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JACQUES DERRIDA ON THE TERRITORY OF GHOSTS

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In the given article, I would like to address a few texts of Jacques Derrida, written by him in the 1990s, namely: *Back from Moscow, in the USSR* (1993), *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (1994) and *Marx & Sons* (1999). The close reading of *Back from Moscow, in the USSR* will allow me to examine the first series of questions, in particular: what the role of the genre of "autobiographical-travel-testimony", constituted by the texts of European intellectuals who visited USSR in different periods of its history, in the intellectual biography of Derrida, was; how the travel diary can turn into a political diagnosis and what Deconstruction and Perestroika have in common. Two other texts are important for the analysis of more general, yet interrelated questions: how and why *the untimely / contretemps* thoughts of Derrida on the fate of Marxism, become relevant *dans l'ici-maintenant – here* (in Eastern Europe) and *now* (thirty years after the collapse of socialism) and how the studies of "spectralities" contribute to our understanding of the *Postsocialist condition*.

KEYWORDS: deconstruction, ghosts, hauntology, Marxism, Perestroika.

I believe in the political virtue of the contretemps
Jacques Derrida

Preamble

Bringing to the forefront the theme of the relationship between Jacques Derrida and the "territory of ghosts", I have in mind three interrelated storylines that we can trace in the works of Jacques Derrida, written in the 1990s. All of them are directly linked to the rethinking of the *Postsocialist condition*.

In the very first, quite literal sense, I am referring to the story of Derrida's visit to Moscow, which he had undertaken in 1990, shortly before the Soviet Union collapsed. While deconstructing his own experience of travelling to the USSR and of living-through the very particular, unique historical moment, that is of Perestroika, in the book titled *Back from Moscow, in the USSR* (1993), Derrida "talks" with his own ghosts – European intellectuals who visited the USSR in various periods of its history and left the imprints of these travels in their memoirs. In a certain sense, for Derrida, as well as for his predecessors, the USSR was from the beginning a "phantom territory" – a space of utopian projections, unfulfilled expectations, lost illusions that had gone forever together with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

When the "sixth part of the world"[1] disappeared from the political map of the globe and turned into a territory, inhabited by all kinds of ghosts and filled with various material and virtual remainders of the no longer existent Soviet civilization, it turned out that the untimely thoughts of Jacques Derrida on Marxist theory and his analysis of the "paradoxical symptoms of a geopolitical mourning" (Derrida 2008: 259) can be very helpful in terms of comprehending the Post-Soviet situation. The more so because deconstructionist approach disavows any claims for "truth" and manifests the persistent mistrust to any metanarratives. *Hauntology*, elaborated by Derrida in *Specters of Marx*, has become an invaluable analytic tool that opens the possibility to come to terms with our own past, to *reconcile* with it in a certain way.

And last but not least, the third meaning implies the space of thought that was shaped by the Marxist tradition. For many decades, the frontiers of this imagined territory were vigilantly controlled by the guards of orthodox Marxism (on both sides of the Iron Curtain, but especially in the USSR). However, after 1989

[1] *The Sixth Part of the World* (*Shestaya Chast Mira*) was a Soviet silent film directed by Dziga Vertov in 1926, in a travelogue format, that represented diversity of geographical spaces, cultural traditions and the multitude of people who inhabited this territory. With the time being, the title of Vertov's film became the common noun that referred to the entire USSR.

they began to move and develop new contours. This was a familiar territory for Derrida, but he questioned this familiarity / defamiliarized it in order to be able to read Marx in "his own way", breaking, thus, those "ghostly demarcations"[2] that separate different modes of working with Marxist thought from within and from outside of it, and at the same time restoring the interrupted "familial" bonds between Marx and his multiple heirs. However surprising that might have sounded for the ideological opponents of Marxism, Derrida claims that "even people who have never read Marx, or so much as heard of him, are Marx's heirs, and so are the anti-communists and anti-Marxists" (Derrida, Malle, Vermeren, Peretti, Sohm 1994: 39).

I also need to add that Derrida's writings on Marx marked the end of the Cold War within Marxist tradition itself, as throughout several decades, there was a clear-cut divide between Western and Soviet Marxisms. The remote yet harsh ideological disputes over the irreconcilable contradictions continued till the end of Soviet era. The fall of the Berlin Wall put the end to this tale of two Marxisms and allowed for "the ramification of 'a thousand Marxisms'" (Bensaïd 2002: xiii). In this sense, Derrida's *Specters of Marx* was one of the first books that inaugurated the age of heterodox Marxist thought.

En revenir en USSR: Perestroika and Deconstruction

Jacques Derrida visited Moscow in the spring of 1990. He came *just-in-time,* as a year later USSR ceased to exist: Perestroika ended, having buried the socialist system, which it had intended to re-build anew.

In 1993, Derrida published a text titled *Back from Moscow, in the USSR* (which came out first in Russian[3] and then in English). Despite / thanks to its *working character*[4], this text actually provides the explicit answers to several interrelated

[2] *Ghostly Demarcations* is the title of the book, edited by Michael Sprinker (Sprinker 2008),that gathered critical essays, dedicated to *Specters of Marx*, which were written by prominent leftist theorists in between 1994 and 1998.

