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# Messianic-City: Ruins, Refuge and Hospitality in Derrida

Puspa Damai

## The Heart of the City

“Listen first to those who, like myself, did not have to watch TV to know that SOME of L.A. was burning,” Derrida wrote to a newsletter in response to the riots triggered by the Rodney King events in 1992, adding, “L.A. is not anywhere, but it is a singular organization of the experience of ‘anywhere’” (“Faxitexture” 28). At a time when one hardly needs to watch TV to know that many cities around the world are burning, or are targeted and wounded, bombed and invaded—as if the Biblical injunction, “Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you” had turned against itself, or had suspended itself, thereby converting cities of refuge into sites of intense hostility—it would be pertinent to recall the many illuminating texts Derrida has composed on cities and how deconstruction is inextricably related to burning, cinders, ashes, ruins, haunting, dissemination and destruction, and at the same time to rebuilding, inheriting, maintaining (*maintenant*), opening, reconstructing and welcoming. At the same time, it is precisely his evocation of the city as a place of refuge modeled after a certain messianicity, if not messianism, that exposes his own texts to a rigorous rethinking and critique. A number of fascinating readings have been done on Derrida’s concept of hospitality, yet hardly anything has been written on the theme of the city in Derrida, even

though it is not difficult to see that for Derrida cities represent what his seminar on hospitality calls the very “structures of welcoming [les structures de l’accueil]” (*Acts of Religion* 361). After looking closely at the direct as well as oblique references to cities which traverse Derrida’s work like traces that radically erase themselves while presenting themselves, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that one has not quite approached deconstruction if one has not yet visited Derrida’s concept of the city. It should be recalled that Derrida in *Dissemination* refers to a radical anteriority explicitly in terms of the city when he talks about a tower that “occupies a place before ‘me,’” and like a sentence that awaits me, keeps watch over me and “surveys my heart’s core—which is *precisely a city, a labyrinthine one*” (341, italics added).

On the one hand Derrida’s city is split—like Jean-Luc Nancy’s “heart,” which Nancy says does not exist before the break, for “it is the break itself that makes a heart” (99)—into the tower and the labyrinth, whose destiny is decided by the tower. On the other hand, however, the “heart,” which is one of the most recurring themes in Derrida, and which he characterizes by using “city” as a trope, ironically evokes unicity, even an essence. The oneness or *ipseity* of the heart in Derrida becomes obvious when, in *The Gift of Death*, he prophesies that the future belongs to the heart insofar as the heart is “a place of treasures,” the treasures to come, treasures one saves “beyond the economy of the terrestrial visible or sensible,” or the priceless treasures of the “celestial capital” (98). In “Che cos’è la poesia?” Derrida returns to this theme to argue that poetry is a dictation from the other that is lost “in anonymity, between city and nature”; and the secret of this dictation from the other that remains im-presentable can only be learned by heart (223). A poem, Derrida continues, is “what teaches the heart, invents the heart” but the invention that causes the heart beat lies “beyond oppositions, beyond outside and inside” (231). Again, in *For What Tomorrow*, Derrida evokes the “heart” while analyzing the problem of sovereign monopoly over the death penalty, arguing for the unconditional abolition of the death penalty both for reasons of principle (rather than utility or inutility) and for *reasons of the heart* (89–90), as if the reasons of the heart had been deployed to counter the reasons of the head, or in other words, sovereignty as being “head” of the State.

Contrary to Henri Lefebvre’s critique that deconstruction and poststructuralism conceptualize space as merely a mental thing or a mental place (*Production* 3–4), the question of the city brings deconstruction to the “ground realities,” by foregrounding the political dimension of Derrida’s thinking. For instance, Derrida’s

text, *On the Name*, examines Plato's concept of *khōra*, in which Derrida interprets *khōra* not as a mental space but as a shifting receptacle that makes a city go outside of itself or exposes it to the other as if the memory of one's city had been imprinted by "the secretariat of another city" (114, 118). A city, which is at once more than one and less than one, insofar as it subsists only by going outside of itself towards the other, is not merely the houses, the monuments and the habitat, or to put it otherwise, is not something that can be calculated in terms of its monuments; instead it is the polis where all political decisions are made, a site where all historical events take place and an event that makes the arrival of the other possible. In fact, for Derrida a city embodies the figure of the other itself, the other which, with its visitation that exceeds all expectations, opens itself as hospitality. The city in Derrida functions almost in the same way as does language in the work of Emmanuel Levinas, whose concept of hospitality to the Other—as seen especially in his remarks in *Totality and Infinity* that "the essence of language is friendship and hospitality" (305)—provides Derrida an important point of departure for his own concept of cosmopolitan hospitality.

It is precisely Derrida's concept of the city of refuge grounded on the law of incalculable or unconditional hospitality to the other or on the principle of the heart—which is not a normative principle, not even a quasi-normative one—which provides a vantage point to show how Derrida's project of the city of refuge is conditioned by a number of theoretical constraints. I will point out at least four areas—not only to continue with the spatial metaphor but also to suggest that Derrida's cosmopolitics of the city eventually culminates in the politics of "areas" in which one area is posited over against the rest—each inextricably related to the other and yet unique, which register and reveal these constraints. The first is his notion of tradition or heritage that determines both the conditions of the inheritance and the question of who inherits it. The second area is Derrida's characterization of the arrival of the other without which neither hospitality nor any event would be possible: on close inspection, the way in which the other's arrival is theorized as an unconditional visitation, as opposed to an arrival by invitation, reveals that Derrida's notion of the unconditional itself belongs to a discourse that is already conditioned by a set of invariables. The messianic event of the arrival of the other is the third area that conditions Derrida's concept of the unconditionally hospitable city. Although distinguished from messianism, this concept nonetheless unmistakably evokes theology, albeit a negative one, thereby bringing, as if in a loop, Derrida's critique of

sovereignty back to the onto-theological tradition from which he wants to distinguish his principle of the heart or the messiani-city. And finally, the last area in which a constraint can be identified is the centrality of Derrida's notion of the "other" Europe in his references to cities, which interestingly revives a universalist project of the new Europe in spite of his assurance that this "other" Europe is not limited to any fixed borders, or that it is in the process of constant making and remaking, thereby turning these Europeans "at once youthful and tired of [their] age" (*The Other* 7).

