

# From the Posthumous Memoirs of Humanity: “Democracy to Come”

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Taking Derrida’s work as point of departure, this commentary aims to articulate the concept of the humanities with the postulation of a democracy *to come*. The humanities are thought through their constituent but posthumous humanism, and through their power within the university. The humanities have rewritten Humanity. Their autobiographical traces, unfindable traces of this writing, mean marks for a democracy *to come*. Following Derrida, this commentary asserts that no event of democracy is thinkable without the dissymmetry that comes from the humanities. Beyond Derrida, however, the productivity of fiction provides more elements for the untamed reactivation of the contemporary democratic discourse. *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 2005; 1: 208–220

## I. Introduction

I had no children, I haven’t transmitted the legacy of our misery to any creature.

Brás Cubas<sup>1</sup>

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1. Machado de Assis, Joaquim Maria. *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 203. The novel by Machado, Brazilian writer of the late 19th century, inspires our commentary. Brás Cubas, the narrator of these memoirs, writes as a specter, and the book is dedicated to the worms that ate his corpse. The real cause of his death was his failed and fixed idea of an anti-hypochondriac, hence aporetic, poultice that would soothe the pains of a melancholic humanity. His only actual legacy, though, is his writing. The literary question would be whether his posthumous writing carries something of a medicine. There is here an obvious analogy with democracy, and the medicinal writing of democracy. Furthermore, the interplay between humanities and Humanity can be found in Machado’s book through the central relationship between Brás Cubas and Quincas Borba. They are friends from school, and function as alter egos. One survives the other, yet both survive death somehow: Brás as a ghost, and Quincas as a dog (in another novel). Brás, the lawyer, the writer, man of the humanities, survives as a specter, for the sake of writing, whilst Quincas, the philosopher, the humanist, survives as a dog, for the sake of himself – but the dog overshadows him . . .

Humanity and humanists have witnessed the triumph of democracy – both its tragedy and its farce. A spirit of Humanity has thrived throughout the world. It has conquered the world and played an important part in the establishment of democracy – unfortunate democracy tainted by exceptional sovereignty. This spirit, furthermore, has found its cradle and scourge in the humanities. Humanists, professors, scholars, and artists have strongly critiqued humanism. They have allegedly betrayed an old alliance with humanism that would date back to the Enlightenment, to the Renaissance, and even earlier, to Aquinas and Carolingian theology. The treacherous humanities have rewritten Humanity. In this autobiographical writing, the humanities leave traces behind. Their traces mean marks for a democracy *to come*.

It is now impossible to unravel Humanity from the humanities, given that those critiques actually thicken the net of their entanglement. This commentary, however, passionate for them, proposes their consummation, insisting on this *im-possibility* – a reading of the humanities whereby their remaining plural singularity suspends the human, and offers a new chance for democracy. Considering that we are always already inscribed in a democratic tradition of political legitimacy and discourse, it is exactly the incisive affirmation of democracy that challenges existing democracies and brings a significant, non-reactive critique to the fore. The distinctive feature of this tradition is that its specters come both from the past and from the future.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the condition for the address to the specters of the future is that it be opened to its own crisis. At the bottom of any critique, there must be crisis, chaos, and the impossible. Only in this spacing shall we have a chance, perhaps, to experience another democracy, and not without gusto.

A discussion of the concept and becoming of the humanities must follow if we are to find the institutional framework of this crisis (II). From their configuration to their power (III), from the animalities that they conceal (IV) to the very loving art that they disclose (V), the humanities *remain* democratic; and they exhale democracy *to come* in as much as their corpses are consumed. These elements, when unfolded, constitute major contributions of the humanities, posthumous tributes that the humanities pay to democracy. After that, we will be prepared to conceive of another becoming that affects and disturbs our time, that of a democracy leaning toward the event – democracy *to come* (VI), which will need yet another contribution of the humanities, their last, minor, and posthumous act. In this endeavor, the work of Derrida will be privileged. Other actors will be called to the stage as well – some others will figure as specters . . . haunting.