[3] Jacques Derrida's text came in the book titled *Jacques Derrida in Moscow* (Деррида 1993: 13–81), with the extended commentary by a Russian philosopher Mikhail Ryklin, who was one of the hosts of Derrida in Moscow. But that was not a preface or the afterword of the editor: it would be more correct to say that Ryklin positions himself as a co-author and a fellow in thinking with Derrida, "travelling" with him back to USSR/sans USSR, working and walking through the same texts.

[4] This text was initially written as a working paper, as a draft that Derrida meant to discuss with the colleagues in Irwine University in May of 1990s. Its final version came out in 1993 in the collective volume, edited by Mark Poster, based on a series of seminars in Irwine (Derrida 1993). But, as Derrida noted in *Marx&Sons*, any text is *a working text*, not only in a sense that it does not stop at the moment when it gets published, but also in a sense that texts should *work:* "And, as such, they call for something other than a 'reply'. Other work, another work, however modest and inadequate, should

questions. The first question that was often asked in the West is why Derrida had never been Marxist and / or communist. The second question might have been interesting mostly for the scholars from former socialist spaces: why he never traveled to the USSR before Perestroika (or, one could reformulate this question in a different way: why he came to Moscow / USSR *at this particular moment)*.

This concise text can also be read as preliminary sketch for some of the major ideas of the *Specters of Marx* (1994). It was possibly in Moscow where he realized what exactly was at stake when a *certain version of Marxism* had come to its end. "Derrida opined that his own form of 'radical critique' and 'deconstructionist' thought derived from 'a certain spirit of Marxism' and was a contribution to the liberalization of Marxism, which had been inaugurated by Gorbachev in Soviet Russia" (Pawling 2013: 61).

Back from Moscow, in the USSR is based on the re-reading of some autobiographic texts written by the French and German writers and theorists who travelled to the USSR in the 1920–1950s. Some of these texts played a special role in Derrida's own intellectual biography. He had read André Gide's book *The Return from the USSR* (Gide 1936) at the age of 15, in 1945. The book "left no doubt as to the tragic failure of the Soviet Revolution" (Derrida 1993: 211). Yet this "remarkable, solid and lucid" book impressed him so much that Derrida, even resisting "a terrifying politico-theoretical intimidation of the Stalinist or neo-Stalinist type" in his environment, always remembered the Affect conveyed to him through the texts of Gide, René Etiemble and others. Derrida retained this memory of the Affect (or retained this Affect in his memory) that permeated the literary testimonies of French intellectuals of previous generations, who had visited the USSR. In his words, nothing kept him "from sharing, in the mode of both hope and nostalgia, something to Etiemble's disarmed passion or childish imaginary in his romantic relationship with the Soviet Revolution. […] I am always bowled over when I hear the *International*, I tremble with emotion and then I always "go out into the streets" to fight against Reaction" (Derrida 1993: 211).

But not it was not only the memory of the Affect, which he long wanted to work with and to analyze, prompted Derrida to come to Moscow. Derrida was also interested in the systematic reflection on the relations between tourism and political analysis, which he believed might allow him to see how travel impressions may turn into a political diagnosis. Philosophical curiosity towards the "time of the Now" (or *Jetzzeit,* to use Walter Benjamin's concept (Benjamin, 2006: 395), the fascination with the present and at the same time the wish to distance himself from

go out to meet them – so as to cross paths with them, rather than merely respond to them" (Derrida 2008: 2015).

it through the act of writing, the desire to make the *reality of actuality* intelligible, to relate that what he had read to his own experience – all of this undoubtedly mattered. The most important was, probably, the awareness of witnessing / being present / living through something that cannot take place at another historical time and will never occur again. Here, we are speaking of the singularity and irreversibility of the moment (Perestroika) and the uniqueness of the experience – what that means to think of the "epic center" of the socialist revolution, while being in the epicentre of the new world's "seism".

Jacques Derrida visited Moscow in the very end of Perestroika and he came there in "Perestroika's style": he was invited by intellectuals, who were affiliated with the Laboratory of Postclassical Studies at the Institute of Philosophy and formed the so called Podoroga's circle[5]. Almost all of his predecessors (from André Gide to Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and many others), who went to the Soviet Union in between the 1930s and 1980s, were allowed to visit the country by the official invitation from the Soviet leaders in the format of "foreign delegation". Jacques Derrida arrived autonomously (as Walter Benjamin once did in the 1920s).

Derrida was certain that he had no choice. He felt an urge to write a book, or as he formulated – "*récit raisonné*", about his trip to the USSR. Not because he was fond of such genre as travelogue, but because

> *raisonner* signifies to *rationalise.* In the code of psychoanalysis this at times connotes active overintepretation: it imposes order *after the fact* where there was nothing before, to draw a certain benefit, if only that of intelligibility or simple meaningfulness (Derrida, 1993: 198)[6].

In sketching up his own "phantom narrative", he relied on the writings of other European intellectuals, who had done this before him, those who visited the USSR in different periods of its history and left the whole corpus of testimonies,

[5] In the early 1990s, Valery Podoroga, a prominent Soviet and Russian philosopher, and his younger colleagues – Mikhail Ryklin, Helen Petrovsky, Oleg Aronson, Elena Oznobkina and few others, created the Laboratory of Postclassical Studies as a part of the Institute of Philosophy in the Academy of Sciences in Moscow. They have quickly became known outside of their circle, thanks to the seminars and conferences to which they invited prominent European and American scholars, but most of all due to their publications – collective volumes, translations and monographs that they published in the 1990s in a new publishing house Ad Marginem, whose director Alexander Ivanov was himself a philosopher. In 1992, they launched a series of books under the title "Philosophy on the Margins. The International Collection of Contemporary Thought", in which later on the translations of texts by Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Georges Bataille, etc. appeared. This text of Jacques Derrida was the third book in the collection of Ad Marginem. In 2000, Russian translation of *De la grammatologie* with a comprehensive introduction by Natalia Avtonomova was released by the same publishing house (Деррида 2000).

