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*in the name of the revolution,
the double barricade*

(impure “impure impure history of ghosts”)

June, 1848, was, let us hasten to say, a thing apart, and almost impossible to class in the philosophy of history.... But, at bottom, what was June, 1848? A revolt of the people against itself...; let us then be permitted for a moment to arrest the reader's attention upon the two absolutely unique barricades of which we have just spoken...these two frightful masterpieces of civil war.... The barricade Saint Antoine was monstrous.... Ruin. You might say: who built that? You might also say: who destroyed that?... It was great and it was little. It was the bottomless pit parodied upon the spot by chaos come again.... This barricade was furious.... It was huge and living; and, as from the back of an electric beast, there came from it a crackling of thunders. The spirit of revolution covered with its cloud that summit whereon growled this voice of the people which is like the voice of God; a strange majesty emanated from that titanic hodful of refuse. It was a garbage heap and it was Sinäi.

As we have said before, it attacked in the name of the Revolution, what? the Revolution....

A mile from there, at the corner of the Rue du Temple...rose this obstruction, which made of the street a cul-de-sac; an immovable and quiet wall; nobody could be seen, nothing could be heard; not a cry, not a sound, not a breath. A sepulchre...the chief of that barricade was a geometer or a spectre....

The barricade St. Antoine was the tumult of thunders; the barricade du Temple was silence. There was between these two redoubts the difference between the terrible and the ominous. The one seemed a gaping mouth; the other a mask.

Admitting that the gloomy and gigantic insurrection of June was composed of an anger and an enigma; you felt in the first barricade the dragon, and behind the second the sphinx.

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE ABYSS BUT TO TALK

Sixteen years tell in the subterranean education of the émeute, and June 1848 understood it far better than June 1832....

There were no longer giants against colossi. It resembled Milton and Dante rather than Homer. Demons attacked, spectres resisted....

A voice from the most obscure depths of the groups, cried... "Citizens, let us offer the protest of corpses...."

The name of the man who thus spoke was never known... that great anonymous always found in human crises and in social births....

After the man of the people, who decreed "the protest of corpses," had spoken and given the formula of the common soul, from all lips arose a strangely satisfied and terrible cry, funereal in meaning and triumphant in tone: "Long live death! Let us all stay!"

"Why all?" said Enjolras.

"All! All!"....

—Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*

Specters of Marx: The title of this lecture would commit one to speak first of all about Marx. About Marx himself. About his testament or his inheritance. And about a specter, the shadow of Marx, the *revenant* whose return so many raised voices today are attempting to conjure away. For it does resemble a conjuration or conspiracy, because of the agreement or the contract signed by so many political subjects who subscribe to the more or less clear or more or less secret clauses (the point is always to conquer or to keep the keys to a power), but first of all because such a conjuration is meant to conjure away. One must, magically, chase away a specter, exorcise the possible return of a power held to be baleful in itself and whose demonic threat continues to haunt the century.

Since such a conjuration today insists, in such a deafening consensus, that what is, it says, indeed dead, remain dead indeed, it arouses a suspicion. It awakens us where it would like to put us to sleep. Vigilance, therefore: the cadaver is perhaps not as dead, as simply dead as the conjuration tries to delude us into believing. The one who has disappeared appears still to be *there*, and his apparition is not nothing. It does not do nothing. Assuming that the remains can be identified, we know better than ever today that the dead must be able to work. And to cause to work, perhaps more than ever. There is also a mode of production of the phantom, itself a phantomatic mode of production. As in the work of mourning, after a trauma, the conjuration has to make sure that the dead will not come back: quick, do whatever is needed to keep the cadaver localized, in a safe place, decomposing right where it was inhumed, or even embalmed as they liked to do in Moscow. Quick, a vault to which one keeps the keys! These keys would be nothing other than those of the power that the conjuration would like thus to reconstitute upon the death of Marx. We were speaking earlier of an *unlocking*. The logic of the key in which I hoped to orient this keynote address was one of a politico-logic of trauma and a topology of mourning. A mourning in fact and by right interminable, without possible normality, without reliable limit, in its reality or in its concept, between introjection and incorporation. But the same logic, as we suggested, responds to the injunction of a justice which, beyond right or law, rises up in the very respect owed to whoever *is not*, no longer or not yet, living, presently living.

Mourning always follows a trauma. I have tried to show elsewhere that the work of mourning is not one kind of work among others. It is work itself, work in general, the trait by means of which one ought perhaps to reconsider the very concept of production—in what links it to trauma, to mourning, to the idealizing iterability of exappropriation, thus to the spectral spiritualization that is at work in any *tekmē*. There is the temptation to add here an aporetic postscript to Freud's remark that linked in a same comparative history three of the traumas inflicted on human narcissism when it is thus de-centered: the *psychological* trauma (the power of the unconscious over the conscious ego, discovered by psychoanalysis), after the *biological* trauma (the animal descent of man discovered by Darwin—to whom, moreover, Engels alludes in the Preface to the 1888 *Manifesto*), after the *cosmological* trauma (the Copernican Earth is no longer the center of the universe, and this is more and more the

case one could say so as to draw from it many consequences concerning the limits of geopolitics). Our aporia would here stem from the fact that there is no longer any name or teleology for determining the Marxist *coup* and its subject. Freud thought he knew, for his part, what man and his narcissism were. The Marxist blow is as much the projected unity of a thought and of a labor movement, sometimes in a messianic or eschatological form, as it is the history of the totalitarian world (including Nazism and fascism, which are the inseparable adversaries of Stalinism). This is perhaps the deepest wound for mankind, in the body of its history and in the history of its concept, still more traumatizing than the “psychological” lesion (*Kränkung*) produced by the blow of psychoanalysis, the third and most serious in Freud’s view.¹ For we know that the *blow* struck enigmatically in the name of Marx also accumulates and gathers together the other three. It thus presupposes them today, even if such was not the case in the last century. It carries beyond them by carrying them out, just as it bears the name of Marx by exceeding it infinitely. The century of “Marxism” will have been that of the techno-scientific and effective decentering of the earth, of geopolitics, of the *anthropos* in its onto-theological identity or its genetic properties, of the *ego cogito*—and of the very concept of narcissism whose aporias are, let us say in order to go too quickly and save ourselves a lot of references, the explicit theme of deconstruction. This trauma is endlessly denied by the very movement through which one tries to cushion it, to assimilate it, to interiorize and incorporate it. In this mourning work in process, in this interminable task, the ghost remains that which gives one the most to think about—and to do. Let us insist and spell things out: to do and to make come about, as well as to let come (about).

But the specters of Marx come on stage from the other side. They are named according to the other path of the genitive—and this other grammar says more than grammar. The specters of Marx are also his. They are perhaps first of all the ghosts that inhabited him, the *revenants* with which Marx himself will have been occupied, and which he will have wanted in advance to make his thing; which does not mean that he knew their secrets, nor even that he thematized in his turn the obsessive recurrence of what would be a theme if one could say of the *revenant* that it lets itself be *posed there, exposed before you*, as a theme or a system, a thesis or a synthesis ought to do. All of these values are disqualified by the specter, if there is any.

The specters of Marx: with these words we will name from now on certain

figures whose coming Marx will have been the first to apprehend, sometimes to describe. Those that herald the best and whose event he will have greeted, those that arise from or threaten the worst, whose testimony he will have rejected. There are several times of the specter. It is a proper characteristic of the specter, if there is any, that no one can be sure if by returning it testifies to a living past or to a living future, for the *revenant* may already mark the promised return of the specter of living being. Once again, untimeliness and disadjustment of the contemporary. In this regard, communism has always been and will remain spectral: it is always still to come and is distinguished, like democracy itself, from every living present understood as plenitude of a presence-to-itself, as totality of a presence effectively identical to itself. Capitalist societies can always heave a sigh of relief and say to themselves: communism is finished since the collapse of the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century and not only is it finished, but it did not take place, it was only a ghost. They do no more than disavow the undeniable itself: a ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back.