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2. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (Routledge, New York, 1994). For the democratic revolution to which this text pays tribute, see Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London, Verso, 2001), pp. 149–93.

## II. Free Humanities, Trans-Humanities

The humanities have been offered the opportunity to retreat, there in the affirmation of deconstruction. Detached from the hypocrisy of Man, they might be finally free to face the bottom of themselves – being able to challenge His political offspring. Humiliated, they have fallen to the lowest levels of existence, following humanity. As freed and humble remains of humanity, now they find some light in the shallow and posthumous spaces of memory – that dangerous memory of *writing*.<sup>3</sup> Therein rests the re-treat of themselves that presupposes an autobiographical narrative. In writing, the humanities are free up to the point of threatening their very existence. Only when they put themselves in question, beyond presence, opening themselves to the *im-possible*, only then should we encounter a new spacing, freed from the constrains of the human.

Free and posthumous, what do they become? What is their principle? Their drive, their will . . . They search, research, and ask questions. This is their fate and their quest. And what other quest than the quest for self and their origin. Beneath themselves they find only wounds – psychological, biological, cosmological, and others that are heralded day after day. However, from the freedom that these wounds provide, the same question endures, and its urgency is even greater. In the free movement of such a quest, it is another element that thrives, prior, immanent, but also broader than the question: a yes.<sup>4</sup>

Humanists, professors, scholars, and students (and all professions of the university); their questioning movement leads most certainly to constative utterances, to the permanent and necessary verification and falsification of any statement – what leads to the principle of peer review, academic journals, publication, and *publicity*. Alongside them, though, beneath and beyond, they find something else, an affirmation. There can be no affirmation of this sort, one that supports the opinion of the humanist, one that calls for the trust, and belief of a public, one that urges the use of an affirmed formula, and desperately asks for conditions of work. There can be no such thing without performative utterances, which act inasmuch as say. They cause an effect, by their inner and contextual strength, upon those who heed it. Professions of faith of the professors, belief and urge that underlie the professions of the university, that is what complicates the constative-performative divide.<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt that such a call to an affirmation is most explicitly found in the humanities. Especially the Law School, which, given its

3. Writing as *pharmakon*, *pharmakon* as democracy, these identifications can be found in Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (London, The Athlon Press, London), pp. 143–5. These pages also foreshadow Derrida's recent analyses of democracy.

4. Jacques Derrida, "Une certaine possibilité impossible de dire l'événement," in Soussana, Derrida, and Nouss, eds., *Dire l'événement, est-ce possible?* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001), p. 83 ff.

5. Jacques Derrida, "University without Condition" in Kamuf, ed., *Without Alibi* (Stanford, CA, Stanford Press, 2002), pp. 209 and 234.

symbiosis with theology,<sup>6</sup> coupled with its practical concerns, tends to accommodate a certain dogmatic moment.<sup>7</sup> However, this affirmation takes into account all professions of the university – the traditional fields of the humanities are just those that *present* this move toward truth, and this affirmation of knowledge.<sup>8</sup> When describing the humanities, Derrida has given a special status to the Law School (cogently, it is a matter of rights, the rights of the humanities). He has also taken into account most of the fields that are classified amongst the humanities: literature, psychoanalysis, history, arts, and everything that “theory” may comprise. However, Derrida has implicitly excluded social sciences from his remarks. It is understandable, given the level of quantification that these sciences now demand. Nevertheless, a major advance is needed on this issue. Social sciences desperately need the methods of the humanities, and the humanities also need to be freed from their own disciplines.<sup>9</sup>

This is not necessarily out of the scope of Derrida’s work. It is time to liberate the humanities from the academic disciplines to which they are bound, and even to experiment a new sphere that acknowledges and uses the force of the university, and yet circumvents its limitations. Writing is necessarily *indiscipline*; non-disciplinary in the sense of order, hierarchy, and compartment, but still disciplinary in the sense of responsibility – writing, task of the humanities, is the response to an ultimate responsibility. It is time to turn academic disciplines into *in-disciplines* and *trans-disciplines*. The transversal logic of questioning that cuts and connects across fields, by its very affirmative drive, ends up subverting the very grammar of the university, the walled grammar of the university.<sup>10</sup> This freed way of thinking the university may empower diversity and dissemination. Diversity in and beyond the university implies that the university be thought as a whole, not a totalizing one, but a whole as multiplicity, which is found beside the parts.<sup>11</sup>

6. See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1985); chapter three for this matter. See the legal-theological decisionism of *The Idea of Representation* (Washington, D.C., Plutarch Press, 1988). For the issue of theological-juridical hermeneutics, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London, Sheed and Ward, 1989), pp. 324–41.