[6] For Derrida it was not obvious at all that any travel diary should necessarily result into the phenomenalization (Derrida 1993: 215).

whose very "genre", "type" or "mode" Derrida describes as *back from the USSRs* (adding "s", Derrida implies that they travelled to *different* USSRs). He borrows this title from André Gide, whose book under nearly the same title (with a reference to the USSR as a singular noun) was published in 1936. Retrospectively, one can say that Derrida made the last contribution to this "rich, brief, intense and dense" tradition (even though deconstructing it). When he came to Moscow for the second time, Soviet Union did not exist any longer. It was "Back to Moscow", yet this time without the USSR.

The USSR for Western intellectuals during several decades was an embodiment of the "promised land", the place of heterotopia. The stories of travel to the "holy land of Bolshevism", although their authors tended not to emphasize their commitment to the transcendent, are comparable only to pilgrimage narratives on Jerusalem or Mecca and have no analogues in the secular literature of the twentieth century (Derrida 1993: 199; Ryklin 2005: 158):

> Before the October Revolution, there was no such works. There will be no more tomorrow; there can already be no more after the end of the struggles and hopes, the anticipations and debates to which this revolution will have given rise [*donné lieu*] – and *donné lieu* from a unique geographic and political *lieu*, from an irreplaceable geopolitical event, held to be *exemplary*, namely Moscow in the USSR (Derrida 1993: 198).

This corpus of "autobiographical-travel-testimonies" (Derrida 1993: 199) may be studied as a single coherent text, the meaning of which arises from the montage of various literary pieces, composed by different individuals. They narrate the stories of dis/continuous trips back and forth in time and space. Not accidentally, the very first chapter in Derrida's book begins with *fort/da, back from/back in*. We are dealing here with the *history of affect* (Derrida 1993: 212), and the narrative(s) of affection have their own dramaturgy: there was excitement and admiration at the beginning of each trip, mixed with doubts and mistrust, a strong desire to come and see in order to "tell the truth" about the Soviet Union upon return. *Return* in which sense?

The key concept for Derrida's book is the expression *en revenir*, which he comes across in Etiemble's text, when the latter writes that he *n'en reviens pas* from his trip to Moscow. Derrida explores the density of this idiomatic expression (Roland Barthes, perhaps, would have preferred the word *amphibologie*), deciphering its multiple meanings. In its first and most obvious sense *en revenir*, indeed, means "to return". The other locution of this idiom means "to lose one's illusions", "lose faith", endure the cruelty of disappointment. And the moment the one "*en revient*" is here all the more serious in that one "*revient de loin*" [returns from afar]". Thus,

this polysemic expression describes the trajectory of most of these *back from Moscow, in the USSRs (*Derrida 1993: 211).

What did "the USSR" mean for Derrida? The uniqueness of the experience (visiting the USSR) was predetermined by its name, to the meaning and significance of which Derrida pays special attention. For any former Soviet citizen, who knew that the USSR meant "the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics", that was a quite natural, inborn name, inseparable from the history of this state that did not prompt to pose a question on its philosophical essence. Derrida comments *on this Name* in the following way:

> The very name of the USSR is the only name of the state in the world that contains in itself no reference to a locality or a nationality, the only proper name of a state that, in sum, contains no given proper name, in the current sense of the term: the USSR is the name of an etatic individual, and individual and singular state that has given itself or claimed to give itself its own proper name without reference to any singular place or to any national past. At its foundation, a state has given itself a purely artificial, technical, conceptual, general, conventional, and constitutional name, a common name in sum, a "communist" name: in short a purely political name. I know no other example or comparable phenomenon in the world (Derrida 1993: 198).

Given that socialism and nationalism are the eternal adversaries, and being the ideological antipodes, as one excludes / expels the other, Derrida points out that the very name of the country, which promoted universalism against any forms of particularism, could not allow for the slightest allusions to the national / ethno-specific locality. I would only add that leaving behind the brackets the historical names of the territory and the lands, which were given this technical name, and abbreviating itself to the first letters (turning, thus, the name almost into the conjuration), this name, however, indirectly holds the historical connection with other revolutionary formations and, first of all, it alludes to the Paris Commune and the political form of self-government generated by it (*Le conseil de la Commune*).

Certainly, Derrida sought to relate his own experience of visiting the USSR during Perestroika and the experience of his predecessors, while being interested in exploring not so much the commonality, but the *difference*. Mikhail Ryklin noted that Derrida long awaited to ask the authors of those books a series of "inconvenient questions" constituting the essence of the deconstruction strategy (Rykhlin 2005: 157).

The majority of the texts, which shaped the tradition of "autobiographical-travel-testimony", were written in between 1925 and 1939. The meaning of the October revolution, its significance for the world's political imagination and

history, the impulse it gave to the utopian projects of social reconstruction and the internationalization of solidarity[7], the enthusiasm of the masses which retained even through the years of Purges and Second World War, – all of that faded away with the course of time. Although the disillusionment took place gradually – first, in 1937[8], then in 1956[9], later in 1968 and then the 1989 became the point of no return for that utopian impulse.