In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, let us recall, a first noun returned three times on the same first page, the noun “specter” (*Gespenst*): “A specter is haunting Europe,” says Marx in 1848, “the specter of communism [*Ein Gespenst geht um in Europa—das Gespenst des Kommunismus*]”. Marx, unless it is the other one, Engels, then puts on stage, for the time of a few paragraphs, the terror that this specter inspires in all the powers of old Europe. No one speaks of anything anymore but this specter. All phantasms are projected onto the screen of this ghost (that is, on something absent, for the screen itself is phantomatic, as in the television of the future which will have no “screenic” support and will project its images—sometimes synthetic images—directly on the eye, like the sound of the telephone deep in the ear). One watches for the signals, the tables that turn, the dishes that move. Is it going to answer? As in the space of a salon during a spiritualist séance, but sometimes that space is what is called the street, one looks out for one’s goods and furniture, attempting to adjust all of politics to the frightening hypothesis of a visitation.² Politicians are seers or visionaries. They desire and fear an apparition which they know will not present anyone in person but will strike a series of blows to be deciphered. All possible alliances are thus forged to conjure away this common adversary, “the specter of communism.” The alliance signifies: death to the specter. It is convoked to be revoked, everyone swears [*jure*] only on the

specter, but in order to conjure it away. No one talks of anything else. But what else can you do, since it is not there, this ghost, like any ghost worthy of the name? And even when it is there, that is, when it is there without being there, you feel that the specter is looking, although through a helmet; it is watching, observing, staring at the spectators and the blind seers, but you do not see it seeing, it remains invulnerable beneath its visored armor. So one speaks of nothing else but in order to chase it away, to exclude it, to exorcise it. The salon, then, is old Europe which is gathering all its forces (*alle Mächte des alten Europas*). If the conspirators attempt to exorcise or conjure away the specter, it is without knowing at bottom what or whom they are talking about. For the conspirators, communism is a name, the holy alliance is a holy hunt: "All the powers of old Europe have joined [*verbündet*] into a holy hunt [*zu einer heiligen Hetzjagd*] against this specter [*gegen dies Gespenst*]."

Who could deny it? If an alliance is in the process of being formed against communism, an alliance of the old or the new Europe, it remains a holy alliance. The paternal figure of the Holy Father the Pope, who is then cited by Marx, still figures today in a prominent place in this alliance, in the person of a Polish bishop who boasts, and in this he is confirmed by Gorbachev, that he was not for nothing in the collapse of communist totalitarianism in Europe and in the advent of a Europe that from now on will be what it should always have been according to him, a Christian Europe. As in the Holy Alliance of the nineteenth century, Russia could once again take part. That is why we insisted on the neo-evangelism—Hegelian neo-evangelism—of a rhetoric of the "Fukuyama" type. It was a Hegelian neo-evangelism that Marx denounced with great verve and vehemence in the Stirnerian theory of ghosts. We will get to this later, but already here we must point out the intersection. We believe it is significant.

The specter that Marx was talking about then, communism, was there without being there. It was not yet there. It will never be there. There is no *Dasein* of the specter, but there is no *Dasein* without the uncanniness, without the strange familiarity (*Unheimlichkeit*) of some specter. What is a specter? What is its history and what is its time?

The specter, as its name indicates, is the *frequency* of a certain visibility. But the visibility of the invisible. And visibility, by its essence, is not seen, which is why it remains *epekeina tes ousias*, beyond the phenomenon or beyond being. The specter is also, among other things, what one imagines, what one thinks

one sees and which one projects—on an imaginary screen where there is nothing to see. Not even the screen sometimes, and a screen always has, at bottom, in the bottom or background that it is, a structure of disappearing apparition. But now one can no longer get any shut-eye, being so intent to watch out for the return. Whence the theatricalization of speech itself and the spectacularizing speculation on time. The perspective has to be reversed, once again: ghost or *revenant*, sensuous-non-sensuous, visible-invisible, the specter first of all sees *us*. From the other side of the eye, *visor effect*, it looks at us even before we see *it* or even before we see period. We feel ourselves observed, sometimes under surveillance by it even before any apparition. Especially—and this is the event, for the specter is *of* the event—it sees us during a *visit*. It (re)pays us a visit [*Il nous rend visite*]. Visit upon visit, since it returns to see us and since *visitare*, frequentative of *visere* (to see, examine, contemplate), translates well the recurrence or returning, the frequency of a visitation. The latter does not always mark the moment of a generous apparition or a friendly vision; it can signify strict inspection or violent search, consequent persecution, implacable *concatenation*. The social mode of haunting, its original style could also be called, taking into account this repetition, *frequentation*. Marx lived more than others, we are going to make this clear, in the frequentation of specters.

The specter *appears* to present itself during a visitation. One represents it to oneself, but it is not present, itself, in flesh and blood. This non-presence of the specter demands that one take its times and its history into consideration, the singularity of its temporality or of its historicity. When, in 1847–48, Marx names the specter of communism, he inscribes it in an 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 manifesto 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 absence of a ghost.)

Here is perhaps one of the strange motifs we should talk about this evening: What tends perhaps to disappear in the political world that is shaping up, and perhaps in a new age of democracy, is the domination of this form of organization called the party, the party-State relation, which finally will have lasted, strictly speaking, only two centuries, barely longer than that, a period to which belong as well certain determined types of parliamentary and liberal democracy, constitutional monarchies, Nazi, fascist, or Soviet totalitarianisms. *Not one* of these regimes was possible without what could be called the axiomatics of the party. Now, as one can see foreshadowed, it seems, everywhere in the world today, the structure of the party is becoming not only more and more suspect (and for reasons that are no longer always, necessarily, "reactionary," those of the classical individualist reaction) but also radically unadapted to the new—tele-techno-media—conditions of public space, of political life, of democracy, and of the *new* modes of representation (both parliamentary and non-parliamentary) that they call up. A reflection on what will become of Marxism tomorrow, of its inheritance or its testament, should include, among so many other things, a reflection on the finitude of a certain concept or of a certain reality of the party. And, of course, of its State correlative. A movement is underway that we would be tempted to describe as a deconstruction of the traditional concepts of State, and thus of party and labor union. Even though they do not signify the withering away of the State, in the Marxist or Gramscian sense, one cannot analyze their historical singularity outside of the Marxist inheritance—where inheritance is more than ever a critical and transformative filter, that is, where it is out of the question to be for or against the State in general, its life or its death *in general*. There was a moment, in the

history of European (and, of course, American) politics, when it was a reactionary gesture to call for the end of the party, just as it was to analyze the inadequation of existing parliamentary structures to democracy itself. Let us put forward here with many precautions, both theoretical and practical, the hypothesis that this is no longer the case, *not always* the case (for these old forms of struggle against the State may survive for a long time); one must do away with this equivocation so that it will no longer be the case. The hypothesis is that this mutation has already begun; it is irreversible.

The universal Communist Party, the Communist International will be, said the *Manifesto* in 1848, the final incarnation, the real presence of the specter, thus the end of the spectral. This future is not described, it is not foreseen in the constative mode; it is announced, promised, called for in a performative mode. From the symptom, Marx draws a diagnosis and a prognosis. The symptom that authorizes the diagnosis is that the fear of the communist ghost *exists*. One gets signs of this if one observes the Holy European Alliance. These signs must mean something, namely that the European powers recognize, through the specter, the power of communism ("Communism is already acknowledged by all European powers to be itself a power [*als eine Macht*]"). As for the prognosis, it does not consist in merely foreseeing (a gesture of the constative type) but in calling for the advent, in the future, of a manifesto of the communist party which, precisely in the performative form of the call, will transform the legend of the specter not yet into the reality of communist society but into that other form of real event (between the legendary specter and its absolute incarnation) that is the Manifesto of the Communist Party. Parousia of the manifestation of the manifest. As party. Not as party that in addition would be, in this case, communist, or whose communism would be only a predicate. But as party that would accomplish the essence of the party as communist party. Here is the call, namely the Manifesto in view of the Manifesto, the self-manifestation of the manifesto, in which consists the essence of any manifesto that calls itself: by saying "it is time," time rejoins and adjoins itself here, now, a now that happens to itself in the act and the body of this manifestation: it is "high time" that I become manifest, that become manifest the manifesto that is no other than this one here, now, me, the present is coming to pass, itself conjoined witness, here precisely is the manifesto that I am or that I operate in the work, in an act, I am myself but this manifestation, at this very moment, in this book, here I am: "It is high

time [*Es ist hobe Zeit*] that communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet [or oppose: *entgegenstellen*] this nursery tale of the specter of communism [*den Märchen vom Gespenst des Kommunismus*] with a Manifesto of the party itself." What does this manifesto testify to? And who testifies to what? In which languages? The following sentence speaks of the multiplicity of languages: not of all languages but of a few, and of communists of different nationalities gathered in London. *The Manifesto*, says *The Manifesto* in German, will be published in English, French, German, Italian, Flemish, and Danish. Ghosts also speak different languages, national languages, like the money from which they are, as we shall see, inseparable. As circulating currency, money bears local and political character, it "uses different national languages and wears different national uniforms."³ Let us repeat our question of the manifesto as speech or language of testimony. Who testifies to what? In what way does the "what" determine the "who," the one never preceding the other? Why does this absolute manifestation of self attest to itself [*s'atteste-t-elle elle-même*], while taking the side of the party, only by contesting and detesting the ghost? What about the ghost, therefore, in this struggle? The ghost that finds itself called upon to take sides, as well as to testify, with the helmet and visor effect?