All of these constraints that condition Derrida's unconditional hospitality eventually bear on the question of sovereignty, and I claim that Derrida's project of the city of refuge fails to theorize the other of sovereignty, for it is already conditioned by the sovereignty of the other. By the other of sovereignty I do not mean, as if following a path paved by Foucault in *Society Must Be Defended*, that "we have to bypass or get around the problem of sovereignty" (27). Bypassing sovereignty would be impossible, as Derrida cautions in *Rouges*, because evading it would threaten "the classical principles of freedom and self-determination" (158). Derrida indeed handles the question of sovereignty with more subtlety than does Foucault with the latter's impatient bypassing. Against the classical conceptualization of sovereignty as expressed so volubly and indivisibly, for instance, in the *Leviathan*, where Hobbes argues that whether sovereignty resides in one as in monarchy, or in many as in autocracy, or in all as in democracy, sovereignty requires that they must have it entirely (123), or in Bodin's *On Sovereignty* where sovereignty is defined as an absolute and perpetual power of the prince that cannot be transferred in any other ways than as an unconditional gift (8), Derrida maintains that sovereignty should remain at once indivisible yet to be shared. Nevertheless, the question persists as to the nature of this sharing (*partage*), for it is also the unconditional gift of sovereignty that constitutes the law of the unconditional in Derrida; and the whole deconstruction of the classical notion of sovereignty seems merely to reverse the order of the sovereign. Instead of claiming the sovereignty of the self, or *ipseity*, Derrida seems to revert it to the sovereignty of the other. The circular wheel of sovereignty that receives a measured pounding in the first chapter of *Rouges*—where Derrida adroitly exposes the circularity of sovereignty as "a rounding off" by the self, or as a turn (*tours*) around the self (12)—only comes full circle in order to reaffirm the unicity of the heart of the city.

Derrida's project of the city in general and, in particular, that of the city of refuge, which he sketches out in his address to the International Parliament of Writers in Strasbourg in 1996 (later

published in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*), is a pertinent site for pursuing this reversal because these projects seem—against his express wish not to put forward any plan or proposition, and to strictly maintain “the essential poverty of [his] work” (“Hospitality” 74)—to chart out an ambitious plan for a network of cities of asylum for victims of state persecution. The Cities of Asylum network, established under the auspices of the International Parliament of Writers, of which Derrida was a founding member and vice president, is not a utopic vision. As we are informed by Christian Salmon in the first issue of the Parliament’s Journal, *Autodafe*, the Parliament convened in haste after the assassination of Tahar Djaout in Algeria in 1993, and Salman Rushdie and Wole Soyinka were its first two presidents. And from the moment of its creation, it has been involved in setting up a network of Asylum Cities that offer refuge to writers and artists threatened by fundamentalist and totalitarian regimes. “Five years after its creation,” Salmon continues, “there are thirty cities in this network” including Barcelona, Frankfurt, Salzburg, and Venice (13). In his address to the Parliament, Derrida characterizes the cities of refuge as “free and autonomous cities,” but their autonomy does not correspond to the classical notion of autonomy as indivisible sovereignty; instead it invokes “an original [inédit] concept of hospitality” (5) which proposes the “Law of an unconditional hospitality, offered *a priori* to every other” (*On Cosmopolitanism* 22). In other words, the autonomy of a city of refuge would initiate an implosion of classical sovereignty and an emergence of a new concept of shared sovereignty. Derrida proposes the implosion and emergence at a number of levels, of which perhaps the most consequential is the destabilization of the topological and political unity of the *polis*, which he splits into two: the City and the State. While the traditional theory of sovereignty, that of Carl Schmitt, for instance, seeks to keep the unity of the polis intact by safeguarding what Schmitt’s *Political Theology* calls the State’s “monopoly to decide” (13), Derrida, on the contrary, seeks to dissociate the City from the State in order to bring the former out of the shadow of the monopolistic sovereignty of the latter, and to endow the city with more autonomy and sovereignty.

Another event of this shared sovereignty occurs in Derrida’s interrogation of the classical notion of the sovereign being who decides on the exception, as formulated by Carl Schmitt in *Political Theology* (5). Against the secularized theological and ontological legacy of sovereignty of which Schmitt is only one of the heirs, Derrida maintains that a decision, if such a thing is possible, cannot and should not be made by me; rather it is always the other

who decides, leaving me, the subject, in the wake to bear responsibility for his decision (“Hospitality” 67). In other words, the event of decision embodies a shared—or, to use Derrida’s favorite term, spectral—sovereignty which is divided between the other and myself, and in which the other, who overwhelms me, is not a presence but an apparition. Thus, by conceptualizing the city as a threshold between two forms of the polis, or between the norm and the decision, Derrida conjures a site in which sovereignty implies a decision that exceeds the economy of one’s ipseity or an experience of the haunting of the other beyond the exchanges of intersubjectivity. On the basis of his concept of the shared sovereignty of the city, Derrida succeeds in envisioning a new cosmopolitics beyond the sovereignty of nation-states and even beyond the discourse of world-government or its analogies in the form of world-cities or globalcities, to which even the most serious discussions on cosmopolitanism are confined. Even though Saskia Sassen, one of the most cited exponents of global cities, thinks that global cities are command points in the organization of a world economy (4), her project nonetheless does not seek to dissociate cities from the neo-colonial politics of the wealthy nations. It is important to remember, as Spivak reminds us, “why Kabul—behind it Gaza, Karachi, Ulan Bator and *bien d’autres encore*—cannot emerge as global cities” (74).

The cities of asylum, however, are neither anti-State nor para-State “structures”; rather, they call for a rethinking of political belonging that tends, beyond the State, toward what Bataille in *The Absence of Myth* calls “the absence of community” (96), or what Derrida in *Politics of Friendship* refers to as “friendship without the community of the friends of solitude” (42). Derrida would agree with Bataille when the latter says that “[w]ithin me there is only the ruin of sovereignty” (96), but he would depart from Bataille’s notion of sovereignty as a “state of collapse,” which Bataille compares with the insubordination of the starry sky, to point out, as he does in the above-cited passage in *Dissemination*, that there is a tower that keeps watch over “me” and surveys the core of “my” heart. In other words, for Derrida a city is not only the embodiment of the other, it is also a space held hostage by the other. That is to say, Derrida does not only revise traditional sovereignty by dividing it between the subject and the other, between the norm and the decision, and between the City and the State, but he also maintains that the other is singularity itself, and the event of the other’s arrival is exceptional. Insofar as the city of refuge is unconditionally open to the arrival of the other, and insofar as the singular event of the other’s arrival exceeds all laws of hospitality, the

city becomes a site of the “radical evil” itself. In *Acts of Religion*, Derrida relates radical evil with the messianic, which he distinguishes from messianism. Messianicity or what I am calling here the “messianic-city” “exposes itself to the absolute surprise” of the unconditional arrival of the other (56). A city of refuge is unthinkable without the fear and trembling generated by this radical evil. In this sense, the tremor caused in the city and by the city, for Derrida, is more hostile than is denoted by the conventional notion of enmity or hostility.

