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Beyond Inquisitional Logic, or, Toward an An-archaeological Latin Americanism

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I. POLITICS OF NO FUTURE?

In a recent issue of the *New Left Review*, art historian and leftist essayist T. J. Clark published an essay entitled “For a Left With No Future,” a manifesto of sorts—or, as Susan Watkins contends, a “counter manifesto” (79)—in which he insists that the European left should renounce any sort of utopian orientation in favor of a “politics in a tragic key” (Clark 2012, 59), what he calls, following a kind of nihilist-punk slogan, a politics of “no future.” His critique of the vision of an alternative, utopian future on the part of the revolutionary left (defined here as “root-and-branch opposition to capitalism”) has substantial consequences for the present not only of the European left, but also of the Latin American left, despite the fact that they currently find them-

selves in radically disparate situations. “Is this pessimism?” asks Clark, responding:

Well, yes. But what other tonality seems possible in the face of the past ten years? How are we meant to understand the arrival of real ruination in the order of global finance . . . and the almost complete failure of left responses to it to resonate beyond the ranks of the faithful? Or to put the question another way: if the past decade is not proof that there are *no* circumstances capable of reviving the left in its nineteenth and twentieth-century form, then what would proof be like? (54–55)

The problem with this argument, in my view, has to do with the establishment of an opposition between a utopian future and a tragic future. If for Clark, it is vital to take a critical distance from the utopian in favor of a somewhat pessimistic “presentism” (Watkins 2012, 79), there remains a crucial blind spot in his logic: the tragic does not present an alternative to the utopian (nor can the utopian offer a way out of the tragic), because both utopian and tragic thought fall under the same sign of the future as calculable or predetermined. In the utopian version of the future, we know what it is that we desire, and it is only a question of whether this future will come about. In the tragic version of the future, or the tragic version *without* future, we know what we want, and we know that our desires will *not* come to fruition.

These two alternative futures, then, in reality prove to be no more than two sides of the same coin: a prescriptive politics, on one side, and a politics that would eliminate agency or action, that is, the very possibility of politics. As Gabriela Basterra argues in *Seductions of Fate*, when we choose to employ the adjective “tragic” to characterize catastrophic events, we “occlude our own involvement in the decision-making process that led to so much suffering, as well as our own responsibility for its outcome” (2004, 1); we abandon, simultaneously, the possibility of ethics *and* the possibility of politics. Both the utopian *and* the tragic, then, represent a politics of no future in their exclusion of the possibility of the unforeseen or unforeseeable, the incalculable, the very possibility of an event. In *The Politics of Friendship* (2005), Jacques Derrida writes of the future as the absolute other, the *arrivant* that we do not expect,

and for whom we are never prepared, not (or not only) due to the catastrophic nature of the arrival, but also because we lack a vocabulary, a lexicon, to think such a future: it exceeds the limits of representation (and, by extension, of politics).

If we are interested in, and committed to, the possibility of democracy—not the extant capitalist democracy, nor any other version of democracy that we could fathom, but a democracy-to-come, that is, incalculable—it is worth asking the following questions: What are the conditions of possibility for the thinking of democracy (as movement, as change itself, as event), or for reflecting upon that which is unthinkable? How can we trace different genealogies of (Latin Americanist) thought, of possible avenues of thinking, that would at once take into account the violence of what I will call Inquisitional logic, or identitarian thinking, while creating the conditions of possibility for the deconstruction of such violence, knowing full well that such deconstruction is ultimately inseparable from violence? Can we propose, finally, a relation with the past that does not annihilate futurity, which moves beyond the utopian and the tragic and, in doing so, carves a space in political thinking for the incalculable?

