Chapter 1

Global Poststructuralism and Virtual Economics

Evils of the New World Order

At midpoint in his *Specters of Marx* (1993), Jacques Derrida pits himself against the euphoric champions of capitalism, liberal democracy, and the new world order, decrying the monstrous inequality prevailing in human life during the late twentieth century.

> Never have violence, inequality, exclusion, famine and, indeed, economic oppression affected so many human beings in the history of the earth and humanity. Instead of extolling the advent of the ideal of liberal democracy and of the capitalist market in the euphoria of the end of history, instead of celebrating the "end of ideologies" and the conclusion of grand emancipatory discourses, let us never neglect this macroscopic evidence, made of innumerable singular sufferings: no progress allows us to be unaware that never, in absolute numbers, never have so many men, women, and children been enslaved, starved, or exterminated on the earth.[1]

From this vantage it is not surprising that the notorious specter of Marx, announced in the *Communist Manifesto,* might concern us anew: "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism."[2] The spirit of communism and other revenants and phantoms in the works of Marx, which constitute a veritable "spectropoetics," in Derrida's terminology, cannot simply be exorcised or conjured away in a jubilatory and vengeful work of mourning. The post–Cold War "death of communism" adumbrates the reinstitution of Marxian legacies at a tumultuous

period of geopolitical crisis, foreshadowing a spectral messianic discourse suited to the spectacularizing postmodern media everywhere disseminating virtual realities and irradiated simulacra. What is going on is, however, more than a growing media simulacrazation of culture and society.

Against the gleeful champions of triumphant capitalism, Derrida lists ten evils of the new world order (134–39). These include, first, spreading unemployment, underemployment, and social inactivity, often resulting from calculated deregulation. Second, the massive exclusion from political participation of the homeless around the world and the widespread expulsion of exiles, immigrants, and stateless persons. Third, the economic warfare being waged especially between and among Japan, the United States, and the European states and blocs, which commands disproportionate international resources. Fourth, the contradictions between the values of the liberal market and innumerable protectionist barriers and interventionist practices. Fifth, the exacerbation of external debt that holds in thrall large segments of humanity, excluding them in a vicious contradiction from the market. Sixth, the large-scale arms trafficking that links scientific research, commerce, and workers' interest such that its suspension would entail major economic risks. Seventh, the proliferation of atomic weaponry beyond the control of states and markets. Eighth, the multiplication of ethnic wars guided by dreams of original homelands and fears of territorial displacements. Ninth, the spread of profit-maximizing virtual states organized by drug consortia and the Mafia, which worldwide have infiltrated economic and social systems as well as state institutions. And tenth, the unequal application of international law in the interest of certain powerful states devoted to national sovereignty backed by technical, economic, and military might. At one of the more poignant summative moments in *Specters of Marx,* Derrida sketches the indistinct appearance of an emergent "new International" composed of the dispossessed joined together through bonds of suffering and hope.

There are other evils of the new world order that Derrida should have listed, notably, environmental degradation; the feminization of poverty; the proliferation of national security apparatuses and militarized states; widespread dedication to quick profits, speedups, and short-term goals; intensifying globalized neocolonial business arrangements; worsening conditions in and multiplication of urban ghettoes and racial enclaves; and increasingly uneven distribution of such basic

resources as food, water, energy, education, medical care, and credit. Chapter 12 explores further related economic features of the new dispensation. To be sure, there are no surprises in these catalogues of evil; it is mainly that in the past Derrida had rarely sketched this larger picture in such broad outline.

It is a delusion to think, as far as Derrida is concerned, that communism is dead and that Marxism is finished. On the contrary, he advocates a return to the specters of Marx (they are numerous), for, like the apparition of a censored wish, communism is to come. It is a matter not only of geopolitical forces, but of heritage and its conjuration and transformation. Derrida observes with Marx in mind, "a heritage is always the reaffirmation of a debt but a critical, selective, and filtering reaffirmation . . . " (150). Because current events embody traces, retentions, and representational devices, they manifest a certain "hauntology" and require a hermeneutic sifting. Of the many spirits of Marx, Derrida most praises the spirits of autocritique and messianism, the latter a vague and despairing, atheological, structural messianic, associated by Derrida with absolute hospitality, the thought of the other, the event to come, and the emancipatory promise of ideal democracy and justice. Derrida commits the enterprise of deconstruction and its future to this enigmatic messianism. In a time of crisis we summon heritage, "the spirit of fathers," the dead; it is a project of survivals and siftings, integrating death with life. Like everyone else, like us, Marx himself did not relish dealing with phantoms, yet they concerned him despite his evident preference for immediate reality. Of course, specters, revenants, and phantoms—unlike spirits—manifest themselves visibly in the here and now, occupying a virtual frontier zone beyond, yet within, material existence and present time.

Nothing appears more materially immediate and less apparitional in Marx than the concepts of use-value, exchange-value, the commodity-form, and commodity fetishism. It is to these linked notions, developed most famously early in *Capital 1,* that Derrida largely devotes the fifth and last chapter of *Specters of Marx.* In the next section of this five-section chapter, I shall briefly review these crucial concepts of Marx, revisiting certain pivotal passages in his work. The third section traces Derrida's poststructuralist accounts of both Marx's concepts and his own project of hauntology, isolating problems along the way. In the fourth section I shall present a comparison, contrast, and critique of Baudrillard and Derrida targeted on certain key matters, including the new world order, the condition of political economy in the fin de

siècle, the status of Marx's commodity theory, and the appearance of specters in the economic sphere. The fifth section concludes by exploring the dynamics of globalism/localism and virtualization in the postmodern world economy as portrayed by Derrida and Baudrillard, both of whom, in the wake of Marx, forward enterprises of hauntology and transeconomics that are not without difficulties, as we shall see.