### Identifying the Enemies of the City

Before further examining the sovereign and exceptional space of the city of refuge that exposes us to radical evil in the process of providing refuge from the calculative and repressive machinations of the State, we should pause first to review Derrida’s writing on cities in general, a body of texts that somehow has eluded critical attention. The city is the protagonist in a number of texts by Derrida that include *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, which we will return to later; “Point de Folie—Maintenant L’Architecture,” in which Derrida talks about the mad moments of “maintenant” (used to mean the maintenance and immediacy) of the architecture of the event; “Generations of a City,” in which Derrida develops the architectural logic of incompleteness; “Des Tours de Babel,” which examines the myth of the building of the imperial Tower of Babel and its deconstruction by God; and “Faxitexture,” Derrida’s keynote address to the Anywhere Conference held in Japan in 1992, in which, by looking at the Rodney King events and the riots that followed them, he contemplates how technology is determining the texture of the city and also how formidable a task it is to rebuild L.A. from the ashes. Derrida’s conversations on 9/11, published together with the interviews with Habermas in *Philosophy in the Time of Terror*, revolve around the issue of terror, colonialism and imperialism. In his analysis of the events of 9/11, Derrida expounds on the logic of “autoimmunity” in relation to democracy and to his notion of the “to come” of the event and its traumatism.

Equally important are Derrida’s essays on Europe published as *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today’s Europe*, wherein, through a seductive play on the heading of the text, *L’autre cap*, he not only revisits a tradition that sees Europe as a cape, a heartland where the capital is concentrated, indeed as the capital city (polis) of the world, but also deliberates on European responsibility in order to suggest that a rethinking of sovereignty or heading is necessary



today. Not only these later works, but also earlier texts by Derrida, such as *Of Grammatology*, *Margins of Philosophy*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Dissemination*, are marked with varying degrees and intensity by the haunting question of the city. The logic of the “evil” or “catastrophic” supplement in *Of Grammatology*, for instance, rotates around Derrida’s critique of Rousseau’s equation between alphabetic writing and the city. After submitting to a hairsplitting analysis the latter’s assertion that languages are made to be spoken and writing is nothing but a supplement of speech, Derrida—and I summarize without attempting to reconstitute his complex critical moves here—anchors his critique of the metaphysics of presence in Rousseau’s notion of the sovereign city. “Praise of the ‘assembled people’ at the festival or at the political forum [in Rousseau] is always a critique of representation,” writes Derrida, because the “legitimizing instance, in the city as in language—speech or writing—and in the arts, is the representer present in person,” which in turn defines Rousseauian sovereignty or the Will as an impossibility of representation, or as “presence, and delight in presence” (296). “In all the orders,” he continues, “the possibility of the representer befalls represented presence as evil befalls good, or history befalls origin,” for “the signifier-representer is the catastrophe” itself (296).

If Rousseau’s notion of the city as catastrophe helped Derrida critique the principle of absolute sovereignty without representation, the essay “Before the Law,” which reads Kafka’s story of the same title, revisits the city in order to analyze and expose what Derrida calls the categorical authority of law by which law presents itself as absolute withdrawal appearing as if “without history, genesis, or any possible derivation” (191). As we know, Kafka’s “Before the Law” relates the travails of a man from the countryside when he goes to the city in order to seek admittance to Law. “Given his situation,” Derrida writes, “the man from the country does not know the law which is always the city’s law, the law of the cities and edifices, protected by gates and boundaries, of spaces shut by doors” (195). This law of the city, or the city as the law, quickly erodes the distinction between before and behind, inside and outside, high and low, and now and later by annulling that “which takes place, the event itself,” thereby opening itself as a topology “without its own place,” or as atopolology (208–9). Even though Derrida calls the atopolology of law a differential topology, it seems that the inaccessibility of law is precisely what annuls all differences and stops all events by converting its gated city into the citadel of the absolute sovereignty that, like sovereignty in Rousseau, tries to resist all representation.

It is precisely the question of the event or the opening up of space that leads Derrida to reopen the case of dispute between Martin Heidegger and Meyer Shapiro regarding certain shoe paintings by Van Gogh. Heidegger claims that the pair of shoes by Van Gogh belongs to a peasant woman; Shapiro, on the other hand, argues that the pair belongs instead to the city dweller, or more precisely, to the artist himself, by then a man of the city. Heidegger identifies the shoes with “the rooted and the sedentary” peasant woman, and Shapiro with the city dweller, who is an “uprooted emigrant” (260). “According to Shapiro,” writes Derrida, “Heidegger has put the shoes back onto (male or female) peasants’ feet. He has in advance, laced them, bound them on to peasant ankles, those of a subject whose identity, in the very contour of its absence, appears quite strict” (275). On the other hand, continues Derrida, by declaring that they are the artist’s shoes, Shapiro concludes the case, and for him the “[h]earing is over, [and the] sentence decided” (276). What interests Derrida is not only the historical fact that Shapiro and Heidegger are seeking restitution of certain shoes that have “traveled a lot, traversed all sorts of towns and territories and wars,” and that have suffered “[s]everal world wars and mass deportations” (281). Nor is he only concerned with the fact that the dispute is taking place on the frame of the painting, neither entirely inside nor outside the painting, for “who is going to believe,” Derrida asks—without, however, revealing that he is referring to the horrendous acts of Nazi atrocities against the Jews during the second World War, thereby accentuating the magnitude of the violence suggesting that it has no name yet—“that this episode is merely a theoretical or philosophical dispute for the interpretation of a work or *The Work of art*” (272)? What makes him more curious is the way the verdict is reached by the pair of professors regarding the rightful owner of the shoes, and the interest both show “in *identifying*, in identifying the subject (bearer or borne) of these shoes” (282). Hinting at Heidegger’s flirtation with Nazi ideology and the subsequent condemnation of his thoughts by his critics, Derrida writes that there is “persecution in this narrative, in this story of shoes to be identified, appropriated,” and he continues that this tale is made up of who knows “how many bodies, names, and anonymities, nameable and unnameable” (274). By deconstructing these “persecutionary” narratives that seek to appropriate Van Gogh’s shoes for their own end, Derrida argues that “there is much to discharge, to return, to reconstitute” in the hallucinogenic shoes, or the collective hallucination that they have become (273). He accuses Heidegger and Shapiro of reducing the spectrality of the shoes, and the haunting

space of the painting that they belong to, to the binary of the city and the countryside, and he blames both professors for playing out the drama of snatching the shoes “from the common enemy, or at any rate from the common discourse of the common enemy” (273).

The Heidegger-Shapiro debate over identifying the subject or the right owner of the shoes produces this common discourse of the common or an easily identifiable—that is also to say, an always already identified—enemy insofar as the decision of whose shoes they are is done by the professors who pretend to know the owners without letting the owners decide for themselves. As a result the debate unfolds as a secret correspondence between the disputants as their seemingly contradictory positions start to converge or resemble each other, rendering indistinguishable the borders both between the city and the countryside and between amity and enmity. Derrida tries to trace the surplus or the ghost that returns or remains after this circular correspondence through the logic of the *parergon*, which he defines as “the exceptional, the strange, the extraordinary” (58), and also as an extra “whose transcendent exteriority comes to play, abut onto, brush against, rub, press against the limit itself and intervene in the inside only to the extent that the inside is lacking” (56).

