was tempted to name thereby the persistence of a present past, the return of the dead which the worldwide work of mourning cannot get rid of, whose return it runs away from, which it chases (excludes, banishes, and at the same time pursues), Marx, for his part, announces and calls for a presence to come. He seems to predict and prescribe: What for the moment figures only as a specter in the ideological representation of old Europe must become, in the future, a present reality, that is, a living reality. The Manifesto calls it, calls for this presentation of the living reality: we must see to it that in the future this specter – and first of all an association of workers forced to remain secret until about 1848 – becomes a reality, and a living reality. This real life must show itself and manifest itself, it must present itself beyond Europe, old or new Europe, in the universal dimension of an International.

But it must also manifest itself in the form of a manifest that will be the Manifesto of a party. For Marx already gives the party form to the properly political structure of the force that will have to be, according to the Manifesto, the motor of the revolution, the transformation, the appropriation then finally the destruction of the State, and the end of the political as such. (Since this singular end of the political would correspond to the presentation of an absolutely living reality, this is one more reason to think that the essence of the political will always have the inessential figure, the very anessence of a ghost.)

In Specters of Marx, the presentation of the hypothesis does not present itself, in the proper sense. The hypothesis or thesis is not pose [ne se pose pas, literally, does not pose itself]. Even if it did present itself or ‘pose itself’, it would do so without manifesto [sans manifeste] or auto-manifestation. Without presenting itself in the present, it nevertheless takes a position, as one says – its ‘position’ or rather ‘supposition’, that is, the ‘responsibility’ thus assumed – as a transformatism, and therefore as a heterodox or paradoxical transposition of the 11th of the Theses on Feuerbach.

Therefore, as a faithful-unchaste heritage of Marx, the faithful for being faithful (‘unfaithful for being faithful’; with a view to being faithful and, at the same time, because it is or would be faithful). Therefore, as a hypothesis or postulate: about what an inheritance in general can and must be, namely, necessarily faithful and unfaithful, unfaithful out of faithfulness. This book is a book about inheritance, though it should not be confined to the ‘sons of Marx’. It is more precisely, a book about what ‘inherit’ can, not mean [voulant-dire] in an unequivocal way, but, perhaps, enjoin, in a way that is contradictory and contradictorily binding. How to respond to, how to feel responsible for a heritage that hands you down contradictory orders?

Though I do not pretend to reconstitute this movement here, I would nonetheless like to recall what, at a particular moment, tied together, 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 ‘haunting’, in which a discourse (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.

For one of the ‘red threads’ running through Specters of Marx is nothing less than the question of the ‘philosophical’ in Marx. The three questions are intertwined. How are we to delimit: (1) the ‘phenomenality of the political’ as such? (2) ‘philosophy’ as onto-theology? and (3) a heritage as a heritage of ‘Marx’, by the name and in the name of Marx? Now it is at the moment when these three questions are tied together that I attempt to define the act which, carrying one beyond the question-form of the question, consists in ‘taking a responsibility, in short, committing oneself in a performative fashion’. In Specters of Marx, I added:

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. (The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the
point, however, is to change it.' [Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschiedenen interpretiert; es kommt aber darauf an, sie zu verändern.] 3

The gesture that I thus hazard is, of course, one that others will always be entitled to judge. It can be deemed productive or not, efficacious or imaginary, real or fictive, lucid or blind, and so on. I myself, by definition, have no 'theoretical' or 'practical' certainty on this score. Indeed, I would even claim that one neither can nor should have such certainty at the moment one assumes responsibility for doing or saying something that is something other than the necessary consequence of a program. However, the form of my gesture would seem to include, at a minimum, the demand that one read, a demand which remains, for its part, at once theoretical and practical: it asks that people take into account the nature and form – I would go so far as to say the avowed intention – of this gesture, if only to criticize its utility, possibility, authenticity, or even sincerity.

Three types of consequences necessarily follow. Before essaying a more precise response to the texts assembled in this volume, I will simply situate these typical consequences. I cannot engage in the necessary discussion of them here, but this reminder of basic principles should be taken to apply to all that follows.

(1) The question of the question or the putting into question of the question. Although I have just pointed to a cluster of questions, and although Specters of Marx multiplies interrogations and constantly recalls the critical urgency of all sorts of problems that must never be cast aside, it is also marked, like all the texts I have published in the past ten years (since, at least, Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question), by a heavy insistence on the dependent character, or even a certain secondariness, of the question-form. Whence a certain divisibility, whence the fold [pitü], or, as others would say, the duplicity assumed by a discourse which attempts to do two things that are, initially, difficult to reconcile: 'on the one hand, to reawaken questions mesmerized or repressed by the answer itself; but, simultaneously and on the other hand, to assume the (necessarily revolutionary) affirmation as well, the injunction, the promise – in short, the quasi-performativity of a yes that watches over [veille sur] the question, preceding it as an eve precedes the following day [comme sa veille même]. One example of this ambiguous respect for the question (critical or hypercritical; dare I say 'deconstructive'? ) is, perhaps, provided by those moments when, in propounding a new question, I promptly – almost simultaneously – cast doubt upon a rhetoric of the question (which must not be reduced to that of a 'rhetorical question'): ‘One question is not yet posed. Not as such. It is hidden rather by the

philosophical, we will say more precisely ontological response of Marx himself." This question is precisely that of the specter or spirit. Without pausing, almost in the same breath, I explain why I thought I had to beware of these words, especially the alternative 'question/response'. And it is at this point, doubtless not fortuitously, that the word 'perhaps' surges up, one of those 'perhaps' which have for decades explicitly marked the privileged modality, messianic, in this instance, of the statements that matter the most to me (it so happens that I elucidated, at length, the meaning and even, if the word may be hazarded, necessity or ineffectuality of this 'perhaps' the year after Specters of Marx, in Politics of Friendship): 'But all these words are treacherous; perhaps it is no longer at all a matter of question and we are aiming instead at another structure of "presentation", in a gesture of thinking or writing...'.

(2) Depoliticization, repoliticization. What should come after this deconstruction of Marxist 'ontology', in my view, is exactly the opposite of a depoliticization, or a withering away of political effectiveness. Rather, the point, as I see it, of radically re-examining the premises subtending the relationship between 'Marx', theory, science and philosophy is to provide the beginnings of an account of disastrous historical failures on both the theoretical and political plane, as well as to effect a different kind of repoliticization of a certain inheritance from Marx. First, by shifting that inheritance toward a dimension of the political divested of everything which – for better but especially for worse, in our modernity – has welded the political to the ontological (in the first place, to a certain conception of the effectivity or present-being of the universal cast in terms of selon the state, and of cosmopolitical citizenship or the International cast in terms of the Party). 9

As for the disasters I have just very elliptically named, which are, I repeat, theoretical-and-political disasters, they should trouble us, should they not? Should they not give ideas – a few, at any rate – to all the patented Marxists still prepared to dispense lessons from on high? To the statutory Marxists, and those of whom we have the statues [statuaires et statues], to all those who still consider themselves entitled to indulge their penchant for irony at the expense of those difficult allies who have not joined them from the beginning in the orthodoxy of their dogmatic sleep; To the official Marxists who act like difficult children with their difficult allies, when the latter do their best not to give in, after the disaster has taken place, to the worse sort of resignation – theoretical and political, once again? To be sure, in the present book, at any event (this is the reason I am pleased and grateful to take part in it). Terry Eagleton is, fortunately, the only (and nearly
the last) 'Marxist' of this stripe. He is the only one (virtually the only one and virtually the last) to maintain that imperceptibly triumphal tone. One can only rub one's eyes in disbelief and wonder where he finds the inspiration, the haughtiness, the right. Has he learned nothing at all? What proprietary right must still be protected? Which borders must still be patrolled? To whom is 'Marxism' supposed to belong? Is it still the private preserve or personal property of those who claim or proclaim that they are 'Marxists'? As for Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, she will at least have had the merit of manifesting uneasiness or remorse in a recent text. She reports the thoughts of 'a friend' there. What was this friend friendly enough to tell her? That if she had always had some 'trouble with Derrida about Marx', 'maybe that's because', she confesses, transcribing, 'I feel proprietary about Marx.'

'Proprietary' is a very good word. I would suggest making it still more precise: proprietary. For, spelling it that way, one lays claim not only to property, but also to priority, which is even more likely to provoke a smile. A friendly suggestion, indeed, which is not enough to repeat on every page to show that one has understood it. For, a bit later on the same page, we read: 'Is it just my proprietary reaction . . .?' Four pages further on, the remorse is growing increasingly compulsory, while remaining just as ineffectual: 'Is this my proprietary about Marx? Am I a closet clarity-fetishist when it comes to Marx? Who knows?'

Who knows? I, for my part, do not, but I must confess that, like the friend whose warning Spivak reports, I fear she is. What will never cease to amaze me about the jealous possessiveness of so many Marxists, and what amazes me even more in this instance, is not only what is always a bit comic about a property claim, and comic in a way that is even more theatrical when what is involved is an inheritance, a textual inheritance, and, still more pathetic, the appropriation of an inheritance named 'Marx'. No, what I always wonder, and even more in this instance, is where the author thinks the presumptive property deeds are. 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? On the preceding page (p. 71) of an essay that is unbelievable from first to last, Spivak had already written the following, in a final gleam of lucidity that nothing could reflect better than this statement does: 'Now comes a list of "mistakes" that betrays me at my most proprietary about Marx, perhaps. The reader will judge.' True: this reader, among others, will have judged: the list in question is, first and foremost, a list of the misreadings to be chalked up to Gayatri Spivak herself - who is well advised to put the word 'mistakes' in inverted commas in advance. Some of her errors stem from an outright inability to read, exacerbated here by the wounded resentment of her 'proprietary about Marx'. Others are due to her unbridled manipulation of a rhetoric I shall, for lack of time and space, illustrate with only one example.12 I single it out because it bears directly on the 'depoliticization-repoliticization' which concerns me here, in this second point. Defining the requisite conditions for the repoliticization that I would like to see come about, I wrote: 'There will be no repoliticization, there will be no politics otherwise.'13 In other words, I was insisting on the fact that, in the absence of the conditions I define in this context, we will not succeed in repoliticizing, something I obviously desire and which it plainly seems to me desirable to do. Now, the individual who suspects herself, on solid grounds, of feeling a bit 'proprietary' about Marx, here drops the 'otherwise', cuts off the sentence, and ascribes to me - erroneously, without putting the words in inverted commas, but giving the page reference in Specters of Marx (that is, p. 87) - the following statement (in addition to a series of "we wills" that are not mine): 'We won't repoliticize [SM 87]!' - as if she were entitled to attribute these words to me in a straightforward, innocent paraphrase, as if I had advised against repoliticizing, precisely at the point where I emphatically call for the exact opposite.14 When I first read so massive a falsification, I could hardly believe my eyes, and was, above all, hard put to decide whether it was deliberate or involuntary. But whether deliberate and/or involuntary, this is a serious matter. To put it boldly and categorically, everything would seem to suggest that it is not possible to raise questions and express concern about a determinant politics or a determinate of the political without promptly being accused of depoliticization in general. But, of course, a repoliticization always involves a relative depoliticization, an awareness that an old conception of the political has, in itself, been depoliticized or is depoliticizing.

Nothing touching on 'politicization' or 'repoliticization' has escaped the lucidity of Jameson, whose powerful, scrupulous analysis the reader will already have read. Jameson notes that 'spectrality is here the form of the most radical politicization and that, far from being locked into the repetitions of neurosis and obsession, it is energetically future-oriented and active.'15 Yes, confidence; Spivak is in any case right to say 'the reader will judge.'

I am not in the process of saying that, if Marxism is pitting so poorly, especially in the academy, the blame lies with the 'Marxists', or a few academic 'Marxists', let alone with some of those I have just mentioned
(Spivak, Eagleton, or Ahmad). That, as one can imagine, would assuredly be saying too much. The problem, alas, has very different dimensions. Let us only say that now that the harm has been done, and the causes and effects being what they are, the symptomatic modes of behavior I have just described do not help matters any, as one says, or contribute to setting things right.

(3) The performativity. The illusion I have just made to ‘quasi-performativity’ would seem to signify at least two things, two in a single word. These two things stand in an essential relation to the need for repoliticization, at this juncture where it seems to me that, under certain conditions, efforts to repoliticize should be pursued.

(A) In Specters of Marx, as in all of my texts of at least the past twenty-five years, all my argumentation has been everywhere determined and overdetermined by a concern to take into account the performative dimension (not only of language in the narrow sense, but also of what I call the trace and writing).

(B) Overdetermined, because, at the same time, the aim has been other than to apply an Austrikan notion as it stood (here too, I hope that I have been faithful-unfaithful, unfaithful out of faithfulness, to a heritage, to ‘Austin’, to what is one of the major bodies of thought or main theoretical events – undoubtedly one of the most fertile – of our time). I have for a long time been attempting 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. This effort will have begun with, at the latest, ‘Signature Event Context’, and been pursued everywhere else, especially in ‘Limited Inc.’ and The Post Card. I am pleased to see that Fredric Jameson has so clearly perceived certain relations of continuity and coherence between The Post Card . . . and Specters of Marx. As to what Hamacher here says about and does with what — in, precisely, The Post Card — I called, in 1979, the ‘performativity’, which he ties in with more recent texts like Avantges, it is, in my view, one of the many luminous, powerful gestures of his interpretation, in a text that is impressive, admirable and original. Because I find myself in close agreement with Hamacher, and am prepared to follow him down all the paths he thus opens up, I can do no more here than pay him simple, grateful homage. (Thus there is, despite appearances, nothing paradoxical about the fact that I say very little about his essay here, contending myself with inviting the reader to read and reread it while weighing its every word.)

After these preliminary remarks, I must rather summarily announce the choice I felt I had to make in attempting to respond, in an unfortunately limited space, to the essays in this book. So as not to neglect the themes which are, in my view, the most urgent, the most general, and also the ones the most frequently addressed by all the various essays. I shall draft a conceptual order onto a more ‘personal’ one. While responding to everyone in turn (except, occasional remarks aside, Eagleton and Hamacher, for the counterposed reasons I have just mentioned), I shall sometimes overstep the logic of this order, in as to refer, now and again, to the recurrence of the same theme or objection in several different essays. This is the least unworkable solution, one I have had to adopt, in an economy that was not of my choosing, to respond in the least unjust manner possible, in a limited space, to nine different texts, nine different strategies, or, it might even be said, nine different ‘logics’.

To begin with, a reminder. As those who do me the honor of taking an interest in my work can testify, I have never gone to battle against Marxism or the Marxists. Why, then, should I have come to hope for a reconciliation? (I here underscore the word that appears in Aijaz Ahmad’s title, and repeatedly in his text; it is, in sum, its leitmotif.) What might be the interest of such a reconciliation? Had my major concern been reconciliation, even as Ahmad understands the word,17 I would have written a very different book. If one carefully rereads the paragraph in which Ahmad expatiates at length upon all the subtlety of his title, ‘Reconciling Derrida’, it becomes clear that what is at issue is neither a ‘reconciliation with Derrida’ nor ‘Derrida reconciled’ . . . on the part of Derrida, in relation to Marx – or of Marxism in relation to Derrida’.