7. See Pierre Legendre, *The Masters of Law: A Study of the Dogmatic Function*, in Goodrich, ed., *Law and the Unconscious – A Legendre Reader* (Hampshire, Macmillan Press, 1997).

8. Derrida, ‘University without Condition’, p. 207.

9. See the epistemological work of Boaventura de Souza Santos, who argues for the adoption of the method of the humanities by social sciences. *Critica à Razão Indolente* (São Paulo, Cortez, 2000).

10. The walls within the university can be even higher than the external ones, especially those that oppose academic to non-academic work. An analogous experience could be remembered here: democratization of knowledge in psychiatric clinics (for patients and technicians, noticeably La Borde’s case). See Felix Guattari, *Chaosmosis – An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 6–7.

11. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 42–4.

### III. Power of the Humanities

Given that this university is *uni-diversity*, one could ask whether such a *uni(di)versal* experience of the humanities is able to provide any means for a further development of the humanities and the values professed by the humanities. Derrida strives to show the opportunity that the unconditional status of the university offers to those interested in thinking another *place* for the humanities. There is something sovereign in universities. However, according to Derrida, it is feasible to distinguish sovereignty from unconditionality. The unconditional moment of the university does belong to a certain understanding of sovereignty, but it should be somehow extricated from that, and an unconditional principle would then be found in the university – not exactly its fact, but its postulation<sup>12</sup>: “This university without condition does not, *in fact*, exist, as we know only too well. Nevertheless . . . it should remain an ultimate place of critical resistance – and more than critical.”<sup>13</sup> It would then “resist effectively by allying itself with extra-academic forces [since it is in itself divisive, and foreign to territorial, indivisible, and exceptional sovereignty] in order to organize an inventive resistance, through its *œuvres*, its works, to all attempts at reappropriation . . . to all other figures of sovereignty.”<sup>14</sup>

All that would be meaningless, though, without certain conditions, or measures. This is what Derrida has always said about the university. The university is a place of power, disputes, and hierarchies. Its size, structure, and goals are determined by economic, and political factors. Unconditional might then sound quite unsuited. Particularly, when he praises so much the “unconditionality without power”<sup>15</sup> as the exposition of the university, heterogeneous to the principle of power. It becomes necessary to decompose the concept. Let us see what Derrida means here in two moments:

*Unconditional university.* Unconditional evokes a certain independence of the university, a right to say everything in the public sphere: “the principial right

12. For postulation see Jacques Derrida, ‘The ‘World’ of the Enlightenment to Come (Exception, Calculation, Sovereignty),’ *Research in Phenomenology*, 33 (2003), p. 33.

13. Derrida, ‘University without Condition’, p. 204.

14. Op. cit., p. 236. Here Derrida provides an example of the difficult distinction that he proposes between sovereignty and unconditionality. The university is sovereign only insofar as it is unconditional. According to Derrida, the political thought of the West has been tainted by the overarching power of an exceptional sovereignty, and by a rationalism of the State. This model of sovereignty is ultimately found in Plato’s praise of a sun-like knowledge of the good, the power and knowledge of the one, in the *Republic*. Yet there is in this reference, and also revealingly in Kant’s *als ob* (as if), a certain faith that shelters reason and inhabits the reasonable without any prior causality, without any further source. But it can only exercise its exceptional and absolute mode, suspending rights and law so as to constitute its order, upon a territorial setting as in Schmitt’s work, i.e. relying on an indivisible, divine singularity. This is the reason why Derrida attempts to move away from the constraining force of the nation-state, from absolute exception, without relinquishing its underlying insistence upon an unconditional yet divisible faith. Cf. Derrida, ‘Enlightenment to Come’, pp. 30–1, and 44–5. This powerless power, Derrida finds in the university, referring back to the ‘University without Condition’.