The incursion of the exterior that remains and returns is called in *Politics of Friendship* “the threat of the ruin” (88) against which, Derrida argues, the discourse of the purely political enmity in Carl Schmitt is constructed. As we know, for Schmitt, the political or the polis is grounded on the “ultimate” distinction between friend and enemy (*The Concept* 26). If the political is to exist for Schmitt, Derrida remarks, “one must [as in Rousseau’s city] know who everyone is, who is a friend and who is an enemy, and this knowing is not in the mode of theoretical knowledge but in one of a *practical identification*” (116). The politics of identification in Schmitt, however, must categorically avoid all other knowledge and distinctions based on morality, economy, aesthetics, and even religion. I may hate a person, or he may even be my enemy in the sense of the *inimicus*, but that does not make him my political enemy (*hostis*); we may be friends, but at the same time we may be political enemies. From Schmitt’s apparently rigorously theoretical distinction between *inimicus* and *hostis*, Derrida concludes that in Schmitt’s scheme, the friend can be an enemy. That is to say, whenever “this border is threatened, fragile, porous, [and] contestable,” then “the Schmittian discourse collapses” and it is “against the threat of this ruin” that Schmitt’s concept of the polis or the

political takes form as it “defends itself, walls itself up, [and] reconstructs itself unendingly against what is to come” (88). Derrida’s notion of the city that commands unconditional hospitality echoes Schmitt’s concept of the unconditional hostility of the polis, but it differs from that concept not only because it implies deconstruction of the binaries whereby it exceeds the ontological premises of Schmitt’s politics of identification, but also because Derrida thinks that the unending reconstruction of the city against the ruin, or the conception of a sovereign city untouched by ruin, in fact turns a city into a monument or museum or, worse, a penitentiary. Derrida’s city starts precisely where the Schmittian polis, with its sovereign decisions on the friend and the enemy, collapses. It is the originary principle of the collapse and the ruin that first gives the polis and its binaries to thinking and to spatializing. The radical evil of, or as, the city in Derrida implies an abyssal openness to the arrival of the other, who exceeds all calculations, mechanisms or discourses of identification that reduce the other to a common figure of the friend or the enemy. By moving from the figure of the common to the exceptional or singular alterity, Derrida conceives of the city as a site marked by the aporetic experience in which the other’s arrival from beyond the horizon of expectation surprises or threatens us with the radical evil. It is this “threat that must be *thought*,” as Derrida puts it in *Specters of Marx*, that makes the event take place as “the ruin or the absolute ashes” (175).

In this sense we understand better Derrida’s remarks in *Memoirs of the Blind*, his reflection on the genre of the self-portrait, that in “the beginning there is ruin” (68). At the origin comes ruin not as a ground to support what follows, nor as an accident that supervenes in the monument that was originally untouched by ruin; ruin is what happens to the image, to self-portrait, to all projects of identification from their origin. Ruin remains or returns from the moment of the first gaze when the portrait is given over to the spectral gaze of the other. Even though the draftsman is portraying himself in his self-portrait, he cannot draw without letting the spectator look back at his face; in other words, the self-portraitist cannot proceed except by letting himself be blinded by the spectator that his work prescribes. In all the cases of the self-portrait, it is the extrinsic clue that allows identification, as if the draftsman were drawing himself in memory of himself, in mourning for himself. It is this unheimlich moment of encounter with the specter or the other while looking at one’s own face that constitutes for Derrida the figuration of the self-portrait as ruin. The draftsman always draws to the dictate of the other’s gaze or voice.

The “voice of the other orders or commands” (64). The event that interrupts the “blind” draftsman’s self-portrait as mourning, therefore, is the other’s sovereign command, his traumatizing and paralyzing order or his wounding signature and stroke. The ruin that proliferates in the wake of Schmittian sovereignty or of his decision over the friend and the enemy exposes us to “what is to come.” Thus it brings us back to a sovereign moment in which it is, of course, not the “I” but the hau(o)ntological other that commands. No wonder, therefore, that in the interview, “That Strange Institution Called Literature,” Derrida calls this command the “force of ruin” (53).

### Cities of Ruin

Ruin is intimately related to Derrida’s concept of the cities of refuge not simply because these cities extend hospitality to the “refuse” of the State, to those without papers and thus without any legal protection. For the purpose of the argument, we can categorize Derrida’s use of ruin into three clusters. The first includes his concept of the force of ruin that contaminates origin, in other words, ruin corresponding to the event of deconstruction itself. The second is his notion of wearing, tearing, coming to an end, and haunting, which, as in *Specters of Marx*, he juxtaposes to the apocalyptic and “neoevangelical” rhetoric of the crisis or the end of history; or the end of the city, in the case of *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. From the beginning of his essay on cosmopolitanism, therefore, Derrida refers to the general “verdict” about the end of the city (3), as if to imply that all projects about its renewal, including his own, had to take into account the Gothic spectrality of the city after the verdict of its demise. The third cluster consists of his notions of *aporia*, arrival or event, which are described in a number of texts as the experience of the desert of the desert, which is not the same desert that we come across in Baudrillard’s *America*, where cities are not cities but mobile deserts (223); or in Virilio’s *Panic City*, where he ruminates over the acceleration of paths as the desertification of the world (113). For Derrida the experience of the desert is aporetic, or pathless; and out of this pathlessness, as he argues in the essay “The Biodegradable,” arises a certain force of the ruin. A desert invokes a certain “connivance with ruin,” which constitutes, for him, the secret of deconstruction’s resistance. In the same essay he also responds to critics who prophesy that deconstruction is in ruins because of its association with controversial figures like Paul de Man. Derrida responds by

arguing that deconstruction enjoys a certain immunity from ruin precisely because it is more ruin than anything else. Ruining deconstruction is improbable, he claims, not just because it is “neither a system, nor an edification,” but also because it is a “differential movement that passes by way of so many other texts, it has many other places, many other resources than mine” (851).