A shift from Marx to Marxism, then: why? Who is Marxism? Ahmd? All those he comes forward to represent? But already, in this book alone, there is no possibility of agreement or homogeneity among all the ‘Marxists’, all those who call themselves or are called ‘Marxists’. Even if it were possible to identify all of them as ‘Marxists’, it would still be impossible to identify them all with one another. There is nothing wrong with this, in my view, but it should make the identifying label ‘Marxist’ more uncertain than ever (I discuss this more than once in Specters of Marx).

Ahmed goes on to say: ‘In either case, we would then have a sense of gratification too easily obtained.’ In question here, then, is something more like a reconciliation of myself with myself (‘Derrida in the
process of reconciling') in the course of a process of 'identification'. I shall have to insist on this point, while avoiding, precisely, narcissistic identification (although I have elsewhere hazarded statements about narcissism that are hardly in keeping with the consensus). It is necessary to insist for at least two reasons:

(1) First, in order to do justice to the complexity of the identification which Ahmad speaks of, and which, in my opinion, touches on a very sensitive issue in these discussions. As Ahmad points out, in a complex and interesting way, the process of identification involved is, as he sees it, twofold: 'identifying with the intent of this reconciling', 'identifying that with which Derrida has here set out to reconcile himself'.

(2) Second, because, in both cases (one of which is enveloped in the other, as we have seen), it is assumed that reconciliation is on the agenda (something I contest, I will say how and why in a moment), and that I am the one who is doing the identifying. Now the process of identification, which is the object, ultimately, of the trickiest analyses in Specters of Marx, is taken up precisely at the point where the book enters into the whole matter of spectral logic; I find that Ahmad rather hastily reduces it to a question of proper nouns, personal pronouns and what he calls 'subjects'. He does so with an assurance that I, as will be imagined, am hard put to share. Thus he writes:

I mean, rather, the active sense of a process, and of a subject: a mode of reconciliation; Derrida in the process of reconciling; and we, therefore, in response to the process Derrida has initiated, participating in an identification – an identification also in the positive sense of identifying with the intent of this reconciling, as well as in the sense of identifying that with which Derrida has here set out to reconcile himself. It is in this double movement of identification that the pleasures and problems of Derrida's text lie for us, the readers of the text.¹⁸

Yes, 'pleasures and problems'. When, with imperturbable self-assurance, as if he were sure of what he meant to say ('I mean,' he says), Ahmad associates my name with a process of reconciliation (one I am even supposed to have 'initiated'!), I sigh and smile (for yes, I too take a certain pleasure in this); but when he says 'we' ('we therefore...') in the following sentence, my laughter becomes, so to speak, at once frank and serious: 'problems,' I should say! For I wonder where this dogmatic sleep finds such resources. Who is entitled to say 'we' here? We 'Marxists'? We readers, etc.? And, above all: does everything in my book not come down to problematizing, precisely, every process of identification, or, even, of determination in general (identification of the other, or with the other, or with oneself: X is Y, I am the other, I am I; we are we, etc.): all questions which come under the general heading I have been emphasizing from the beginning of this response: ontology or not, spectral or difference, and so on. This affects, first of all, the very idea of justice and messianicity that provides Specters of Marx its guiding thread, the red thread that runs all the way through it. But the only interest and specificity this idea has, if it has any at all, depends on its being able to elude the sway of that logic of identity and self-identity.²⁸

Had my overriding concern been some sort of 'reconciliation', I would have proceeded very differently. I would not have foreseen, as I clearly did, what has in fact occurred more often than not – namely, that Specters of Marx would above all fail to please those 'Marxists' who are comfortably installed in their proprietorial positions, and identified by themselves with themselves. Precisely because matters are not simple, and because this book does not come from the enemy. From an identifiable enemy. It was especially by way of anticipation of the reactions – variegated, to be sure, but, on this point, similar and eminently predictable – of possessive Marxists (for example, Eagleton, Spivak and Ahmad), watching over orthodoxy as if over a patrimony, that I announced:

what we are saying here will not please anyone. But who ever said that someone ever had to speak, think, or write in order to please someone else? And if one interprets the gesture we are taking here as a belated rallying-to-Marxism, then one would have to have misunderstood quite badly. It is true, however, that I would be today, here, now, less insensitive than ever to the appeal of the contretemps or of being out-of-step, as well as to the style of an untimeliness that is more manifest and more urgent than ever. Already I hear people saying: You picked a good time to salute Marx! Or else: It's about time! Why so late? I believe in the political virtue of the contretemps...²⁹

(I would also ask that one read what precedes and follows, at least up to 'I am not a Marxist... And who can still say I am a Marxist?')

In writing the above, without having this or that particular 'Marxist' in mind, I doubtless already saw coming the very predictable displeasure or outrage of self-proclaimed Marxists like Eagleton or Ahmad.

The chronology of the contretemps was, if I may say so, pre-programmed. Two examples:

(1) The contretemps according to Eagleton: '[I]t is hard,' Eagleton says, 'to resist asking, plaintively, where was Jacques Derrida when we needed him?' But do we not have to strain to reconcile this accusation of the 'contretemps' with the charge of 'opportunism', aired by the same author? – for Eagleton accuses me of opportunism and the opposite at the same time, as well as of swimming against the current merely in
order to 'exploit Marxism as critique, dissent...'. This incorrigible, paradoxical 'opportunism' would thus seem to make me do precisely the opposite of what it is opportune to do at the appropriate moment, the long-awaited moment. I would appear to be an opportunist, with a poor sense of timing! The only possible explanation (a bit thin for a Marxist, it will perhaps be agreed) would seem to be psychological, characterological, or even a matter of my idiosyncrasies or character disorders: my 'adolescent perversity'. 23 This hypothesis makes me smile — and, as Ahmad would say, I almost take a certain pleasure in it. For what, after all, does Eagleton have against adolescent perversity? Is he musing about a return to normalcy before all things? For normalization? Is his model revolutionary, the normal adult, cured of all perversity? Of what other sorts of perversity as well? Once one has set to casting one form of perversity, it is never hard to extend the list. But even supposing that this psychological hypothesis accounts for my personal vices, the realm under discussion, as Eagleton is well aware, transcends my person. Even if only one reader took an interest in me, it would be necessary to discuss him too in terms of 'adolescent perversity'. And if so many 'perversion adolescents' in the world incline to this side rather than that, a 'Marxist' ought to wonder what is going on — in the world at large, not in the world of my deranged driver. He ought to look for explanations other than the libidinal deviation of an author who is not growing old with the requisite grace. For I suspect that Eagleton ultimately reproaches me with not growing old fast enough, with growing old à contretemps.

(2) The contrebass according to Ahmad. This critic not only regrets the fact that I have been tardy with what he calls (I will come back to this in a moment) my 'affiliation' or 'reconciliation'. He also confesses, for his part, that he has read me too quickly (which is true, indeed, on the plane; 'on,' he confides, 'my flight to Ljubljana'). 24 This is no excuse for contenting oneself with flying through a text. The effects of thus skimming through my text on the fly are not limited to the hastily formed impression that it is a gesture of 'reconciliation' (my book is obviously anything but that, and reconciliation with myself, any other aside, has never been easy for me; I have a painful experience of it which I will not succeed in communicating to the readers I am speaking of at the moment, but which, I am sure, is in theory legible in all that I write).

I am also taken aback by a certain eagerness to speak of Specters of Marx or my work in general as if it were merely a species, instance, or example of the 'genre' postmodernism or poststructuralism. These are catch-all notions into which the most poorly informed public (and, most often, the mass-circulation press) stuffs nearly everything it does not like or understand, starting with 'deconstruction'. I do not consider myself either a poststructuralist or a postmodernist. I have often explained why I almost never use these words, except to say that they are inadequate to what I am trying to do. I have never spoken of the announcements of the end of all metametanarratives, let alone endorsed them. Ahmad thus contents himself with skimming over my text on a more than routine reconnaissance mission when he writes, on the subject of my critique of Fukuyama, that 'the discussion would have been more fruitful had he offered reflections on the political and philosophical adjacencies between Fukuyama's end-of-history argument and the announcements of the end of all metametanarratives that one finds routinely in the work of so many deconstructionists.' Confusion. I do not know what context or routine is being alluded to. But I am certain that there is no necessary relation between these 'announcements' and the 'deconstructions' I know of or carry out myself. So this charge doesn't stand up. I suppose that the 'postmodernists' (Lyotard, for example) who do use the word 'metametanarrative' (something I have never done in my life, for good reason) would find this amalgam as unsettling as I do. 'Deconstructionists' have occasionally also been accused, quite unjustly, with having a weakness for — yet another catch-all notion — the grand metanarrative discourses, the grands récits, when, for instance, they speak imprecisely of 'Western metaphysics' tout court or of the metaphysics of presence, as they sometimes do, and as I too have sometimes done for pedagogical reasons (I have often explained why elsewhere).

One more word about Fukuyama, and three brief reminders.

(1) I have never sought to compete with Perry Anderson, whose then recent text I did not know at the time. I was not out to be more 'original' (Eagleton) or less 'conventional' (Ahmad) than Anderson in my critique of Fukuyama. I note in passing that the two 'Marxists' in this volume who show the greatest inclination toward proprietorships about Marx, those who are, I would say, the most partisan, are also those who begin by defending and protecting — as if this were in dispute — the copyright, priority and privilege of Fukuyama's 'best unofficially Marxist critic', Perry Anderson.

(2) I did not simply offer an internal critique of Fukuyama: I also pointed out the contextual effects and political logic governing the reception and exploitation of his book. Moreover, if, as Ahmad says, Anderson is to be credited with recognizing 'what strengths there were in Fukuyama's arguments', I did not, for my part, fail to acknowledge that 'this book is not as bad as naïve as one might be led to think by the frenzied exploitation that exhibits it as the finest ideological showcase of victorious capitalism in a liberal democracy. . . .'
(3) As to the problematic of the end of history, etc., although I have nothing against Anderson's reading (since when does one have to regret all convergence with a Marxist?), the argument I put forward is, in its overall design and its details, woven into the substance and intent of my book — which, it will be granted, is thoroughly un-Andersonian. My reasoning is tied by so many threads to previous publications (mine, of course — too many for me to be able to mention more than Of an Apocalyptic Tone . . . — but, especially, those of untold others as well, from the 1950s on!), that I have neither the stamina nor the space to reconstitute their tangled skein. As I shall have to do again, for lack of time and space, and, alas, more than once, I here content myself with inviting interested readers to reread these texts in order to form their own judgment, if only about the specificity of each argument. But, frankly, I do not think that Anderson's critique of Fukuyama, even if I had read it at the time, would have persuaded me of the futility or conventionality of my own. Let the reader judge.

Ahmad is right, it seems to me, to wonder: what kind of text is it that Derrida has composed? Indeed, one understands nothing about this text if one fails to take into account the specificity of its genre, of its writing, composition, rhetoric and address — in a word, everything a traditional reader in a rush would have called its form, or tone, or which I, for my part, consider inseparable from its content. Ahmad is right again when, answering his very good question, he says: 'We have, in other words, essentially a performative text . . .' Yes, of course. But I am, naturally, no longer in agreement with him when he reduces this performativity to a 'performance', especially to the 'performance' of a 'literary text', especially when this 'performance' is in its turn reduced to conventional, confused notions of 'form of rhetoric', 'affectivity', 'tone', and so forth. Who would deny that there are rhetoric, affect and tone in Specters of Marx? I certainly would not; but I lay a different kind of claim to them, and relate them differently to the performativity of the analysis itself. Does Aijaz Ahmad think his text is so very atomized? Does he think that what he writes has been purged of all affectivity, all rhetoric, and, since this too is a matter that seems to bother him, of every gesture of filiation and affiliation? Specters of Marx is not only a text which, no more than any other, cannot efficaciously deny all filiation and affiliation. On the contrary: it assumes more than one, and explains why. This multiplicity changes everything. The book also does something else that can seem contradictory, explaining and justifying the contradiction. Yes, it is possible to articulate several apparently contradictory gestures, simultaneously or successively, in one and the same book. For example, I invoke the authority of Marx [je me réclame de Marx], but it can also happen that, having spoken 'for him', I also speak 'against him': in the same book, without suspecting that this was against the rules! Or that one had to choose to be 'for' or 'against' Marx, as in a polling booth! Expressly identifying itself as a book on inheritance, Specters of Marx 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. This insistence is not merely the consequence of a taste for literature or mourning, any more than Marx's interest in Shakespeare makes Capital a literary work. I have simultaneously marked out the law, effects and ethical-political risks of this filiation. One has to read Specters of Marx very naively indeed to miss the whole analysis of the paternalistic phallogocentricity that marks all scenes of filiation (of Hamlet and in Karl Marx!). The antecedents of this analysis extend too far back in my work, are too explicit and systematic for me to have to review them here. I would merely like to emphasize 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. If one follows this path, which also leads back to my analysis of fetishism in Glas and elsewhere, then the scene of filiation and its interpretation, and, especially, the reference to Hamlet, the paternal specter and what I call the 'visor effect', begin to wear a very different aspect. I suggest that Ahmad do some rereading after touching down; he will then see that my gesture is not solely one of filiation or affiliation. No, I do not simply claim to be Marx's heir, and even less to have exclusive rights to the inheritance. By affirming as often as I do that there is more than one specter or spirit of Marx, I acknowledge that there are and must be as many heirs as there in fact are, and that they must sometimes be clandestine and illegitimate, as everywhere. Ahmad, in contrast, seems to complain, as the presumptively legitimate 'Marxists' and 'communists' and presumptively legitimate sons seem to complain, of having been dispossessed of his patrimony or 'proprietary right'. (I emphasize the word presumptively, for, in the Marxist family as elsewhere, legitimacy is always presumptively, especially when what is at stake is filiation in general, and not only, as people right down to Freud and Joyce have too naively believed, paternal filiation as 'legal fiction': for this 'fiction' applies to maternity as well, and did so even before maternity could be supplemented by surrogate mothers.) One can judge this fierce claim to filial legitimacy by, at least, Ahmad's tone, as he himself would say, at the moment when he declares that I have a tendency to identify with Hamlet, to 'position' myself like Hamlet, to identify with both Hamlet and the 'Ghost'! even, indeed, with Marx himself!"
possible to read and closely analyze a scene of filiation without straightforwardly identifying with one of the characters! Here again, I fear that the tendency to find me 'literary' begets a somewhat naïve experience of what reading, literature and the reading of what is known as a 'poetic' or 'literary' text are. On this point too, the lesson given by Marx, reader of Shakespeare, has not always been well understood by the 'Marxists' or those who are 'generally known as Marxists':

[H]is initial act of positioning himself within his own text [I already find every one of these words comically irrelevant, but never mind] by enclosing his text between two quotations from Hamlet, which foreground the Ghost of the dead father (obvious reference to Derrida's *ule - Specters of Marx* - 'we're in agreement there, the reference is 'obvious', I shall make no further attempt to camouflage it) as well as to the theme of the finality of the death of Marxism [agreed, although little. I make bold to say matters are not quite so simple; but it is from this point forward that things become really disturbing] and to his assertion that he and his deconstruction, not communists and those who are generally known as Marxists, are the true heirs of Marx, the dead Father. Here is, then, the opening quotation, with its own repetition of a key phrase:

The time is out of joint
— *Hamlet*

*Hamlet* . . . *Swear.
*Ghost* [beneath]: *Swear* . . .