The structure of the event thus called for remains difficult to analyze. The legend of the specter, the story, the fable (*Märchen*) would be abolished in the *Manifesto*, as if the specter itself, after having embodied a spectrality in legend and without becoming a reality (communism itself, communist society), came out of itself, called for an exit from the legend without entering into the reality of which it is the specter. Since it is neither real nor legendary, some "Thing" will have frightened and continues to frighten in the equivocation of this event, as in the singular spectrality of this performative utterance, namely, of Marxism itself (and the question this evening could be summed up as follows: what is a Marxist utterance? a so-called Marxist utterance? or more precisely: what *will be from now on* such an utterance? and who could say "I am a Marxist" or "I am not a Marxist"?).

To make fear, to make oneself fear.⁴ To cause fear in the enemies of the *Manifesto*, but perhaps also in Marx and the Marxists themselves. For one could be tempted to explain the whole totalitarian inheritance of Marx's thought, but also the other totalitarianisms that were not just by chance or mechanical juxtaposition its contemporaries, as a reaction of panic-ridden

fear before the ghost in general. To the ghost that communism represented for the capitalist (monarchist, imperial, or republican) States of old Europe in general, came the response of a frightened and ruthless war and it was only in the course of this war that Leninism and then Stalinist totalitarianism were able to constitute themselves, harden themselves monstrously into their cadaverous rigor. But since Marxist ontology was *also* struggling against the ghost in general, in the name of living presence as material actuality, the whole “Marxist” process of the totalitarian society was also responding to the same panic. We must, it seems to me, take such an hypothesis seriously. Later, between Stirner and Marx, we will get around to this essential ineluctability of the reflexive reflex, of the “make oneself fear” in the experience of the ghost. It is as if Marx and Marxism had run away, fled from themselves, and had scared themselves. In the course of the same *chase*, the same persecution, the same infernal pursuit. Revolution against the revolution as the figure of *Les Misérables* suggests. More precisely, given the number and the *frequency*, it is as if they had been frightened by *someone* within themselves. They should not have done so, we might think a little hastily. Nazi and fascist totalitarianisms found themselves now on one side, now on the other in this war of ghosts, but in the course of a sole and same history. And there are so many ghosts in this tragedy, in the charnel houses of all the camps, that no one will ever be sure of being on a single and same side. It is better to know that. In a word, the whole history of European politics at least, and at least since Marx, would be that of a ruthless war between solidary camps that are equally terrorized by the ghost, the ghost of the other, and its own ghost as the ghost of the other. The Holy Alliance is terrorized by the ghost of communism and undertakes a war against it that is still going on, but it is a war against a camp that is itself organized by the terror of the ghost, the one in front of it and the one it carries within itself.

There is nothing “revisionist”⁵ about interpreting the genesis of totalitarianisms as reciprocal reactions to the fear of the ghost that communism inspired beginning in the last century, to the terror that it inspired in its adversaries but that it turned inside out and felt sufficiently within itself to precipitate the monstrous realization, the magical effectuation, the animist incorporation of an emancipatory eschatology which ought to have respected the promise, the being-promise of a promise—and which could not have been a simple ideological phantasm since the critique of ideology itself was inspired

by nothing else.

For, finally we must get around to this, the *revenant* was the persecution of Marx. As it was that of Stirner. *Both of them*, as is quite understandable, kept on persecuting their persecutor, their own persecutor, their most intimate stranger. Marx loved the figure of the ghost, he detested it, he called it to witness his contestation, he was haunted by it, harassed, besieged, obsessed by it. In him, but of course in order to repulse it, outside of him. In him outside of him: this is the place outside of place of ghosts wherever they feign to take up their abode. More than others, perhaps, Marx had ghosts in his head and knew without knowing what he was talking about ("Mensch, es spukt in Deinem Kopfe!" one might say to him in a parody of Stirner). But for this very reason he also did not love the ghosts he loved. And who loved him—and observed him from beneath the visor. He was doubtless *obsessed* by them (the word is his, as we will see) but, as he did against the adversaries of communism, he waged a merciless battle against them.

Like all obsessives, he harassed the obsession. There are countless signs of this, each one more explicit than the other. To cite only two very different examples from this rich spectrology, one could evoke in passing his 1841 Dissertation (*The Difference in the Philosophy of Nature of Democritus and Epicurus*). There the very young Marx signs a filial dedication (for it is always to the father, the secret of a father that a frightened child calls for help against the specter: "I am thy Fathers Spirit... I am forbid/ To tell the secrets of my Prison-House"). In this dedication, Marx addresses himself as son to Ludwig von Westphalen, "personal adviser to the government" in Trier, this "very dear paternal friend [*seinen theuren väterlichen Freund*]." He then speaks of a sign of filial love (*diese Zeilen als erste Zeichen kindlicher Liebe*) as regards someone before whom "all the spirits of the world are called to appear [*vor dem alle Geister der Welt erscheinen*]" and who never recoiled in fear from the shadows of retrograde ghosts (*Schlagschatten der retrograden Gespenster*) or from skies often covered with dark clouds. The last words of this dedication name the spirit (*Der Geist*) as the "great magical physician [*der grosse Zauberkundig Arzt*]" to whom this spiritual father entrusted himself (*anvertraut*) and from whom he draws all his strength to struggle against the evil of the ghost. It is the spirit against the specter. In this adoptive father, in this hero of the struggle against retrograde ghosts (which Marx seems implicitly to distinguish from the specter of progress that communism will be for example), the young Marx

sees the living and visible proof (*argumentum ad oculos*) that “idealism is not a fiction but a truth.”

Youthful dedication? Conventional language? Surely. But the words are not so common, they appear calculated and the statistical accounting can begin. Frequency counts. The experience, the apprehension of the ghost is tuned into *frequency*: number (more than one), insistence, rhythm (waves, cycles, and periods). The youthful dedication continues to speak and to proliferate itself, it appears more significant and less conventional when one notices, in the years that follow, the relentless determination to denounce, that is, to conjure (away), and with great verve, but also with great fascination, what *The German Ideology* will call the history of ghosts (*Gespensstergeschichte*). We will come back to this text in a moment, it is crawling with them, a crowd of *revenants* are waiting for us there: shrouds, errant souls, clanking of chains in the night, groanings, chilling bursts of laughter, and all those heads, so many invisible heads that look at us, the greatest concentration of all specters in the history of humanity. Marx (and Engels) try to straighten things out, they seek to identify, they pretend to count. They have trouble.

A little later, in fact, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* deploys once again, on the same frequency, something like a spectropolitics and a genealogy of ghosts, more precisely a *patrimonial* logic of the *generations of ghosts*. Marx never stops conjuring and exorcising there. He separates out the good from the bad “ghosts.” Sometimes in the same sentence, he desperately tries to oppose (but how difficult it is and how risky), the “spirit of the revolution [*Geist der Revolution*]” to its specter (*Gespenst*). Yes, it is difficult and risky. Because of the lexicon, first of all: like *esprit* and like “spirit,” *Geist* can also signify “specter” and Marx thinks he can exploit, even as he controls, its rhetorical effects. The semantics of *Gespenst* themselves haunt the semantics of *Geist*. If there is some ghost, it is to be found precisely where, between the two, reference hesitates, undecidably, or else no longer hesitates where it should have. But if it is so difficult and risky, beyond any possible mastery, if the two remain indiscernible and finally synonymous, it is because, in Marx’s own view, the specter will first have been necessary, one might say even vital to the historical unfolding of spirit. For, first of all, Marx himself *inherits* from the Hegelian remark on the repetition of history, whether one is talking about great events, revolutions, or heroes (the remark is well known: first tragedy, then farce). Victor Hugo was also attentive, as we have seen, to the revolu-

tionary repetition. A revolution repeats, and it even repeats the revolution against the revolution. *The Eighteenth Brumaire* concludes from this that men make their *own* history, that is the condition of *inheritance*. Appropriation in general, we would say, is *in the condition of the other* and of the *dead* other, of more than one dead, a generation of the dead. What is said about appropriation is also valid for freedom, liberation, or emancipation.

Men make their own history [*ihre eigene Geschichte*] but they do not make it just as they please [*aus freien Stücken*]; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past [*überlieferten Umständen*]. The tradition of all the dead generations [*aller toten Geschlechter*] weighs [*lastet*] like a nightmare on the brain of the living.

(Marx writes “lastet wie ein Alp,” that is, weighs like one of those ghosts that give nightmares; the French translation reads simply “pèse d’un poids très lourd,” weighs very heavily; as often happens in translations, the ghost drops off into oblivion or, in the best of cases, it is dissolved into approximate figures, for example “phantasmagoria,” a word that moreover is generally relieved of its literal sense which links it to speech and to public speech.)