Let me offer a preview. The virtualization of economics in the advanced sectors of Western economies accompanies the global formation of the new world order during the closing third of the twentieth century, but most especially during its final years. This is a period of speeded-up, extreme phenomena and events, ranging from the apparently harmless Wall Street Crash of 1987, to the evidently painless finessing of huge foreign debts, to the formation of a new International, to environmental apparitions such as ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect, to the "orbitalization" of floating currencies, speculative monies, and information circulating around the globe at the speed of light. Virtualization appears in processes of simulation and spectacularization, especially those associated with increasingly ubiquitous television, advertising, mass media, and computer networks. For Baudrillard the virtualization characteristic of the postmodern era reaches beyond economics, which itself is experiencing a growing split between real and imaginary economies. While Derrida examines postmodern virtualizations, he argues that many key operations of virtualization, such as idealization, fetishization, autonomization, and imploding binaries, operate prior to as well as during the capitalist and the postmodern eras.

The title phrase "*global* poststructuralism" designates the moment when problematic phenomena of postmodernity and the new world order, including worldwide economic matters, occupy the foreground of poststructuralist analysis. Here attention focuses on such pressing and often interrelated end-of-the-century issues as the impact of mass media, the effects of recent economic transformations, the roles of political institutions, the spread of armaments and war, and the prospects for radical social change. Under these conditions, the heterogeneous projects of cultural studies, new social movements, postcolonial studies, and poststructuralism come more and more to share, despite different heritages and allegiances, common interests and concerns.

The construction of a new economic criticism, a project noticeably under way in the 1990s, takes as a point of departure the traditions of

political economy stemming from the eighteenth century and culminating in contending postwar Keynesian, neoconservative, and socialist discourses. At the onset of the new world order, widespread "returns to Marx" signal a certain paradoxical imperative to get past the discourse of modernity so as to rethink capitalism and conceive alternatives. The works of Derrida and Baudrillard on use-value, exchange-value, and the commodity-form, however critical of Marx they are, represent attempts by poststructuralists to sift through the remnants of the Enlightenment tradition of economic thinking to discover what remains for coping with the new conditions of the emerging global order.

Perhaps this is the place for a caveat. Derrida and Baudrillard criticize Marx's labor theory of value for propounding a metaphysics of production, for capitulating to a calculating utilitarian ethos, and for promoting an ascetically stern economic discipline. However much I share their antipathies, I am disappointed that neither thinker adequately addresses Marx's theory of surplus value, which provides an account of the (systematic) character of exploitation. In the absence of some such account, exploitation becomes a matter of chance, accident, destiny, uncertainty. Is this how it is—exploitation befalls (some of) us? The deconstruction of Marx cannot skirt the theory of surplus value, which is arguably Marx's most significant finding. There are exploitations; they are deplorable; they seem systematic. Neither Derrida nor Baudrillard comes to convincing philosophical grips with the concept of surplus value, which itself is not free of problems.

In this chapter I develop the argument that poststructuralism in its global phase, coinciding with postmodern times and the advent of the new world order, redirects political economy, including Marx's oeuvre, toward virtual realities exemplified by preoccupation with simulations, hyperrealities, specters, and phantomized economic phenomena. The poststructuralist fascination with revenant effects is accompanied by dismay and astonishment at the mounting evils across the globe. If one were a seer, one might be tempted to frame such global emptying out, haunting, and spreading evil as testimonies of a coming apocalypse. Poststructuralism is not beyond tendencies toward spiritualism and prophetic foreboding. To those wanting not only diagnoses but directions or directives for what is to be done, poststructuralism will remain a disappointment, for it refuses to specify a program of political action. There are, however, arguably no more striking depictions of the spectralizations of postmodern political economy than those quite different ones offered by Derrida and Baudrillard in the shadow of Marx.

Theorizing Commodity Fetishism

According to Marx in *Capital 1,* a commodity is made in order to be sold on the market; its exchange-value most concerns the producer, while its use-value attracts the buyer. The lack of use-value for the producer explains why the commodity is on the market and why it is construed by Marx as alienated from the worker, who expends energy and thereby adds (labor) value in producing the commodity for others and for wages to live on rather than for direct use. Exchange-value is realized when the commodity is sold, and use-value when it is put to work. On the market, labor value barely makes an appearance. The linked processes of commodification and money exchange spread beyond the realm of items for sale to the labor sphere, where dependent workers must sell to bosses their time, skill, and energy in order to earn money for subsistence. At the point at which the relations between individual workers and owners and buyers and sellers metamorphose into alienated relations between commodity-like things amid a mass of other profit-oriented commodities on the competitive market, society enters fully into capitalist relations of production. Such relations are characterized by more or less thorough-going commodification, monetization, alienation. The fetishism of the commodity-form—its mysterious autonomy and spectral character as portrayed by Marx—results from its disembodied, socially uniform, objectified aspects, which obscure the individual and atomized, concrete, private labor involved in its production. When encountered on the market, the commodity appears to have a soul and will of its own, separate from both the material crafting of its maker and the collective labor of the host of society's workers.