It is not difficult to see how Derrida relates the autoimmunity of ruin to the cities of refuge in which the principle of the unconditional sanctuary to the refugees is indispensable. However, it is pertinent to examine this relationship further in order to understand how the forces of ruin and refuge are essentially interlinked in Derrida’s concept of the city. Every structure of hegemony is built against its own refusals, outcasts, and foreigners, or to borrow from Mbembe’s “Aesthetics of Superfluity,” its superfluous or expendable life (380). Ruin is not related to a structure or a culture, therefore also to a city, in a simple relationship of inside and outside. What is proper to a culture or a structure, reminds Derrida, is not to be identical to itself. As he illustrates this strange relationship in slightly different contexts in *The Other Heading* (9–10) and in *Aporias* (10), among other texts, there is no structure or city without a difference with itself, a difference which is at once internal but irreducible to the structure. A city without a difference to itself is possible only in the manner of the Tower of Babel before what Derrida calls its deconstruction by God. In “Des Tours de Babel” Derrida recounts how before the deconstruction of Babel, “the great Semitic family was establishing its empire, which it wanted universal, and its tongue, which it also attempts to impose on the universe” (167). What God’s intervention in imposing confusion on Babel suggests is not merely the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits, argues Derrida, “an incompleteness, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system and architectonics” (165). A city of refuge, in other words, would be a city perennially touched by ruin, which, unlike the imperial tower that aspires to saturation and totalized architecture, is in the process of constant making and unmaking. That is the reason why Derrida in “Force of Law” argues that ruin is not a negative thing. In contrast to the police, which he defines in the essay as “a *Dasein* coextensive with the *Dasein* of the *polis*” or as the omnipresent figure sans figure of the police that constitutes the being there of the *polis* itself, ruin is not a thing, it “hasn’t always been there, it will not always be there, it is finite” (44). It is for this trace of finitude, for the law of the ruin, even for the law itself (*l’amour du droit*) that Derrida confesses his love in the essay. “What else is

there to love anyway?" he asks; one "cannot love a monument, a work of architecture, an institution as such except in an experience itself precarious in its fragility" (44).

The law of the city, then, imposes itself on us with a double injunction, to save it as well as to deconstruct it. It is on the threshold of these two forces, of law and ruin, that Derrida in "Generations of a City" locates the dictations of the city of Prague, which not only bears a proper name, and is older than its inhabitants, but also acts like a "juridical person or like a person of a novel" by hiding his secret behind the mask (18). Derrida proposes what he calls the "axiom of incompleteness," which he traces in Kafka's account of the construction of a heaven-reaching tower in a city by its inhabitants, who realize that they are too involved to leave the city when it is threatened to be destroyed by five successive blows of a gigantic fist. He argues that totalizing construction is catastrophic because it desires to "resolve all problems exhaustively within the time span of a generation and not to *give time and space* to future generations" (21). Structures of infinitude or sovereign presence are neither transferable nor loveable, because inheritance and love require finitude, that is to say, time, space, and death. Not to saturate architecture is to give time and space to what is not yet present or visible in a city; in other words, it is to take the city as a legacy and to transfer it to the generations to come without making it completely untransferable through a totalized and imperial architecture. This, Derrida argues, is what would be a contradictory dictation of a city like Prague, which seems to implore that it is only the threshold of itself, so in order to guard it and protect it, it is equally necessary to deconstruct it. "If you leave me intact and one," the injunction commands, "you will lose me. It is necessary both to protect me and to assault me [. . .] it is necessary both to love me and to violate me" (23). But Derrida quickly adds that the dictation is particular about the manner in which the city demands to be assaulted, and those demands, according to Derrida are: a "city must remain open to knowing that it does not yet know what it will be" or respecting the principle of non-knowledge in architectural and urbanistic science (16); in other words, a city must not subject building and dwelling to any techno-scientific programming at the expense of ethico-political responsibility; but at the same time, this open and non-saturating urban project involves constructing according to structures that might "keep the patrimony alive [*garder le patrimoine*] without reducing the city to a museum or to a monumental tomb" (15). The ethico-political responsibility and the "destiny of the city [*destin de la ville*]" (17) require renunciation of the imperial Tower

at the same time that they involve guarding the “patrimony” of the city. With a plea for non-saturation, non-knowledge and non-programming of the city, Derrida calls for a revival of the singular essence of the city beyond the imperial Tower. In the same breath, he invokes the specter of the Tower in the form of a patrimony to be carried and guarded as legacy over the generations, and he ruins it by conditioning it with the economic discourse of sexual hierarchy and homogeneity, thereby reinstalling the politics of identification and the principle of perpetual and undivided sovereignty.

Guarding the patrimony of the city, one may argue, is not the same as safeguarding patriarchal interests, insofar as the city is neither contemporaneous to its inhabitants nor reducible to the present of their relations and hierarchies. Anyone who has read “At This Very Moment in This Work,” to give just one of many possible examples in which Derrida critiques Levinas for making femininity and sexual difference “secondary with respect to a wholly-other” (433), realizes the rashness in accusing Derrida of chauvinism. Maintenance of the city in the sense Derrida uses this term in his essay “Point de Folie,” as reconstruction but also as “what happens, has just happened, promises to happen *to* architecture” (324), does not remain a stranger to history, but has a different relation with it. The event and promise of *maintenant* can never happen, according to Derrida, to an already constituted *us*, to a human subjectivity. “We appear to ourselves,” he clarifies, “only through an experience of spacing”; in other words, what “happens through architecture constructs and instructs this *us*”; as a result, the latter finds itself “engaged by architecture before it becomes the subject of it” (324). On the one hand, the city with its spacing is what gives refuge to its inhabitants, who are not even inhabitants before its hospitality. On the other hand, the double injunction of the city dictates us to guard patrimony yet violate the city so that the city remains a precarious heritage which is imposed on its inhabitants before even they realize it. Inheritance, as Derrida explains its logic in *Specters of Marx*, is not a given, but a task, which remains before us even before we know *we are*. “That we *are* heirs does not mean that we *have* or we *receive* this or that,” writes Derrida, “but the *being* of what we are *is* first of all inheritance, whether we like it or know it or not” (54). Thus, by making the act of inheritance a task that precedes the event of being the subject of inheritance or the subject in knowledge, Derrida demystifies ontology, the logic of being as presence. In his dissemination of the presence of being or the subject over the generations of cities, or over what in *Specters of Marx* he calls the “generations of the



ghosts, that is to say about certain *others* who are not present, nor presently living, either to us, in us, or outside us” (xix), Derrida deconstructs the sovereignty of the subject that claims absolute and indivisible power without representation. The logic of the non-saturated city requires that it not be reduced to a program that would convert the city into an all mapped out techno-scientific, esthetic or socio-economic urban project; rather, its construction, which is in fact its violation or deconstruction, must be extended over several generations so that something like a decision would be possible as to the nature of the city instead of building it once and for all from the perspective of what is visible and present in the city. The invisible non-present, however, does not imply a utopia, a space that will be present in the future like the Promised Land. The noncontemporaneity of the city with the living present instead intimates a time or space which is out of joint with itself, a time that institutes, to once again recall a charged moment from *Specters of Marx*, “a dislocation in Being and time itself, a disjuncture that, in always risking the evil, expropriation, and injustice [. . .] would alone be able to *do justice* or to *render justice* to the other as other” (27). Rendering justice to the other, for Derrida, is to reaffirm the other’s absolute precedence, or to reaffirm the heterogeneity of the one that “comes before me, before my present, thus before any past present,” and for that very reason, of the one that “comes from the future or as future: as the very coming of the event,” which in turn constitutes “the very condition of the present and of the presence of the present” (28). No promise of the future without the presence or the gift of this dislocation and disjuncture, without “this desert-like messianism,” which, for Derrida, should remain without content and without an identifiable messiah (28).