And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed [*noch nicht Dagewesenes zu schaffen*], precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up [*beschwören sie ängstlich*] the spirits of the past to their service [*die Geister der Vergangenheit zu ihrem Dienste herauf*] and borrow [*entleihen*] from them *names*, battle-cries [*Schlachtparole*] and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this *borrowed language* [*mit dieser erborgten Sprache*].⁶

It is indeed a matter of convoking or conjuring (*beschwören*) the spirits as specters in a gesture of positive conjuration, the one that swears in order to call up and not to drive away. But can one uphold this distinction? For if such a conjuration seems welcoming and hospitable, since it calls forth the dead, makes or lets them come, it is never free of anxiety. And thus of a movement of repulsion or restriction. Not only is the conjuration characterized by a certain anxiety, it does not let itself be determined merely *in addition* by this anxiety (as the word *ängstlich* suggests), it is destined to the anxiety *that it is*.

The conjuration is anxiety from the moment it calls upon death to invent the quick and to enliven the new, to summon the presence of what is not yet there (*noch nicht Dagewesenes*). This anxiety in the face of the ghost is properly revolutionary. If death weighs on the living brain of the living, and still more on the brains of revolutionaries, it must then have some spectral density. To weigh (*lasten*) is also to charge, tax, impose, indebt, accuse, assign, enjoin. And the more life there is, the graver the specter of the other becomes, the heavier its imposition. And the more the living have to answer for it. *To answer for the dead, to respond to the dead.* To correspond and have it out with [*s'expliquer avec*] obsessive haunting, in the absence of any certainty or symmetry. Nothing is more serious and nothing is more true, nothing is more exact [*juste*] than this phantasmagoria. The specter weighs [*pèse*], it thinks [*pense*], it intensifies and condenses itself within the very inside of life, within the most living life, the most singular (or, if one prefers, individual) life. The latter therefore no longer has and must no longer have, insofar as it is living, a pure identity to itself or any assured inside: this is what all philosophies of life, or even philosophies of the living and real individual, would have to weigh carefully.⁷

The paradox must be sharpened: the more the new erupts in the revolutionary crisis, the more the period is in crisis, the more it is "out of joint," then the more one has to convoke the old, "borrow" from it. Inheritance from the "spirits of the past" consists, as always, in borrowing. Figures of borrowing, borrowed figures, figurality as the figure of borrowing. And the borrowing *speaks*: borrowed language, borrowed names, says Marx. A question of credit, then, or of faith. But an unstable and barely visible dividing line crosses through this law of the fiduciary. It passes between a parody and a truth, but one truth as incarnation or living repetition of the other, a regenerating reviviscence of the past, of the spirit, of the spirit of the past from which one inherits. The dividing line passes between a mechanical reproduction of the specter and an appropriation that is so alive, so interiorizing, so assimilating of the inheritance and of the "spirits of the past" that it is none other than the life of forgetting, life as forgetting itself. And the forgetting of the maternal in order to make the spirit live in oneself. These are Marx's words. It is his language, and the example of the language is not just any example among others. It designates the very element of these rights of succession.

Thus Luther donned the mask of the Apostle Paul, the revolution of

1789 to 1814 draped itself alternately as the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, and the revolution of 1848 knew nothing better to do than to parody [*parodieren*], now 1789, now the revolutionary tradition of 1793 to 1795. In like manner a beginner who has learnt a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he has assimilated [appropriated: *hat er sich nur angeeignet*] the spirit of the new language and can freely express himself in it [produce in it: *in ihr produzieren*] only when he finds his way in it without recalling the old and forgets his native tongue in the use of the new. (P. 104)

From one inheritance to the other. The living appropriation of the spirit, the assimilation of a new language is already an inheritance. And the appropriation of another language here figures the revolution. This revolutionary inheritance supposes, to be sure, that one ends up forgetting the specter, that of the primitive or mother tongue. In order to forget not what one inherits but the pre-inheritance on the basis of which one inherits. This forgetting is only a forgetting. For what one must forget will have been indispensable. One must pass through the pre-inheritance, even if it is to parody it, in order to appropriate the life of a new language or make the revolution. And while the forgetting corresponds to the moment of living appropriation, Marx nevertheless does not valorize it as simply as one might think. Things are very complicated. One must forget the specter and the parody, Marx seems to say, so that history can continue. But if one is content to forget it, then the result is bourgeois platitude: life, that's all. So one must not forget it, one must remember it but while forgetting it enough, in this very memory, in order to "find again the *spirit* of the revolution without making its *specter* return [*den Geist der revolution wiederzufinden, nicht ihr Gespenst wieder umgeben machen*, emphasis added]."

This is the fold of "a striking difference [*ein springender Unterschied*]," says Marx, between two modalities or two temporalities in the conjuration of the dead (*Totenbeschwörung*), in the evocation or convocation of the specter. One has to admit that they resemble each other. They contaminate each other sometimes in such a troubling manner, since the simulacrum consists precisely in miming the phantom or in simulating the phantasm of the other, that the "striking" difference strikes, precisely, at the origin, and leaps into view only in order to jump up and down before your eyes. To disappear by appearing, in the phenomenon of its phantasm. Marx holds to this difference, all the

same, as he holds to life; he illustrates it in one of those eloquent revolutionary epics to which one can only do justice by reading it aloud, until one is out of breath. It begins thus, by the *conjunction* (*Beschwörung*) of the dead on the scale of worldwide history (*weltgeschichtliche Totenbeschwörung*):

Consideration of this world-historical necromancy [*Totenbeschwörung*] reveals at once a striking difference. Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Napoleon, the heroes as well as the parties and the masses of the old French Revolution, performed the task of their time [*die Aufgabe ihrer Zeit*] in Roman costume and with Roman phrases, the task of unchaining and setting up modern *bourgeois* society. The first ones knocked the feudal basis to pieces and mowed off the feudal heads which had grown on it. The other created inside France the conditions under which free competition could first be developed, parcelled landed property exploited...and beyond the French borders... (Ibid.)

But synchrony does not have a chance, no time is contemporary with itself, neither the time of the Revolution, which finally never takes place in the present, nor the times that follow or follow from it. What happens? Nothing, nothing other at least than forgetting. First of all this task, which was moreover the task of their time (*die Aufgabe ihrer Zeit*), appears in a time that is already dislocated, disjointed, off its hinges (“out of joint” or “aus den Fugen”): it can *present itself only* through the Roman haunting, in the anachrony of antique costume and phrases. Then, once the revolutionary task is accomplished, amnesia necessarily sets in. It was already on the program of the anachrony, in the “task of their time.” Anachrony practices and promises forgetting. Bourgeois society forgets, in its sober platitude, “that ghosts from the days of Rome had watched over its cradle [*dass die Gespenster der Römerzeit ihre Wiege gebütet hatten*]. A question of the head, as always according to Marx, a question of the head or the cap- and the spirit: in the amnesiac order of capitalist bourgeoisie (the one that lives, like an animal, on the forgetting of ghosts), the muzzle [*gueule*] replaces the head at the summit, the lard-head of a fattened, sedentary, bourgeois king, replaces the political and vigorous head of revolutionaries on the march.⁸

[I]ts real commanders [*ihre wirklichen Heerführer*] sat behind the counter, and the hogheaded [*Speckkopf*] Louis XVIII was its political chief [*ibr politisches Haupt*]. Wholly absorbed in the production of wealth and in peaceful competitive struggle, it no longer comprehended that ghosts

from the days of Rome had watched over its cradle. But unheroic as bourgeois society is, it nevertheless took heroism, sacrifice, terror, civil war and battles of peoples to bring it into being. (Ibid.).

Marx then accumulates the examples of this rhythmic *anachrony*. He analyzes its pulses and impulses. He takes pleasure in it, the pleasure of repetition; on seeing him so sensitive to these compulsive waves, one gets the impression that he is not just pointing his finger: he is taking the pulse of history. And he is listening to a revolutionary *frequency*. In regular bursts, the latter alternates conjuration and abjuration of the specters. The great specter of the classical tradition (Rome) is convoked (this is the positive conjuration) so as to allow one to rise to the height of the historic tragedy, but already also so as to hide, in the illusion, the mediocre content of bourgeois ambition. Then, this done, the phantasm is revoked, which is the abjuration; one forgets the ghost as if one were waking up from an hallucination. Cromwell had already spoken the language of the Hebrew prophets. The bourgeois revolution accomplished, the English people prefer Locke to Habakkuk. Then comes the Eighteenth Brumaire and the repetition repeats itself. It is at this point that Marx intends to distinguish between the spirit (*Geist*) of the revolution and its specter (*Gespenst*), as if the former did not already call up the latter, as if everything, and Marx all the same recognizes this himself, did not pass by way of differences *within a fantastics as general as it is irreducible*. Far from organizing the good schematics of a constitution of time, this other transcendental imagination is the law of an invincible *anachrony*. Untimely, "out of joint," even and especially if it appears to come in due time, the spirit of the revolution is *fantastic and anachronistic through and through*. It has to be so—and among all the questions that this discourse assigns to us, one of the most necessary would no doubt concern the articulation among these indissociable concepts which must, if not identify with each other, at least pass one into the other without crossing any rigorous conceptual border: spirit of revolution, actual reality, (productive or reproductive) imagination, specter (*Geist der Revolution, Wirklichkeit, Phantasie, Gespenst*):

Thus the resurrection of the dead [*Die Totenerweckung*] in those revolutions served the purpose of glorifying [*verberrlichen*] the new struggles, not of parodying [*parodieren*] the old; of magnifying the given task in imagination [*in der Phantasie*], not of fleeing from its solution in reality; of

finding once more the spirit of revolution, not of making its ghost walk about again.