15. Derrida, ‘University without Condition’, p. 301, footnote 3.

to say everything, even if it be under the heading of fiction and the experimentation of knowledge, and the right to say it publicly, to publish it.”<sup>16</sup> It is also, as we saw before, a resistance, which always means an insistence – upon principles, and a postulation inclined toward democracy. Yet this postulation must surmount the position of principle, and again, in its postulation, it shall become a force: “What is needed, then, is not only a principle of resistance, but a force of resistance – and of dissidence.”<sup>17</sup> Deconstruction was born in the university – it was a revolution within the university. It is there that this right to a critique, to a radical critique, a genealogy, and a deconstruction are guarded. It is from the university that the right to speak of the humanities gets hold of society in its affirmation of democracy<sup>18</sup> – unconditional, almost sovereign, almost imperial, almost universal in its radical and uncontainable insistence upon its own right.<sup>19</sup>

*Without power.* This is not to mean that there are no or fewer power relations in the university, this is not the same as to say that power is absent from the structure of the university, on the contrary.<sup>20</sup> Being without power actually means escaping possibility. The university cannot. It is exposed and submitted to all powers, especially to the nation-state. In addition, it is open, and it offers no adequate physical barriers, it cannot defend its autonomy, except for its words – and it still depends on economic “contributions” from outside, conditions heterogeneously established. Above all, its lack of possibility means another insistence, an insistence upon the im-possible. Moreover, the university is this institution where social projects are engendered. It is the very site of invention in all fields of knowledge, and is praised for its ingenuity (one can only invent the impossible, for if it were possible, there would be no invention; nothing new, as such, would have been invented, and it would have been predicted, anticipated, ergo any invention would have been precluded).<sup>21</sup> Such an impossibility, this aporia, presented in the university by the humanities will soon be further developed through the thought of the event – where democracy and the humanities *eventually* meet.

16. Op. cit., p. 205.

17. Op. cit., p. 205.

18. Jacques Derrida, *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 22–31.

19. With regard to a certain colonial and universalistic drive in culture, therefore looming upon the university, see Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 35–43. For this same drive in relation to law and nation, see Peter Fitzpatrick, *Modernism and the Grounds of Law* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 69 and 125–9.

20. Derrida, *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?* p. 15.

21. Derrida, ‘Dire l’événement,’ pp. 95–6. Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, p. 118. Also, Jacques Derrida, ‘Psyche: Inventions of the Other,’ in Waters, Godzich, eds., *Reading de Man Reading* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 310–42.



#### IV. In the Time of the Humanities . . . Beasts Would Be Needed<sup>22</sup>

The humanities profess fragility, and this fragility is appropriate for the world we live in. It is exactly this *as if* of the professions, of the humanities that can open spaciousness (also temporal) for the becoming world of the world. “*Fiction* is what *figures* but also what *makes*.”<sup>23</sup> Such a fiction, appropriated by the humanities in the faith of the *professor*, figures out time as well. It is the fiction of the hour, the unity-hour that organizes the time of the university. The problem is that this fiction, today, has become pious and self-punishing. This fictional time that has worked for the human, a work of liberation from the time of God, has now unleashed its might upon the human, and, especially, the humanist, who has been caught and imprisoned by his own time. There has been a time when the humanist was spared, when no one but the worker (industrial, agricultural, intellectual) would have to bear time constraints. Not anymore, there is nothing to be spared. The professor is no longer the master of the university – he has become the apprentice with regard to time. Time masters, and administrative workers, managers turn out to be its filial representatives.