To attempt to respond to these questions, the present essay proposes to explore two genealogies of Latin Americanist political thought. The first could be called, to borrow from Alberto Moreiras's recent essay, the "identitarian register," which I would ground in something that I have termed *Inquisitional logic*. The second genealogy could be characterized as a "marrano register" (2012, 178–79): if Moreiras understands this concept as an intellectual counter-tradition to Spanish Imperial reason, I am interested in pursuing a notion of *marranismo* as a critical practice, a practice of critique, that would expose the constitutive impossibility of Inquisitional (or identitary) logic. In principle, this latter genealogy could include subalternism, deconstruction, infrapolitics, and posthegemony, to mention only a few examples, without collapsing one into another. The consequences of such critical endeavors, as I hope to signal in the final section of this essay, require a reconsideration of the political in relation to the ethical, the aporetic conjugation of which would open a space in which—from which—to begin to think an unforeseeable future, democracy-to-come, or to think that which is unthinkable about such a future.

II. INQUISITIONAL LOGIC

I'd like to begin with a brief discussion of what I have called, in my broader research, Inquisitional logic. Inquisitional logic represents the violent face of the dominant concepts of modernity: identity as reflexivity or self-presence (and difference as its corresponding mirror image), sovereignty, and the idea of the political as the Schmittian divide between friend and enemy. It accounts for the link between Inquisition and colonialism, given the historically and geopolitically specific conditions of imperial expansion across the Atlantic. Inquisitional logic, finally, grounds itself in the violent conversion of others (Jews and Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula and indigenous peoples in the Americas), in the representation of the Americas as a new and eminently "convertible" world, and in the subsequent "reconversion" of these subjects through interrogation and torture. Conversion, in this sense, stands as the organizing principle of both Inquisition and colonialism, the totalizing violence of which can be understood as a response to internal instability and heterogeneity. This is particularly true of Spanish and Portuguese colonial expansion, as both empires struggled to eliminate Judaism and Islam through conversion and expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula, while conquering ethnic and religious difference through annihilation, enslavement, and conversion in the New World.

The Inquisition, for its part, is structured around the articulation of a question, with the scene of interrogation standing as its material and symbolic epicenter. Together with the confessions of victims accused of heresy, interrogation serves as the foundational discursive act of the Inquisition. In this way, we can understand religious conversion (as well as a secondary conversion carried out through the act of torture itself) as that which makes possible the Inquisition, but also the Inquisition as that which makes conversion possible, as Brett Levinson argues and as Oscar Cabezas takes up in his book *Postsoberanía*: "el converso en tanto sujeto desfigurado respecto de una identidad estable desata el terror de la Inquisición permitiéndole operar, ocupar y desplegarse, bajo sospecha delictual, sobre todo el cuerpo de la comunidad" (the converso—a subject disfigured with respect to a stable identity—unleashes the terror of the Inquisition, allowing it to operate, oc-

copy and unfold, under delictual suspicion, across the entire body of the community) (2012, 78).

To read Inquisitional logic as identitarian logic, let us first return to the Greek word used to signify torture, *basanos*, and its early and crucial link to the notion of truth as *alêtheia*, as classics scholar Page duBois has detailed in her book *Torture and Truth*. Tracing the etymology of the word *basanos*, which originally referred to a touchstone to test the purity of gold, and which evolved, in Athenian culture, to signify a test of loyalty and, finally, to the extraction of truth from the body of the slave using force, duBois demonstrates that our very notion of truth is inseparable from the Western practice of torture. Following duBois, we learn that the practice of torture in Western culture is intimately tied, since its inception, to classical notions of truth as *alêtheia*, a buried truth brought to light (in contrast to *nêmertes*, the infallible truth of the underworld): “That truth is unitary, that truth may finally be extracted by torture, is part of our legacy from the Greeks and, therefore, part of our idea of ‘truth’” (1991, 5).