From 1848 to 1851 only the ghost [*Gespensst*] of the old revolution walked about, from Marrast, the *républicain en gants jaunes*, who disguised himself as the old Bailly, down to the adventurer who hides his commonplace repulsive features under the iron death mask of Napoleon. (P. 105)

Marx often aims at the head—and the chief. The figures of the ghost are first of all faces. It is a matter then of masks, if not, this time, of a helmet and a visor. But between the spirit and the specter, between tragedy and comedy, between the revolution on the march and what installs it in parody, there is only the difference of a time between two masks. It is a matter of spirit when Luther takes the mask (*maskierte sich*) of the Apostle Paul, it is a matter of specter, “parody,” and “caricature” with the lard-head Louis XVIII or the death mask of Napoleon the Great on the face of Napoleon “le Petit.”

One must take another step. One must think the future, that is, life. That is, death. Marx recognizes, of course, the law of this fatal anachrony and, finally, he is perhaps as aware as we are of the essential contamination of spirit (*Geist*) by specter (*Gespensst*). But he wants to be done with it, he deems that one can, he declares that one should be done with it. He detests all ghosts, the good and the bad, he thinks one can break with this frequentation. It is as if he were saying to us, we who do not believe a word of it: What you think you are calling so subtly the law of anachrony is precisely anachronistic. That fate weighed on revolutions of the past. Those that are coming, *at present and in the future* (namely, what Marx always prefers, like everyone, like life itself, and this is the tautology of preference), those that are heralded already in the nineteenth century must turn away from the past, from its *Geist* as well as its *Gespensst*. In sum, they must cease to inherit. They must no longer even do that mourning work in the course of which the living maintain the dead, play dead, busy themselves with the dead, let themselves be entertained and occupied and *played or tricked* [jouer] by the dead, speak *them* and speak *to them*, bear their name and hold forth in their language. No, no more revolutionary memory, down with the monument, bring down the curtain on the shadow theater and funerary eloquence, destroy the mausoleum for popular crowds, shatter the death masks beneath the glass caskets. All of that is the revolution of the past. Already, still in the nineteenth century. Already in the nineteenth century,

one must stop inheriting in this way, one must forget this form of forgetting on the frequency of what is called mourning work, the haunting of the spirit as much as the haunting of the specter:

The *social* revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry [*ihre Poesie*] from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition about the past. Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to dull themselves to their own content [*um sich über ihren eigenen Inhalt zu betäuben*]. In order to arrive at its own content [*um bei ihrem eignen Inhalt anzukommen*], the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead. There the words went beyond the content; here the content goes beyond the words [*Dort ging die Phrase über den Inhalt, hier geht der Inhalt über die Phrase hinaus*]. (P. 106; my emphasis)

Things are not simple by a long shot. One must lend an ear and read closely, reckon with every word of the language; we are still in the cemetery, the gravediggers are working hard, digging up skulls, trying to identify them, one by one, and Hamlet recalls that this one “had a tongue” and it used to sing. What does Marx mean? He too has died, let us not forget, and more than once, precisely [*justement*], we ought to know it, it is not so easy given that this happens too often; we inherit from him in our fashion, at least from each one of his surviving words, which he could never have wanted us to forget without having at least some respectful attention for them, without having, for example, heard the revolutionary injunction to let the dead bury their dead, the imperative of an “active forgetting,” as a certain Nietzsche will soon put it. What does Marx mean, the dead Marx? He knew very well that the dead have never buried anyone. Nor have the living who were not also *mortals*, that is, who properly bear within themselves, that is, outside themselves, and before themselves, the impossible possibility of their death. It will always be necessary that still living mortals bury the already dead living. The dead have never buried anyone, but neither have the living, the living who would be only living, the immortal living. The gods never bury anyone. Neither the dead as such, nor the living as such have ever put anyone in the ground. If Marx cannot not know this, what then does he mean? What does he want exactly [*au juste*]? What did he want *then*, he who is dead and buried? He wanted first of all, it seems, to recall us to the *make-oneself-fear* of that fear of oneself. During past revolutions, the dead ones, the conjuration convoked the

great spirits (Jewish prophets, Rome, and so forth), but only in order to forget, to repress, out of fear, to anesthetize itself (*sich betäuben*) in the face of the violence of the blow it was striking. The spirit of the past protected the conjuration against its “own content,” the spirit was there to protect it against itself. Everything is concentrated therefore in the question of this “content” and of this “own content” to which Marx refers so often, three times in these few famous lines. The whole anachronistic dislocation plays in the inadequation between the phrase and the content—the *proper* content, the appropriate content. Marx believes in it.

This disadjustment will no doubt never end. Doubtless it will reverse itself, and we'll have the revolution within the revolution, the future revolution that, without mourning, wins out over the past revolution: it will finally be the event, the advent of the event, the coming of the future-to-come, the victory of an “own content” that ends up winning out over the “phrase.” All the same, in the past revolution, when the gravediggers were alive, in sum, the phrase exceeded the content. Whence the anachrony of a revolutionary present haunted by its antique models. But in the future, and already in the *social* revolution of the nineteenth century still to come in Marx's view (the whole novelty of the new would inhabit this *social* dimension, beyond the political or economic revolution), the anachrony or untimeliness will not be erased in some plenitude of the parousia and the presence to itself of the present. Time will still be “out of joint.” But this time the inadequation will stem from the *excess* of its “own content” with regard to the “phrase.” The “own content” will no longer frighten, it will not hide itself, driven back behind the bereaved rhetoric of antique models and the grimace of death masks. It will exceed the form, it will break out of the clothes, it will overtake signs, models, eloquence, mourning. Nothing there will be any longer an affected mannerism, giving itself airs [*affecté, apprêté*]: no more credit and no more borrowed figure. But as paradoxical as it seems, it is in this unleashed overflowing, at the moment when all the joints give way between form and content, that the latter will be properly its “own” and properly revolutionary. By all logic, one ought to recognize it by nothing other than the excess of this untimely dis-identification, therefore by nothing that is. By nothing that is presently identifiable. As soon as one identifies a revolution, it begins to imitate, it enters into a death agony. That is the poetic difference, for we recall that Marx tells us where the *social* revolution will have to draw forth its “poetry.” That is the difference of poet-

ry itself between the *over there* of the political revolution of yesterday and the *here* of the social revolution of today, more precisely of this imminent today about which, alas, we know, now, today, that in its tomorrow, for the last century and a half, it will have to have exposed itself indefinitely, imperturbably, sometimes for the best, more often for the worst, here rather than over there, to one of the most inexhaustible phraseologies of modern history: "Dort ging die Phrase über den Inhalt, hier geht der Inhalt über die Phrase hinaus." Yes and no, alas.

It would, of course, have been necessary to cite more examples of this implacable anachrony in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (and this title, with the date, already furnishes the first example of bereaved parody: in what is both a family, the Bonapartes, and France, at the genealogical juncture of public and private). We will retain only one example, closest to the letter, that is, to the spectral body that takes its place. This time it is a matter in effect of a parody of the specter itself. A revolution begins itself to caricature the "red specter" that the counter-revolutionaries did everything to conjure (away). The "red specter" was also the name of a revolutionary group.⁹ The supplementary fold that matters to us here is the one that regularly assures the reflexive return of a conjuration: those who inspire fear frighten themselves, they conjure the very specter they represent. The conjuration is in mourning for *itself* and turns its own force against itself.