I have never maintained, of course, that 'I' and 'my deconstruction' (!) were the 'true heirs' of Marx, the 'dead father'. I do not believe that. Nor does the question much interest me. Moreover, everything I say makes the expression 'true heir' irrelevant to the point of caricature. That pretension is, indeed, the subject of the book - I would almost say its *target*. On the other hand, the idea or hypothesis (in fact, the fantasy) that someone is making such an 'assertion' or claim (that of being a true heir of Marx) manifestly sets Ahmad's teeth on edge. He writes jealously over the inheritance. He denounces in advance everything he presumes to be a claim to the inheritance whenever it seems to him to come from someone he regards as not belonging to the family or lineage of those he tranquilly calls the 'communists and those who are generally known as Marxists', ranking himself among them, without a doubt - without, I mean, ever being visited by the slightest doubt on this head. Preoccupation with legitimate descent is a feeling that I do not find within myself. I have even learned to cultivate and publicly defend my indifference to this subject, to explain the 'logic' of that indifference, and to go so far as to make of it a kind of ethical and political first principle. As I rule, I analyze and question the fantasy of legitimate descent (fathers, sons and brothers, etc., rather than mother, daughter and sister), attempting to throw it into crisis, whereas, for Ahmad and 'those who are generally known as Marxists', that fantasy plainly continues to be an obsessive one. This is obvious when he criticizes me, but also when, on the strength of a good many points of agreement that I shall not consider, he says that he 'accepts' what I say 'with a sense of comradeship'. This communitarian concern for familial reappropriation, this jealous claim to 'propriety', here as in other domains, is the very subject of my work: in this book and, for thirty years now, in everything Ahmad calls, in a phrase I shall let him assume the responsibility for, 'his [any] deconstruction'.

In order to think at, if not to rise to, a level above all 'propriety', comrades, *encore un effort!*

Of course, I am grateful to Ahmad for his 'sense of comradeship', especially when he - remarkable, this - congratulates me on my 'very salutary affliation with what he [I] call[s] a "certain spirit of marxism"'.

But it is then that I sense, emanating from him rather than me, an insatiable desire for proper genealogy, legitimate filiation and quasi-familial community: unite, all ye legitimate sons of Marx, 'those who are generally known as Marxists', unite as good comrades, as brothers of all countries! If it were not a well-known fact that Marx had a bastard son by his maid (in France, a play was recently written about this; it included extracts from Shakespeare, *Hamlet* and *Specters of Marx*), if I were not afraid of sustaining Eagleton's verdict (yet another affair of tone: 'The high humourlessness of Derrida's literary style - French "playfulness" is a notoriously high-toned affair - reflects a residual debt to the academic world he has so courageously challenged'), and if, finally, I dared recall the entire deconstructive critique of 'fraternity' I elaborated in *The Politics of Friendship* - which I do not dare do - then I would here speak of the Marx brothers. If I did, the reason would be, more seriously, that *Specters of Marx* is, like *The Politics of Friendship*, also a sort of critique of the genealogical principle, of a certain fraternalism, and of the brother/brother as much as of the father/son couple. The hauntiology of Marx himself, his terrified fascination in the face of his own specters, often revolved around the brother (Stirner as a 'bad brother' of Marx, because he was a 'bad son of Hegel') . But in the midst of my professions of gratitude, I must, moving too quickly, alas, admit, ingrate that I am, that I do not find myself in agreement with much of anything Ahmad says, very emphatically, about a great many things, and always with a view to accusing me of them, or suspecting me of them. I shall have to step up the pace if I am to avoid making a detailed, attentive response filling hundreds of pages (that is, indeed, what is called for, but I have not been allotted the space).
(1) I do not find myself in agreement with what Ahmad says, first, about the 'tone' of my text. I do not believe one has the right to isolate what he discusses under the continued rubric of 'tone' ('tone of religious suffering', 'messianic total register', 'quasi-religious tone', 'the whole of the text', part sermon, part dirge', 'virtually religious cadences', etc.). To be entitled to isolate and thus criticize a tone, one would have to have a slightly more elaborate concept of tone, of its fusion with concept, meaning and the performative I spoke of earlier, in order to lay claim to it and to question it. Above all, one must have. If I may say so without appearing offensive, a finer ear for the differential, unstable, shifting qualities of a tone – for example, the tonal values that signal irony or play, even at the most serious moments, and always in passages where the tone is, precisely, inseparable from the content. Ahmad is as insensitive as Eagleton to variations in tone – to, for example, the irony and humor that I am fond of cultivating in all my texts, without exception. That is his right. By definition, especially given the short time at my disposal, I will not be able to change his mind or modify his taste. But even if one loses something of the meaning when one misses the context and the differential vibration of a tone, enough is left in the words, sentences, logic and syntax that one does not have the right to miss everything. For, to use only Ahmad's own words, the 'virtually religious' ('virtually religious') and the 'quasi' ('quasi-religious'), for example, should by themselves suffice to change a great deal. Indeed, almost everything, given that what is in question in the book, from first to last, is a subtle but indispensable distinction. Which distinction? That between, on the one hand, a certain irreducible religiosity (the one that commands a discourse on the promise and justice, and on revolutionary commitment, even when such discourses emanate from communists and those who are generally known as Marxists), and, in fact, whenever ethical and political discourse bears the stamp of messianicity – as distinguished from messianism, by a precarious dividing-line which is worth whatever it is worth, and which I will come back to, although Ahmad cannot be unaware that it organizes the whole logic of the book); and, on the other hand, religion, the religions for each of which I can justifiably say that Specters of Marx, like everything I write, betrays no weakness (Ahmad would seem to acknowledge this). One cannot, as Ahmad does here, dispense with the vast question of religion and the religious by leveling rather muddled accusations about a 'quasi-religious' tone. The religious question should not be regarded as clear or settled today. One should not act as if one knew what the 'religious' or the 'quasi-religious' was – above all if one wants to be a Marxist, or calls oneself that. Between the two there is, yes, the question of ideology (irreducible, indestructible and irreducible welded to the

(2) Again, I do not agree with what Ahmad so blandly advances on the subject of metaphorics in Specters of Marx ('metaphor of mourning', 'metaphorical language of “inheritance” and “promise of Marxism”, the language of metaphor, “language of poetic direction”, and so on). I have, in the past, made too great an effort to problematize the concept, and utilization of the concept, of metaphor (in, precisely, its relation to the concept) not to be suspicious of Ahmad's rhetoric here, of the very dogmatic way he uses this word ('metaphor', 'metaphorical', 'metaphoric'). Doubtless there is, in all mourning work, a process of metaphorization (condensation or displacement, internalization or introjection, and thus identification with the dead, re-narcissization, idealization, etc.). But the motifs of mourning, inheritance and promise are, in Specters of Marx, anything but 'metaphors' in the ordinary sense of the word. They are focal points for conceptual or theoretical activity, the organizing themes of the entire deconstructive critique that I am attempting to make. Inexplicable from one another, they command, among other things, the analysis of the political-phantasmatic world scene after the alleged death of communism and the putative 'death of Marx'. They also enable me to introduce into the political realm necessary questions of a psychoanalytic type (those of the specter or phantasma – which also means specter in Greek) – something the 'Marxists' have rarely succeeded in doing in what I would regard as a convincing and rigorous manner. All this presupposes a transformation of psychoanalytic logic itself, precisely as it bears on the subjects of mourning, narcissism and fetishism. I have, elsewhere, tried to suggest how the transformation might be brought about, and cannot discuss this at length here.

(3) I do not agree with Ahmad when he speaks of 'Derrida's refusal of class politics'. There is a serious misunderstanding here. I am doubtless partly responsible for it, and would like to provide a better explanation of the matter than I have so far. Let us make a transition, then: it is precisely, the concept of 'transition' which will occupy us now, and will serve me as a passageway between Ahmad's text and others in this volume which, in diverse modes, display a certain uneasiness with what I am supposed to have said or, rather, not to have said about classes, the concept of class and class struggle. This holds for Lewis. In a very different sense, it holds for Jameson too, whom Lewis also invokes, inasmuch as he clearly situates his critical essay in the wake of those by Ahmad and Jameson, whose responses to Specters of Marx had already appeared (in New Left Review) when Lewis wrote his own. In an attempt to respond simultaneously to Ahmad's and
Lewis's objections (for I do not consider the paragraphs that Jameson devotes to these questions of 'class' to be objections, and I shall say why). I would like to quote a sentence I wrote some time ago; Lewis takes it as one of his epigraphs, as if it ought to constitute the central target of a critique, a critique he does in fact develop in the subsection of his essay called 'On class':

I felt that the concept of class struggle and even the identification of a social class were run by capitalist modernity... Thus any sentence in which 'social class' appeared was a problematic sentence for me.53

What, to begin with, is said in these two sentences, which are thus brutally torn from the context of an interview in which I described my relation to the Althusserian project as it developed in the closest possible proximity to me, close in a hundred different ways, in terms of place and of friendship, in the 1960s? In context, these two sentences did not say that what was or is called 'social class' has no existence in my eyes, that it does not correspond to anything real, any social force capable of generating conflicts, effects of domination, struggles, alliances and so on. They said, very precisely, that the principle of identification of social class as presupposed by the concept of 'class struggle' (it being understood, but this goes without saying, that what is in question is the coded concept as promulgated by the dominant Marxist discourse, that of the communist parties - I will come back to the question of the party below) - they said, then, that this principle and this concept had become 'problematic' for me in the sentences I was hearing at the time (I repeat, 'thus any sentence in which 'social class' appeared was a problematic sentence for me'). If I had wanted to say that I believed there were no more social classes and that all struggle over this subject was passe, I would have. All I did in fact say was that the concept and principle of identification of social class current in the Marxist discourse I was hearing then (in the 1960s) were problematic for me. I underscore the word 'problematic', which does not mean either false or outmoded or inoperative or insignificant, but rather susceptible of transformation and critical re-elaboration, in a situation in which a certain capitalist modernity 'ruins' the most sensitive defining criterion of class (for example - but a great deal more needs to be said about this, for everything is hanging in the balance here - the concepts of labor, worker, proletariat, mode of production, etc.). I by no means said, not even in this improvised interview, that I considered the problem of classes to be outdated or irrelevant. So little did I say or think that, immediately after the sentence Lewis cites, I offered the following clarification (which Lewis, if he has read more than three lines of my text, ought to have had the fairness to cite):

Thus any sentence in which 'social class' appeared was a problematic sentence for me. For the reasons expressed earlier, I could not say [this in this form] today, in 1998. I underscore 'in this form', the text of Marxist statements of the 1960s. I believe in the generic existence of social classes [again, emphasis added today, in 1998], but the modernity of industrial societies (not to mention the Third World) cannot be approached, analyzed, taken into account within a political strategy, starting off from a concept whose links are so loose. I had the impression I was still seeing models for sociological and political analysis inherited if not from the nineteenth, at least from the first half of the twentieth century,... I believe that an interest in what the concept of class struggle aimed at, an interest in analyzing conflicts in social forces, is still absolutely indispensable. [Once again, I am underscoring these words today, in 1998: the sentence sufficiently clear and unambiguous]. But I'm not sure that the concept of class, as it's been inherited [again, I underscore these words in 1998] is the best instrument for those activities, unless it is considerably differentiated [emphasis added, again, in 1998].

I do not dare quote myself further. I would simply invite interested readers to restore all these contexts, particularly the whole discussion which develops the passage just cited in the direction of the concepts of the 'last instance', 'overdetermination', appropriation and expropriation (this is the best answer I can give here). I would also invite them to restore the other contexts that, in Specters of Marx, take determinate shape around these focal points. It should in any event be fairly clear that I took and take very seriously the existence of some 'thing' like that which one calls, since Marx, social classes, and that I take seriously the struggles of which this 'thing' is the field, focus, stakes, driving force, etc. It should be just as clear that I believe, to repeat, that an 'interest' in this thing and this struggle is 'indispensable', but that, consequently, interest in the progress of the analysis which one adjusts in the struggle is also indispensable. What seemed especially problematic to me at the time was the insufficiently 'differentiated' nature of the concept of social class as it has been 'inherited'. What seemed problematic to me at the time, I repeat, was above all the principle of identification of social class, and the idea that a social class is what it is, homogeneous, present and identical to itself as 'ultimate support'.54 But a certain difference from itself, a certain heterogeneity in a social force, does not seem to me to be incompatible with the movement constituted by a social struggle. On the contrary. When, in Specters of Marx, I speak of a 'critical inheritance', the questions about this 'ultimate support' and the self-identity of a social class not only do not exclude struggle, antagonisms, or unstable relations of
domination, but, on the contrary, are formulated with reference to this struggle for hegemony. For example, I say (but, again, I invite interested readers to restore the context in which these propositions occur) that at least provisionally, we are placing our trust, in fact, in this form of critical analysis we have inherited from Marxism: in a given situation, provided that it is determinable and determined as being that of a socio-political antagonism, a hegemonic force always seems to be represented by a dominant rhetoric and ideology, whatever may be the conflicts between forces, the principle contradiction or the secondary contradictions, the overdeterminations and the relays that may later complicate this schema...36

That is my question and my main concern: what I find ‘problematic’ has to do, first of all, with what comes along to ‘complicate this schema’. I admit, of course, that this ‘complication’ goes very far indeed, in my estimation. It can go so far as to lead us to be suspicious of the simple opposition of dominant and dominated, or even of the final determination of the forces in conflict, or even, more radically, of the idea that force is always stronger than weakness...