In his essay “Faith and Knowledge,” he returns to this concept of the desert and its promise, relating it to the event of dislocation, disjuncting, radical evil, and also justice, and to the other’s absolute precedence. The desert, he writes, is “the most anarchic and unarchivable place possible,” which is neither an island nor the Promised Land, but a third place “that makes possible, opens, or infinitizes the other” (55). Thus, he contrasts the identifiable messiah and the Promised Land to a certain desertification and ruin of the anarchic third place, which is “prior to any social or political determination, prior to all intersubjectivity” (55), therefore more originary than the origin itself.

But to abuse this hypothesis, as one of the interlocutors in “At This Very Moment in This Work I Am” proposes regarding Levinas’s secundarization of femininity by determining the concept of

the other as He (433–34), Derrida's infinite other is suddenly determined as the messiah, the anointed figure of the king, that would safeguard the patrimony of the city. The messiah, like Levinas's "wholly other," is no longer symmetrical to the binaries of sexual, economic or even religious differences, as it belongs to the desert of the desert or to the absolute night of non-knowledge; yet even in his position outside of these differences, the messiah nevertheless retains his patrimony or messianicity, and like the God of "Des Tours de Babel," who is a deconstructionist par-excellence, surprises us with his unexpected visitation. Our wait for the revelation in the desert, writes Derrida in *Acts of Religion*, is indeed about the messiah as hôte, about the messianic as hospitality, the messianic that introduces deconstructive disruption or madness in the concept of hospitality (362). This however does not mean that Derrida limits his discussion of the messiah to a religious tradition even though there are multiple instances where he seems to be doing exactly that. For example, in "Marx & Sons," he chides Aijaz Ahmad for wishing to "dispense with the vast question of religion and the religious" (234), and warns that following Ahmad on dispensing with the religious would be to renounce the irreducible religiosity that commands the discourse on promise, justice, and revolutionary commitments (234). The event of Marx, he argues, is rooted in a European and Judeo-Christian culture, which also means that "Marx and every 'Marxism' has appeared in a culture in which 'messiah' means something, and this culture has not remained local" (255).

Yet Derrida insists that his concept of the messianic is stripped of all religiosity. He tries to illustrate this towards the end of *The Gift of Death*, where he contrasts the economy of the Gospel of Matthew to Baudelaire's pamphlet, "The Pagan School," which, for him, unmasks the mathematical sublime of evangelical spiritualism. Expounding on the Gospel's injunctions, "Love thy enemies" and "Thine alms may be in secret, and thy father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly," Derrida argues that the Gospel's economy is a curious one that seems to integrate non-economy itself by preaching a passage from symmetrical love (i.e. loving only those who love you) to love without reserve, or a passage from earthly wages to the infinite and incalculable rewards in heaven. What this fabricated mystery of the Gospel presupposes, writes Derrida, is that seeing in secret, God will pay back infinitely more as God is the witness of every secret; "He shares and *he knows*" (112). The infinitely sharing God is not what Derrida means by the shared sovereignty, because what the infinite sharing amounts to here is winning paradise economically; and although

that economy renounces the earthly economy, it remains for him a mercenary sharing.

In contrast to the “hypocrisy” of the Gospel, Derrida traces a different and terrifying form of sharing in Kierkegaard’s account of Abraham at Mt. Moriah and Melville’s story of “Bartleby, the Scrivener.” Kierkegaard’s interpretation of Abraham’s sacrifice and Bartleby’s “I prefer not to” both represent for Derrida a form of sharing terrible secrets that cannot be shared. “We share with Abraham, writes Derrida, “what cannot be shared, a secret we know nothing about,” because to share a secret is not to know or reveal the secret, “it is to share we know not what” (*The Gift* 80). Thus this terrible secret which is sworn to secrecy cannot be transmitted from generation to generation (80), not just because Abraham does not know or possess it or because Bartleby prefers not to share it, but because it is the secret of the other, the foreigner, the Wholly Other (80). It cannot be subjected to the rule of generational transmission because each generation has to inaugurate anew this event of the “absolute beginning” (80). Another instance of this terrifying form of sharing for Derrida is Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*, which Derrida analyzes in *Of Hospitality*. This text emphasizes the impossibility of generational transmission or sharing of the secret by arguing that it is the other that decides how the secret ought to be transmitted. The other, the foreigner, the one who encrypts himself like Oedipus at Colonus into the desert of the desert in a far-away land, wants the secret transmitted in one way, not the other, thereby making his host a “retained hostage, a detained addressee” (*Of Hospitality* 107). While examining the concluding part of *Oedipus at Colonus*, Derrida emphasizes this scene in which Oedipus makes Theseus privy to the secret of the place of his death and burial on the condition that it not be revealed to his townspeople nor to his children. But at the same time, he urges Theseus to not forget him. Oedipus’s request neither to be forgotten nor to be stripped of the secret of the place of his burial, writes Derrida, sounds like an injunction or a threat, or a piece of blackmail that detains the addressee and holds him hostage. The impossible injunction of keeping the secret as well as sharing it “will rescue the city, will guarantee the political safety of the city” (*Of Hospitality* 99). The other holds the key to the political safety of the city, which is inextricable from the scene of hostage and threat, the scene of inheritance and the interruption of the work of mourning. In the figure of Oedipus, the transgressor, whom Derrida repeatedly calls the foreigner, the outlaw, even the clandestine immigrant, Derrida interrogates the scene of hospitality that is determined by the head of the family or the State, but at

the same time, by making the secret of this clandestine immigrant the key to the very existence of the city, he not only reinstates the other as the sovereign, but also makes the figure of the messiah, together with the tradition in which “a messiah means something,” the sovereign principle of the city.