Here is our hypothesis: well beyond an "eighteenth Brumaire" this has never stopped happening to what is called Marxism. Far from protecting it from the worst, this return conjuration, this counter-conjuration will have precipitated it more surely in that direction. In chapter 3 of the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx opposes once again the Revolution of 1848 to the first French Revolution. A sure and effective rhetoric accumulates the traits of an opposition dominated by a major figure: 1789 is the ascending curve, audacity mounts, one goes ever farther (constitutionals, Girondins, Jacobins), while in 1848 things follow a descending curve, the constitutionals conspire against the constitution, the revolutionaries seek to be constitutionals, and the omnipotence of the National Assembly gets bogged down in parliamentarism. The phrase decidedly wins out over content:

wild, inane agitation [without content: *inhaltslose Agitation*] in the name of tranquillity; most solemn preaching of tranquillity in the name of revo-

lution; passions without truth, truths without passion; heroes without heroic deeds, history without events [*Geschichte ohne Ereignisse*]. (P. 125)

Now, in what does this absence of events, and finally this ahistoricity, consist? What does it look like? Answer: an absence of body, of course. But who or what has lost its body? Well, not a living individual, not, as one says, a real subject, but a specter, the red specter that was conjured (away) by the counter-revolutionaries (in fact, by all of Europe: the *Manifesto* was yesterday). That is why one must “reverse” things, invert the tale by Chamisso, “The Wonderful Story of Peter Schlemihl,” the man who lost his shadow. Here, Marx tells us, “Men and events appear as inverted Schlemihls [*als umgekehrte Schlemible*],” the shadow has lost its body at the moment the revolution appeared in the uniform of order. The specter itself, the red specter, has been in effect disincarnated. As if that were possible. But is that not also possibility, precisely [*justement*], virtuality itself? And to understand history, that is, the event-ness of the event, must one not reckon with this virtualization? Must one not think that the loss of the body can affect the specter itself? To the point that it is then impossible to discern between the specter and the specter of the specter, the specter searching for proper content and living effectivity? Not the night in which all cows are black, but grey on grey because red on red. For let us never forget that in describing these overturnings, inversions, conversions without border, Marx means to denounce appearances. His *critique* also consists in saying: these men and these events who lose flesh like an inverted Schlemihl whose body has disappeared (*abbanden gekommen ist*), that’s how they appear (*erscheinen*), to be sure, but this is but an apparition, therefore also an appearance and *finally an image*, in the sense of *phenomenon* and in the sense of rhetorical *figure*. It remains the case that what seems to be finally an image is also, provisionally, the final image, what “appears in the end” (*endlich erscheint*), grey on grey like red on red, in the parousia of this aborted revolution:

If any section of history has been painted grey on grey [*grau in grau*], it is this. Men and events appear as inverted Schlemihls [*erscheinen als umgekehrte Schlemible*], as shadows that have lost their bodies. The revolution itself paralyzes its own bearers and endows only its adversaries with passionate forcefulness. When the “red specter” [*das “rote Gespenst”*] continually conjured up and exorcised [*beraufbeschworen und gebannt*] by the counter-revolutionaries, finally appears [*endlich erscheint*], it appears

not with the Phrygian cap of anarchy on its head, but in the uniform of order, in red breeches [*in roten Plumphosen*]. (Ibid.)

On both sides, between revolution and counter-revolution, between the democrats and Bonaparte, the war does not oppose only specters and conjurations, animist spells and magic incantations, but simulacra of simulacra. On both sides, a specular reflection endlessly sends the simulacrum away, that is, defers up to the abyss the encounter with a living body, with the real, living, actual event, with the revolution itself, the revolution properly speaking, in person. This does not prevent Marx from giving a date. It is true that he points out, each time within brackets, that it is a Sunday. Now, in its very singularity, a date always repeats, resuscitates the ghost of another date for which it mourns. What is more, a Sunday is not just any day for a revolution. Hegel had already named a certain speculative Good Friday, Marx gives one to see what is seen on the Lord's day, the awaited apparition, the return of the dead, resurrection as reappearance:

beneficial consequences of the second [Sunday of the month: *Sonntag des Monats*] May 1852. In their minds [Messieurs the Democrats] the second [Sunday of] May 1852 had become a fixed idea, a dogma, like the day on which Christ should reappear [*wiedererscheiner sollte*] and the millenium begin, in the minds of the Chiliasts. As ever, weakness had taken refuge in a belief in miracles, fancied the enemy overcome when it had only conjured him away in imagination [*in der Phantasie wegbexete*]... (P. 107; the first three bracketed insertions are Marx's)

And a little later—it is still Sunday, the same day, another Sunday, the floor is turned over to phantoms, to the phantasmagoria, to anathema as formula of exorcism (*Bannformel*), to sorcery, the survival will have lasted but the blink of an eye—here is the will and testament of a people. With its own voice, with its own hand, an immediately blinded people signs its own death warrant in a Mephistophelean decree:

the sheet lightning of the daily press, the entire literature, the political names and the intellectual reputations [*die geistigen Renommeen*], the civil law and the penal code, the *liberté, égalité, fraternité* and the second [Sunday of] May 1852—all has vanished like a phantasmagoria [*Phantasmagorie*] before the spell [*Bannformel*] of a man whom even his

enemies do not make out to be a magician [*Hexenmeister*]. Universal suffrage seems to have survived [*überlebt*] only for a moment, in order that with its own hand it may make its last will and testament before the eyes of all the world and declare in the name of the people itself: "All that comes to birth is fit for overthrow, as nothing worth." (Ibid.)

What happened in this blink of an eye? How to describe this sleight of hand? A fake magician, as insubstantial as a sort of *back-up ghost*, auxiliary specter, or *revenant* on call (Louis Bonaparte), himself haunted by the quasi-paternal figure of a great specter (Napoleon Bonaparte and the Revolution of 1789), taking advantage of a day on duty, makes the revolution disappear, like a phantasmagoria, by means of a perverse, diabolical, and non-apparent exorcism. For if his conjuration makes the people disappear, it signs in fact by the same token his own disappearance, it signs it with his own hand: absolute alienation and now without body, alienation of self that appropriates in this way only its own death and bequeaths only the patrimony of its expropriation.

Do these paradoxes correspond to a consistent and irreducible logic? Or must one make certain allowances? Must one allow for rhetoric? Is it just a matter here of seeking certain effects in what some (for example, Michel Henry¹⁰) have occasionally wanted to qualify among the "political" or "historical" texts of Marx, in opposition to his "philosophical" texts? Our hypothesis is different. No doubt one must take the measure of the polemic, the oratorical talent, an uncommon linguistic arsenal: a panoply of arguments but also of images, a *fantastic panoply* at a time when people had a taste for ghosts (for a *certain* theater of ghosts, according to a historically determined scenography—every age has its scenography, we have our ghosts). One must also consider, to be sure, the singular involvement in the mobility of a highly differentiated historical, tactical, and strategic context. But this should not prevent one from recognizing certain invariables beyond these limits. There is constancy, consistency, and coherence here. There are discursive layers whose stratification allows long sequences to remain subjacent to ephemeral formations. Even if a certain structural heterogeneity remains, as we are constantly suggesting here, it does not divide different types of discourse, but rather is at work within each one of them. In its philosophical form, the paradox of the specter was already part of the program of *The German Ideology* and will remain on the program of *Capital*. And the fantastic panoply, while it furnishes the rhetoric or the polemic with images or phantasms, perhaps gives one to think

that the figure of the ghost is not just one figure among others. It is perhaps the hidden figure of all figures. For this reason, it would perhaps no longer figure as one tropological weapon among others. There would be no meta-rhetoric of the ghost.

In the face of these paradoxes, what would be the task here? One of the tasks, at least, would be for example to reconstitute a battle plan, the spectrological map of what was, in *The German Ideology*, the most gigantic phantomachia in the whole history of philosophy. One would have to follow it in detail, through the extraordinary play and the reciprocal excesses of what Marx called, in the passages we have just quoted, an “own content” and a “phrase.” Pleasure ought not to lose a single spark of the wit, the spirit of Marx (and Engels) through and beyond the witticism [*mot d’esprit*], not only in the economy of the *Witz*, its features and its barbs, but through and beyond the trans-substantiation between *Gaz* and *Geist*.¹¹