Who, or what, is the marrano, or marranismo? Is marranismo that which allows for the existence of the Inquisition or that which serves as its limit? As I have aimed to demonstrate in my broader research, the marrano acts as an aporetic figure, the representations of which oscillate between an Inquisitional (identitary) logic and a deconstructive logic. On the one hand, historical and aesthetic representations of the marrano tend to underscore her crypto-Jewishness, and Inquisitorial interrogation is shown to extract the clandestine truth duBois describes in her work. The marrano is interrogated to bring to light her Jewishness, the hidden heretical impulse, as if it were possible to preserve it intact despite the process of conversion and, in some cases, despite the years, the generations that passed since the conversion of the marrano’s ancestors (and, in any case, what precisely was “there” to begin with?). In nineteenth- and twentieth-century narrative, theater, and film, the marrano bears a symbolic weight or, more precisely, an allegorical weight, a mode of signification that shares the secret form, or formal secret, of the crypto-Jew. Written during or in the wake of dictatorship, such depictions of the interrogated marrano allegorize the tortured political prisoner under totalitarian state violence. Yet the majority of these works end up reproducing the Inqui-

sitional logic they aim to resist by remaining bound to an identitarian reading of the marrano. Despite a political or ideological opposition to repressive state violence, these works maintain the violent bond between torture and truth, missing altogether the deconstructive potential of marranismo.

There are, of course, alternative readings of the marrano: in addition to those of Moreiras, Levinson, and Cabezas, which we have mentioned, are those of José Luis Villacañas (who emphasizes the double exclusion of Spinoza's marranism), Ricardo Forster (who reads the marrano as the alter-ego of the modern, autonomous subject), and Jacques Derrida, who locates "in the metonymic and generalized figure of the Marrano, the right to secrecy as right to resistance against and beyond the order of the political" (2002, 64). Derrida's work on the secret offers a particularly promising, and wholly distinct, reading of the marrano, one which is not based upon the hiding or revelation (through confession) of *alêtheia*: "It would not be a question of a secret as a representation dissimulated by a conscious subject, nor, moreover, of the content of an unconscious representation, some secret or mysterious motive that the moralist or the psychoanalyst might have the skill to detect, or, as they say, to de-mystify" (1995, 24). Rather, the Derridean secret exceeds the play of burying and unburying, that is, it subverts the notion of *alêtheia* that is constitutive of Inquisitional logic. *This* is the distinction that I consider vital to a discussion of marrano thinking. By exposing the limits of Inquisitional logic, the deconstructive impulse opens more possibilities than it excludes, both in theory and so-called practice.

Yet the notion of an unburied truth, a once forgotten truth brought to light, has dominated a certain strand of Latin Americanist political thought, a tradition that betrays a compatibility, or complicity, with the logic of archaeology, an arche (ἀρχή) logos (λόγος). Such thinking, an excavational mode of thought, a cousin of a certain conservative philological tendency, has as its foundation or ground (*Grund*)—in addition to what is built upon it—that which hides beneath it, an identifiable and revealable truth. One example of this tradition can be found in the "decolonial turn" of the aughts, a school or "option" that aims to excavate an authentically indigenous essence from postcolonial Latin America and emancipate it from the Eurocentrism that has kept it prisoner. Yet such *arche-logic* can also be found in less expected sites,

where its political and intellectual consequences and commitments are dramatically different from those we find in decolonial studies. I am thinking, for example, of a recent article by Bruno Bosteels, “Una arqueología del porvenir,” in which he reads José Revueltas’s *Dialéctica de la conciencia* “como una suerte de arqueología del futuro: un rescate de la memoria genérica de la humanidad, sus rebeliones y derrotas, a través de una iluminación profana que no sólo condensa nuestro pasado inmemorial sino que también lo proyecta sobre la utopía de aquello que queda aún por venir” (as a kind of archaeology of the future: a salvaging of the generic memory of humanity, its rebellions and defeats, through a profane illumination that not only condenses our immemorial past but also projects it upon the utopia of that which is still to come) (162). Bosteels’s argument does not stand or fall on a narrowly conceived concept of identity—indeed, the strong use of the pronoun “our” suggests the weight he places on the normative force of quite a different sort of universal identity. Bosteels’s “archaeology of the future” may be limited, not by its desire to return to the past to think the present or future, but rather by its exclusion, from its approach to the present, of a reading that takes into account the act of reading itself. The logic of archaeology, even in its strongest contemporary versions, suffers from the lack of auto-critique or exposure of the limits of its own thinking or theorizing, the inability to call reading *reading*.