It is good, it is convenient that professors do not master. They acquire a new fragility and passivity, yet unknown to them. It is now necessary to learn from them, more than ever. In this openness, in this radical responsiveness and suffering, the humanities come to realize their relationship with their others. The other comes when one’s time is gone. There lie the grounds for the recognition, also found in Derrida’s writing, of the suffering of the animals: intense and unprecedented. The professor (Derrida) now is and follows the animal – singular, an animal, there, at the professor’s home, in front of him. The animal, his female cat, faces him, threatens him, naked. Nakedness there reveals a mutual fragility. The professor is naked, and so he knows because of the animal, which threatens him, even though he is familiar. The animal, whose name had been given by the professor (hence the animal is invaded by mortality – or by the foreshadowing of the remains of the name in the aftermath of death), is unaware of its nakedness, and hence it gives itself to its naked being.

This scene of fragility and passivity, this experience of fragility and friendship beyond borders is what may give the humanities a new disposition. The professor surrenders to the animal – what means, with Derrida and Derrida’s Nietzsche, to promise himself to the animal. This is the promise to share finitude, suffering, and this experience of world, to share our passion of the world, and our compassion . . . “Being able to suffer is no longer a power, it is a possibility without power . . . a possibility of the impossible. Mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking

22. This heading, although in a very different context, is inspired by Peter Fitzpatrick’s ‘Gods would be needed . . .’: American Empire and the Rule of (International) Law’ *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 16 (2003), pp. 429–66.

23. Derrida, ‘University without Condition’, p. 228.

the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the possibility of this nonpower . . .”<sup>24</sup>

The experience of the living animal must be coupled with another experience, also disruptive to the animal–man, that of fiction. Derrida deploys fiction himself in describing his *own* experience; fiction that he uses to produce a cartography of animals, maybe not a fabulous bestiary, as he said, but a sort of *confabulation*. He rightly avoids the production of fables – and their moralizing and humanizing effects – but he cannot avoid bare production: machine-like production, autobiographical, imaginary production of animals. His most impressive animal, ineffective, non-existent, it is a chimera, multiplicity of animals, and reunion of animal figures. Fictional disposition, a rhizome<sup>25</sup> attached to production. That is his work, or *art*, and the art of the (posthumous) humanities.

## V. For Love of the Humanities . . . Democracy

In love of the humanities, performing the art of the humanities, the post-human animal wants its language, the right to its language and to perform its task – the right to a new discourse of democracy. People, though, are still absent in this movement toward democracy. Therefore, fiction is required again, but no pure fiction will be able to articulate such a democratic discourse. Fiction might also belong to the realm of power and the “I can.” Art (as outward or public praxis, beyond work),<sup>26</sup> nevertheless, in embodying the viral character and productivity of fiction, would be in a position to arrange a fiction that happens here and now. A fictive art opens spaciousness for a *demos to come*. However absent, these people are already haunting us. Fragile and dangerous animals gave us a clue to find them.

They are the people from the streets, they are found there and they resemble animals, sometimes in their dirtiness, bareness, and above all in their suffering. They are rogues (in French, *voyous*),<sup>27</sup> and they belong to the streets, as wheeled people – like those who in medieval times suffered in the apparatus of the wheel, those who live beyond the borders of the city, foreigners in their own nations. In French, they are somewhat immoral

24. Jacques Derrida, ‘The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)’, *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (2002), p. 396. Again the irresistible force of a specter: Machado de Assis wrote a book called *Philosopher or Dog?* (London, Bloomsbury, 1997), which, depending on the point of view, either narrates the story of Quincas Borba, a philosopher, and Rubião, his disciple, or the story of Quincas Borba, a dog. The most important here is that the name of the philosopher’s dog was Quincas Borba. The philosopher gave the dog his own name. Derrida, however, in his long text about the animal, did not give us the name of his cat. What is the name of Derrida’s cat? Perhaps, and the consequences would be unforeseeable, *Jacques Derrida . . . Jacques Derrida, philosopher or cat?*

25. “A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo”. Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus – Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London, Athlone Press, 1988), p. 25.

26. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Experience of Freedom* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 74 ff.