We will be able to isolate only a few traits in a long and witty [*spirituelle*] diatribe. Once again it is a question of a *hunt*. Anything close at hand is made to serve as arrow for the bow. There is harassment always without mercy, sometimes without respect for the rules of conduct (which is to say, without too much good faith), of someone who is accused of belonging to that lineage of neo-evangelists we were talking about above. Saint Max (Stirner), if one can believe Marx (and Engels), would have caused the Apocalypse of Saint John to lie. Where the latter heralded the whore of Babylon (that other center of our Middle-Eastern ellipsis, still today), the neo-evangelist Stirner proclaims man, the secret (*das Geheimnis*), the unique (*den Einzigen*). And then follows, in the desert of the spirit (*die Wüste des Geistes*), the whole history of spirits, ghosts, or *revenants*: first the pure history of spirits (*reine Geistergeschichte*), then the history of the possessed (*die Bessenenen*) as impure history of phantoms (*unreine Geistergeschichte*), then the impure impure history of spirits (*unreine unreine Geistergeschichte*). Stirner proclaims it himself: “ever since the word was made flesh, since the world *was* spiritualized [*vergeistigt*], bewitched [*verzaubert*], it is a ghost [*ein Spuk*].”¹² Marx ironizes on the “Stirner” case (the proper name in quotation marks because, as everyone knows, it is a pseudonym): “Stirner’ sees spirits [*sieht Geister*].” For, like a tourist guide or a professor, Stirner would claim to teach us the rules of method for a good introduction to ghosts. After having determined the spirit to be something other than (the) self (“*Der Geist ist etwas Andres als Ich*”), a

definition, we dare say, not lacking in insight, Stirner poses yet another excellent question ("But this other, what is it? [*Dieses Andre aber, was ist's?*]"), a big question which Marx, it seems, is too quick to scoff at and too eager to do whatever necessary to exorcise in his turn. All the more so in that, as Marx himself remarks in order to mock it easily, this question does no more than modify, with a supplementary "metamorphosis" (*Wandlung*), the originary question (*die urprüngliche Frage*), the abyssal question that bore in effect on the non-identity to self, on the inadequation and thus the non-presence to self, the dis-adjusted untimeliness of this thing that is called *spirit*. Marx should not have made fun of it, but he does, and maliciously, with an ingenuousness that would like to appear feigned. Perhaps it is less so than it appears. (So let us not try to hide the fact here, although this is not exactly the right moment, that we take seriously the originality, audacity, and, precisely, the philosophico-political seriousness of Stirner who also should be read without Marx or against him; but this is not our topic here). Marx:

Now, therefore, the question arises: What is the spirit other than the ego? whereas the original question was: What is the spirit, owing to its creation out of nothing, other than itself [*Was ist der Geist durch seine Schöpfung aus Nichts anderes als er selbst?*] With this Saint Max jumps to the next "transformation." (P. 152; another equivalent reading: spirit is created from nothing other than itself)

In its first and simple "impurity," the history of ghosts unfolds in several moments. Even before one watches from the comfort of one's chair¹³ what is called the theory of specters, the procession of the ghosts of concepts that would be these concepts of ghosts (their mere names, Marx thinks), it is important to underscore that this theory *betrays* its origin, namely, father Hegel. It betrays and it betrays: It allows one to see its ancestral line and it is unworthy of that ancestor. It denounces that ancestor. Stirner's Hegelian genealogy would also be a decline of the son. Stirner descends from Hegel, he is haunted by the author of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and he cannot stand it. He spits out living ghosts like a whale suffering from indigestion. In other words, he does not comprehend Hegel as well as another one of the descendants, guess who. The latter, just as persecuted by the shadow of this great father who comes back every night, ready also to betray him or to avenge him (it is sometimes the same thing), is busy giving a lesson here in Hegelianism to

brother Stirner. Stirner always slips into Hegelian language, he slides his words into “the long-familiar orthodox-Hegelian phrases” (p. 149). But this unworthy heir has not understood the essentials of the will and testament, he has not read very well *The Phenomenology of Spirit* which is his inspiration and which he wants to give to us in a Christian version (“Saint Max intends to give us a phenomenology of the Christian spirit” [p. 153]). What has he not understood? What is the essential? On the subject of the becoming-specter of the spirit, he has not seen that, for Hegel, the world was not only spiritualized (*vergeistigt*) but de-spiritualized (*entgeistigt*), a thesis that the author of *The German Ideology* seems to approve: this de-spiritualization is quite correctly (*ganz richtig*) recognized by Hegel, we read. Hegel managed to relate the two movements, but our “saintly dialectician,” who is ignorant of the “historical method,” has not learned how to do so. What is more, if he had been a better historian, he would have ended up breaking with Hegel. For the reproach against Stirner is both that he does not understand Hegel and—that this is not necessarily a contradiction—that he is too Hegelian in his genealogy of the ghost. This bad brother sees himself accused at once of being the too filial son and a bad son of Hegel.¹⁴ A docile son listens to his father, he mimes him but does not understand him at all, implies Marx—who would have liked to do not the opposite, that is, become another bad son, but something else by interrupting filiation. Easier said than done. In any case, the work of Stirner remains null and void. “But even if he had given us this phenomenology (which after Hegel is moreover superfluous), he would all the same have given us nothing” (pp. 153–54).

A bad son and a bad historian, Stirner would be unable to break with the ancestor and the precedent of the *Phenomenology* (and what is a *phenomenology* if not a logic of the *phainesthai* and of the *phantasma*, therefore of the phantom? Unless one goes to desperate lengths, as Marx finally does himself, to try to distinguish between spirit and specter). The author of *The Ego and His Own* does not see that concepts as abstract as Self-Consciousness or Man are religious in nature. He makes of religion a *causa sui*, as if specters could move about on their own. He does not see that “‘Christianity’ has no history whatsoever,” no history of its own. It does not manage to explain, as it should have done, the “self-determinations” and the “developments” of “the religious spirit” based on “empirical conditions” and “empirical causes,” on “a determined form of society,” “determined relations of exchange and industry.” He missed

both the being-determined, therefore “necessary,” he missed the *determination* (the master-word of the accusation) and more precisely the empiricity of this determination. He thus misapprehended what determines this determination of spirit as hetero-determination. The apparently declared empiricism that inspires this critique always leads it back, in fact, to a law of alterity. As always, empiricism has a vocation for heterology. One recognizes actual experience by its encounter with some other. Now, for having overlooked this hetero-determination of the Christian spirit, Stirner is under a spell, he hallucinates, he phantomalizes, one might say he fantasizes the spirit. In truth, he is haunted by the Hegelian frequency. He is inhabited only by that. The only “alterity” of which he is capable is the “being-other” of the professorial chair, “a ‘being-other’ of the thoughts of the Berlin professor.” The “metamorphoses” of Stirnerian man and world are universal history incarnated in the shadow of Hegel, incorporated into “the body of Hegelian philosophy [*in den Leib der Hegelschen Philosophie*],” metamorphosed and incorporated “into ghosts, which only apparently are a ‘being-other’ of the thoughts of the Berlin professor.” They are only that, and they are apparently that. In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, in this Bible or this Book, Hegel transfigures the individual into “consciousness” and the world into “object.” Life and history are thus transfigured, in their very diversity, into *relations of consciousness to the object*. It is still a matter of truth and it is a phenomenologization of the truth as truth of *consciousness* that is here put in question. The history of the ghost remains a history of phantomalization and the latter will indeed be a history of truth, a history of the becoming-true of a fable, unless it is the reverse, a fabrication of truth, in any case a history of ghosts. The phenomenology (of spirit) describes (1) the relation of consciousness to the object *as truth* or as relation *to the truth* as mere object; (2) the relation of consciousness, insofar as it is *the true*, to the object; (3) the *true relation* of consciousness with truth (*wahres Verhalten des Bewusstseins zur Wahrheit*).

This tripleness reflects the Trinity: God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The spirit provides mediation, thus passage and unity. It gives rise, by the same token, to the metamorphosis of the spiritual into the spectral: this is the very error of Saint Max. One therefore has the feeling that, in the critique of Stirner in any case, Marx is out to get the specter above all and not the spirit, as if he still believed in some de-contaminating purification in this regard, as if the ghost were not watching the spirit, as if it were not haunting

the spirit, precisely, from the threshold of spiritualization, as if iterability itself, which conditions both the idealization and the spiritualization of the "idea," did not erase any critical assurance as to the discernment between these two concepts. But Marx insists on discerning. That is the price of the *krinein* of the critique.

think; the title of this present work may be read as a reply to that of J.-M. Benoist, however much time it may have taken or left to time, to the *contretemps*—that is to the *revenant*), one would have to recall a great number of essays that it is impossible to list here (those in particular by J.-J. Goux, T. Keenan, T. Lewis, C. Malabou, B. Martin, A. Parker, G. Spivak, M. Sprinker, A. Warminski, S. Weber).

- 10 It is not clear whether the “foule crimes” that happened “in my dayes of Nature” were his or not. And this is, perhaps, the secret of these “secrets of my Prison-House” which it is “forbid” to the King to reveal. Performatives *en abyme*. The oaths, the calls to swear, the injunctions, and the conjurations that then proliferate—as in all of the plays of Shakespeare, who was a great thinker and great poet of the oath—suppose a secret, to be sure, some impossible testimony, one which cannot and especially must not be exposed in a confession, still less in a proof, a piece of evidence, or a constative utterance of the type S is P. But this secret also keeps the secret of some absolute contradiction between two experiences of the secret: I tell you that I cannot tell you, I swear it, that is my first crime and my first confession, a confession without confession. They do not exclude any other of the kind, believe me.