Critical inheritance: one may thus, for example, speak of a dominant discourse or of dominant representations and ideas, and refer in this way to a hierarchized and confined field without necessarily subscribing to the concept of social class by means of which Marx so often determined, particularly in The German Ideology, the forces that are fighting for... hegemony... One may continue to speak of domination in a field of forces not only while suspending the reference to this ultimate support that would be the identity and the self-identity of a social class (I add this emphasis today, in 1998, to make it clear that what seems to me problematic is not something like social class as such, but rather, what is usually attributed to it in a certain dominant Marxist tradition: the status or place of ‘ultimate support’ and ‘identity as self-identity’), but even while suspending the credit extended to what Marx calls the idea, the determination of the superstructure as idea, ideal or ideological representation, indeed even the discursive form of this representation. All the more so since the concept of the ideal implies this irreducible genesis of the spectral that we are planning to re-examine here. 37

What turns on this program in Specters of Marx has not captured the attention of those who here reproach me. I believe unjustly, with, at the very least, taking the problem of class and class struggle lightly. The passage I have just quoted (like many others) is plainly inscribed in a logic open to all possible ‘overdeterminations’ (in this sense, it is a logic that is at least provisionally coherent with a Marxist – for example, Althusserian – discourse); but it also ‘complicates this schema’, and, without ceasing to take class formations and class struggles into account, goes so far as to put back on the drawing board, in the ‘class struggle’, the relations between weakness and strength, between labor, production, the economic and the ‘ideological’. My failing lies perhaps in my unfamiliarity with all the Marxist work that elaborates a new concept of class and class struggle while taking more fully into account the new realities of the techno-scientifico-capitalist ‘modernity’ of world society. I confess that, on this specific point, I do not know of any work I find convincing, although I have made a point of bailing, on more than one occasion, recent work by Marxist theoreticians who have refused to let a rather unpropitious historical climate discourage them in their analyses and commitments. I am, in any case, certain of one thing: among the Marxists I am to respond to here, those who object to what I say, or fail to, about classes and the class struggle do not themselves advance a single new concept – with the exception of Jameson, whose remarks I do not at all take as objections (I shall return to this point without delay). But before coming to Jameson, I would like to clarify a matter which ought to be self-evident, but seems to have been overlooked in Ahmad’s and Lewis’s hurried and somewhat global readings. Whenever I speak of the New International in Specters of Marx, emphasizing that, in it, solidarity or alliance should not depend, fundamentally and in the final analysis, on class affiliation, this in no wise signifies, for me, the disappearance of ‘classes’ or the attenuation of conflicts connected with ‘class’ differences or oppositions (or, at least, differences or oppositions based on the new configurations of social forces for which I do in fact believe that we need new concepts and therefore, perhaps, new names as well). What I say about the New International (which is already a reality – I shall return to this too – has nothing abstract or Utopian about it, and is neither demobilized nor destabilizing, quite the contrary) as little presupposes the disappearance of power relations or relations of social domination as it does the end of citizenship, national communities, parties, or fatherlands. At issue is, simply, another dimension of analysis and political commitment, one that cuts across social differences and oppositions of social forces (what one used to call, simplifying, ‘classes’). I would not say that such a dimension (for instance, the dimension of social, national, or international classes, of political struggles within nation states, problems of citizenship or nationality, of party strategies, etc.) is superior or inferior, a primary or a secondary concern, fundamental or not. All that depends, at every instant, on new assessments of what is urgent in, first and foremost, singular situations, and of their structural implications. For such assessment, there is, by definition, no pre-existing criterion or absolute calculability; analysis must begin anew every day everywhere, without ever being guaranteed.
by prior knowledge. It is on this condition, on the condition constituted by this injunction, that there is, if there is, action, decision and political responsibility - repoliticization. The 'undecidable' has never been, for me, the opposite of decision: it is the condition of decision wherever decision cannot be deduced from an existing body of knowledge [un savoir] as it would be by a calculating machine. Incidentally, I nowhere speak of a New International that 'declares itself without class', as Lewis says; nor do I speak 'in the absence of class considerations'. What I say, precisely, at the end of a long discussion that I cannot reproduce here, but would ask those interested to reread, is that the alliance or 'link' which forms this International can be forged, and is in fact being forged, 'without common belonging to a class'.36 That has nothing to do with an 'absence of class considerations', with ignorance or neutralization of what used to be called a class - in any case, the interests of social and economic forces for which we need, it seems to me, more refined analyses. If I am wrong, from the standpoint of knowledge or political action, if my critics think that every International is forged, must be forged, out of 'common belonging to a class', they should say so and demonstrate what they say (something neither Ahmad nor Lewis does), rather than dogmatically anathematizing every discourse that does not take the traditional code of 'class struggle' for granted, or hold it sacred. Another of Lewis's confusions consists in thinking that he can discern, in what I say about the New International, 'an abstract concern with human rights'. But, aside from the fact that, even if this were as clearly the case as Lewis seems to think, he is obliged to admit that there is nothing anti-Marxist about it ('a commitment to human rights'), he says, 'that in its concrete forms is not antithetical to classical Marxism, but which revolutionary Marxists insist is unrealizable short of revolution, and which is properly 'undecidable' in the absence of class considerations', it so happens that I make this allusion to 'common belonging to a class' more precise a few lines earlier. As is, alas, all too often the case, this has escaped the impressionistic, intermittent attention of those who have an interest in making what I say over into an abstract formalism insensitive to social determinations (to say nothing of their confusion on the subject of what I term the 'undecidable'). What I in fact wrote was that a

Indeed, I put such little faith in the abstract concept of 'human rights' that, a bit later, the same discussion calls into question, at least programmatically, but in pursuing a trajectory that my work has been following for a very long time, the metaphysical concept of man [le concept métaphysique de l'homme] which, precisely, finds itself at the center of these 'human rights' [droits de l'homme] (particularly as they are counterposed to an equally 'abstract' concept of the animal).

In the end, I have decided to let remarks of this kind go unanswered, leaving it to the reader to judge Lewis's rhetoric and good faith when, in the same breath, he is moved to write, 'Derrida's International further asserts the desirability of cross-class alliances (bosses alongside workers); its call to membership is addressed most of all to intellectuals - preferably, other deconstructionists.'37 Even a demagogic candidate in the heat of a nineteenth-century electoral campaign would not have dared indulge in this kind of slur. He would not, at any rate, have had the cheek to submit that as an argument in a debate. I would say much the same about another ridiculous accusation, without replying to it or discussing it, so crude and demagogically polemical is a remark of the following sort: 'it may also surprise many deconstructionists [who: which ones?] to learn that the death Derrida mourns is not Marxism's but rather that of a particular regime of state capitalism [for Lewis, this is the only valid definition of Stalinist Bolshevism]. For Marxists, there is nothing to mourn.' (Ah, is that so?)38

I quite agree: 'deconstructionists' (which ones, exactly?) and a good many others are indeed likely to be surprised upon being informed, by Lewis, that I am not wearing mourning for Stalinism. Will they be any less surprised to learn that Lewis, for his part, is not wearing mourning at all? And as I am in the process of identifying the points I will not pause to discuss in Lewis's text, here is at least an initial list:

1. The allegation that I have criticized 'a deficiency of morality in Marxism by equating Leninism and Fascist totalitarianism'. I have never done so anywhere, and no trace of this 'equation' is to be found anywhere in my text - which does not mean that I consider Leninism to be irreproachable and innocent of all 'totalitarianism'.

2. The definition of my work as 'postmodernist', which occurs a
hundred zimes over. This is a gross error, which I have already discussed above. It is exacerbated here by the identification of 'postmodernism, poststructuralism', and the critiques of 'metanarrative'.

(3) The allegation that I claim the working class is shrinking in terms of absolute numbers on a worldwide scale. I have never thought that. Nor have I ever said that classical Marxism cannot account for the homeless as a group, excludes them, and ignores their revolutionary potential. At such moments, I have the feeling that Lewis has a compulsive interest in making me out to be the diabolical last representative, the consummate incarnation of all the real or potential objections, justified or not, that can be directed against Marxism! One ought, rather, to be worried by the increasing rarity of criticism and discussion – and wonder why even those who formulate objections are beginning to be few and far between in this domain.

(4) To say that I seek to 'discredit revolution' both as a political strategy for the present and as a social aspiration for the future is a blatant counter-truth. On more occasions than I care to count (so many that I do not even have the time to look up the references, in Specters of Marx and elsewhere), I have invested the word 'revolution' with a positive, affirmative value, even if the traditional figure and imagery of revolution seem to me to call for certain 'complications...'. Everything that I range under the rubric of 'messianic' 'without messianism' is inconceivable without the reference to revolution moments that interrupt not only states of conservation, but even processes of reform (I insist on the latter point, because Lewis often describes me as a 'reformist' – which, I grant, I can also be in certain specific contexts, for I refuse to make an abstract choice between the allegories, Reform and Revolution). Suffice it to say that I am hard put to recognize anything at all of what I am or do in diagnoses such as: 'Pessimism about the willingness and the ability of the working class to fight for a better society accounts for a great deal of the kind of postmodern theorizing [Specters of Marx] contains. The discussion of messianic, as well as to anyone willing to attend to it, inclines neither to the past nor to passivity. I could show that it is fundamentally ommunistic, if I did not find that category as trivial and uninteresting as the category pessimism, I will say a word about this later. I have already explained what I think about the 'working class' and the category 'postmodernism'.

(5) I have never said, to cite Lewis's formulation, that 'Marxism leads inevitably to the gulag insofar as Marxism seeks to materialize its critical spirit in a real society.' If I thought so, I would have said so. But, if I thought so, how could I have written Specters of Marx? It is true – though this is quite the opposite, in my view – that I am inclined to believe that a certain 'Marxism', an alleged or self-styled 'Marxism', a pseudo-Marxism, was in fact unable to avoid the gulag. But this is not because it sought to 'materialize its critical spirit in a real society'. Quite the contrary! It is precisely because it did not, because it failed sufficiently to 'materialize its critical spirit in a real society'. To be sure, I make no specific analysis of what we might call, using a very inadequate term, the Soviet, Bolshevik, Leninist, or Stalinist 'failure'. That was not what my book set out to do, and I admit that I am not yet capable of offering such an analysis. To date, I have not read anything on this terrible subject that I regard as satisfactory. I thank Lewis for the bibliography he provides me on this question, but I do not find it very helpful (for he does no more than sum up a vague dogmatism, appealing to Bukharin's formula: 'Telegraphically stated, Stalinism is the doctrine of 'socialism in one country'.' Everything then depends on the way one reads and deploys the telegram. By itself, it is very meager: Lewis says nothing convincing about it. If I understand certain of his allusions, he has in mind a refined version (Tony Cliff's, for example) of the Trotskyist interpretation: the degeneration of a workers' state is in reality supposed to have been due to nothing more than the fact that a bureaucracy replaced a bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy is said to have played the same role as the bourgeoisie in the accumulation process and the production of surplus-value. Perhaps. One would have to ask – since it is Lewis who brings up the gulag – how the substitution of a bureaucracy for a bourgeoisie can by itself account for the gulag (I doubt it can), and, above all, if our role here, in the face of the gulag, should be to 'account for' it. Doubtless we need to work out and mobilize a different problematic. Which one? For instance, the one that, articulating psychoanalysis and politics in a new way – something none of those who respond to me in this book do – takes into consideration the experience of death and mourning, and, therefore, of specialization. (Need I recall that my book moves in that direction?) This is necessary to approach both the political assassinations and the gulag, and also, precisely, what is so hastily labeled bureaucratization. I am afraid that the concept of bureaucracy, which has been used and abused, is a most abstract phantom; furthermore, it is not, in my opinion, possible to analyze how the bureaucracy could arise, and, precisely, the ghostly abstraction that constitutes it, without a serious, precise and differentiated theory of the effects of spectrality. Moreover, Lewis says nothing concrete, beyond the unjust accusation he throws at me and the words he puts in my mouth without offering a shred of proof (where have I said something I do not think – that 'Marxism leads inevitably to the gulag insofar as Marxism seeks to materialize its critical spirit in a real society')?; he contents himself with
referring the reader to work that has been carried out elsewhere (‘It is impossible,’ he says, ‘to do justice to the richness of the theory of bureaucratic state capitalism in this space. . . . I am aware that a number of important questions and issues remain after the incomplete summary I have offer of how the theory of “bureaucratic state capitalism” explains the rise of Stalinism. It is not possible on this occasion, however, to pursue other matters, such as . . .’—these follow a list of all manner of real problems that are left unspoken.’) 88

I do not wish to take undue advantage of all of Lewis’s alibis, postponements, and dodges, but I would like to spell out two points: (1) on the one hand, the supposed richness of a theory (conspicuous vacuity) does not necessarily imply that it is pertinent or sufficient; (2) and, on the other hand, given that matters are stated as schematically and programatically as they are here, I find it amusing that Lewis is pleased to chide me for still being ‘metaphysical’ (‘But enough has been indicated to allow the core of the theory to emerge and to know that we stand here a far remove from Derrida’s metaphysical view of the Bolsheviks’ eventual failure.’) 89

Of course—and one could say that this is where the whole problem hes—I do not simply find this program and alibi (the theory of the bureaucracy, of which, to boot, Lewis gives a very sketchy account) highly abstract, schematic and metaphorical in the form in which they are presented. Not only do I believe that anything one might have to say of interest on the subject of the bureaucracy and state capitalism (incidentally, I have no doubt that others could surely say useful, interesting things on this score—but Lewis’s essay only gives the bare bones of an account, in very unconvincing fashion) presupposes thinking ‘spectrality’ by way, precisely, of that ‘hauntology’ whose direction and main lines I indicate in Specters of Marx; I believe above all that the hauntology I discuss is anything but ‘metaphysical’ and ‘abstract’, which is what all the contributors to this volume seem to imply, wrongly, because they have not read or wanted to read me—With the exception of Hamacher, and, perhaps, Montag, who, in a perceptive essay with which I am almost everywhere in agreement, clearly notes that ‘To speak of specters, the lexicon of ontology is insufficient.’ 90

For, immediately after denouncing Derrida’s metaphysical view of the Bolsheviks’ eventual failure’, Lewis, as if to illustrate what he says, discusses this ‘hauntology’, which, for him, is only abstraction and metaphysics. I will come back to this, of course, but let me first say here, in a kind of sledgehammer statement of principle, that the spectral logic I appeal to in Specters of Marx and elsewhere, is, in my view, not metaphysical, but ‘deconstructive’. This logic is required to account for the processes and effects of, if I may be allowed to put it this way, metaphorization, abstraction, idealization, ideologization, and fetishization. (Incidentally, Jameson quite rightly points out that I have consistently demonstrated the impossibility of avoiding the metaphysical.) 91 For no serious Marxist can shrug his shoulders over, say, abstraction, as if it were nothing to speak of. Nor, for that matter, over ‘metaphysics’ as an abstraction. Bureaucratization, for example, is also a phenomenon of abstraction and speculatization. That is something else I have learned from reading Marx: namely, that we need to account for the possibility of the process of abstraction. Marx spent a lifetime analyzing the possibility of abstraction in all spheres of existence. And he taught us, among other things, that we should not shrug off abstraction as if it were nothing to speak of (‘that just an abstraction’), as if it were the insubstantiality of the imaginary, and so on. Need I repeat that my book is also a critique of abstraction? Let me quote once again, among a host of similar passages in Specters of Marx, the page I have already recommended to Spivak’s distracted attention (‘It is even more a certain emancipatory and messianic affirmation, a certain experience of the promise that one can try to liberate from any dogmatism and even from any metaphysico-religious determination, from any messianism. And a promise must promise to be kept, that is, not to remain “spiritual” or “abstract” but to produce 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.’). 92

In order to spell out the following, I find more ‘metaphysical abstraction’, more ‘bad abstraction’, more destabilizing and delegitimating abstraction in Ahmad, Lewis, or Eagleton than in myself, indeed, to borrow Lewis’s amusing term. I find more ‘pessimism’ in those Marxists who would like to reproduce the present obsolete forms of organization represented by the state, Party and International. To be sure, I must confess that I simply cannot bring myself to take seriously the trivial opposition between optimism and pessimism as Lewis employs it: the messianicity I speak of, like the ‘experience of the impossible’ 93 at the heart of messianicity, is the strange alley [alliance] of ‘pessimism’ and ‘optimism’ that underlies, it seems to me, all serious revolutionary approaches to the political realm (la chose politique). And since it follows from this that one can just as well say ‘optimism’ as ‘pessimism’, I make little use of either of these pseudo-categories.