In the opening words of the oft-cited section in *Capital 1* on "The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret," Marx gives as the example of a commodity a wooden table, oddly characterized as "an ordinary, sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will."[3] Of commodities, Marx notes that they are "sensuous things which are at the same time suprasensible or social" (165). Marx's personification of the commodity-form portrays it as a most peculiar item—half isolated ordinary table with its feet on the ground and half socialized up-turned table endowed with wooden feet and brain. The table as commodity, an

animated and spectral entity, occupies both states simultaneously. And yet a moment prior to commodification is clearly implied in which the table manifests itself as an everyday individual material object for use. Undergoing commodification, the table accrues special social, transcendent, suprasensible features, becoming one among other commodities. In depicting the mysterious aspects of this transformation, Marx pictures the brain of the table in its commodity-form generating whimsical notions, which he describes as more wondrous than if the table had initiated a dance on its own. Still, when all is said and done, this image of the dancing table, itself whimsical, is neither peculiar nor powerful enough, according to Marx, to suggest the genuinely grotesque ideas emerging from the suprasensible commodity.

An explanatory footnote by Marx, cryptic in its economy, says of the commodity table: "One may recall that China and the tables began to dance when the rest of the world appeared to be standing still—*pour encourager les autres*" (164n). Editors and translators gloss this statement by evoking the simultaneous appearance in the 1850s of the fad of spiritualism in Germany and the Taiping revolt in China, both occurring at a time when in Europe reactions against the revolutionary events of 1848 had the world standing still. The gist of this supplementary linkage of revolution and spiritualist table rapping (signs of encouragement) is finally ambiguous. No doubt, the pace of commodification had by mid-century approached a revolutionary stage. As in the earlier *Communist Manifesto,* where "a spectre is haunting Europe," here again in *Capital* it is a ghostly emanation that figures a certain revolution. The fetishism of the commodity, resulting from a magical transformation, marks the secret, forgotten crystallization of labor activity in the commodity-form and the becoming social and immaterial at once of the ordinary thing. The table occupies a space of powerful intersecting forces and interests, despite its initial innocent thingly demeanor.

Of the table it can be stated what Marx states about capitalist production in general: "use-value is universally mediated by exchange-value."[4] This epigram effects a reversal of the temporal relation between use-value and exchange-value. The labor that goes into production has, from the outset, as its target the goal of exchange, with the result that exchange preconditions use. We could say that pure use, uncontaminated by exchange, is a dream. The ordinary table here appears as a fiction and a nostalgic figure; it is to the dancing table, the spectralized commodity-form in the epoch of the capitalist mode of production, that we, Derrida will argue, must return.

Specters and Hauntology

While reading Marx, Derrida declares that "as soon as there is production, there is fetishism," a phenomenon which entails, in Derridean terms, "idealization, autonomization and automatization, dematerialization and spectral incorporation, work of mourning co-extensive with all work" (263). What disturbs Derrida here is that "Marx believes he must limit this coextensivity to commodity production, which in our view is an act of exorcism . . . " (263–64). There are several important issues at stake in this oblique complaint. Derrida believes that the qualities characteristic of fetishism are limited to neither commodity production nor the historical capitalist mode of production. It is not only or simply in capitalist relations of production that one finds the dynamics of capitalization and of fetishization (idealization, autonomization, automatization, dematerialization, spectral incorporation). Marx's negative characterization of commodity fetishism seeks also to exorcise that which cannot be cast out, the dynamics of both mourning and spectralization inherent in work. As a first step, Derrida transcodes Marx's commodity fetishism into Freud's mourning, replacing history with ontology or, in Derrida's coinage, hauntology. It is ultimately, however, a question of the specificity, irreducibility, and survival of specters, which moves beyond psychoanalysis to religion, a second more fundamental step in Derrida's analysis of Marx.

"When Marx evokes the specters at the moment of analyzing, for example, the mystical character or the becoming-fetish of the commodity," admonishes Derrida, "we ought not, of course, to see there merely rhetorical effects or contingent figures only appropriate in convincing while capturing the imagination. . . . We would still be obliged to take into account the invincible force and original power of the 'phantom' effect" (236–37). Derrida insists on ferreting out Marx's "spiritualism," and the outcome of this strategy is to open anew our apprehension of Marx's materialism as well as his rhetoric. In the end, Derrida will conclude: "Marx keeps on wishing to base his critique or his exorcism of the spectral simulacrum on an ontology. It is a question of an ontology—critical but pre-deconstructive—of presence as actual reality and as objectivity. This critical ontology intends to set going the possibility of dissipating the phantom; let's venture to say further to conjure it like the representative consciousness of a subject, and to take this representation back, so as to reduce it to its conditions, into the material world of labor, production, and exchange" (269). Significantly, Marx's belief in

use-value, pure and simple and prior to exchange, as in the case of the ordinary table, partakes of a wishful ontology, which Derrida criticizes and which prompts him to take an explicit position himself on specters.[5] Not insignificantly, what most preoccupy and haunt Derrida are the specters populating Marx's texts.

Derrida's critique of the concept of use-value calls into question its purity and its temporality, that is, its noncontamination by exchange-value and its sovereign, primordial self-presence. In a classic deconstructive reversal, Derrida illustrates that exchange-value always already precedes use-value, which, of course, Marx himself notes intermittently.[6] Gayatri Spivak proffers the observation that "Marx left the slippery concept of 'use-value' untheorized."[7] Near the close of his reflections, Derrida recasts use-value as a pragmatic limit-concept that does not correspond to any object but that stages and constrains the analysis of the phantasmagorical process of commodity exchange. He hints, in passing, that the economy of gifts would be powerfully phantasmagorical and that a commodity economy puts limits on this hypothetical phantasmagoria.[8] In a telling move, Derrida stipulates that "it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of each concept, starting with the concept of being and time. That is what we will term here a hauntology. Ontology only hinders itself in moves with exorcism. Ontology is a conjuration" (255). Because concepts by definition depend on iterability, différance, and alterity, they lack ontological purity, self-presence, and absolute singularity. For them to have such qualities, all remnants, traces, and repetitions must have been banished in an operation of exorcism. Classical ontology depends on such exorcism, while deconstructive hauntology requires dealing with specters since, as Derrida insists, "they are always *there,* the specters, even if they don't exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet. They give us to rethink the 'there' as soon as we open our mouths . . . " (279). Specters regularly inhabit economies of equivalence, repetition, difference, and capitalization.