4 *in the name of the revolution*

- 1 Sigmund Freud, “Eine Schwierigkeit der Psychoanalyse,” *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. XII, p. 8; Standard Edition, Vol. XVII, p. 141.
- 2 We will approach this scene below (pp. 147 ff.), around a certain table, regarding fetishization as spectralization of exchange-value. It is the very opening, the first scene, if not the primal scene, of *Capital*.
- 3 *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), trans. S. W. Ryazanskaya, ed. Maurice Dobb (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 107.
- 4 On the expression “faire peur,” cf. above, p. 180, n. 40. (Tr.)
- 5 Perverse logic, abyssal perversity of all “revisionisms” that mark the end of this century and will doubtless continue into the next. Of course, there must be no let-up in the opposition to the worst revisionisms and negationisms, those whose figure and interests are now fairly well determined, even if their manifestations continually proliferate and get renewed. The task will therefore always be urgent, always something to be reaffirmed. But here and there one sees advance signs of a symmetrical perversity that is no less threatening. Armed with a good conscience that is imperturbable because often enveloped in ignorance or obscurantism, sheltered from any effective right to repose in the mass media (I am thinking of a certain recent article by Michiko Kakutani, “When History and Memory Are Casualties: Holocaust Denial,” *New York Times*, 30 April 1993), there are those who are not content to profit from the

ghosts that haunt our most painful memory. They also authorize themselves thereby, in the same élan, to *manipulate* with impunity, without any scruple, the very word “revisionism.” They are prepared to use it to accuse anyone who poses critical, methodological, epistemological, philosophical questions about history, about the way it is thought, written, or established, about the status of truth, and so forth. Whoever calls for vigilance in the reading of history, whoever complicates a little the schemas accredited by the *doxa*, or demands a reconsideration of the concepts, procedures, and productions of historical truth or the presuppositions of historiography, and so forth, risks being accused today, through amalgamation, contagion, or confusion, of “revisionism” or at least of playing into some “revisionism.” This accusation is now at the disposal of the first comer who understands nothing of this critical necessity, who wishes to be protected from it, and wants first of all his or her culture or lack of culture, his or her certainties or beliefs to be left untouched. A very disturbing historical situation which risks imposing an *a priori* censorship on historical research or on historical reflection wherever they touch on sensitive areas of our present existence. It is urgent to point out that entire wings of history, that of this century in particular, in Europe and outside of Europe, will *still* have to be interrogated and brought to light, radical questions will have to be asked and reformulated without there being anything at all “revisionist” about that. Let us even say: on the contrary.

- 6 *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 11 (New York: International Publishers, 1979), pp. 103-04; emphasis added.
- 7 We are obviously thinking here of the work of Michel Henry (*Marx* in two volumes [Paris: Gallimard, 1976]) who classifies the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, as well as *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* and a few other works, among the “political” or “historico-political” texts. They are, according to Henry, less philosophical, if indeed they are philosophical, because they “do not bear their principle of intelligibility within themselves” (I, p. 10). (What does it mean, strictly speaking, for a text to *bear a principle of intelligibility within itself*? [Patrice Loraux devotes to this strategy of Michel Henry several very lucid pages of his book (*Les Sous-Main de Marx* [Paris: Hachette, 1986], pp. 34-36) in the foreword titled “The Theory of Texts”; in particular, he recalls the tradition of this strategy]; has there ever been an example of it? This is not the place to discuss it—even though the strange and confident belief in such an immanence of intelligibility is not foreign to the concept of life that supports this whole book.) This “historico-political” dimension (either weakly philosophical or non-philosophical) would be manifest, according to Henry, in the “case notably of the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, written for an American newspaper” (I, p. 11). Now, this latter work does not seem to be at all bounded by the closure of “political” or “historico-political” texts, assum-

ing that one can accept such a problematic distinction, in particular in the case of a work like that of Marx. Notably one finds again his spectral paradoxology, the one that matters to us here, in the most “philosophical” and significant texts in Henry’s own view, for example, as we will soon see, in *The German Ideology*. By weighing and thinking this spectrology, we are not directly opposing the philosophy of life or of the “radical subjectivity from which any objectivity is excluded” (I, p. 326), nor its interpretation by Henry (with whom we share at least some concerns, but doubtless from a wholly different point of view, about the way Marx has been read until now). But we are trying to accept the necessity of complicating it in an abyssal fashion, there where the supplement of an internal-external fold forbids simply opposing the living to the non-living. Whoever subscribes, as we would be tempted to do, to the final words of the very last conclusion of Henry’s *Marx* (“Marx’s thought places us before the abyssal question: what is life?”) has indeed to refer to this abyss, which is to say, to re-problematize all the preceding statements of that book which is so wholly about the *living*, the *living* individual, *living* subjectivity, real work as *living* work, and so forth, in other words, the whole critical arsenal of a profoundly polemical work. For it is finally in the name of this univocal reference to the living that it tries, with great violence, to discredit more or less all previous readings of Marx, and especially in their political dimension. One wonders: Why would the question of life be “abyssal,” precisely? In other words, why this question? Does it not open onto the unthought non-self-identity of the concept or the being called “life”? Onto the essential obscurity, for both science and philosophy, of what is called life? Does not all of this mark the internal or external limits, the closure or principle of ruin of a philosophy of life? And of subjectivity, however novel its conceptual presentation may be, once it is determined as essentially living? If one integrates into the life of this living subjectivity the work of negativity or of objectivity, the phenomena or rather the non-phenomena of death and so forth, why persist in calling it life? On the other hand, we do not think this interpretation of being or of production as manifestation—or radical immanence—of a living and monadic subjectivity (cf. for example II, pp. 41–42), an interpretation that is found to be widely justified in the letter of numerous texts of Marx, should be opposed by some philosophy of death (which could claim just as many rights and references in the same texts read differently). We are attempting something else. To try to accede to the possibility of this very alternative (life and/or death), we are directing our attention to the effects or the petitions of a survival or of a return of the dead (neither life nor death) on the sole basis of which one is able to speak of “living subjectivity” (in opposition to its death): to speak of it but also to understand that it can, itself, speak and speak of itself, leave traces or legacies beyond the living present of its life, ask (itself) questions regarding its own subject, in short, also address itself to the other or, if one prefers, to

other living individuals, to other “monads.” For all these questions, and such is the hypothesis of our reading, the work of the specter here weaves, in the shadow of a labyrinth covered with mirrors, a tenuous but indispensable guiding thread.

- 8 The text introduces this passage by pointing out that “the French translation most often loses these traits.” (Tr.)
- 9 Before I had found this allusion to the “red specter” in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Etienne Balibar had alerted me to the existence of a newspaper titled *The Red Specter* (“during the Revolution of ’48... apparently after the June massacres... that is, the specter of the dead proletarian revolutionaries”). “‘I am announcing the *jacquerie!*’ writes Romieu in *The Red Specter*. ‘The proletarians are ready, lying in ambush in the least little village, hate and envy in their hearts...’” (cited by J. Bruhat, *Le Socialisme français de 1848 à 1871*, in *Histoire générale du socialisme* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972–78], vol. I, p. 507). “One also thinks,” adds Balibar, “of ‘the specter of the red death’ by Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, written, if I am not mistaken, after the Commune, even if the ‘red death’ is not apparently the same thing as the ‘death of the reds’...”
- 10 Cf. above, p. 186, n. 7.
- 11 “Stirner discovers that at the end of the ancient world, ‘spirit’ ‘again foamed and frothed over irresistibly because *gases*’ (spirits) [*Gase/Geister*] ‘developed within it...’” Marx then analyzes the “wonderful play” that Saint Max thus describes (*The German Ideology*, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), pp. 186–87). Hegel had already been attentive to the affinity *Gas-Geist*: the work of death, the fermentation of the cadaver in decomposition mark the passage from a philosophy of nature to a philosophy of spirit. On these themes, permit me to refer to *Glas* (especially pp. 59, 91, 235) and *Of Spirit* (p. 99).
- 12 *The German Ideology*, p. 153. As is well known, Marx constantly weaves into his polemical remarks long quotations from *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (1845; translated as *The Ego and His Own*).
- 13 The word “chaire,” pulpit or professorial chair, is a homonym of “chair,” flesh. (Tr.)
- 14 On the tangled and overdetermined history of the relations with Stirner and on the historico-political context of this polemic, cf. Henri Arvon, *Aux sources de l’existentialisme, Max Stirner* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), pp. 128ff.

5 apparition of the inapparent

- 1 The English translation of *The German Ideology* retains “conjuring trick” for