The enormous dissemination of the literature produced by Western intellectuals on their travels to the USSR was due to the "massive need for concrete utopias that the Soviet Union seemed to embody at that time" (Enzensberger 1982: 172). For decades, Soviet Russia stood as "a provisional supplier of pathos" for European left-wing intellectuals, whereas "Parisian cafés were its processing factories", as Mikhail Ryklin formulated it (Ryklin 1993: 133). André Gide wrote in 1931: "I should like to cry about my affection for Russia: and that my cry should be heard, should have some importance" (Gide 1949: 179–180). The revolutionary *affect* retained in those writings, even when it became clear that the revolutionary experiment in the USSR had failed. René Etiemble claimed that he was so inspired by the idea of "permanent revolution", that at some point he turned into a kind of a "touristo-Trotskyist," explaining his travels by the sympathy to heresy (Etiemble 1989: 203).

This interest was also determined by the wide-spread anxieties within Europe itself about its future – will it remain democratic? Become Communist? Or will it be given up to Nazism and Fascism? As late as in 1939, Georges Friedman, who was also sympathetic to the communist cause, expressed his belief that socialism would retain, in one way or another, the need of the future, and that a new civilization must be one of "modern humanism" grounded on the principles of rational

[7] Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Letters* wrote on the enormous solidarity that European working class expressed towards the Soviet Union in the 1920s, going onto the demonstrations with the slogans "*Tutti vogliamo essere Russi!*", that is "We all want to be Russians!" (Gramsci 1997: 112–113).

[8] 1937 stands as a year when the last illusions concerning Europe's communist future were lost. Nazism and Fascism had already become the most powerful political regimes in Europe, and in the USSR, where the revolutionary utopia was replaced by Stalinism in the beginning of the 1930s, the black era of Purges started. The Nazi-Soviet pact of 23 August 1939 shattered the last hope: the myth was dead. Significantly, Lion Feuchtwanger's book *Moscow, 1937* was published exactly that year and this was the last book (until the death of Stalin) written in a "Back from the USSR" genre with a tonality of "naïve enthusiasm" (if to use Derrida's words).

[9] As Derrida points out, for him "the end of communist Marxism did not await the recent collapse of the USSR and everything that depends on it throughout the world. All that started – all that was even déjà vu, indubitably – at the beginning of the '50s". Therefore, the question "Whither Marxism?" resonates like an old repetition (Derrida 1994: 15). I could only add, that in the 1950s–1960s French intellectuals (Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and others) voiced similar concerns and discussed almost the same questions (related to the fate of Marxism, the essence of Soviet regime or the necessity to choose a political stance in relation to communism).

organization of global resources. Therefore, he wrote, "the State formed by October Revolution was the great hope of an epoch, when humanity seemed to have arrived at the verge of disaster" (Friedman 1987: 76–77).

Derrida highlights that the travels to the USSR were not merely the travels to another space *abroad*, they were more a kind of travel to the im/possible future, to the space, which, despite its materiality, was not something quite real. That the "USSR" from the very beginning represented a kind of Imago-logical construction, whose function was to show Europeans what they would have become if the Revolution had succeeded in their countries too, and if Marxism had ceased to be just one of the intellectual movements and would have become the state ideology.

The travel diaries of European intellectuals, who visited USSR in those years in order to clarify their own political stakes and sympathies, are particularly helpful if we want to understand their discontent and get to know what exactly they had identified as *inappropriate* for themselves or just *too* different. It is even more interesting when these observations were conceptualized by the intellectuals, whose opinion did not necessarily coincide with the Communist Party's line[10]. In other words, the October Revolution became an assay for many European intellectuals. Disillusionment with Leftist ideas and, as a consequence, the ultimate choice of a non-communist future (for themselves as well as for Europe) for many of them began precisely because of their frustration with the "real socialism" as they could observe it in the USSR.

Freedom or dictatorship[11]: this was a dilemma, which Feuchtwanger tried to resolve by saying that the Soviet Union could never have achieved what it did if it were a western type-democracy. In 1926, Walter Benjamin wrote from Moscow to his friend Jula Radt that "it is impossible to predict what the upshot of all this will be for Russia. Perhaps a true socialist community, perhaps something entirely different. The struggle to decide this question continues without interruption" (Benjamin 1994: 311).

A German theorist Hans Magnum Enzensberger pointed out that, due to the disruption of the communication in relations between USSR and Western world, "ignorance and manipulation become the rule." Thus, socialism turned into a sort of "internal and secretive affair, only accessible to those who have the opportunity to peek behind the mystifying façade (Enzensberger 1982: 163). In that context, an "eyewitness report", based on personal observations should have played a crucial role.

[10] I have discussed it in more detailed way in another text: Ousmanova 2004: 210–238.

[11] It is worth mentioning, that when the Cold War started, the anti-left and anti-Soviet political discourse represented the very "essence" of the Cold War as the "conflict between freedom and repression" (Weichlein 2017: 26).

European intellectuals, who visited USSR in different periods of its history, could not, of course, take the position of insiders for they would come to the country for a short period of time as foreign tourists or members of an official delegation. Therefore, they saw mostly what they were allowed to see. "No one who returns from a sojourn in socialism is a genuine part of the process he tries to describe" (Enzensberger 1982: 159).