At the point I have reached in these responses, it is perhaps time to mark out, in Jameson’s remarkable response, certain areas of debate, of agreement and disagreement. I will begin with the two themes I just recalled: social classes and the messianic...
Classes. Although Lewis appeals to Jameson against me, I by no means take what Jameson says on this subject as a critique of what I put forward. For I find myself in basic agreement with Jameson: I have, at any rate, the same basic orientation he does vis-à-vis the following proposition, even if I do not subscribe to the letter of all he says (the reader should reread his contribution, which I cannot cite at length here):

As for class, however, merely mentioned in passing as one of those traditional features of Marxism that can be jettisoned en routic by any truly postcontemporary Marxism — this ultimate support that would be the identity and the self-identity of a social class (Spectre de Marx, p. 97/Specters of Marx, p. 56) — it seems to me appropriate to take this opportunity to show how the very widespread conception of class is itself a kind of caricature. It is certain that — even among Marxists — the demarcation of the concept of class has become an obligatory gesture today...

I feel that there is a close proximity of views between Jameson and myself when he writes, a page further on:

And this is of course exactly the gesture I will myself reproduce here, by reminding you that class itself is not at all this simple-minded and unmixed concept in the first place, not at all a primary building block of the most obvious and orthodox ontologies (I note in passing that this is my ontology and ontologization in general which disturb Jameson as they do me, thus setting us apart from all those who more or less directly hold out an ontology and an ontologism against me, especially and above all Negri; I will come back to this), but rather in its concrete moments something a good deal more complex, internally conflicted and reflexive than any of those stereotypes.

Those stereotypes are all I wish to contest: they have greater currency in discourse of a Marxist type than Jameson seems, or pretends, to think. Otherwise he would not insist as heavily as he does on all these risks. And I subscribe to what he says before and after the passage I have quoted, as well as to all the indications he provides of those complexities and areas of conflict. I am not sure, however, that I understand or, consequently, can accept the word 'allegory', which he goes on to use a number of times; it doubtless calls for clarifications and a debate that would take us beyond the bounds of this brief discussion (see, in its entirety, the conclusion to the subsection entitled 'Undermining the unmixed', where Jameson and I are obviously in very close agreement, as we are on many other points).

I continue to have reservations concerning the word 'allegory', which Jameson assigns so important a role in the context just evoked, and am still undecided about it. I would, however, firmly reject the use of the words 'aesthetic' on the one hand, and, on the other, 'Utopia', 'Utopianism', or 'Utopian', to characterize my work.

(A) The aesthetic. This is a motif on which Jameson places a great deal of weight, with consequences that are all the more serious in that, as the result of a still more unfortunate misunderstanding, he ranges the reference to spectrality under this 'umbrella'. As I have far too much to say about my reasons for regarding this category as inadequate, I will provisionally limit myself to making only three points here. (1) Whether or not I succeed, everything I write tends to show that even where my discourse does not posit any philosophical thesis, and, indeed, expressly refrains from doing so, and even where it questions notions both of thesis and position (Setzung), and also of philosophical theme or system, it is nevertheless not an aesthetic affirmation (which would, moreover, be exposed and vulnerable to the same questions: a value or evaluation in the aesthetic realm is a 'position', and my gestures with regard to the value of form or of taste are anything but formalistic or dogmatic). Even less is my discourse the affirmation of a 'minimalist' aesthetic (and I think I can say that this 'even less' is not a 'minimalist' upping of the ante). (2) It is not enough to call the idea of 'systematicity' in philosophy into question (the system is only one form of coherence or 'consistency', a form that, moreover, appears late in the history of philosophy) in order then to take refuge in the aesthetic or in 'personal aesthetic tastes'. I have multiplied 'deconstructive' gestures vis-à-vis the traditional categories 'system' and 'aesthetic'. (3) When Jameson writes that 'what saves the day here is the central formal role of the Heideggerian problematic, which assigns a minimal narrative to the entire project', or, again, when he affirms that Rorty's aestheticism (I am, in fact, not at all, truly not at all in agreement with Rorty, especially where he takes his inspiration from my work) is, as aestheticism, more radical than mine, because I arrange 'to rescue the discipline secretly in this backdoor Heideggerian manner . . .', etc., I would merely recall that my mistrust of this 'minimal narrative' and Heideggerian axiomatic has been abiding, frequently emphasized and legible. Everywhere. I even have the unpardonable pretension of thinking that, among attentive readers of Heidegger (I cannot say whether there are many of them, but I am trying to be one), I do not know any more reticent than I am in this regard. I will not, then, allow myself to be trapped in the alternative 'aestheticism/Heideggerianism'. I like to think that there are other ways; they are the ones that have always attracted me.

Let me add something that might bring me even closer to Jameson on this point. It is perhaps not uninteresting or irrelevant after all to speak of an 'aesthetic' of my texts; it perhaps does 'make sense to talk
about something like an "aesthetic" [the word is in inverted commas, is it not? Jameson puts it in inverted commas] of the Derridean text. One could perhaps write pertinent, interesting, things, even theses, on this point. But I would then simply say, by way of response to Jameson, but also to all those - they are legion - who think they can 're- aestheticize' matters in this book, reducing its concepts (the concept of the 'specter', for instance) to figures of rhetoric, or my demonstrations to literary experiments and effects of style: none of what matters to me, and, above all, may matter to the discussion under way (even since, precisely, my texts have managed to expose themselves to, or enter into, discussion), can be reduced to, or elucidated by, this 'aesthetic' approach. Even if my protest here is not sufficient to lay the allegation (and, often, accusatory suspicion) of the aesthetic or aestheticism to rest, even if the evidence provided by all I have written on this subject is still not sufficient to disarm this critical interpretation. I may perhaps be allowed to bring the following very unsophisticated argument to bear: the number, duration and, sometimes, vehemence of the discussions which have sprung up around these texts suggests what is at stake in them is not a matter of aesthetics, and even less of the order of some minimalist aesthetic. At issue is the question of how one writes or argues, of what the norms that apply here are (especially the academic norms). This question is anything but 'aesthetic'; it is particularly, and perhaps above all, political.

(B) 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. Jameson regularly and repeatedly translates everything I say about the 'messianic' as 'Utopianism'. As this is, I believe, at least a twofold misunderstanding, a single sentence of Jameson's will permit me to identify two points of disagreement, one bearing on messianicity itself, and the other on the ostensibly Benjaminian heritage of this concept. Thus Jameson writes: 'indeed we will later on want to see in Specters of Marx the overt expression of a persistent if generally subterranean Utopianism, which he himself (shunning that word) will prefer to call "a weak messianic power", following Benjamin.’ What does indeed call for explanation, first of all, is, precisely, my reason for wanting to 'shun' the word 'Utopia'. 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 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 toward toward the event, is at the same time a waiting without expectation [une attente sans attente] (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).

Although there is a waiting here, an apparently passive limit to anticipation (I cannot calculate everything, predict and program all that is coming, the future in general, etc., and this limit to calculability or knowledge is also, for a finite being, the condition of praxis, decision, action and responsibility), this exposure to the event, which can either come to pass or not (condition of absolute otherness), is inseparable from a promise and an injunction that call for commitment without delay [sans attendre], and, in truth, rule out abstention. Even if messianicity as I describe it here can seem abstract (precisely because we have to do here with a universal structure of relation to the event, to the concrete otherness of him who/that is coming, a way of thinking the event 'before' or independently of any ontology), we have to do here with the most concrete urgency, and the most revolutionary as well. 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. As this unconditional messianicity must thereafter negotiate its conditions in one or another singular, practical situation, we have to do here with the locus of an analysis and evaluation, and, therefore, of a responsibility. These must be re-examined at every moment, on the eve and in the course of each event. But that this re-examination has to be carried out, and carried out without delay - this is an ineluctability whose imperative, always here-now, in singular fashion, can in no case yield to the allure of Utopia, at least not to what the word literally signifies or is ordinarily taken to mean. Indeed, one could not so much as account for the possibility of Utopia in general without reference to what I call messianicity.

Nor does this non-Utopian way of thinking messianicity belong - not really, not essentially - to the Benjaminian tradition that Jameson and Hamacher are, to be sure, right to recall, though they proceed a bit hastily, perhaps, when they reduce what I have to say to that tradition, or re-inscribe it here. I too evoke this Benjaminian tradition, in a note. But, in that note, I discuss the differences as much as I do the consonance ('consonant . . . despite many differences'). For I do not believe, as Hamacher and Jameson do, that the continuity between the Benjaminian motif and what I am attempting is determinate - or, above all, that it is sufficient to account for what is going on here. One should not be too quick to dismiss these differences.
supposing that Benjamin's purpose were, in itself, sufficiently clear and identifiable for one to be able to identify something else with it. I do not mention the possibility of this discontinuity with Benjamin in order to lay claim to some sort of originality, but simply to clarify, in programmatic fashion, a number of points.

(1) In the text of Benjamin's to which I referred, the reference to Jewish messianism seems to me to be constitutive— and, to all appearances, ineradicable. That appearances may be deceptive is a possibility I do not exclude, but, in that case, a considerable effort would be required to dissociate the Benjaminian allusion to a 'messianic power', however 'weak', from any and all forms of Judaism, or, again, to dissociate a certain Jewish tradition from the usual figures or representations of messianism, of the kind that can dominate, not only the prevailing docera, but sometimes even the most sophisticated orthodoxies. It may be that what I am attempting to do tends in that direction. But I am not at all sure; for, in principle, my use of the word 'messianic' bears no relation to any messianistic tradition. That is why I speak, precisely, of 'messianicity without messianism'. And that is why I wrote, if I may insist on the letter of this short sentence, that 'the following paragraph names messianism, or, more precisely, [the] messianic without our messianism, a "weak messianic power" [eine schwache messianische Kraft; Benjamin's emphasis]'. The interpolated phrase, 'the messianic without messianism', is, of course, my own, not Benjamin's. It is not, then, an appositional phrase, translation, or equivalent expression; I wanted, rather, to mark an orientation and a break, a tendency running from weakening to announcement, from the 'weak' to the 'without'— and, consequently, the asymptote, and only the asymptote, of a possible convergence of Benjamin's idea with the one I would like to propose. Between 'weak' and 'without', there is a leap— perhaps an infinite leap. A messianicity without messianism is not a watered-down messianism, a diminishment of the force of the messianic expectation. It is a different structure, a structure of existence that I attempt to take into account by way of a reference less to religious traditions than to possibilities whose analysis I would like to pursue, refine, complicate, and contest— for example, the analysis offered by a theory of speech acts or a phenomenology of existence (in the twofold Husserlian and Heideggerian tradition); the possibility of taking into account, on the one hand, a paradoxical experience of the performative of the promise (but also of the threat at the heart of the promise) that organizes every speech act, every other performative, and even every preverbal experience of the relation to the other; and, on the other hand, at the point of intersection with this shattering promise, the horizon of awaiting

[attend] that informs our relationship to time— to the event, to that which happens [ce qui arrive], to the one who arrives [l'arrivant], and to the other. Involved this time, however, would be a waiting without waiting, a waiting whose horizon is, as it were, punctuated by the event (which is waited for without being waited); we would have to do with a waiting for an event, for someone or something that, in order to happen or 'arrive', must exceed and surprise every determinant anticipation. No future, no time-to-come [à venir], no other, otherwise: no event worthy of the name, no revolution. And no justice. At the point of intersection of these two styles of thought (speech act theory and the onto-phenomenology of temporal or historical existence), but also against both of them, the interpretation of the messianic that I propose does not, it will perhaps be agreed, much resemble Benjamin's. It no longer has any essential connection with what messianism may be taken to mean, that is, at least two things: on the one hand, the memory of a determinate historical revelation, whether Jewish or Judeo-Christian, and, on the other, a relatively determinate messiah-figure. The very structure of messianicity without messianism itself suffices to exclude these two conditions. Not that I think we must reject them, or that we must necessarily disengage or do away with the historical figures of messianism; these are, however, only possible on the universal and quasi-transcendental ground of the structure constituted by this 'without messianism'.