A second example, more archaeological still, would be the cover of Bosteels’s recent book *Marx and Freud in Latin America* (2012), which shows three images from Argentine artist Marcelo Brodsky’s installation *Los Condenados de la Tierra*. The installation includes boxes of books that had been buried during the dictatorship by a leftist couple and excavated several decades later by their children after hearing that they were hidden in their backyard in La Plata (Fig. 1). These highly suggestive images metonymically signal the project of the book—and, one could deduce, Bosteels’s larger project of “actualizing” communism through a kind of revindication of a repressed militancy from the 1960s and 1970s. Bosteels explains that the studies in his book, like the images from Brodsky’s installation, “consist in an effort to dig similar holes and tell the story of what happened with those works and other like them that were censored, forgotten, buried, or destroyed since the mid-1970s” (21). This work in counter-memory concerns not only books that were



Figure 1. Image from cover of Bruno Bosteels's *Marx and Freud in Latin America* (2012). © Verso Books. Courtesy of Verso Books.

literally buried or censored and later disinterred, but also “the ideas, dreams and projects that were otherwise forced to find a more figurative hiding place in the inner recesses of the psychic apparatus of their original readers and proponents” (21). Such an approach to politics and history, or to political history, is symptomatic of an ubiquitous desire in Latin Americanist thought to access the truth of the past, a desire that, in the work of Bosteels, acquires a sharp and rigorous quality but which, I want to insist, does not allow for a notion of the future that would leave room for the incalculable. Again, my criticism has little to do with the appropriation of Revueltas or Brodsky, whose works in principle open up a number of fascinating, diverse (and divergent) avenues of interpretation, but rather with the foreclosure of futures (and of pasts) that cannot be reckoned or thought in advance or understood, even “figuratively,” in their pastness.

If we can understand Inquisitional logic as a kind of archaeological mode of thought, what I am proposing as marrano thinking would appear in relation to another logic, an-archaeological, an-archival, a critical practice that would not only insubordinate (in the sense given this verb by Nelly Richard), but would also

expose the instability of the principles of identity, originality, foundation, and truth. In contrast to Bosteels's project, recent work by Susana Draper ("Fragmentos de futuro en los abismos del pasado"), Gareth Williams (*The Mexican Exception*), and Sam Steinberg ("Photopoetics at Tlatelolco") enact a decidedly different approach to the past. In all three, it is possible to detect a gesture of return to 1968 not to "bring to light" the truth of the Mexican student-popular movement, but rather to traverse the fantasy of the movement, together with its dissolution, without seeking to suture the gaps that are necessarily produced in such readings. This is marrano thinking: a rejection of the excavation a buried truth in favor of an an-archaeological approach in which the future of the past remains unaccounted for: that is, the very possibility of reading.

This is not to say that these critics are in agreement on what their "marrano thinking" amounts to, or on how it proceeds—any more than the critics I have been lining up, brutally, on the "archaeological" side agree. If Williams underscores the impossibility of accounting for "the singular experience of the democratic event called 1968," Draper reads Roberto Bolaño's *Amuleto* as:

una manera de pensar la escritura de la historia que, en tono benjaminiano, exige una prosa diferente—un acto de imaginación que parece recordarnos que todo recuerdo del pasado está siendo un acto de ficcionalización de ese pasado, una traducción casi imposible de voces aniquiladas—una escucha espectral que en el texto respondería quizás a la pregunta de qué tipo de "construcción" del 68 se puede hacer en el 1998, cómo heredar su promesa y repetir su gesto sin intentar calcarlo.