In his late memoirs, René Etiemble commented on his travel to USSR in the 1930s: "[…] so one travels in a land of tyranny, without seeing anything, without knowing anything, without understanding anything" (Etiemble 1989:105)[12]. I deliberately take hold of this quote from the phrase context – in order to comment on a position of a Speaking Subject, but then I will put it back in its place. Jacques Derrida is fully aware that what he "saw" in Moscow, was pre-configured by the texts that he read before coming to Russia. That what he knew or could get to know about Moscow and Perestroika during his stay, he mostly learned from the colleagues who hosted him in Moscow[13]. When he refers to some facts from the Soviet history or daily life in Perestroika's times, he never fails to stress the mediated character of his knowledge ("I was told"), thus, distancing himself from the position of someone who "witnessed" something and could provide testimony, questioning, that is, the very position of an "eyewitness" as a narrator.

Why this digression is important in relation to Etiemble's remark? Derrida provides the long quotation from Etiemble's book, in which the writer accuses himself (in 1989) of having been blind or too naïve, when he praised "Russian nationalist" Stalin in 1934, without knowing anything of the death of millions of Ukrainians from hunger in 1933. Derrida notes that this self-accusation should have brought to its author a "small narcisstico-exhibitionist benefit" (Derrida 1993: 214). This confession of Etiemble reveals a few things: first, the position of a Western observer in the USSR had been well "organized" and "patronized" by the Soviet regime, and, second, during Perestroika times not only Soviet intellectuals began to repent of their former sympathies for the regime, but many Western intellectuals and writers also rushed to denounce their publicized earlier *memoires.*

The German Marxist theorist Hans Magnum Enzensberger, who himself travelled to the USSR in the 1960s–1970s, in 1973 wrote an ironic and at the same time very informative text titled *Tourists of the Revolution.* In this text Enzensberger problematizes the status of a distant observer – the position in which all intellectuals who visited the USSR inevitably found themselves. In doing this, he reveals

[12] "[…] *ainsi voyage-t-on en pays de tyrannie, sans rien voir, sans rien savoir, sans rien comprendre*".

[13] Derrida confesses of having mixed feelings about it: being enormously grateful to the colleagues in Moscow, he, nevertheless, had to resist the growing sense of intellectual affinity.

the structural causes (institutional conditions) of the formation of their views on what they had seen in the country of "victorious socialism". The institutional basis of radical or revolutionary tourism, at least, from the early 1930s, was the so called "delegation system". Since the "delegates" were invited as privileged guests, they were not supposed to cover any of their expenses. The privileges that the delegates enjoyed during their stay in the USSR were particularly striking if to compare to the conditions of life of general population. Enzensberger argued that from a material viewpoint such an arrangement had led to corruption", whereas from a moral viewpoint it inevitably implied the "defusing of criticism"; and the main question for him was, thus, "why professed socialists let themselves be politically blackmailed, morally bribed, and theoretically blinded, and not just a few individuals, but in drove" (Enzensberger 1982: 165).

As it has been said, after their travels to the Soviet Union, many of the intellectuals faced a necessity to take a position towards what they had seen there[14]. Soviet authorities were driven by quite pragmatic intention to win over the vacillating visitors to the Bolsheviks' side[15]. To be (*hyper)critical* meant to betray communist ideals associated with the USSR; to be *hypocritical* meant to betray oneself. They had to make a choice, ethical and political at the same time, a choice which was fraught with various consequences for the *committed intellectuals*.

Walter Benjamin begins his essay "Moscow" (1927) with the following statement: "However little one may know Russia, what one learns is to observe and judge Europe with the conscious knowledge of what is going in Russia. This is the first benefit to the intelligent European in Russia. But, equally, this is why the stay is so exact a touchstone for foreigners. It obliges everyone to choose his standpoint" (Benjamin 1978: 97).

Can one consider the loss of an individual freedom to be a sign of social progress? This was one of the most difficult, almost intolerable, questions. The fundamental ambivalence of the position of European intellectuals towards Soviet Union can be found in almost any of these texts: the country was an eternal reminder of their own being, a constant reproach to the ambiguity of their position, of their uncertainty. Derrida was not under the pressure of *mauvaise conscience*, as he was not obliged to take a *definite* stance and to play *a certain* role, which might have been prescribed by the circumstances of his travel to the USSR, if such a visit would

[14] I have discussed it in more detailed way in Ousmanova 2004: 210–238.

[15] Till the end of the 1930s this communicative strategy was highly efficient. When Gide "published after his return, *Retour de l'URSS* and *Retouches à mon retour de l'URSS* (both Paris, 1936 and 1937 respectively), it had a bomb-like effect. Within one year more than a hundred thousand copies were sold and there were translations into fifteen languages" (Enzensberger 1982: 165).

have been undertaken in previous decades[16]. He did not have to choose "on whose side he is", as he was *on his own side*. However, none the less important question is whether it is possible at all to choose "the standpoint" for a philosopher whose main philosophical method is that of deconstruction of any form of a fixed identity (of the word, of the thought, of the tradition, of the Self)? A deconstructionist may be only – and always – in *op/position*. Reading Marx in the times when his ideas are not welcome in the universities – this is also a deconstructivist gesture, a moving to the op-posite direction, against the neoliberal mainstream.