To common sense, the temporal location of specters presents conundrums. Revenants are returnees from the past, who are to come in the future. They occupy several timesites simultaneously, instancing an originary iterability as well as an irreducible virtuality. They exist before their first apparition. Like the specter of communism, the specter in the wooden table, the exemplary commodity-form, does make an appearance in Marx, who, declares Derrida, "knew how to leave them at liberty, even to emancipate them . . . " (227). By Derrida's lights these

uncanny specters of Marx characteristically undermine the stability of his neat conceptual binary distinctions, co-implicating presence and absence, the sensible and the suprasensible, the present and the past, use and exchange, event and representation, living being and revenant, subjectivity and objectivity, materialism and spiritualism, inside and outside. Of Marx's conflicted relation to specters, Derrida observes with evident relish, "Marx loved the figure of the phantom, he detested it, he seized it as evidence for his debates, he was haunted, harassed, besieged, obsessed by it. Inside him, but in order, of course, to reject it, outside him. Inside him outside him: this is the place beyond place of phantoms wherever they simulate residence" (173).

Derrida argues suggestively, though too skimpily, that one of Marx's main critical tactics is, despite appearances, "idealization." The movement of idealization entails the invention by Marx of iterable phantoms, illusions, simulacra, and apparitions, as in his accounts of commodities, money, and ideology. When a government issues money, its stamp purportedly transmutes paper into gold—a spectral transformation reminiscent of the phantomization and fetishization of the ordinary wooden table. In the case of ideology, a ruling class broadly disseminates across society its own self-interested ideas and values, which metamorphose into those of nonhegemonic, disenfranchised groups. Such transubstantiations beget out of quotidian phenomena, like paper or wood or group interests, magical simulacra, artifacts, and illusions like money, commodities, and ideologies. At the end of processes of idealization lie, perhaps unexpectedly, dematerialized, autonomous, fabricated, spectral entities, quite unlike the "solid objects" Marx apparently would have preferred. What in all this distinguishes Marx's work, argues Derrida, is an unstable and tormented vacillation between ontological and hauntological phenomena and events. Marx's world is haunted by specters and specters of specters. He is a prophet of virtual economics.

It is, of course, the hauntological rather than ontological dimension of Marx's work that elicits Derrida's admiration and that, he believes, offers a future to Marxism. "Marx sticks to respecting the originality and the effective character, the autonomization and automatization of ideality as finite-infinite process of (phantomatic, fantastic, fetishistic, or ideological) différance—and simulation, which, as in the operation of différance, is not simply imaginary. There is artifactual substance, technical substance, and there must be labor in order to constitute or deconstitute it. This movement will remain precious, doubtless irreplaceable, provided we adjust it, as all 'good Marxism' will do, to new structures

and situations" (269). Here, as elsewhere, Derrida recommends pragmatic structural examination of the construction and deconstruction of simulated and virtualized cultural processes, such as différance, fetishization, iterability, and spectralization. This project takes place as part of a new reading of materialism and a renewal of the Marxian heritage. Derrida's deconstruction emanates out of Marx, becoming post-Marxist in his eyes.

About the dynamic of labor value and surplus value in the economy of capitalism, which Marx first argued was behind exploitation and profits, Derrida has little to say directly other than that labor entails the work of mourning and of différance. The distinctive historical features of capitalism dissolve in Derrida's brief and vague account of processes of capitalization. "There is no longer, there never was a single capital, nor a single capitalism, only capitalisms—state or private, real or symbolic, always linked to spectral forces—capitalizations rather whose antagonisms are irreducible" (101–2). Derrida stresses irreducible differences among forms of technical-scientific, finance, state, private, and symbolic capital. In his view, the phantasmagorical process of exchange commences not with the commodity-form of the capitalist era but with the potentiality of exchange as such, value as such, and equivalences among entities.

Concerning the deconstructive account of capitalization, Derrida declares cryptically that it:

> does not lead necessarily to a general phantasmagorization in which everything would indifferently become commodities in an equivalence of prices. All the more so because . . . the concept of commodity-form or of exchange-value is obviously affected by the same overflowing contamination. If capitalization doesn't have any rigorous limit, it is because it too happens to overflow. . . . [Consequently,] an other approach concerning differences has to ("conceptually" and "really") structure the field thus reopened. Far from effacing the analytical differences and determinations, this other logic calls for other concepts. One can expect from this a finer and more rigorous reinscription. In any case it alone can call for this incessant restructuration as, also, for the very progress of criticism. (258–59)

This compressed statement follows two lines of thinking. The first and clearest, though least satisfying, is that, in a changing world, deconstruction, the "other approach," promises advances for criticism in

general and for the restructuring and reinscribing of real and conceptual differences in the area of Marxian exchange theory. The second, related line asserts elliptically that Marx's logocentric distinction between exchange- and use-value collapses as a result of the overflowing dynamics of capitalization and that, as a result, the phantasmagorical acceleration characteristic of commodification need not follow. This last assertion, though problematic, makes sense within certain limits; that is, if the main conceptual bases of commodity theory do not work, the theory of commodification loses credibility. To scrap the Marxian account of commodification, however, is to be left here with the Derridean sketch of capitalization.