27. Jacques Derrida, *Voyous – deux essais sur la raison* (Paris, Galilée, 2003), pp. 95–103.



people, deceivers, sometimes children who grow on the streets. *Voyou* is also related (in a marginal etymology) to the werewolf – from fragility it acquires a supernatural strength, posthumous man, posthumous wolf. In English, rogue, a vagrant, perhaps dishonest, perhaps a mischievous person, rogue can also mean a shirking horse. In its uncertain etymology, rogue may derive from Latin *rogare*, to claim. What poverty, and what might! Poverty, that of people, might, that of claim and fiction. What if the humanities, for love of the humanities, were to produce this articulation: people, profession? This is what takes place when texts such as *Voyous*, “University without Condition,” and “The Animal that Therefore I Am (More to Follow)” are put together.

Confabulation appears in the secret of the post-human devotion to the yes – as in the scene where the professor meets the animal, and in the setting where the animal meets the people. Yes, they say to each other, to their exposition to the public, to public scrutiny, to the fall of their will onto this non-symmetrical public space. They fall apart . . . abandoned:<sup>28</sup> they fall in love. That is the confabulation of strangers – strange, and rogue lovers – task of the post-humanist. They ought to write other fables. Uncanny to the moralizing and humanizing human fables, but attached to the productivity of fables, those lovely strangers ought to produce the new discourse of democracy. For love of the humanities, and deploying these skills, confabulation engenders democracy. Love understood as that love of friendship – not natural, but open, and dangerous. Sexual love (promising and threatening), contemptuous of the all too tedious male exclusive friendship, it offers another chance to friendship. A singular friendship is the chance to flee the all too present or similar friendship, which is only possible at the funereal oration. Love is brought to the fore, once again, because it is able to introduce dissymmetry into the realm of friendship, where the equal, and natural, and religious brothers have always ruled.<sup>29</sup> Loving, writing – apart.

## VI. Posthumous Will: Democracy to Come

Dissymmetry of the yes (the affirmation and acquiescence of the humanities), dissymmetry of power (the unconditional, im-possible universality that inhabits and disrupts the logic of sovereignty), dissymmetry of death (encountered by the humanities in the posthumous character of humanity, or in the animal), and dissymmetry of love (exhaled by the humanities in their uncommon sharing): here, the most significant contribution of the humanities to democracy. This is what democracy desperately needs; it is a matter of survival. Also, a matter of taste: the humanities are the pleasure of democracy. Acknowledging survival is

28. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 36–47.

29. For his concept of *aimance*, see Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, pp. 69 and 298.

acknowledging that something from democracy always remains – that democracy be left to *remain!* Heeding pleasure means *another* pleasure, and one that ought to *come*. These two moments – interdependent – can be tackled by Derrida’s postulation of a democracy *to come*. With a view to addressing the problems at hand, I will follow and adapt Derrida’s unfolding<sup>30</sup> of a democracy *to come* in four key words:

*Deconstruction.* Democracy is the political system where deconstruction flourishes. The institutional apparatus of democracy not only favors deconstruction’s art, but it also requires deconstruction. It is the chance of radical critique, of genealogical tasks, and of deconstruction as rhizomic self-critique that offers the elements for the movement of democracy, for the drift of democracy, for the open space of power characteristic of democracy. Without deconstruction, and deconstruction in/of democracy, power would be settled, sedimented: there would be no room for any decision, neither for politics at all.<sup>31</sup>

*Differance.* Deconstruction is rupture with presence, and the logocentric tradition of metaphysics, but in turn it gives itself to the differance of the world, to differance within language. It acquiesces and it urges this differance to come to the fore – always testing the resilience of presence. Difference, then, shows that democracy *is* never, not even the future, not even its origin: democracy, remains (democracy, *to come*). Democracy remains distant from itself – its concept is by right in dispute. Yet democracy differs in time – it is never present, neither presented in the future nor in the past. Furthermore, democracy, particularly democracy, is marked by a certain semantic openness, which dates back to Plato and Aristotle. *Plural* democracy, undecidable in its very nature, produces remains.<sup>32</sup>

*Specters.* These remains, though, cannot but be seen as traces, traces of something else, henceforth marks for anything else, which may eventually form a code, ready to be deciphered. Traces that in a time out of joint appear as specters, haunting. They are unequivocal and unavoidable in their harassment, for however invisible – we do not see them straight away<sup>33</sup> – we do see them seeing us. Moreover, the trace bears names. Democracy remains the question of names. First as the filial, and patronymic name that excludes women from the material and spiritual wealth of the household, and from the fraternity of democracy.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, its very felicitous name, democracy, whose value has been proved,

30. Derrida, *Voyous*, pp. 126–33.

31. ‘Democracy is the very placing in question of the notion of ground’. Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time* (London, Verso, 1991), p. 78.