Derrida came to the USSR in the times of Perestroika, when the USSR was no longer the favourite travel objective of "radical" or "revolutionary tourists" (Enzensberger 1982:178). Knowing that this is no longer the promised land even for left-wing intellectuals, Derrida tries to make sense of (to rationalize) his own experience of going to the USSR, when the Utopian spirit has already evaporated. Derrida speaks of Perestroika as of "unique seism that is now shaking the history of the world", although it is not at all clear whether its epicentre is in Moscow ("supposing that there is an epicentre somewhere"). But what is certain is that Perestroika "*destroys at its root* the possibility of all *back from USSRs*, which from now on are out of date" (Derrida 1993: 200).

It would be helpful to recall here that the very word *Perestroika*, which came first as a part of the renewed Party's lexicon and then became the signifier of the entire historical period, was not accidental. Throughout the entire history of the Soviet state, the theme of "construction" was given a political economic priority, it played a crucial role in the economic modernization of the USSR (in some periods, like in the 1930s or in the 1960s, the entire Soviet Union seemed to be a huge construction site), as well as in the political discourse that would exploit "constructivist" metaphors. Derrida begins his reflection on the meanings of Perestroika by asking – why to insist on this *being-in construction?* (Derrida 1993: 222)

At first glance, the word "Perestroika" sounds rather harmless, even joyful and it does not seem to bear the threat or risk of destruction in it. However, the whole question is what exactly should be "rebuilt", how, and in which direction. Let us not forget that in Russian the verb "*perestroit'sja*" is most often used in its literal meaning in the sphere of military training and exercises: to re-build (that is to re-assemble, to regroup) means to destroy the old order in order to quickly establish a new one since the situation has changed.

[16] According to Mikhail Ryklin, Derrida had been invited to the USSR several times before 1990, but he repeatedly refused, believing that in this country there were no conditions and prerequisites for free thinking that would not be bound by external restrictions (Rykhlin 2005: 157).

In order to underline the risks of Perestroika, that it bore from the very beginning, Derrida quotes André Gide, who says that "it is important to tell ourselves incessantly", that *USSR is in construction*. He meant that it is mostly (or only) the question of Time – when the new type of society will be built (Gide 1936: 17). There were times of suspension, of delay, of re-construction, but these times were considered only *temporary* delays that change neither direction nor the goal.

What did Perestroika change in the relation between *Socialism and Time*? "Construction" has a purpose, but it also has its time constraints.

> On the one hand, at an initial level, we are taking about a *travail* of time to come, of an uneasy anticipation of the future: will the promise be kept? But from another prospective, we can say today, that this "construction", having failed, the supposed taking into account of this failure opens the era of perestroika, a word that also means "construction" – "reconstruction", construction that begins or rebegins after a new departure. This new departure supposes that the first construction has failed or been undone" (Derrida 1993: 223).

Here Derrida reveals a strange "paradox of anticipation", which could be associated with a possible occurrence of *a reversal of direction* and which embraces the *problematic presumption*:

> first, that one claims to go see "over there", *fort* (and not in an ideal and future "here", *da)* if perestroika is "working", if the delivery went well, if the *travail* is happening as it should; and second, that in an inverse sense, one expects perestroika to forge a society (Russian or not? Soviet or not? By definition we can no longer say) *on the model* of Western parliamentary democracies, liberal in the political and economic sense (Derrida 1993: 223).

In other words, the future traveller who would like to see what the outcome of de- and re-construction of a socialist society will be, has to have a firm knowledge of "what democracy is or ought to be", but such a *presumption,* in Derrida's view, "is the site of the gravest problem for us today" (I would say, that *today,* almost thirty years later, in the current geopolitical and economic context, it has become even more problematic).

Stating that "Deconstruction, that's the USSR today", Derrida points out that it was not him who dared to compare or even to identify Perestroika as Deconstruction, if colleagues from Moscow had not told him that "the translation they were using among themselves for *perestroika*, was "deconstruction" (Derrida 1993: 222). Perestroika for Derrida is an experience of a singular / impossible, whose radical spirit and historical scale may inspire and paralyze at the same time. In the

very same sense, deconstruction, if it takes place, happens only in the form of the promise and failure, a promise that manages to persevere even though it is most likely to fail.

It is hard to comment on the reception of Derrida's text about his trip to Moscow in other contexts. To my knowledge, its English version passed almost unnoticed and remained in the shadow of *Specters of Marx*, whereas for Russian-speaking audience the publication of this book became a significant philosophical event and was perceived as a Gift of the Philosopher. Not only because this was the very first book of Derrida published in Russian, but even more so because it gave an example of how deconstruction may work as an analytical tool in relation to Soviet and Post-Soviet realities and the narratives they engendered. As Mikhail Ryklin noted, in 1990 "Perestroika and deconstruction met in Moscow for the first (and only) time" (Ryklin 2005: 156). In retrospect, reading this text today, we understand why it was perceived as a diagnosis of the times, when no one could predict the course and the speed of the events that followed in the 1990s. Comparing deconstruction with Perestroika, or more precisely, identifying Perestroika as Deconstruction, Derrida himself, probably, could not imagine what destructive and yet liberating effects it might produce:

> Today, the dominant discourse in the West and for the travellers it dispatches in the Eastern countries, too often consists in asking oneself, are these people going to succeed – at what cost, at what rhythm – in resembling us by entering the now more than ever assured space of democracies and their market (whether it is called capitalist, neocapitalist, or mixed, or whether its autoregulation is named in another fashion?) Are they finally going to end history? Or – will they leave history by entering it, if one tranquilly believes, as does one White-House thinker-adviser, that we are finally reaching the end of history with the universal realization of the democratic model (Derrida 1993: 222)[17].