Derrida's theory of capitalization posseses cultural generality but lacks historical specificity. In its precapitalized mode the socioeconomic world, Derrida hints, contains primordial antagonistic social exchanges, uses, values, labors, appropriations, and fetishes arranged in no particular order of priority. Innumerable interchanges with others define the socius. Along with ubiquitous substitutions, interactions, and differences of human beings within and over time are specters, phantoms, and revenants, whether registered or not, witnessing while accompanying numberless ineradicable movements and interactions through space, time, and ideality. Evidently, capitalization belongs to the logocentric epoch of calculations, record-keeping, time schedules, and equivalences and not to the post-Renaissance era of bourgeois capitalism.

Just how the socioeconomics of capitalization goes with the evils of the contemporary world, catalogued by Derrida in *Specters,* is unclear. Nor is it clear in the end how things stand with the evils diagnosed by Marx, particularly alienation, reification, commodification (especially of labor), monetization, and surplus value. While he rereads Marx and notes the formation of a new International, Derrida does not say what is to be done short of leaving various hints, including that hereafter the theory of capital should reflect its disaggregation.

Accursed Shares, Specters, Orbits

In his studies of "extreme phenomena," published under the title *The Transparency of Evil* (1990), Jean Baudrillard offers provocative observations about bourgeois socioeconomic conditions and theories in the advanced countries of the Western world in the tradition of Marx's diagnoses and in the context of rapidly changing circumstances. To begin

with, I shall distill a selection of these observations in a catalogue of seven propositions about the new world order during postmodern times,[9] setting up comparisons with Derrida's work in this domain.

First, the great mission of the West is not the commercialization of the world, but its spectacularization by means of images, media, and advertising. The whole of reality is filtered through media. If anything, the surplus-value of the sign, not the commodity, is the key to this system. Second, surplus production has brought an end to use-value. But the concepts of use-, exchange-, and sign-value should themselves be jettisoned since value no longer refers to things or commodities or symbols; it radiates viruslike in all directions, without references or equivalences, in a haphazard proliferation and dispersal. Third, excessive Third World debt, like global financial circulation and speculation and floating currencies, has become autonomous and virtual, passing harmlessly from one bank or country to another, abandoning debtors. Fourth, machines and technology no longer alienate humankind; rather they form integrated circuits; alienation is becoming a thing of the past. Fifth, the principle of operationality (or perfomativity)—of minutely regulating and manipulating action—has taken over so that labor does not create wealth nor does the Earth produce; capital makes labor and Earth produce. Sixth, the destiny of liberated things is to foster and provision circulatory networks, to enter trajectories of pure circulation, which is not what revolution was imagined to be. Revolution opens onto indeterminacy, confusion, and anxiety. Seventh, what can render exchange impossible is disjunction stemming from radical otherness, from its incompatibility, irreconcilability, antagonism, and ineluctability, even though rituals of hospitality offer restricted access to reciprocity.

Baudrillard and Derrida comment pointedly on numerous problems and contradictions of euphoric fin-de-siècle liberal capitalism. Derrida, to be sure, exhibits dismay in his stark list of ten evils and some hope in his silhouettes of the new International and the messianic promise of ideal justice and democracy. There is little hope evident anywhere in the fatalistic dystopian view of Baudrillard, who neither believes any longer in liberation or revolution nor offers cures for the widespread degeneracy he sees at every turn. Regarding economic theory, both thinkers call for an end to the all-encompassing metaphysics of production and labor value central to the project of political economy and Marxism in particular. Where Derrida describes capitalism as a disaggregation of systems, Baudrillard detects a triumphant organized capitalism operating more or less effectively but in an increasingly rarefied

and transformed orbital mode. Both are particularly appalled at the scope of debt, with Baudrillard exhibiting fascination and incredulity at the finessing of debt by international financial management. Like Derrida and Marx, Baudrillard detects specters haunting the civilized world of exchanges.

According to Baudrillard, the lethal positivity generated by modernity begets specters. It has to do with what does not make it into even the broadest modern consensus formation—nonnegotiable foreignness, radical otherness, negativity, inordinacy, "evil"—all of which he calls, after Bataille, the "accursed share." Confronting such disjunctions feels very much to us like leaving the Enlightenment traditions and returning to an earlier, primitive mode of existence in which the "natural disorder of the world" (109) and the "*inseparability of good and evil*" (105) are totally accepted, as they appear to be by Baudrillard, who wants to summon back otherness, "evil," and foreignness, all the while deploring hyperbolic positivity.

> When it comes to radical otherness between beings, sexes or cultures, we find the same kind of antagonism as in the case of Evil, the same logic of definitive incomprehensibility. . . . The more things seem to become oriented towards universal comprehension and universal homogenization, the more unavoidable becomes the idea of an external irreducibility. . . . This presence imposes itself as the brute fact, as the irresistible, suprasensory, supernatural reality. . . . In its irreconcilability, this force is present in every culture. It is still at work today in the relationships between the Third World and the West, between Japan and the West, or between Europe and America, and also within each culture. . . . Cosmopolitan evolutionism is an illusion, and it is everywhere being exposed as such. There is no solution to Foreignness. It is eternal—and radical. (139–40)

Out of the suppression of the accursed share—the modern denial of forces of otherness, foreignness, evil, negativity—emerges the energy and gravity of what is dead—specters. "Otherness denied," says Baudrillard, "becomes a specter" (122) and, generalizing further, "*everything* we once thought dead and buried, everything we thought left behind for ever by the ineluctable march of universal progress, is not dead at all, but on the contrary likely to return . . . " (138). For Baudrillard, the accursed share (which is unassimilable) is simultaneously brute fact and supernatural, absent and present, dead and living, in the past and in the future. This peculiar mix of binary features signals, as we

know from Derrida, hauntology, with its eruption of specters into fundamental processes of social existence.