Here, be it said in passing, everything seems to come down to the interpretation and 'logic' of the little word 'without'. I have treated this question elsewhere at length, in connection with Blanchot, and in his wake. It is well known that Blanchot makes apparently paradoxical use of the preposition 'without', sometimes placing it between two homonyms that are virtually synonymous, between two homonyms whose synonymy is broken up at the very heart of the analogy which fuses their meanings (la mort sans mort, le rapport sans rapport, etc.). Without does not necessarily designate negativity, even less does it designate annihilation. If this preposition effects a certain abstraction, it also accounts for the necessary effects of abstraction in so doing— of the abstraction of the 'there is', of the abstraction that 'there is'. Initially, I imagined that I would be able to organize all these 'responses' (responses without response, of course) by subordinating them to an analysis of the word 'without'— and of the way most of the contributors to this volume use that word. Some of them are serene and confident that they can make it serve as a weapon against me (Eagleton, with his usual triumphant air, doubtless assumes that he will spark the plaudits, mirth, or wrath of the crowd by denouncing, starting with the very tide of his essay, a 'Marxism without Marxism!'). But yes, that is precisely the point!
I am happy to confirm this for him, and to sign and seal my deposition. Others—for example, Macherey—express legitimate misgivings about a 'dematerialized Marx', but in agreeable fashion. This is, in intelligent, serious fashion: 'Marx without social classes, without the exploitation of labor, without surplus-value... '(my italics). Macherey is right to conclude that such a Marx 'risks,' in fact, no longer being anything but his own ghost.70 But it is obviously riskier to go on to imply that a 'ghost' is nothing, that it is less than nothing, without any materiality, without any body, a pure, illusory appearance—and to suppose that the true, good Marxists have rid themselves of all 'ghosts' and all spectrality. For that brings us back, once again, to the spectral logic that certain of my readers, in this volume, want to exorcize, conjure away, deny, or ignore at any price, in eminently traditional fashion.71 It goes without saying that if a ghost is a ghost, and nothing more, nothing more than nothing, nothing come of nothing, then my book does not deserve a second's attention (a possibility that must never be ruled out; I would be the last to do so). But the same would have to be said of all the possibilities that have something in common with this spectrality, although they cannot be reduced to it (ideology, fetishism, value—both exchange-value and use-value—language, everything produced by mourning work, a negativity, an idealization, an abstraction, a virtualization, etc.). And as I have now come to the allusion to Marx 'without classes', let me briefly recall my response to Lewis, who was also alarmed by the notion of an International 'without class', and who, in the sentence 'without coordination, without party, without country... without co-citizenship, without common belonging to a class', underscores only 'without common belonging to a class': the point is not to eliminate or deny class affiliations, any more than citizenship or parties, but rather to make an appeal for an International whose essential basis or motivating force would not be class, citizenship, or party. It does not follow that one need not take class, citizenship, or party into consideration—and as rigorously as possible, depending on the determinate context. Moreover, if Lewis is unsettled by the phrase 'without classes', why does he not balk at 'without citizenship'? Because it would be ridiculous to express surprise over the fact that an International (even the old International) should constitute itself 'without' reference to citizenship. The 'without' has nothing negative about it, and does not at all imply that the citizens who make a commitment to this International therefore cease to be, at another level, citizens, or to give due consideration to their citizenship. The same might be said about party and class, even at the moment when 'Party' and 'class' are ceasing to be the major reference or dominant paradigm (something which I do in fact believe, today; here I doubtless part company with

Lewis and a number of other 'Marxists'—not all 'Marxists'). All of this is difficult enough not to have anything to do with the 'third way' the old rhetoric of certain Marxists is accustomed to denouncing. Their aim is to convince themselves, or to affect to believe, that they are dealing with something familiar, at a juncture in which, no longer finding the usual landmarks, they cannot, after all, claim to be confronting an enemy from the right, a 'class enemy': this is how Ahmad, with Lewis's staunch approval, seeks to define what I am about: 'third way', but that's old hat! What they really like is the family, authenticated genealogy, family resemblance: it reassures them to recognize the old familiar things, to recognize each other as they reassure each other; that way one knows who's who, who belongs to which family and which family line: 'We are thus on a very familiar territory: deconstruction as the Third Way, opposed certainly to the Right but also to “everything”, as [Remi] put it earlier, that the word “International” has historically signified.'72

The figures of messianism would have to be (to put matters too hastily here, crisscrossing all the codes in a somewhat confused manner) deconstructed as 'religious', ideological, or fetishistic formations, whereas messianicity without messianism remains, for its part, unconstructible, like justice. It remains unconstructible because the movement of any deconstruction presupposes it—not as a ground of certainty, the firm ground of a solutio (to cite Macherey's hasty interpretation),73 but in line with another modality.

What is to be said of this 'quasi-transcendental' supposition? And why maintain the reference to the messianic, even while claiming to rule out all messianism, precisely in describing a universal structure (waiting without awaiting another future-to-come and an other in general; promise of a revolutionary justice that will interrupt the ordinary course of history, etc.)? Why this name, the messianic or the messiah? I shall come back to this in my third point, where the greatest difficulty resides.

(2) For I wonder if Benjamin does not link the privileged moments of this 'weak messianic' power (eine schwache messianische Kraft) to determine his co-cultural phases, or, indeed, crises. The hypothesis makes sense, at least, given the political context and the date of his essay (the Hitler-Stalin pact at the beginning of the war), even if that does not suffice to make it certain. Thus there would be, for Benjamin, critical moments (pre-revolutionary or post-revolutionary), moments of hope or disappointment, in short, dead ends during which a simulacrum of messianism serves as an alibi. Whence the strange adjective 'weak'. I am not sure I would define the messianicity I speak of as a
power (it is, no less, a vulnerability or a kind of absolute powerlessness), but even if I did define it as a power, as the movement of a desire, as the attraction, invincible elan or affirmation of an unpredictable future-to-come (or even of a past-to-come-again), the experience of the non-present, of the non-living present in the living present (of the spectral), of that which lives on [du sur-vivant]24 (absolutely past or absolutely to come, beyond all presentation or representability, etc.), I would never say, in speaking of this 'power', that it is strong or weak, more or less strong or more or less weak. For, in my view, the universal, quasi-transcendental structure that I call messianicity without messianism is not bound up with any particular moment of (political or general) history or culture (Abrahamic or any other); and it does not serve any sort of messianism as an alibi, does not mime or reiterate any sort of messianism, does not confirm or undermine any sort of messianism.

(3) I must further complicate this schema. By way of objection to the foregoing, one might make the following argument, which I have not omitted to bring forward against myself, between the lines: Since you say that the 'messianic' is independent of all forms of 'messianism' ('without messianism'), why not describe the universal structure in question without even mentioning the messianic, without making allusion to any messiah whatever, to the Messiah-figure who so evidently maintains an ultimate affiliation with one language, one culture and one 'revelation'? The objection is legitimate, and obvious enough not to have escaped my attention; here, then, is the response I was constrained to give – to begin with, to myself. An essentially strategic response, it takes account of a complex situation; this calculation can therefore not be summed up in a single word.

(a) On the one hand, this word (messianic) is, in my estimation, relatively arbitrary or extrinsic; it has merely rhetorical or pedagogical value. Through reference to a familiar cultural landscape, it makes it easier to understand, in certain contexts, what that which I accordingly call messianicity resembles (what it resembles, I hasten to add, without identifying itself with it, or reducing itself to it). In a context in which what I intend by messianicity is understood, if it comes to be understood some day, it should be possible to talk about this not only without reference to traditional messianism or a 'Messiah', but even without the 'without'. But by that point, under the old words, all the names will have been changed.

(b) But, on the other hand, matters are not so simple. Beneath this arbitrary choice and pedagogical usefulness, there lurks, perhaps, a more irreducible ambiguity. I find it hard to decide whether messianic-icity without messianism (qua universal structure) precedes and conditions every determinate, historical figure of messianism (in which case it would be radically independent of all such figures, and would remain heterogeneous from them, making the name itself a matter of merely incidental interest), or whether the possibility of thinking this independence has only come about or revealed itself as such by way of the 'Biblical' events which name the messiah and make him a determinate figure.25

(c) On the latter hypothesis (which I have to leave open, and suspended, for I have no answer to the question posed in this form – and I am for the moment retaining the word 'messianic' so that the question remains posed), it is harder to treat the reference to the messianic as a provisional, didactic tool – even if the messianic is strictly determined as 'without messianism'. This for several reasons, of which there are at least four: I will lay them out in elliptical, economical, cut-and-dried fashion here.

(i) To begin with, one cannot, it seems to me, ignore or deny the fact that the event named 'Marx' (with all its components, premises and consequences) is rooted in a European and Judeo-Christian culture. What is in question here is not a delineable empirical sphere. It is necessary to assess all the stakes of Marx's implication in this culture, down to the logic and rhetoric of the discourse inherited from him, even in societies or cultures at a far remove from this Biblico-European tradition. Marx, and every 'Marxism', have appeared in a culture in which 'messiah' means something, and this culture has not remained 'local' or easily circumscribable in the history of humanity. It is always useful to recall this sedimentation, if only to draw diverse political consequences from it.

(ii) In the second place, Marxist culture, down to the very letter of its language, has in its way participated, willy-nilly, in the phenomenon I have elsewhere dubbed 'monothalitization.'26 It would therefore be difficult (and highly abstract to boot) to purge it of every messianic reference. My essay on Marx – I beg the reader's indulgence for the insolence of this remark – is only an element in a structure [dispositif] that is not limited to Marx.

(iii) No critique of religion, or of each determinate religion, however necessary or radical that critique may be, should or can, in my view, impugn faith in general. As I have tried to show elsewhere as well, especially in ‘Foi et savoir…’, the experience of belief, of credit, of faith in the pledged word (beyond all knowledge and any 'constitutive' possibility) is part of the structure of the social bond or the relation to the other in general, of the injunction, the promise, and the performativity that all knowledge and all political action, and in particular all
revolutions, imply. The critique of religion itself, as a scientific or political undertaking, makes appeal to this 'faith'. It therefore seems to me impossible to eliminate all reference to faith. The expression 'the messianic without messianism' appeared to me well suited to translating this difference between faith and religion, at least provisionally.

(iv) Here we touch upon the sensitive point of the 'question of ideology': What is to be said of the concept of ideology? Of the indestructibility of the ideological? What, above all, is to be said of the exemplary - that is, irreplaceable - role which religion plays in the emergence of this Marxian concept? Leaving to one side a historical urgency, namely, the fact that the geopolitical situation today requires us to rethink the question of religion (this is a point on which I fully agree with Jameson),77 I must here ask those who do not want to take my use of the word 'messianic' and my reference to a spectral logic seriously to reread certain pages of Specters of Marx. I am thinking, in particular, of everything which seeks to pave the way for a response to the question 'What is ideology?' by insisting on two forms of 'irreducibility': on the one hand, the irreducibly specific character of the specter, and, on the other, the irreducibility of the religious model in the construction of the concept of ideology.78 'Only the reference to the religious world allows one to explain the autonomy of the ideological';79 or again: 'The religious is thus not one ideological phenomenon or phantasmatic production among others.'80

The consequences of this hypothesis, if one admits it, are formidable: every ideological phenomenon would be marked by a degree of religiosity; and, as it is impossible radically to dissociate the phainesthai from the phantasma, to dissociate the appearing (of what appears) from the spectrality of the spectral, it follows that, like the ideological, like the religious, the spectral too is, at root, as indestructible as it is non-delimitable. It is just as hard to make of it a circumscribable object or field as it is to separate pure faith from any and all religious determination. We are here in the most difficult zone, that of the 'theory of ideology' (present or absent) in Marx. It is from this vantage point that I have begun to understand, admire and approve of the opening of Rastko Močnik's essay - although I must confess that, for lack of competence, I have been unable to follow, in all their richness, the most highly formalized passages of this text, those which integrate the problematics of Levi-Strauss, Lacan and Lefort. Nevertheless, I find myself in agreement with what Močnik says to the effect that the very possibility of a theory of ideology is ruined by 'the very idea of ideology'. I would only add that the fact that a theory of ideology is impossible, in the strict sense of the word 'theory' (a formalizable system of objectifying theorems, the formulations of which lie outside

the field of objectivity thus delimited; in other words, in the present instance, a non-ideological theory of ideology, a theory of ideology or science of ideology, as they used to say in France thirty years ago, divested of all ideologemes), does not necessarily have to be regarded as a negative limit or catastrophe. In the face of this, by now, classical situation, one needs, perhaps, to find a different way of thinking both the 'ideological' (the word has perhaps seen its day, in the history of ideas of the idear or edon) and the relationships among thought, philosophy, science and, precisely, 'theory', together with everything that interests all of us here: what still remains to 'be done', what remains irreducible to the constative, to knowledge (which a certain Marx called, sharply limiting the notion, 'interpreting': interpreting the world, when the point is to 'change' it). If I had not already gone on at too great length, I would attempt to show that what I here mean by 'thinking' (which cannot be reduced to philosophy, scientific theory, knowledge in general, although to say so is not to exclude or denigrate them) calls for the coming of an event, i.e., calls precisely for that which 'changes' (in the transitive and intransitive sense of this odd word).

Let us conclude here, provisionally, with a smile - the smile that the specter of Marx - like Specters of Marx - never lost. I owe a debt of gratitude to Antonio Negri for having, in his way, left this smile floating about the lips of a specter - though it is not easy to say which one. After reading, gratefully, 'The Specter's Smile', I would have liked to say to Negri, in brief (for this short response has already gone on too long): I agree, agree about everything with the exception of one word, 'ontology'. Why do you cling to that word? Why do you want to put forward a new ontology, after having duly noted the transformation that renders the Marxist paradigm of ontology obsolete? Why do you want to re-ontologize at all costs, at the risk of restoring everything to order? to the grand order, but to order? I was first given pause, in my enthusiastic approval, when, somewhere, I came across a first reference to ontology. To be sure, it was initially included to describe and follow a move of my own:

Transferred onto the terrain of the critique of political economy, this project (Marx's The German Ideology) of a spectral reading of ideology is applied to the categories of society and capital, develops ontologically, and becomes definitively fixed in Capital (Derrida speaks of this in Specters, pp. 147-58). The specters narrated herein have a particular ontological pertinence: they reveal the complete functioning of the law of value.81

Yes, I understand; but, to begin with, the word 'ontological' as such is not to be found in Marx (one should perhaps not be too quick to
reinsert it in his text); moreover, I was trying to show in this passage that it is in re-ontologizing the process, in re-philosophizing his concepts, that Marx limits the pertinence and force of his turn toward spectral logic. Negri is certainly a better Marxist than I am, he is more faithful to the spirit of Marx than I am when he describes this movement; but, in doing so, he cedes to what I think 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, concrete reality of the process of genesis hidden behind the specter’s mask. Let me recall that when Negri, in the first part of his essay (in sum, the part devoted to commentary), speaks of ‘real genesis’ and ‘masking’, he reproduces (without, it is true, adopting it) precisely that gesture in Marx which I see as being still metaphysical, because it is ontological. Here is what I say in the passage Negri alludes to, of which I will cite only the following lines, while referring the interested reader to the whole discussion that surrounds them and forms the backbone (I dare not say the thesis) of my book:

In their common denunciation, in what is at once most critical and ontological about it, Marx and Saint Max are also heirs to the Platonic tradition, more precisely to the one that associates in a strict fashion image with specter, and idol with phantasm, with the phantasm in its phantomatic or errant dimension as living-dead. The ‘phantasm’ or the Phaeo (81d) or the Timaeus (71a) do not separate from the eidola, are figures of dead souls, they are the souls of the dead.

I was attempting to bring out the philologocentric tendency of this metaphysics, the patrimony that has always linked it to the question of the father (that is why the title of the present essay, ‘Marx & Sons’, is anything but a joke). I spelled out, somewhat further on:

It is doubtless a hypothesis without originality, but one whose consequence can be measured by the constancy of an immense tradition, or rather one must say of the philosophical patrimony such as it is handed down, through the most patricidal mutations, from Plato to Saint Max, to Marx and beyond.

The lineage of this patrimony is wrought, but never interrupted, by the question of the idea, the question of the concept and the concept of the concept, the very one that harbors the whole problematic of The German Ideology (nominalism, conceptualism, but also rhetoric and logic, literal meaning, proper meaning, figurative meaning, and so forth).

To this point, it seems to me, there is no fundamental disagreement between Negri and me. Nor is there any disagreement when, wondering what we can do with the ‘Marxist specters’ today, Negri notes that a mutation has occurred, especially as far as ‘the labor paradigm’ is concerned (I noted this as well). He himself says: ‘We agree in deeming the Marxist ontology out of date, and this ontological description of exploitation, in particular.’