Reading these lines from Derrida's text on "Back from USSRs", one cannot separate its *spirit* from the *Specters of Marx*, that came out just few years later – when the answers to some of the questions posed in this fragment have already become evident, while others, on the contrary, have revealed their actuality for us only *now*.

[17] The notorious "White-House thinker-adviser", of whom Derrida speaks here, is Francis Fukuyama, whose book *End of History and the Last Man* appeared in 1992 (Fukuyama 1992). In *Specters of Marx,* Derrida develops extended argument with a critique of Fukuyama's main propositions, and what he considers particularly important and timely, is the analysis of "the contextual effects and political logic governing the reception and exploitation of his book" (Derrida 2008: 229).

The Untimely Thoughts on the Actuality of Marxism

Specters of Marx came out in 1994 and almost immediately became one of the most discussed books by Jacques Derrida, having provoked heated debates far beyond the philosophical circles. It is important to note, though, that the reading and further dissemination of Derrida's ideas were greatly dependent on the intellectual spaces where discussions took place. For Derrida himself the difference in the modes of reception did not come as a surprise. He anticipated that interpretation, appropriation or rejection of his propositions will vary significantly, depending on "different axiomatics", perspectives, "discursive strategies", philosophies and the political stakes (Derrida 2008: 215).

When this book reached its audience, one of the most frequent questions that were posed to Jacques Derrida, was the question of its *untimeliness*, in both – political and personal – senses.

On the one hand, in a situation of a profound crisis that post-Marxism faced after the collapse of socialist system, the return to the figure of Marx, was, to say the least, unexpected. This was the time when a series of inconvenient questions were widely discussed in academia and beyond, such as: "What remains of the socialist vision(s) after the "collapse" in 1989? Has the collapse of communism also spelled the death of Marxism, and of Marx as an important philosopher and political thinker? Have we indeed reached "the end of history" as Fukuyama has argued, where pluralistic democracies and capitalist economies reign supreme?" (Magnus, Cullenberg 1994: viii).

On the other hand, the question of untimeliness had to do with the intellectual biography of Derrida himself: the return to Marx was unexpected from a philosopher, who kept silent for many years, and distanced himself from Marxist ideas and restrained from any communist temptations. Since his youth, Derrida was opposed to "de facto "Marxism" or "communism" (the Soviet Union, the International of Communist Parties, and everything that resulted from them", but in *Specters of Marx* he made it clear that he "would never step on the side / in defence of conservative or reactionary, or even moderate right-wing or republican positions" (Derrida 1994: 15), and that at this particular historical moment he felt an urge "to rise up against the new anti-Marxist dogma" (Derrida, Malle, Vermeren, Peretti, Sohm 1994: 38)[18].

[18] In 2013, Peggy Kamuf, an American translator of Derrida's book, gave an interview, in which she provided a detailed account of the relations of Derrida with Marxist milieu in France from the 1950s till the end of the 1980s (Kamuf 2013). She also makes an important remark that concerns the pre-history of *Specters of Marx*: "It was thus a conjunction of delay and precipitation, deferral and

The relations of Derrida with Time and contemporaneity are worth of separate discussion, here I would only like to note that the very idea of "untimeliness" bore particular significance for his position as a philosopher. He claimed that "a certain untimeliness" was at once the temporality and the theme of *Specters of Marx* (Derrida 2008:214) and that "the chrono-logic of the *contretemps*" was, thus, "pre-programmed" (Derrida 2008: 227). Introducing the concept of *contretemps* he plays with its idiomatic ambiguity, as this notion means at the same time "a disagreement and untimely or inopportune action", and, thus, it conveys Derrida's "dispute with orthodox Marxism as well as his call for untimely political involvement". As Daniel Rhodes contends, Derrida "seeks to channel the critical spirit of Marx in order to re-politicize the current moment, introducing contretemps in order to highlight the persistent openness and counter-temporality intrinsic to the work of democracy" (Rhodes 2018: 527).

In one of the interviews Derrida was asked whether he considers himself "a philosopher of the present", or, at least, the one who "thinks his time". Derrida responded in his proper manner:

> Like anyone else who tries to be a philosopher, I do not want to give up either on the present or on thinking the presence of the present. I try not to forget that it is often the untimely intrusions of so-called actuality which are most "preoccupied" with the present. Being preoccupied with the present – as a philosopher for example – perhaps means avoiding the constant confusion of presence with actuality (Derrida, Malle, Vermeren, Peretti, Sohm 1994: 31). [19]

After all, "untimeliness" also means to appear *just in-time*, facing all "risks, opportunities, and perhaps incalculabilities" that such an intervention into the present implies.

Derrida, in his own words, intended to explore "the question of the 'philosophical' in Marx", which implies the investigation of three intertwined questions, namely: "How are we to delimit: (1) the 'phenomenality of the political' as such?

haste, that produced *Specters of Marx*. That work was precipitated out of its long suspended state in the wake of a sudden, unforeseen acceleration of events in Berlin, Moscow, Prague, Warsaw, Budapest, Sarajevo, and elsewhere. These were, Derrida remarks, events happening "at a rhythm that no one in the world could calculate in advance, not even a few months before" (Kamuf 2013).