Derrida's specters for their part testify to the singular autonomizations and automaticizations of concepts and entities resulting from the agonistic differentiating processes of thinking, remembering, and producing, which set in motion both the collapse and the contamination of such basic binary distinctions as presence and absence, the sensible and the suprasensible, the present and the past, inside and outside. The ordinary wooden table, to recall one instance, conceived as a commodity-form, dances as if at a séance, becoming a self-actualizing, sensible suprasensible spectral body. Or, to give another example, the construction of a heritage entails sifting and inmixing the living with the dead, summoning and repeating isolated historical remnants, which free-standing icons loom up as revenants. Whichever process or dynamic of constitution we examine, it gives birth to haunting and phantom effects: a combination of idealizing-virtualizing-automatizing—linked modes of uncanny transformation—occurs as destiny during acts of formation. Exorcism is powerless to banish such happenings and apparitions.

The specters of Baudrillard for their part occupy the spaces of purged accursed shares, and they come to inhabit objects. Such hauntings are not only predestined but beyond exorcism; they will direct the future: "[T]he evil genie has taken up residence in *things*. . . . No matter how we choose to describe whatever it is that seeks thus to find a way forward—the accursed share, or strange attractors, destiny, or a hypersensitive response to initial conditions—we shall not be able to avoid its ever-increasing strength. . . . As Hegel put it, we are amid 'the life, moving of itself, of that which is dead.'. . . The development of this increase in strength, this velocity and ferocity of what is dead, is the modern history of the accursed share" (108). The returning specters of Baudrillard bear witness to the banishment of all negativity by and from enlighted modern Western societies.[10] The accelerating return of the unmourned accursed share, this strengthening negativity, especially manifests itself in the postmodern era as the unexpected renewal of primitivism, superstition, old ways. For Baudrillard, catastrophe and natural disorder themselves signal spectral revisitations.

While it appears that Derrida and Baudrillard have recourse to spiritualism, if not religion, with their spectrologies, it is rather a matter of postmodern "orbital theory" undertaken not in the name of any god or religion. Their messianic and apocalyptic moments, nevertheless, do evoke religious reminiscences. Few of us can resist playing disturbed

prophet at one time or another, not least Baudrillard and Derrida. In any case, something old-fashioned and conservative frequently seems to be behind the anxieties of cultural spokespersons. And yet Derrida and Baudrillard stake out vanguard positions, so that they appear wild men or mavericks, not revivified ancient religious figures. Ultimately, it is uncertain where they stand. The specters that they observe spring not from heaven or hell any more than energized and invisible subatomic particles like quarks originate in spiritual realms. Still, the frontier between sensible and suprasensible gets fuzzy, and this in-between zone, which retains the taint of superstition and mystery in physics as in philosophy, mixes while exceeding rationalism, materialism, and spiritualism. It is the space of fractals and catastrophes. In such a locale, phenomena become extreme, often going into orbit.

Baudrillard outlines orbital theory in a chapter on "Transeconomics," that is, economics in its postmodern stage near the end of the political economy of classical theorists, including Marx. "Political economy," says Baudrillard, "is coming to an end before our eyes, metamorphosing into a transeconomics of speculation which merely *plays* at obeying the old logic (the law of value, the laws of the market, production, surplus-value, all the classical laws of capital)" (35). The economics of hyperspeculation that starts characterizing advanced sectors of capitalism in the closing decades of the twentieth century exceeds in its scope and dynamics the logic of investment and profit. "Speculation is not surplus-value, it is a sort of ecstasy of value, utterly detached from production and its real conditions: a pure, empty form, the purged *form* of value operating on nothing but its own revolving motion, its own orbital circulation" (35). What typifies the new financial economics is not just the stupendous size and speed of capital flows, but its surprising autonomy and hyperreality. After the Wall Street Crash of 1987, when billions were lost, no actual damage seemed to occur. The split between real and imaginary economies had widened to such an extent that the catastrophe was virtual. At the point at which a surplus reaches a hyperreal stage of saturation—as in the cases of speculative capital, nuclear weaponry, and Third World debt—it goes into orbit, revolving in an uncontrollable and inaccessible, yet innocuous and protective, circuit outside reality, which is abandoned and remains as is. An imperative of vanguard sectors of the new world order appears to be "go into orbit." This is what has been done by war technology, television, communications, global currencies, investment, debt, and credit. Beyond propounding lucid diagnoses, Baudrillard's

response to orbitalization is ironic bemusement and resignation. Nothing is to be done, apparently.

Orbital circulation has become a new widespread goal, observes Baudrillard, swinging characteristically between fascination and dismay in his accounts of the postmodern condition.

> Everything which once aspired to transcendence, to discovery, to the infinite, has subtly altered its aim so that it can go into orbit: learning, technology, knowledge, having lost any transcendent aspect to their projects, have begun planning orbital trajectories for themselves. "Information" is orbital, for example—a form of knowledge which will never again go beyond itself, never again achieve transcendence or self-reflection in its aspiration towards the infinite; yet which, for all that, never sets its feet on the ground, for it has no true purchase on, nor referent in, reality. Information circulates, moves around, makes its circuits (which are sometimes perfectly useless—but that is the whole point: the question of usefulness cannot be raised)—and with each spiral, each revolution, it accumulates. (29–30)

To enter into orbit is to split off from the real into hyperreality; to generate high-velocity saturations beyond any use, profit, or symbolism into haphazard ecstatic accumulations; to revolve in worldly yet otherworldly autonomous cycles out of reach, harmless (hopefully), paradoxically protective, subject only to virtual catastrophes; to aspire not to progress, transcendence, self-reflection, liberation, or revolution but to excesses of accumulation with each passing circuit. More than anything else, money has become orbital. Baudrillard says of "the mass of floating money whirling about the Earth in an orbital rondo," "A pure artifact, it enjoys a truly astral mobility; and it is instantaneously convertible. Money has now found its proper place, a place far more wondrous than the stock exchange: the orbit in which it rises and sets like some artificial sun" (33). Money is likened to a theatrical planet, an artifact in a hyperreal realm, and not to a black hole, because it poses a virtual, not a real, threat, as the Crash of 1987 illustrates. Orbits are artificial paradises monitored in real time. This is the originality of virtual economics.