The disagreement, misunderstanding, or, rather, ‘disadjustment’ sets in at the point where Negri undertakes to do two things that seem to me to be equally open to question. (1) He believes that he can make out a movement of ‘nostalgia’, of ‘melancholy’, of a ‘work of mourning’, in what I am doing; and, above all, he thinks he has detected a fundamental, determinant note here. (2) He believes that he can remedy this sad negativity with the help of, in sum, a new ‘ontology’—one he calls ‘post-deconstructive’.

(1) First of all, I believe, and have often emphatically stated, that deconstruction, which is affirmative right down to this conception of the messianic without messianism, is anything but a negative movement of nostalgia and melancholy (this is so clearly what I think, and I have said it so often, that I will perhaps not be required to do so again). It is true that this has not prevented me from reflecting, just as insistently, on the work of mourning (or from generalizing this concept—notably in Glas—to the point of making it coextensive with work in general). And, of course, I have also done so, massively, in Specters of Marx. But one can discuss the work of mourning, analyze its necessity and political effects across the globe (after the alleged ‘death of Marx’ or of the communist idea)—one can be constrained to do so for all kinds of reasons, without therefore relinquishing a certain gaiety of affirmative thinking. Even without recalling the many texts and talks I have devoted to this possibility, I think it is fair to say that Specters of Marx is anything but a sad book: notwithstanding a gravity that I am also not prepared to relinquish, it is as if I see it, a gay, humorous book. It is more light-hearted than I am, undoubtedly, but my books are not necessarily or solely self-portraits; it may be that they transform themselves into a kind of antithesis of myself. What is more, contrary to what Lewis too seems to assume, I do not myself mourn, and feel no nostalgia at all, truly none at all, for what has just vanished from the face of the earth after having usurped the figure of communism. But that does not prevent me from analyzing the paradoxical symptoms of a geopolitical mourning, or trying to articulate them with a new logic of the relations between the unconscious and politics. Spectral logic—I will not go back over this—seemed to me indispensable here. Trying to put it to work in rigorous fashion is, I would like to testify, not a sad experience. I often take a great deal of pleasure in it. And even if this is a rather peculiar pleasure, I do not recognize it in anything of what Negri describes as falling under
the shadow of that melancholic libertinism when, at the end of another revolutionary age, men who were still free testified in refusal of the Counter-Reformation and awaited the martyrdom of the Inquisition. We cannot content ourselves with this, perhaps because our Marxist heritage has already been proven in practice; more likely because—indeed, in dealing with specters—the eye, the other senses, and the mind begin to detect delineations of new realities. So is it possible then to proceed beyond the level of moral protest?  

I cannot content myself with this, either: not because ‘our Marxist heritage has already been proven in practice’ (I do not believe that at all: there, my disagreement is sharp and emphatic), but, above all, because the analogy with a paradigm identifiable in another age is one of those reassuring gestures of which, as I have already said, I am always wary, like the ‘family resemblances’ one thinks one can make out, or like ‘familiarity’ in general. Even supposing that I suffer from, or enjoy, some sort of ‘melancholic libertinism’, I do not believe the least trace of it can be found in what I try to think and say in Specters of Marx, which concerns, precisely, the delineations of new things—I hesitate to say, for the reasons stated below, ‘delineations of new realities’. Nor do I think there is any question, in Specters of Marx, of simple ‘moral protest’ or of reducing everything to it, although it is also difficult to expunge every trace of the moral or of ‘religion’, or, at any event, every ‘act of faith’, from a revolutionary injunction, even with a view to establishing the new ‘post-deconstructive ontology’ Negri seems to be in quest of. Negri is unjust when, on the subject of the ‘moral’, he says: ‘There’s a word that rarely appears in Derrida’s book: exploitation.’ I do not know if the word appears there, or, if so, how often, but I am sure that the reference to the ‘concept’ and the ‘thing’ is recurrent in the book, and more or less central—at least in the chapter ‘Wears and Tears (tableau of an ageless world)’ and in the evocation of the ten plagues of the new world order. Doubtless the classic concept of exploitation is subjected to a certain degree of deconstructive turbulence (the question of ontology, again, and therefore that of the proper, of the appropriable, of proper or alienated subjectivity and what I call, everywhere, ex-appropration—the logic of which singularly complicates the traditional discourse on exploitation and alienation). But that in no sense means that suffering and oppression, the ‘exploitation of man by man’, are passed over in silence. To be sure, I also speak of the exploitation of the animal by man (but let us leave this capital question open).

(2) Above all, the re-ontologization Negri proposes is hardly likely to bring back the gaiety he imagines I have been robbed of. Nor will his new ontology—emancipatory or emancipating—persuade me to reconsider, at least for now, in view of the arguments advanced, the entire deconstruction of the ‘ontological’ motif itself, at its root. That deconstruction (which, let me point out again, is neither a critique nor a simple delegitimization) is reaffirmed and developed in Specters of Marx. But, whether I am right or wrong, this is a point which we could not discuss seriously without engaging in a long, excessively long debate about everything that has occupied me for the past thirty years. I therefore decline, provisionally, to enter into that debate again here. But Negri will perhaps allow me to say that it is his concern to rehabilitate ontology, even if the ontology in question is ‘post-deconstructive’, as he puts it, which seems to me to bear the marks of mourning, nostalgia and, indeed, melancholy. Ontology involves, indeed is, on my view, mourning work (sometimes doomed to failure and to melancholy [the well-known theme of the melancholy of Aristotle and Heidegger—who, incidentally, speaks of the melancholy peculiar to philosophers])—carried out with a view to reconstituting, saving, redeeming a full presence of the present-being, where that present-being, in accordance with what is not merely a lack or flaw [défaut], but also an opportunity, appears to be lacking [faire défaut]: difference.

I do not want to turn Negri’s own words against him unfairly: but, at the point in his text where he twice packs me off to prison,” I wonder if he does not do so in order to deny that he, for his part, is still confused, out-of-it-in-it, within the walled perimeter of a new ontological fatherland, a liberated ontology, an ontology of self-liberation. In, for example, a Spinozan sense of the word ‘liberty’.

As we have neither the time nor the space here for a gigantomachy, in the manner of The Sophist, over the essence of being (l’être de l’être) and ontology in general, I offer Negri, so as to conclude with a smile, an armistice based on a compromise: perhaps the two of us could, from now on, agree to regard the word ‘ontology’ as a password, a word arbitrarily established by convention, a shibboleth, which only pretends to mean what the word ‘ontology’ has always meant. In that case we could, between us, use a coded language, like Marranos. In philosophical company, we could act as if we were still speaking the language of metaphysics or ontology, knowing full well, between us, that this was not at all so. For I found the allusions to the Marranos in ‘The Specter’s Smile’ highly seductive. I know that Negri was thinking, as always, of Spinoza. But no matter. He probably does not know that I have often played, as seriously as can be imagined, at secretly presenting myself as a sort of Marrano. I have done so in particular, and openly, in Aporias, Confessions and Archive Fever—and, doubtless, elsewhere as well. And I have done so less openly everywhere—for example, in Le Monolingue de l’Autre. But I will not unveil all the other scenes of this simulacrum.
GHOSTLY DEMARCATIONS

What if, to conclude, we floated the idea that not only Spinoza, but Marx himself, Marx the liberated ontologist, was a Marrano? A sort of clandestine immigrant, a Hispano-Portuguese disguised as a German Jew who, we will assume, pretended to have converted to Protestantism, and even to be a shade anti-Semitic? Now that would really be something! We might add that the sons of Karl himself knew nothing of the affair. And that his daughters didn't either. And now the supreme twist, the abyssal upping of the ante, the absolute surplus-value: they would have been Marranos were they so well disguised, so perfectly encrypted, that they themselves never suspected that that's what they were! – or else had forgotten the fact that they were Marranos, repressed it, denied it, disavowed it. It is well known that this sometimes happens to 'real' Marranos as well, to those who, though they are really, presently, currently, effectively, ontologically Marranos, no longer even know it themselves.

Claims have also been advanced to the effect that the question of marranism was recently closed for good.

I don't believe it for a second. There are still sons – and daughters – who, unbeknownst to themselves, incarnate or metampsychosize the ventriloquist specters of their ancestors.

Translated by G.M. Goshtagi

Notes

1. Although the question (apparently abstract and speculative) of Marx's ontology is broached, under that name, only in certain of the texts assembled here (especially Hamacher's, Jameson's and Negri's), I believe it traverses all of them at a crucial moment. It was also, let me recall, a question everything seemed to hinge on in Specters of Marx.

2. Spectres de Marx (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), pp. 166–7, Specters of Marx, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 101–2. The rest of this passage, not quoted here, expands upon this problematic of the Parry, which I shall come back to, and the question of ideology as 'false' (Märchen) – here, the fable of the specter. [Subsequent references to Specters of Marx are to the French original, followed by the English translation. – Editor's note.]

3. This thread runs through the whole book, but it also connects two debates – very different, to be sure – which are pursued with Michel Henry on the one hand (ibid., pp. 177 ff. / p. 186, n. 7) and Etienne Balibar on the other (ibid., pp. 116 ff. / p. 181, n. 8).

4. Ibid., p. 89/n. 50.

5. Ibid., p. 89/n. 51.

6. Ibid., p. 89/n. 29. Again on the following page, and throughout the book, what is in question, if I may put it that way, is Marx's 'ontological response' – not only to the spectral question of the specter (the question of the specularity that lies beyond any and all ontological determinations: life/death, the sensuous/the intelligible, presence/absence, etc.), but also to an injunction that would be older than anything – the question of the question-form of discourse, as if it were the eve of that question (commas set with manic, Marx's 'ontological response', his response insofar as, and wherever, it is still

ontoological, consists, in my view, in saturating the question, the ontological response reduces or denies the abyss of the question, conjures away the threat of the question. On the effects – positive and negative – of this ontological treatment, see especially ibid., p. 150ff. / p. 91.


8. Spectres de Marx, p. 58; Specters of Marx, p. 29. [I underscore 'perhaps' today.

9. On this twofold point, depolitization and repolitization, see ibid., pp. 149–51 and passim / pp. 91–2 and passim.


11. Ibid., p. 72.

12. Ibid., p. 69.

13. Spectres de Marx, p. 144; Specters of Marx, p. 87. I have added the emphasis on 'otherwise' here.

14. I could cite a thousand passages in my book to confirm what I say here. The following is just one that occurs not far from the passage Speek falsifies, as we have just seen.

It is even more a certain emancipatory and messianic affirmation, a certain experience of the promise that one can try to liberate from any dogmatism and from any metaphysical-religious determination, from any mea non dixi. And a promise must promise to be kept, that is, not to remain 'spiritual' or 'abstract', but to produce new forms of action, practice, organisation, 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 organisation. It is exactly the contrary that matters to us here. (Ibid. pp. 146–78 / p. 89).

15. Jameson, p. 60. [This and other essays printed and reprinted in this volume are cited as 'Jameson', 'Ahmad', etc. – Editor's note.] Tom Keenan would seem to interpret matters the same way. he too cites this remark of Jameson’s in a powerful, courageous book he has just published (Fables of Responsibility, Abstractions and Predicaments in Ethics and Politics (Stanford, CA: University of Stanford Press, 1997), p. 224). See esp. his chapter on Marx (first published in 1993), which I have already referred to in Specters of Marx (p. 265n./ p. 195, n. 35). One cannot, then, err more egregiously than to speak, as Ahmad does, at the risk of seeming to wish to deceive the reader, of the 'anti-politics' of Specters of Marx... the anti-politics he advocates might well bring us not a 'new International' but a mere Fortinbras – a "new" order that is a variant of the very old one' (Ahmad, p. 107)).


17. Ahmad, p. 30.

18. Ibid.

19. See, in its entirety, the chapter entitled 'Injunctions of Marx', together with the 'deconstructive' reading of what Hacking has to say on these matters, Specters of Marx, pp. 144 ff. / Specters of Marx, pp. 106 ff.


21. Eagleton, pp. 85–6. There is more than a touch of this adolescent perversity in Derrida, who likes many a postmodernist appears to feel it is a matter of sensibility rather than reasoned conviction) that the dominant is ipso facto demonic and the marginal precious per se. One condition of the unthinking postmodern equation of the marginal with the creative, apart from a convenient obliviousness to such marginal groups as Fascism.

The balance of the passage also bears rereading. I have cited it to this point in order to underscore – besides the summary, archaic psychologism of the distinction between 'sensibility and reasoned conviction' – the rhetorical effect sought, in this polemic, by way of the analogy-begging (ontolog), contaminating reference to 'Fascist' marginality. Let the reader judge: the instigation is nothing less than that I am insensitive to the threat of Fascism, hence that I am not vigilant vis-a-vis Fascism, and thus that I am inclined to be irresolute in the face of Fascism. But, above all, I have cited this much of the passage in order to recall that the facile, despotic, grave error of confusing my
work (or even 'deconstruction' in general) with postmodernism is indicative, in Eagleton as in Ahmad or Lewis, of a massive failure to read and analyze. This rudimentary misunderstanding might by itself warrant my breaking off all further dialogue until certain 'homework' is done. But that is the road not taken, and it is too late to take it.

22. Ahmad did not consider it worthwhile to go back over what he himself calls a 'quick response' to the lecture he read on the airplane after he had read the book the lecture 'turned into' (Lengthier comment on the book I have read). This justifies the taking seriously something he himself takes rather seriously, his high velocity notwithstanding, and entitles me to treat his remarks as the fruit of solid reflection, however hard I sometimes find this to do. One can cite other effects of procrastination and the concreteness among a good many Marxists, or those who are, to borrow Ahmad's expression, 'generally known as Marxists'. Thus Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for her part, speaks, not of the time it took her to read me (one wonders sometimes), but, rather, of the time she devoted to writing. 'I am writing at speed', she declares at the outset of her essay ('Ghostwriting', p. 65). This chronology of an acceleration in reading or writing would thus seem to characterize those Marxists in the habit of criticizing me for having been too slow to speak of Marx. Eagleton, whom I have just cited, is a case in point, as are Spivak (see, for example, p. 66) and many others. They and I do, indeed, have different ways of dealing with time and the contemporaries. We do nothing at the same speed, which is - I say this quite seriously - the chief source of all these misunderstandings. We do not make up our minds in the same way about which situations call for rapid action and which ones require, on the contrary, that one take one's time - as much time as possible.


24. Sharp with that he is, Ahmad believes he can detect an identification [mine] with Hamlet, but he espies another as well: 'we detect a similar identification with the ghost' (Ahmad, p. 106), that is - because the series of substitutions, by definition, cannot come to a halt (this, moreover, makes for its interest, and is the rub of the question) - a condensation with Marx himself. Thus I would seem to identify with every possible father! Ahmad does not like that.