### City of Refuge, or Cosmopolis

The question, then, is whether Derrida’s other is an absolute foreigner to the self, to home and ipseity, or whether it is just a determined figure of a given culture that, as he reminds, has not remained local. How can one reconcile Derrida’s remarks in *Cinders*, for example, that “Cinder [is] the house of being”<sup>44</sup> (41) with Derrida’s insistence on messianism or the threat of ruin comfortably lodged in a culture? A subtle reversal seems to occur when Derrida moves towards determining and identifying the other as a foreigner or a messiah, and then towards relating the messiah to a particular culture which he says has gone global. In *The Gift of Death* Derrida points to the absolute singularity of the other by arguing that “every other (one) is every (bit) other.” But this “trembling dictum” which he formulated to deconstruct Levinas’s distinction between “the infinite alterity of God and that of every human” (*The Gift* 84), turns out to be an already localized and determined figure of the other. As in Levinas’s sudden determination (which, as we saw earlier, Derrida criticizes) of the absolute alterity by designating it as “He,” a masculine pronoun Levinas chooses in order to demonstrate “His” absolute precedence, Derrida’s project of the city of refuge predicated upon the unconditional arrival of the absolute other is suddenly determined as a locality’s other. Insofar as this figure of the foreigner or messiah belongs to the economy of the same, the fear, trembling and radical evil that this figure is supposed to evoke ironically amount to nothing more than Derrida’s attempt, to quote his *Specters of Marx* against him, at scaring himself with his own conjuration or pursuit of someone that closely resembles him (139). This wheel of ipseity ingeniously absorbs the other while claiming that it respects the absolute singularity of the other, which in turn cancels out the distance Derrida otherwise painstakingly creates between the unconditional or the shared sovereignty and the tradition of onto-theological sovereignty.

This reversal of the wheel is present nowhere as strongly as it is in Derrida’s *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, the text that proposes the cities of refuge network. It opens with the question,

“Where have we received the image of cosmopolitanism from?” (3). What follows is Derrida’s answer to the question, an answer which in a way asks, in turn, what lies at the head of cosmopolitanism. Throughout the text he seeks to locate the image of cosmopolitanism in the split between two forms of the City or the polis. At this point the translation of the text is the least helpful as it erases Derrida’s parenthesis where he puts “polis,” and then, as if in order to compensate for the erasure, “de Cité” has been translated as the “metropolis.” The two forms of the polis, according to Derrida, are *la Ville* and *l’État*, or the city and the state (*Cosmopolites* 11). As we know, “la Ville” is derived from the Latin “villa”—the country house, from which also comes the word “village.” Derrida, by locating the origin of cosmopolitanism in a village or a country house, seems to restore it to its initial purity before the contamination of the State. What appears to be a split here, a split that seems to interrogate “the inviolable rule of state sovereignty” (*On Cosmopolitanism* 4), only gives way to reviving the traditional meaning of “la ville” or to “restoring a memorable heritage to its former dignity” (5). The dignified heritage that Derrida wishes to restore “la ville” to is that of the “City of Refuge,” which “bridges several traditions or several moments in Western, European, or para-European traditions” (17). Once the heritage is identified as Western, or more precisely, European, then Derrida smoothly goes on to recall three moments from this tradition to which the city of refuge belongs. The first of the “several traditions” is the Hebraic tradition in which God in the Book of Numbers ordered Moses to build six cities of refuge or asylum; Derrida cites two modern philosophical texts devoted to this tradition—*Refuge Cities* by Daniel Payot, and “The Cities of Refuge” by Levinas. Then he recalls the medieval tradition of sanctuary and *auctoritas* that reassert the sovereignty of the city to determine the laws of hospitality. Finally he goes on to “identify the cosmopolitan [cosmopolitique] tradition common to a certain Greek stoicism and a Pauline Christianity, of which the inheritors were the figures of the Enlightenment,” especially Kant (18–19).

On the one hand, Derrida firmly locates the origin of cosmopolitanism, and by extension, of the cities of refuge in Western or European traditions, reminding us of the dispute over the restitution of Van Gogh’s shoes. On the other, he recalls those traditions as they interface with religion, namely Judeo-Christianity. Any other form of cosmopolitanism either has to correspond to this European tradition and become a para-European tradition, or it is simply not cosmopolitan at all. No wonder that Derrida stops right with Kant, and for him projects of cosmopolitanisms and refuge

are not even worth mentioning. For instance he does not bother even to allude to Kristeva's narrative of cosmopolitanism that starts not with Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* or with Melville's *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, but with Aeschylus's *The Danaïdes*, the Egyptian native women who were the first foreigners to seek refuge in Argos (*Strangers* 42). Nor does one find any reference in Derrida to Appiah's writings on cosmopolitanism which look at the author's hometown of Kumasi in Ghana for the cosmopolitan currents that include the trails of gold, salt, kola, nuts and slaves (102); or to the project of vernacular cosmopolitanism by Sheldon Pollock et al, which considers it an unc cosmopolitan thing to positively or definitively define cosmopolitanism (1) and instead "seek[s] cosmopolitical genealogies from the non-Christian Sanskrit world" (6). Would Derrida consider such worlds that trouble his neat (inédit) origin to be worlds? Perhaps not, because, as he reminds us in one of the texts in *Negotiations*, "the concept of the world gestures towards a history, it has a memory that distinguishes it from that of the globe, of the universe, of Earth, of the *cosmos* even (at least of the cosmos in its pre-Christian meaning)"; for Derrida, the world begins "by designating, and tends to remain, in Abrahamic tradition" and it continues to "structure and condition the modern concepts of the rights of man or the crime against humanity" (374–75). To talk about the world outside Abrahamic tradition would not only be to confuse it with the globe, or with globalization—which for him is "a concept-less word" (*Negotiations* 379) and which he corrects elsewhere as "globalatinization" (*Acts of Religion* 50)—but would also be to give in to the "more or less worn-out words to talk about it—imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialisms, neo-imperialism" (*Negotiations* 376). In other words, cosmopolitanism, together with the notion of the city of refuge, retains its concept-hood precisely because it is true to its memory and its history or origin, whereas talking about the world in terms of imperialism or colonialism is just conceptless (that is, irrational, or "headless") prattling. Thus, in the name of memory, history, concept and responsibility, Derrida would at all cost maintain the link between the world and Europe; to forgo the sovereign place of Europe would be to jeopardize the concept of the world itself. This is not to imply that Derrida objects to reading or engaging the other of Europe. Recalling that he presented himself a number of times as "the exemplary Franco-Maghrebian" (*Monolingualism* 19), or even as the "uprooted African" (*Who's Afraid* 103), it would be a mistake to suggest that the other of Europe has no place in his writing. However, what suggests itself is that the other is granted a

place only in relation to Europe, or to the world of “Europe to come.”

When Derrida refers to the “terror to come” or the “absolute threat” beyond 9/11 in his dialogues in *Philosophy in the Time of Terror*, he is pointing out the threat to this—his—concept of the European world. What is “put at risk by this [i.e. by 9/11, which is for Derrida a suicidal act in which the threat comes from within the U.S., from the training the U.S. provided to people like bin Laden during the Cold War] *terrifying* autoimmunitary logic [. . .] is nothing less than the existence of the world, of the worldwide itself” (98–99). A few pages later, he assures us that he points this threat out “without any Eurocentrism” (116), yet at the same time, he insists on retaining what he calls a new figure of Europe because what Europe inaugurated at the time of “the Enlightenment (*Lumières, Aufklärung, Illuminismo*) in the relationship between the political and the theological, or, rather, the religious,” though still unfulfilled, “will have left in European political space absolutely original marks with regard to religious doctrine” (116–17). Derrida distinguishes the religious doctrine from religion and faith and argues that such marks can be found neither in the Arab world, nor in the Muslim world. He goes on to claim that the Arab Muslim world “is not a *world* and not a world that is *one*” (113–14, emphasis original). Such a mark he argues is not discernible either in the Far East or even in American Democracy.