Baudrillard's accounts of the accursed share and of orbitalization possess explanatory power and exhibit inventiveness, but they are finally hyperbolic and declamatory, too sweeping and lacking in detail. Counter-evidence and qualifications, not to mention ground-level data,

receive scant attention. This is theory going into orbit. Focused single-mindedly on extreme phenomena in Western societies, Baudrillard's studies seem remote from the quotidian matters preoccupying our lives. Viewed from the vantage of genre, Baudrillard in his late work gives up scholarship and normative science in favor of the literary essay and cultural journalism, specializing in stylish provocation. The mixture of outrage and fatalism is quite unlike Derrida's messianism and his project to renew heritage. While Baudrillard renounces Marx and political economy, Derrida opts for a critical reconsideration and return to Marx. Both seem to be resigned socialists, who seek in light of changing circumstances new accounts of economy and speculation—without, however, worrying systems of exploitation, which seems a crucial limitation.

Two decades before *The Transparency of Evil,* Baudrillard, in *The Mirror of Production,* launched his work dramatically: "A specter haunts the revolutionary imagination: the phantom of production. Everywhere it sustains an unbridled romanticism of productivity."[11] He goes on to argue that the idea of the economic as the determining force of each society's infrastructure constitutes an autonomization and transcendentalization common to capitalism as well as Marxism. Turning the tables on the hobgoblin of production, Baudrillard argues further that social, cultural, and symbolic relations are more foundational than the means and relations of production, which are actually secondary and reproductive in shaping dominant social relations. To make a part into a whole, like an economy into a social formation, is to create an ideology—"ideology always proceeds by an autonomization of a partial totality . . . " (148). The Marxist and capitalist abstraction and universalization of labor power, productive forces, and modes of production set up retrospectively the illusion that such concepts are valid for all societies. This "reductive ideality of all social formations" (115) imposes on other periods, peoples, and cultures an anachronistic metaphysics of production. According to Baudrillard, the basis of the ideology of production is the notion of use-value, which quietly establishes utility as the presiding reality principle. Where objects and products are not thought of in terms of utility, as in primitive societies, they neither have exchange-value nor enter into economic spheres. Like advocates of capitalism, Marx makes a fetish of the principle of utility. The specter of production testifies to the denial of "primitive" symbolic exchange, with its antagonistic and fragile nonutilitarian giving and receiving of goods, gifts, "surpluses," rituals, accursed shares. What have been suppressed

through the autonomization of political economy are loss, consummation, waste, antiproduction, and negativity, which return as specters to haunt postmodern times.

Global/Local Dynamics and Virtual Economics

For Baudrillard, entities in orbit represent vanguard forces of globalization, whereas the spectral returns of radical otherness and negativity invariably constitute vanguard forces of localism. Local real wars at ground level multiply, while total nuclear war circles the globe in orbits of virtuality. The one is connected with the other. In these circumstances, extreme globalization seems a safe course, despite its delusional motions. Local antagonisms are still to come. Baudrillard often deplores "progress," praising primitive symbolic exchange and radical otherness in a nostalgia tinged with aristocratic conservatism.[12] For Derrida, the new world order displays a host of evils operating on a global scale, ranging from the uncontrolled proliferation of arms to the spread of debt, unemployment, and starvation. At the same time, the number of local and regional migrations, trade barriers, and ethnic wars continues to increase. Neither globalism nor localism constitutes an unquestionable good or an extreme evil; it depends on cases and circumstances, keeping in mind that events are, frequently enough, mixed blessings or undecidable. To take an obvious example, television disseminates information effectively and educates viewers on local and worldwide scales; it also transforms "reality" into hyperreal spectacles unfolding at remote distances; it at once alienates viewers from their communities and inaugurates multiple affective alliances across far-flung borders. The simultaneous intensification of globalism and localism, a mark of postmodern times, often operates dialectically. Given, for instance, the spread and speed of international trade, local protectionist barriers appear more and more vestigial and retrogressive. Progress and archaism play off one another. The autonomy and self-sufficiency of local communities, especially of tribal peoples, pose a challenge to the emergent global order, which seeks to eradicate closed markets and to enclose wild zones. The civilized defense of such endangered groups, when it occurs, has to overlook primitive conditions and retrograde practices in displays of humanitarian concern and liberality. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, global and local territorializations and deterritorializations engender reterritorializations on molar and molecular levels.[13]

Radical otherness, by definition, cannot be enclosed, socialized, dialecticized, globalized. It is irreconcilable. Such ineradicable negativity—such foreignness—is significantly unlike the positivity usual amongst the new social movements of feminists, people of color, and gays, the vast majority of whom call for tolerance of differences and social integration. Radical foreignness is not alienated, having never wanted inclusion. To cosmopolitan consciousness it is anomalous. It is not part of the imagined totality of the masses, the fraternal order of humanity, the old or new International. It shows up the violence of reigning metanarratives (Marxist and otherwise) as well as the limits of hegemony. It is not subject to television, advertising, fashion, or popular culture, or to money, debt, or commodities. To every global, virtualizing force it opposes its stubborn alterity and localism. This extreme foreignness best manifests itself as a nonsymbolizable entity, indifferent, beyond servitude and subjectivity, useless, inhuman, a specter born of the fateful nullification of the real common to modern Western enlightened societies. Only an absolute hospitality or, alternately, a spirit of resentment could welcome such a strange attractor. While Baudrillard and Derrida promote hospitality to specters, the former is not without dark glee at (re)appearances of the accursed share.