25. It is no accident that Eagleton too makes literature a grievance, or a count in his indictment. In the most academic, indeed, the most conservative manner imaginable, he denounces my 'poetic' language, a bit as if one ought not to confuse genres and disciplines or stray into the wrong department. True, what he doesn't like about my 'poeticizing' is that it is 'portentous'. It is 'portentous' because it lends itself to parody. Indeed. I prefer to let the reader judge. To that end, I would invite him to reread immediately preceding and follow the accusation of 'portentous poeticizing'. To top things off, Eagleton, falling back on a well-known but rather unconvincing tactic, blames me for the 'epigraphs' to whom he counterposes the 'main actor himself, who really is politically earnest and engaged, whose relevant contexts are Auschwitz and Algeria, Althusser, the ANC and Eastern Europe rather than Ithaca or Irvine.'

How can I respond to this strategy? I find it inadmissible, even if Ahmad, for his part, is so generous as to spell out that I am not to be held 'answerable' for those who 'invoke [my] name'. This strategy is inadmissible not only because the distinction between the 'major' and 'epigraphs' is highly suspect in my eyes (for a thousand reasons, of which some are, precisely, political), but also because I do not know who these 'epigraphs' are and what they have allegedly said and done; under cover of darkness, they are accused of all things in creation, though not one of them or their sires is named, and we are offered no rational discussion or argument about a text.

I would say the same thing to Ahmad when he berates, not the 'epigraphs', but the 'Derrideans' (whatever other reservations I have about Derrida's work and influence [maybe about Derrideans, actually], that is, business, I have never thought of him as a man of the Right!). Thank you very much. One should also read the passage that follows; it absolves me of having 'sought the company of the right-wingers'. The word the author underestimates leaves lurking suspicion to the effect that, if I have not sought such company, I may yet have found it. Assuming that that could be demonstrated, one would have both to demonstrate it, i.e., to prove it, but also to assure oneself, in the same act, that one has oneself managed to avoid this suspect 'company'. The two tasks are equally difficult. Everywhere, and especially in the academy, a good many 'Marxists' find themselves in 'the company' of the most conservative forces. I would go even further than in 'the company', and speak of an 'alliance', occasionally more than an 'objective alliance'. I am used to not say so any longer.

26. Ahmad, p. 91.

27. For example, Ahmad indicates his agreement with me about that which holds together this 'triple structure of political, mediatic and academic discourses' (in my opinion, this presupposes an agreement with his boundaries it would be difficult to establish, if we really do agree about that, we ought to agree about almost everything) (Ahmad, p. 97). Again, Ahmad, I say we agree about 'religious particularism' (the premises of that agreement also have rather far-reaching consequences) (Ahmad, p. 100).

28. Ahmad grants me his pardon, then. Although he says elsewhere that what is at issue is not, as he sees it, my reconciliation 'with Marx', nor a reconciliation of 'Marx with me', he writes, in a gesture of forgiveness: 'Much of what Derrida says on this account one can accept readily, with a sense of comradeship, the past acrimonies between Marxism and deconstruction notwithstanding' (Ahmad, p. 101). Although I do not know, and I am quite serious, what deconstructionism is (if not a journalistic fantasy), and although I never speak of it or in behalf of it, and do not feel that I am represented by this 'thing' (I would say the same thing for 'Marxism' who represents 'Marxism'), and despite all the efforts I keep making to detect signs of acrimony, I have no recollection of any, either on my part, or on the part of those whose work is, in one way or another, close to mine. To be sure, one could find things to say about this or that text by a 'Marxist', but this is not evidence of acrimony against Marxism.

On the other hand, I am, even today, most content - this is more, easier to see - rather insensitive to 'any sense of comradeship'. If I had the time and space, I would explain why this is not a reflex on my part, certainly not a class reflex. It is, rather, a carefully considered act, a way of thinking the politics of friendship or friendship in politics. I am therefore deeply touched when Ahmad says, 'We are glad to say, as he himself says, that he is one of us.' But I remain mystified despite my emotion. 'One of us? Where do I say that? And who is us?'

29. Eagleton, p. 85. Eagleton is undoubtedly convinced that, with the finesse, grace and elegance he is universally acknowledged to possess, he has hit upon a title ('Marxism without Marxism') which is a flash of wit, an ironic dart, a witheringly sarcastic critique, aimed at me or, for example, Blanchot, who often says - I have discussed this at length elsewhere - 'X without X'. Every 'good Marxist' knows, however, that almost as close to Marx, more faithful to Marx, more 'Marx', than a 'Marxism without Marxism', is the need we recall here that this Marxism without Marx was, to begin with, the Marxism of Marx himself, if that name still means anything.

30. Spectres de Marx, pp. 198-9 / Specters of Marx, p. 122. This is one of the many arguments (decisive, in my estimation) that Hamacher is the only one to single out and take seriously (Hamacher, p. 185). He alludes to this passage, which is, he writes, 'the only passage which strikes an explicitly autobiographical tone'. I am less sure of this than he is, but it does not matter much, in the end. Moreover, what enables one to recognize an explicitly autobiographical tone?

31. 'Not the least refreshing aspect of this passage is Derrida's lucid sense that a certain narrow-minded religious particularism... is a characteristic not only of some Islamic countries but also of the West itself, capitalist Europe itself, in its moment of greatest triumph' (Ahmad, p. 100).

32. See 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', in Writing and Difference, as well as Glas, For, The Post Card, Resssemblances de la psychanalyse (esp. Etre juste avec Freud), etc.


34. With Michael Sprinker, ibid., pp. 294 ff.

35. Spectres de Marx, p. 95 / Specters of Marx, p. 55.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., p. 142/p. 85.
39. Ibid.
40. Lewis, p. 140.
41. Ibid., p. 157.
42. Ibid., p. 162 n. 15.
43. Ibid., p. 145.
44. Ibid., p. 150.
45. Ibid., p. 152.
46. Ibid., p. 145.
47. Ibid., p. 157.
49. Ibid., p. 155.
50. Ibid., pp. 154, 156.
51. Ibid., p. 157.
52. Mauth, p. 71.
53. Jameson, p. 32.
54. Spectres of Marx, pp. 146–7./Specters of Marx, p. 89.
55. Ibid., pp. 146 ff./pp. 89 ff.
57. Ibid., p. 46.
58. Ibid., p. 47.

That is why, at the point where it seems to me necessary to complicate certain of the 'stereotypes' that Jameson rightly denounces, I insist on the ongoing transformation of the concept and problematic, while saluting certain work, for example, Balibar's. See my long footnote on this subject (Spectres of Marx, pp. 116 ff./Specters of Marx, pp. 181 ff., n. 8), particularly on everything involving 'dialectical materialism' and the concepts of 'transition' and 'non-contemporaneity'. Everything I say is inscribed in the historical and theoretical space of the 'transition', as I suggested above – a transition whose concept is, in its irreducible specificity, harder to think than is generally believed.

The point to be made, however, is not [just] that all such class mappings are arbitrary and somehow subjective, but that they are inevitable ideological grids through which we necessarily read the world (see the rest of this passage up to the point where the word 'allegorical' recurs). 'Class categories are therefore not at all examples of the project or of the autonomous and pure, the self-sufficient operations of origins defined by so-called class affiliation: nothing is more complex allegorically than the play of class connotations across the whole width and breadth of the social field, particularly today' (Jameson, p. 49). It is because I find myself in close agreement with what Jameson says (except perhaps for what 'allegorical' is intended to mean here), because I am sensitive to this 'complexity', that I am so prudent and reserved when it comes to references to 'social class', make them so sparingly, and so am concerned to define an International which no longer depend on a classification whose connotations are so problematic, particularly today', as Jameson aptly says. Having signaled my agreement with Jameson, I would like to know what the critics I have just replied to, especially Ahmad and Lewis, think of his argument.

For example, on how my work is read in the United States (Derrida's own philosophical moves have to be grasped as ideological or rather anti-ideological tactics, and not merely as the abstract philosophical discussions as which these texts cross the ocean and become translated here), and on what distinguishes my trajectory from that of de Man (ibid., pp. 50, 51).

63. Ibid., p. 54.
64. Ibid., p. 32.
65. Ibid., p. 33.
66. Ibid.
67. Spectres of Marx, pp. 95–6n./Specters of Marx, p. 181, n. 2. Permit me to recall that this long note remains cautious from first to last, pending a forthcoming re-reading of these 'dense, enigmatic, burning' pages (p. 96/p. 181).

68. See 'Pas', in Parage (Paris Galliée, 1985).
69. [Le mort sans mort means 'death without death'.] Le rapport sans rapport means 'relation without relation(s)'. Atente sans atente, which I have translated 'awaiting without expectation' or 'a waiting without awaiting', depending on the context, exploits the fact that atente has a range of meanings that go from 'wait' in the sense of passively marking time to 'anticipation' or 'expectation'. – Translator's note.

70. Mauth, p. 24.
71. This obviously does not hold for Hamacher. It holds even less for Warren Montag, whose remarkable analysis takes 'the distinction between spirit and specter' seriously (Montag, p. 77). Mauth's move is more disconcerting. Although he describes my book as a 'work of art' that can easily modulate into a denunciation of a whole or rhetoric – a denunciation I have responded to above), he concedes that, in Marx's texts as I read them, the 'reference to specters intervenes not only as a figure of rhetorical style but as a determination of those texts' content of thought' (Montag, p. 18). But then why not take into account, in the remainder of the essay and in conclusion, the resistance the concept of spectrality offers, to any attempt to reduce it to the status of immaterial appearance? Why contrast, on this point, my argumentation with that put forward by Balibar, who, even while taking the appearing of appearance seriously, is supposed to be saying 'the same thing as I am, but in an inverted way, from the perspective of a Marx one could call "rematerialized", which restores to the "appearances" of ideology their weight of reality, instead of denying every appearance of reality to reality, according to the profound inspiration that undermines the enterprise of a deconstruction' (Mauth, p. 24).

It hardly seems necessary to say that this definition of the 'profound inspiration that undermines a deconstruction' seems to me arbitrary and extremely misleading. Obviously, a great deal could be said about the words 'body', 'reality', 'materiality', 'appearing' (Erscheinen, or 'appearance' (Scheinen), all brought into play here. But, surely, if by 'specter' I had simply meant appearance without reality and materiality, I would have wasted a great deal of my own and other people's time for nothing. The specter (which is, after all, the spirit) is anything but nothing, anything but inapparent and non-existent. But mere appearance. My whole book can be read as one long response to that objection. For a more finely honed approach to the problem, which it is not possible to delimit, I would refer the reader to, in particular, chapter V of Specters of Marx, 'Apparition of the Inapparent', and to all the notes to that chapter, especially n. 6 p. 189, on phantasma and phaneinhsai.

I am grateful to Jameson for not having shrugged off spectrally as if it were nothing at all, even if he reduces it to the 'non-sufficient of the living present' – which it does indeed presuppose, but can by no means be identified with.

72. Ahmad, p. 103, Lewis, p. 148; my emphases.
73. [We]n't this position of something undeconstuctible – which recalls in its own way the Cartesian cogito – be itself a ghost, the ghost or the 'spirit' of Derrida' (Mauthery, p. 24).

No, what motivates deconstruction – the undeconstuctible which, in this context, is given the name justice, as distinguished from law or right (droit) – does not take the form of a founding limit where a kind of radical doubt would be arrested, which it would butt up against. It is an injunction which any construction or foundation would be inadequate to. Not that this injunction is an infinite idea in the Kantian sense. Nor is it Utopia (in the sense in which Jameson too quickly assimilates the impossible to Utopia ('the impossible [(Utopian) hope'], he says on p. 59, whereas everything that I call the impossible in numerous recent texts issues from an entirely different logic and calls for an entirely different way of thinking – in many different figures – events that are eminently real. This entire 'project' comes down to thinking what is knowable and the 'impossible' in a different way. I cannot expand upon this here, or do more than refer the reader to other publications – indeed, to almost everything I have published in the last ten years at least). This undeconstructible injunction of justice is never gathered up and assembled in a single place, nor does it ever identify with itself (see Specters of Marx, pp. 19 ff), though it very urgently commands, without waiting, here–now, and the
inadequation of everything which measures itself against it, of everything it sets into motion, is the possibility, but also the necessity of a history, it is also the possibility and the necessity of a deconstruction. Deconstruction is so little a philosophy of the capable that it begins by taking issue with it, as it were, in its Hegelian as well as its Husserlian forms. For all these reasons, I find it difficult to follow Warren Montag when he follows Mancheray on the tracks of this capable, suggesting that Spectre of Marx reverses or contradicts what Of Grammatology says on the subject of the letter or the trace. On the contrary, I believe that the effort to think the trace is inseparable, and has from the outset been literall (I could marshal very many explicit indications of this, they have been accumulating for thirty years now) indissociable from an effort to think spectrality.

74. ‘Survivor’ usually means ‘survive’, to live, and so means ‘living’ or ‘alive’; in our related word, means both survival and life after death. – Translator’s note.

75. This resembles the debate it would be possible to have about Offenbarung (Revelation) and Offenbartes (the possibility of revelation and manifestation). Heidegger always seems to make the possibility of revelation into a deeper, older and therefore independent structure of existence, on the basis of which revelation in the religious sense, and this or that historical religion, become, secondarily, possible, and take determinate form. One is tempted to oppose to this powerful, classical argument at least one question: what if it were not only by way of the (historical) event of revelation that the revelation of revelability, as such, manifests itself, etc.?


77. See this point Jameson’s very apt comments on the religious and the theory of religion in Marx (Jameson, pp. 53 ff.).

78. Spectres de Marx, pp. 236 ff.; Spectres of Marx, pp. 148 ff. The question ‘What is ideology’, like the ensuing discussion, follows the analysis of the ten specters (‘the specter of a Decadence and a decadence of specters’, the Table of the ten commandments, corresponding to the ten plagues, and another table of Aristotle’s ten categories in this book about so many tables and so many sets of ten). It also follows a certain familial scene, and the question of the phallocentrism between the father and the son (the good and the bad son) (p. 196/p. 122), which indicates that it is henceforth inseparable from the question of the ‘paternity of the ideal’, a phrase I felt it necessary to italicize in order to highlight the question of the father raised by it (p. 236/p. 147).

79. Ibid, p. 262/p, 165.
82. The phenomenology of capitalist production described by Marx in Capital demonstrates therefore how, by way of this spectral movement, a true and proper metaphysics of capital is produced, as well as the autonomy of its power. But because it unfolds itself in a spectral form and autonomizes capital, this phenomenology—Marx maintains—‘masks the real genesis of the process of capital’s development’ (Negri, p. 7, my emphasis).

83. Specters of Marx, p. 235; Spectres of Marx, p. 147.
84. Ibid.
86. For example, he writes: ‘Why does deconstruction want an aura of nostalgia which renders the ontological consistency of the new spectral dimension elusive and frankly ungraspable?’ (Negri, p. 8). Everything that follows — up to ‘We do not know how to construct a straight line that would cut through his process’s agonizing curves’ (ibid.) — seems to me to reflect a misreading for which I perhaps, share the responsibility with Negri, but against which I firmly protest. Similarly, I protest against the words ‘mythicism’ and ‘negative theology à la Blanchot’ (Negri, p. 15); I have elsewhere explained why I object to this stereotype, and so refrain from doing so here.
88. Ibid.