32. Derrida, *Voyous*, p. 47.

33. They always wear a visor – and we are always under the effect of the visor of the specters. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp. 6–8.

34. Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, pp. 291–293; pp. 104–6.

and tasted by generations, comprises a number of ideas. They are in dispute, some of them can be discarded, others added, but still a set of ideas: people, freedom, equality, fraternity, human rights, and popular sovereignty. Each of them has its history, which partakes a certain history of democracy – wherefrom many lessons can be drawn.

Therefore, the name of democracy tends to be questioned, and deconstructed, in the name of democracy. Amongst many names of democracy, Derrida picks up one. This is one of the Greek terms for freedom: *exousia*, a certain license, or even licentiousness. This seductive license is what the logocentric (and seldom democratic) philosophical tradition depicts and criticizes: a license that engenders several different forms of life, in a way that leads democracy to become a cheerful, colourful, beautiful, and seductive polity. This name *pleases* post-humanism. Derrida employs Plato's contempt for democracy as its most significant feature.<sup>35</sup>

*Event.* It is clear that democracy is there to be unveiled in a constative manner. Democracy is there in unfindable traces, unfindable border between the political, the juridical, and the ethical. This constative moment, though, is always complicated by the performative call to democracy. Any discourse on democracy is already an action towards a certain type of democracy. The event of this call, nevertheless, can and should be deconstructed. Whenever we expect to be saying the right thing, then to meet the total context of our speech and the meaning of our speech to ourselves, we deceive ourselves and inflict deception upon others. For the trace returns, citable and iterable.

This distinction between constative and performative utterances has been cogently critiqued and complicated by Derrida.<sup>36</sup> Now, according to him, it is time to derange it even further, maybe to find out where “it fails and must fail”.<sup>37</sup> It is time to call forth the event in the strong sense. The event in a performative act is “guaranteed . . . by conventions, legitimate fictions, and a certain ‘as if’ . . . It is the order of power, of the ‘I can’, ‘I may’, ‘I am empowered to’. No surprise, thus no event in the strong sense.”<sup>38</sup> Another event, beyond any performative – it disturbs any horizon, the horizon of a regulative idea, or utopia. It also interrupts any anticipation, and wounds the horizontal visibility that predicts, anticipates, and rules over utopias and regulative ideas. This other event, passive but not servile, persists in the *to come*, and does not condone the “I can”. It belongs to the realm of the impossible – as we said before with regard to the unconditionality of the university – and it borrows from the university its complete expositional matter. But exposure to whom? To whoever comes. This is the way to handle the all-powerfulness of the one – the sovereign one, either God or subject. Derrida evokes “another truth of the democratic, the truth of the

35. Derrida, *Voyous*, pp. 41–9.

36. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Press, 1988).

37. Derrida, “University”, p. 209.

38. Op. cit., pp. 233–4.

other, of the heterogeneous, of the dissymmetrical, of the disseminating multiplicity, of the anonymous whoever, of the no matter whom, of each one, undetermined.”<sup>39</sup> No expected brothers, natural bonds, or bonds of soil, citizens, patriots, nationals – such is the arrival of the unexpected, unconditional hospitality.