How does it stand with economics in light of the end-of-the-century works by Derrida and Baudrillard, two quite dissimilar French poststructuralists who, nevertheless, theorize postmodernity in certain similar ways? To start with, neither one cites or influences the other. What they do share doubtlessly results from affinities, common traditions, and similar historical circumstances. The specters of Derrida and Baudrillard come from destiny as well as from Marx. Their critiques of use-value and the commodity-form stem from thoroughgoing skepticism about the primordiality of utilitarian production in social formations. The sternness and asceticism connected with Marx's labor theory of value appear more ideological than insightful. The autonomization and fetishization of commodities precede the onset of the capitalist era, deriving from their construction as well as calculated exchange. Baudrillard and Derrida criticize the inhospitable treatment accorded otherness and negativity.[14] Through critique they both combine rationalist and materialist with spiritualist (but atheistic) allegiances. Economics exceeds material systems and flows (as the specters attest), overrunning the established borders of political economy.[15] Regarding the new world order, Derrida and Baudrillard exhibit astonishment mixed with dismay at nuclear proliferation; spreading ethnic wars; me-

dia spectacularization; present-day anxiety of utopia; accelerating speeds of flows; the imperative to operationalize; massive debt; and economic warfare between and among Japan, the United States, Europe, and the Third World. Both worry about, although they appear resigned to, contemporary financial speculation, with Baudrillard providing the escape of orbit theory and Derrida proffering the vague explanation of capitalization theory. While they are broadly indebted to Marx, both undertake substantial critiques of him. No doubt, if Baudrillard had his way, he would forget Marx, a figure haunting him as he does Derrida, who himself is more welcoming yet perhaps less indebted.

While Derrida comments on many of the changes characteristic of postmodern political economy, he argues, in effect, that virtualization is limited to neither postmodernity nor capitalism. In his account, processes of production as such engender idealizations, autonomizations, and dematerializations, i.e., virtualizations. The production and reproduction of the "real" cross over into the "imaginary" as phenomena of repetition and difference enter the process. Iterability and alterity, modes of virtuality, are part and parcel of (re)production. The real partakes of the hyperreal. Materialization and dematerialization go hand in hand, which is a matter of traces, remnants, and supplements in and out of reach. The operation of the virtual also manifests itself in the collapse and co-implication of such classic binary concepts as presence/absence and sensible/suprasensible. Traces from the past and future inhabit the present; suprasensible forces, specters, occupy the sensible here and now. This haunting of being and time invades concepts and events, creating the necessity for a new, postmodern ontology, hauntology, which can take such singular virtualizations into account, particularly in the domain of political economy. For Derrida, communism is both dead and to come. Marxism is finished, yet heritages (spectral debts) survive into futures. Such specters are neither here nor there but present. The messianic hope for ideal justice and democracy, a virtual force, energizes the project of Derridean deconstruction in latter days. Numerous forms and modes of virtualization—each distinctive in its mix of genealogies, operations, trajectories, and effects—function before, during, and after the capitalist and postmodern eras. The virtualization of economy overflows the contemporary moment, though this was barely recognized till recently.

Derrida presumes without demonstrating that the speed, scope, and intensity of virtualization have increased during recent times, which is widely observed to be a hallmark of postmodernity. It is the burden of

Baudrillard's project to promote precisely this thesis. What typifies postmodernity in Baudrillard's notorious account is a mutation in the regimes of signs and values such that more and more simulation, hyperreality, implosion, spectacularization, and orbitalization characterize the times. It is increasingly a world of virtual catastrophes, sumptuous accumulations in orbit, ubiquitous simulacra, automaticized production processes, specters, and similar extreme phenomena. Virtualization affects but is not limited to political economy in Baudrillard's handling, it being part of his argument that Marxian economism as well as classical political economy in general fail to account for the new conditions, which are more cultural than economic. Out of the obsolescence of political economy emerges transeconomics, testifying to the growing split between the real and imaginary economies. The motor of virtual economics is speculative capital, which is mobile, autonomous, sumptuous, hyperreal, orbital. Worldwide debt is an especially salient aspect of this system, as are massive accumulations of floating currencies and Eurodollars. What perhaps most define virtual economics are rapid circulation and growth to the point of irrationality and uselessness. Saturation produces ecstasy as well as inertia. All these processes seem inescapable, blissful, numbing. Financial speculation is today detached from production and real working conditions and surplus-value; in its orbital whirl it thus co-opts the energy of the accursed share, becoming spectral. Baudrillard utters the following ambiguous epitaph: "[T]he suggestion that the imaginary economy and the real one might one day be reconciled is a utopian one: those billions of floating dollars are untranslatable into real economic terms—and that is just as well, because if, *per mirabile,* they could be reinjected into productive economies, the result, for once, would be a true catastrophe" (28). The virtualization of economics appears in the fin de siècle inevitable and irreversible, stupendous and spectral, unreal and protective. For all that, true catastrophe looms like a recycled ghost in a shattered foreground encumbered.