[a way of thinking the writing of history that, in a Benjaminian tone, demands a different kind of prose—an act of imagination that appears to remind us that every memory of the past is a fictionalization of that past, an almost impossible translation of annihilated voices—a spectral rumor that in the text might respond to the question of what type of "construction" of '68 can be made in 1998, how to inherit its promise and repeat its gesture without intending to reproduce it.] (n.d., 65–66)

Steinberg, for his part, glosses the multiple representations (intellectual, aesthetic, official) of Tlatelolco as both a literal and allegorical crypt of the

student-popular movement and its annihilation. But there is no effort by Steinberg to exhume the buried event of 1968 as signifier of the failed movement: rather, he remains preoccupied with the aporetic quality of the revelation of the event, its *photopoeisis*, which hides at the very same time that it reveals: “Each writing of 1968 occupies a double movement, on the one hand standing in reference to and calling forth a larger and more complete archive of that year, and on the other, hoping to silence this endless writing by naming, finally, what event truly occurred then and there” (60).

Beyond the differences in approach of these an-archaeological critical endeavors, we witness an oblique, ambivalent relation to the historical-political archive, with the past as future. It is for this reason, perhaps, that in each of the three projects we can find the Derridean motifs of passive decision and hauntology: in exposing itself to the past as absolute future, to the illegible event of 1968, an-archaeological thinking conditions an unconditional relation to an incalculable future. At the same time, there is something as-yet unarticulated in the above-mentioned projects, each of which is indebted to the Derrida of *Specters of Marx* and *The Politics of Friendship*: texts in themselves indebted to the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, whose influence upon the concepts of passive decision and the spectral injunction, or call, demands a closer look. An-archaeological, or marrano, thinking, cannot be framed as a properly political thought, as I will now suggest, but rather represents a critical, infrapolitical practice: what Moreiras has characterized as the suspension of the ethical by the political and of the political by the ethical (2010, 186).

III. MISREADING THE ETHICO-POLITICAL

In the final part of this essay, I want to suggest that one of the limitations of Latin Americanist political thought—or perhaps one of its symptoms—stems from a misreading of the question of the ethical (in particular, in the work of Levinas), together with a partial or total eclipse of the possible (aporetic) relation between the ethical and the political. I say “misreading” not because these readings (and here I will limit myself to those of Enrique Dussel and Bruno Bosteels) are unfaithful to the work of Levinas, but rather because they

are too faithful—that is, literal—in their incorporation or rejection of a Levinasian ethics. I propose, then, to read Levinas against the grain: an equivocal, heterodox reading, a *malentendu* in the Rancièrian sense that, rather than identifying antagonistic ideological positions, exposes the constitutive equivocation of the political from the vantage point of the ethical: marrano thinking.

Dussel and Bosteels (together with other decolonial thinkers such as Walter Dignolo and Badiouians such as Peter Hallward) define the ethical philosophy of Levinas as an ethics of difference, something that Badiou himself complicates: “For the honour of philosophy, it is first of all necessary to admit that this ideology of a ‘right to difference,’ the contemporary catechism of goodwill with regard to ‘other cultures,’ are strikingly distant from Lévinas’s actual conception of things” (2002, 20). Dussel takes up the notion of responsibility toward the other in his postulation of a distinctly Latin American liberation philosophy. Taking issue with what he calls the “Eurocentric” nature of Levinasian thought, Dussel substitutes the Levinas’s so-called “Jewish” other with the oppressed others of Latin America, “the fifteen million Indians slaughtered during the conquest of Latin America, and the thirteen millions of Africans who were made slaves” (1999, 126). He ignores the fact that the “Jewish victim” cannot be found on a single page of Levinas’s work, save for the dedication of *Otherwise than Being* to “the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions on millions of all confessions and all nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man, the same anti-semitism” (v), which is followed by a *second* dedication in Hebrew that lists the names of Levinas’s relatives murdered by the Nazis. That is, Levinas carries out an improper but necessary translation of the proper name, which Dussel then misreads, substituting the proper name—radical, untranslatable singularity—with an identitarian logic that, rather than preserving singularity, annihilates it.