Derrida, however, would like to see “the United States” separate from the world-endangering threat of American hegemony that “dominates or marginalizes something in the U.S.’s history, something that is also related to the strange ‘Europe’ of the more or less incomplete Enlightenment” (117). It is possible to argue that distinguishing the strange Europe has been a constant and active impulse in the United State at least from Crèvecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer*, in which he characterized the American as “the new man,” who is “either a European or the descendant of a European; hence that strange mixture of blood” (69), to Richard Rorty’s anti-anti-ethnocentrism that boasts that “we” liberals are “part of a great tradition,” citizens of “no mean culture” (203). Of course, this recourse to the strange Europe does not always produce the curative effects Derrida believes it does. Even if it did, that would not amount to the aporetic decision of the other that, he says, would take us beyond the sovereignty of the nation-state, beyond the democratic sovereignty whose onto-theological foundation must be deconstructed in order to finally reconstruct “a new figure, though not necessarily state-related, of universal sovereignty” (“Autoimmunity” 115). It would rather end up, to recall

*Negotiations* again, discovering “what is already there potentially, namely, in this [European] filiation itself, the principle of its excess, of its bursting outside itself, of its auto-deconstruction” (376). Thus the “new world contract” Derrida evokes in this text will only faithfully implement “the best memory of this [European] heritage” (376). No wonder therefore that, for Derrida, the Enlightenment tradition in general, and Kant’s cosmopolitanism in particular, represent the best memory of the heritage, as he argues in *On Cosmopolitanism*, that there is still a considerable gap between “the great generous principles of the right to asylum inherited from the Enlightenment thinkers and from the French Revolution,” and the historical reality or the effective implementation of these principles” (11). As a result, Derrida argues, we are “still a long way from the idea of cosmopolitanism as defined in Kant’s famous text on the right to universal hospitality” (11). What remains to come is none other than Kant himself, the same Kant whom even Habermas finds “no longer appropriate to our historical experiences” (114).

Seen from this perspective, then, the concluding part of Derrida’s essay on the cities of refuge yields an interesting insight as it implicitly repeats Derrida’s concern for the origin of cosmopolitanism. Here, Derrida writes that the other concept of the city has not yet arrived, and concludes that if “it has (indeed) arrived [. . .] then, one has perhaps not yet recognized it” (23). The “to come” of the city, and of democracy itself, is recognized in the essay within a certain Kantian legacy. As in the wheel of ipseity and sovereignty, we thus return to the circularity in which what remains to come is none other than Kant’s cosmopolitanism. The argument here is not that one should abandon, as Habermas suggests we do, the many ghosts of Kant one encounters in Kant’s texts, but that Derrida’s critique of Kant does not go a long way in exposing the anthropological, colonial and racist impulses in Kant’s writings, which in turn would have helped Derrida’s own project of hospitality to decisively move beyond Kant. Thus, in spite of his careful distinction between Kant’s conditional hospitality and his concept of unconditional hospitality beyond calculations and rationalizations, Derrida’s project of universal sovereignty embodied in the autonomous city of refuge is already conditioned by his highly calculative and selective genealogy of the city of refuge that invariably takes us back to the new figure of Europe, or to a selected aspect of the Enlightenment tradition. What Derrida constantly refers to as the singular other is after all brought back to the economic narrative of the same, in the same way as the nostalgic image of the pure village is evoked to limit his notion of the



city of refuge. As his project of universal sovereignty seeks to universalize “the best memory” of European heritage by declaring all critical terms like colonialism, imperialism or neo-colonialism defunct, what recedes away from this schema is the other concept of the city itself, leaving behind in the wake a singular image of a villa that uncannily resembles the state that saturates and totalizes. Contrary to Deleuze’s splitting of the city and the state (obviously not cited by Derrida), which for Deleuze exemplifies two forms of deterritorialization—transcendent deterritorialization of the state as *the imperial spatium* and the immanent deterritorialization of the city as *the political extensio* (Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy* 86), Derrida’s messianic city unfolds like an imperial spatium of the state.

Of course, one can argue that Derrida’s “imperial spatium” is Europe’s expansion or universalization without imperialism in the same way as his Kantianism is Kant’s concept of universal hospitality but without any conditions. One may further point out that Derrida indeed critiques Kant by exposing two of his limits: first, by determining it as a natural law, Kant makes his notion of hospitality inalienable and thus imprescriptible, thereby betraying features of “a secularized theological heritage” (*On Cosmopolitanism* 20). The danger in Kant’s secularized theology is that it cannot rule out the possibility of infinite dispersion over the surface of the earth because it excludes others from what is erected on the surface of the earth. Second, Kant makes hospitality “dependent on state sovereignty” (22). In opposition to Kant’s rights to universal hospitality, Derrida proposes the law of unconditional hospitality “to all newcomers, *whoever they may be*” (22), or as he puts it elsewhere, to “*who or what turns up*” before any anticipation, determination, or identification. The new city of refuge demands the hospitality be offered to the *arrivant*, who may be a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor, without any attempt on the part of the host to determine and decide “whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female” (*Of Hospitality* 77). In other words, the city of refuge invokes the radical evil that exposes us to the arrival of the wholly other. Yet again as we know, radical evil is what Derrida relates to the messianic, to the promise of the other, which even though without messianism, still belongs to a culture that has not remained local. Thus, Derrida’s notion of Europe’s expansion without imperialism unmistakably partakes in the idiom fraught with specters of imperialism. To put it differently again, if Derrida’s project of the city of refuge is giving to the other what cannot be given, its messianic

nature suggests that the impossible giving that Derrida's project of the city implies uncannily resembles the messianist gift of a certain Europe.

As Derrida clarifies in his *Paper Machine*, pure hospitality consists in welcoming the new arrivals before imposing conditions on them, such as asking for a name or identity paper; but on the other hand, "it also assumes that you address them, individually" for "[h]ospitality consists in doing everything possible to address the other" (67). The address to the other, therefore, must involve inventing new norms, new idioms and new languages. Derrida at once seems to infinitize the possibilities of that address to occur, but at the same time by assuming the diction of a certain Europe—"why would I deny it?" he asks in *The Other Heading*, "In the name of what?" (82)—of a certain messianic-city, or the sovereign city built in the image of a pure village, he forecloses those possibilities by imposing conditions on the arrival of the other in its own name.

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