However, this very event, in its fragile passivity, still conserves some force. Another force, that that Derrida finds in Nietzsche’s writing: the force of the “perhaps.” The experience of the “perhaps” takes hold of the democrat – not in the future, past, or present, but here and now,<sup>40</sup> singularly but in the disruption of the subject. Such is the force of a tasteful, but vanishing, experience. The force of this event is stronger than performative acts, and yet it gives performative acts their force. Without the im-possible possibility of the event, nothing at all would take place. But the insistence upon this impossible event demands another political discourse, akin to this “perhaps” and to a “what if.” The “what if” demands one to ask: *What if* another world were possible?<sup>41</sup>

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Political discourse, untamed democratic discourse shaped by the event, it disrupts fiction as “I can,” the center of the subject, and presence. As Derrida says, it unveils the affirmation and the acquiescence of fiction, and finds a different fiction in the “what if.” However, another important element of fiction and of the humanities is missed. The political discourse of a democracy *to come*, another political art, claims the productivity of fiction as well – that rhizomic and viral drive, unquiet, and even turbulent. Bare productivity, it is insatiable, falling apart by licentiousness, by desire, material desire.<sup>42</sup> As such it is apt to trespass any image, but for that it always involves images, projects, perhaps even myths. The democratic discourse of the event should not be invisible, then, but pro-visional. Derrida acknowledges that (“seeable perhaps, but unforeseeable”),<sup>43</sup> but he does not develop it; neither does Derrida offer the theoretical tools to think it.

Thence, political demands should no longer be inscribed in what is called political horizon. Indeed, any horizon tames the event, oppressing the possibility of change – the tamed and foreseen event is caught by the chain of power and rules, which tends to impose the grammar of traditional democratic institutions upon political movements – and a democracy *to come* is mainly available to them. Beyond all horizons, another fiction is

39. Derrida, *Voyous*, p. 35. My translation.

40. Jacques Derrida, ‘Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism’ in Mouffe, ed., *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (New York, Routledge, 1999), p. 83. Also his *Politics of Friendship* (London, Verso, 1997), second chapter.

41. Derrida’s reference to the alterglobalists in his Interview: [http://www.brusseltribunal.org/pdf/Derrida\\_EN.rtf](http://www.brusseltribunal.org/pdf/Derrida_EN.rtf) ‘For a Justice to come: An Interview with Jacques Derrida’. This reference leads to another spacing where democracy finds a way to thrive: beyond national law. See also Derrida, *Voyous*, pp. 118–9, and 127–8.

42. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 24–7.

43. Derrida, ‘Enlightenment to Come’, p. 34: “and there is neither science nor language nor technique, nor, and we must recognize this, experience in general, without the production of some ideality”.

needed. Yes, for a new democratic art. We may call it confabulation without fables. Perhaps, for the sake of this art, we shall solicit a sort of poultice of inscription and prescription,<sup>44</sup> where political demands are not exactly universalized, but publicized together, and where not only metonymic, but also inventive discourses take place. This poultice is neither architectural nor incoherent or chaotic.<sup>45</sup> It does play with chaos, as much as deconstruction, but it conserves a certain non-systemic sense or coherence. Productivity of fiction, and fictional medicine for a new democratic art – these are just minor contributions of the humanities. And I (and the specters)<sup>46</sup> tell you this in confidence: nothing but the posthumous smile of the humanities – at democracy, for democracy.

From the posthumous memoirs of humanity – a treacherous writing, and a smile. Something is said there, to be deciphered: the formula of a *pharmakon*. Humanities, scourge of Humanity, trace of humanity, they have written these memoirs – these ghostwriters.<sup>47</sup> They have written there their impetus; shown how to disclose dissymmetry, whilst guarding the secret of confabulation, the secret, which strong events ought to demand. They have dared to meet an active forgetting of presence, leaving no children.<sup>48</sup> They have dared to shout, out of their own consummation: “Democracy to come!”

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44. This poultice alludes to Castoriadis’s concept of magma: Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987), pp. 340–5. It also alludes to Machado’s poultice, see first note.

45. “Architecture is not architectonic. All coherence is not and has not always been systemic”, Derrida, ‘Enlightenment to Come’, p. 51, footnote 4.

46. Antonio Negri, ‘The Specter’s Smile’, in Sprinkler, ed., *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx* (London, Verso, 1999).

47. Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 68.

48. Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (Sussex, Harvester Press, 1982), p. 136.