In his essay “The Ethical Superstition,” Bosteels reproaches Dussel’s reliance, in his articulation of an ethical philosophy of liberation, upon the idea of the other as victim, maintaining that his book *Ética de la liberación* could just have well been called *Política de la liberación*, were it not for “the spirit of our time and its authoritarian consensus regarding the dignity of the ethical over and above all potentially illusory, if not purely voluntaristic political commit-

ments and partisanship” (2007, 17). Bosteels identifies a contradiction in Dussel’s work: despite the characterization of the other as victim, ethics and politics are interchangeable for Dussel, according to Bosteels. What’s more, Dussel (in his later work) surprisingly refers to a Badiouian notion of subjectivization as central to the process of liberation, says Bosteels: “el devenir-sujeto de la victim” (the becoming-subject of the victim) (17). This presents a serious problem for Bosteels, not because Dussel adopts a Badiouian theory of the subject, but rather because he blurs the distinction (crucial for Bosteels) between ethics and politics, understood here as processes of victimization and subjectivization, respectively.

Why this insistence upon the distinction between ethics and politics as discrete domains, without possible relation? In a recent essay on the polemic that surfaces in response to the publication of a letter by Argentine philosopher Oscar del Barco, “No Matarás”—a confession in which del Barco admits to having participated in militant acts of violence, and condemns such acts, provoking a heated argument over political memory of the armed Left in Argentina—Patrick Dove underscores the danger in creating a false opposition between the ethical and the political:

For many this antagonism takes the form of an either/or: either politics or ethics (either Marx or Freud, Badiou or Levinas, for instance) but not both. The translation of this antagonism into the logic of choice comes with a price: it happens at the expense of thinking what these two spheres might have in common, either despite the antagonism or precisely because of it. By the same token, the either/or has the effect of imputing to each “sphere” a sense of stability and self-consistency that may in fact blind us to what is really at stake in ethical and political thinking. (2008, 280)

What Bosteels identifies as a weakness in Dussel’s work—the inability to distinguish one thing from the other—ends up exposing the compatibility between ethics (as victimization) and politics (as subjectivization). At the same time, Bosteels’s argument obscures the potential force of both the ethical *and* the political (“what is really at stake in ethical and political thinking”) by framing the relation between ethics and politics as an opposition or choice.

The dichotomy ethics/politics, Levinas/Badiou depends upon an anthropomorphized other that greatly interests Dussel, but whose presence in Levinas is questionable. The other as victim, according to Dussel, is grounded in the notion of the vulnerable other, a concept that can be found in the early Levinas of *Totality and Infinity*—“[God’s] very epiphany consists in soliciting us by his destitution in the face of the Stranger, the widow, and the orphan” (1969, 78)—but which is completely absent from his later work *Otherwise than Being*, in which the demand of the other is read as the demand of the other within the same: “[t]here is a claim laid on the same by the other in the core of myself, the extreme tension of the command exercised by the other in me over me, a traumatic hold of the other on the same” (1998, 141). The idea of the other within the same permits us a retrospective reading, against the grain, of the demand “Thou shalt not kill”—together with the figure of the stranger—as figurative concepts (in this reading, the other is not identifiable as such, there is no articulated or articulable demand). The concept of the other within the same renders impossible, in one blow, both the sovereign subject as well as the other as victim: in its place, we witness what we might call (with Moreiras) a *non-subject* that decides not from his autonomy but from his passivity, the Derridean passive decision that we read in *The Politics of Friendship*: “The passive decision, condition of the event, is always in me, structurally, another event, a rending decision as the decision of the other. Of the absolute other in me, the other as the absolute that decides on me in me” (68). In his discussion of Luis González de Alba’s *Los días y los años*, Gareth Williams takes up this idea, this strange and compelling structure of passive decision, arguing that “in his approach to 1968 decision and responsibility are *of the other*; that is, they come back or come down to the other, from the other, even if it is the other ‘in me’” (2011, 143). If the decision is the condition of possibility of the Schmittian sovereign, passive decision, for Williams, serves as the (unconditional) condition of (impossible) possibility of the democratic event of 1968.

The oblique, absence-presence of Levinas in an-archaeological thinking comes about, once again, through the idea of the spectral and, in particular, of the spectral as demand in the (otherwise very different) projects of Draper and Steinberg. If Draper locates, in Bolaño, the “spectral sound” of “annihilated voices” (translation mine), Steinberg argues that “the demand—for politics, for class

struggle, for being-in-common—continues to haunt the cultural discourse of 1968 and every attempt to finally resolve those energies as hegemonic calculation, that is, without politics” (36). Both projects, in my view, are indebted to, heirs of, Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, itself indebted to the legacy of Marx (but also, at the same time, of Levinas). Derrida likens the inheritance of Marx to the appearance of a specter, whose call or injunction is ethico-political. Like the ghost of Hamlet’s father, the specter of Marx returns to warn us that “the time is out of joint,” a call which is at once a warning and a demand for justice, a justice that stands in uncomfortable yet urgent relation to a notion of injustice (*adikia*) “against which there is no calculable insurance” (1994, 32). It is the alarming proximity of justice and injustice that leads Derrida to distinguish between the moralism of an identifiable, fulfillable duty, and the terrifying unreadability of the ethico-political demand. He writes:

Otherwise it rests on the good conscience of having done one’s duty, it loses the chance of the future, of the promise or the appeal, of the desire also (that is its “own” possibility), of this desert-like messianism (without content and without identifiable messiah), of this *abyssal* desert, “desert in the desert,” . . . one desert signaling toward the other, abyssal and chaotic desert, if chaos describes first of all the immensity, excessiveness, disproportion in the gaping hole of the open mouth—in the waiting or calling for what we have nicknamed here without knowing the messianic: the coming of the other, the absolute and unpredictable singularity of the *arrivant* as justice. We believe that this messianic remains an ineffaceable mark—a mark one neither can nor should efface—of Marx’s legacy, and doubtless of inheriting, of the experience of inheritance in general. Otherwise, one would reduce the event-ness of the event, the singularity and the alterity of the other. (Derrida 1994, 33)

Again, the aporetic presence-absence of Levinas, the demand of the other over me in me—a call to which I do not know how to respond except from passivity—suggests that the limit of the ethical is intimately bound to its political valence, or potential, and vice-versa.

We find ourselves, here, in the terrain of reading, which now comes to look like what Moreiras has called *infrapolitics*:

What if, before ethics, there were another practice that makes of the double suspension of the ethical by the political and of the political by the ethical its very possibility? This practice, which finds its expression in literature, but is not limited to literature, is infrapolitical practice. It exposes us without ulterior purpose, and therefore remains, itself, beyond the double suspension. It remains haunted, and lives in the haunting. (2010, 186)

This is the specter, I think, that we find thematically and performatively at work in an-archaeological, marrano thinking. The relation to the other—which always and already involves a relation to the third, to the other of the other—implies a demand that Levinas’s work cannot account for. There are two reasons for this: first, because the demand itself (as *saying* rather than *said*) is unthematizable, unreadable; and second, because Levinas is not able to make the leap from the ethical to the political (he describes the way from proximity to justice as leading from “responsibility” to “problems”). It is for this reason that we need—urgently—the translation of the Levinasian ethical demand to the spectral demand in Derrida, a necessarily partial demand, impossible to fulfill (not, or not only, as Simon Critchley suggests, because the demand is infinite but because, like the marrano secret, it exceeds the play of hiding and revelation: we never “discover” the truth of the demand of the other).

We stand, now, before a genealogy of spectral inheritances, multiple inheritances that demand more work, more thinking. For the illegible quality of the other (the *arrivant*, the event) is in fact a call for *more* reading: recall that Derrida’s specter’s injunction is double, aporetic: “One always inherits from a secret—which says ‘read me, will you ever be able to do so?’” (1994, 18). An-archaeological, marrano thinking, would respond to a call not from an exhumed past, but rather from the future of this past, whose spectral apparition we know not how to read—we can merely signal the impossibility of such a reading. Yet in the struggle to interpret the uninterpretable demand of the ethical and the political, which is a demand for justice, against the violence of Inquisitional logic, marrano thinking represents a wager, a risk without guarantee that, by rejecting futures both utopian and tragic, guards the only possibility—remote, minor—of democracy.



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