[19] Giorgio Agamben in his text "What Is the Contemporary?" formulates the question of "untimeliness" in the following way, taking as a starting point an idea of Roland Barthes that "the contemporary is the untimely": "Contemporariness is, then, a singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time, keeps a distance from it. More precisely, it is that relationship with time that adheres to it, through a disjunction and an anachronism. Those who coincide too well with the epoch, those who are perfectly tied to it in every respect, are not contemporaries precisely because they do not manage to see it; they are not able to firmly hold their gaze on it" (Agamben 2009: 41).

(2) 'philosophy' as onto-theology? and (3) a heritage as a heritage of 'Marx', by the name and in the name of 'Marx'" (Derrida 2008: 219).

The reaction of post-Marxist theorists to Derrida's book on Marx in the West was and remains ambivalent[20]. Derrida was constantly reproached in "distillation", "depoliticizing" and dematerialization of Marx and Marxism, in promoting "Marxism without Marxism", in that he separated Marxism from its political agency and the historical context for the sake of "deconstructive politics" (Macherey 2008; Ahmad 2008; Eagleton 2008).

In response to the critics from the left, Jacques Derrida, firstly, denies the proprietary claims that come from the "statutory Marxists", arguing that "Marx" is a heritage that no one has a right to possess:

> What proprietary right must still be protected? Which borders must still be patrolled? To whom is "Marxism" supposed to belong? Is it still the private preserve or personal property of those who claim or proclaim that they are "Marxists"? (Derrida 2008: 222).

Secondly, dismantling the accusations of "depoliticizing" Marxist theory, he argues, that deconstruction might and should lead to *re-politicization*:

> the point, as I see it, of radically re-examining the premises subtending the relationship between "Marx", theory, science and philosophy is to provide the beginnings of an account of *disastrous historical failures* on both the theoretical and political plane, as well as to effect a different kind of *repoliticization* of a certain inheritance from Marx (Derrida, 2008: 221).

In Eastern European countries, the relation to Marxism as "a theoretical system, political orientation, scholarly tradition, and capitalist counterculture" (Bauman 1976: 47) was problematic long before the actual dissolution of socialist system. Marxism was heavily compromised by the guardians of the ideological orthodoxy in the Soviet Union. The degeneration of Marxism into a dogma during late socialism seriously affected the fate of this theory in the Post-Soviet countries. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it became part of its history, but ceased to be a living intellectual tradition. Its emancipatory potential, conceptual depth and methodological legitimacy were very soon entirely discarded and neglected.

It should be mentioned that in the 1990s the question of the political responsibility of the Theory was widely discussed and Marxism was charged for the entire

[20] A special volume, edited by Michael Sprinker, that includes the critical essays by Terry Eagleton, Antonio Negri, Fredrick Jameson, Tom Lewis and others, with the detailed response by Derrida, came out in 1999 and provides the most representative account on the very essence of this polemics (Sprinker 1999). The review of more recent criticism of *Specters of Marx* can be found here: Habjan 2014:128–144.

experience of real socialism (along with the political repressions and economic failures of the "society of labour"). In order to disclaim this criticism, some post-Marxist theorists insist that "the communist hypothesis" should not be linked to the experience of real socialism. Such a position leads to the exclusion of the East-European Marxism (of the socialist times) from contemporary debates on Marxist theory and erases "really existing socialism" from the history of Marxism itself in the 20th century. For some scholars such statements are counter-productive and they propose to "address directly the region's experience with, and rejection of, 'really existing socialism,' rather than dismissing these and thereby allowing socialism to function as an ontologically absent but epistemologically structuring desire" (Kennedy, Galtz 1995: 23).

Meanwhile, the historical uniqueness of the Soviet project (and that was recognized by its critics as well) consisted in the fact that it represented an attempt to realize the eternal dream of the philosophy, starting from Plato, "to establish the power of philosophers". As Borys Grois argues, the Soviet Union understood itself as "a state in which all power belongs to philosophy", in which any practical activity was considered to be "a contribution to the development of communist theory" (Groys 2007: 41). It is, thus, not surprising that Marxist theory in the USSR became instrumentalized: its vulgarization was inevitable in the process of adjusting complex conceptual schemes and theoretical apparatus to changing social practices. Theory was used to legitimize the decisions and processes that acquired an "uncontrollable" character at some point. In between 1917 and 1929, the state policy was determined by people who creatively developed a theory and made decisions taking into account changing circumstances, conducting analysis of economic and political processes, but after Lenin and Trotsky, the theory had ossified and turned into a set of dogmas that *no longer worked*. This has predetermined the tragic destiny of the Soviet state: the discrepancy between reality and ideology consisted in a constantly widening gap between the Marxist theory and the reality that had "departed" from it, but the party nomenclature still tried to fit it into the much simplified Marxist schemes.

The reduction of the socialist project to the "ghosts of totalitarianism", on which the contemporary dominant ideological discourse insists, is a too simplistic view of the complex, controversial and dramatic experience of socialism. However, it is precisely this oversimplification that makes it possible to "ban" the productive rethinking of it[21]. In *Marx & Sons* Derrida articulates his disagreement with those

[21] In 2001, Slavoj Žižek published a book, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (Žižek 2001), in which he analyzed the ideological and political logic of this concept, introduced into the scientific circulation by Hannah Arendt, and picked up by the propaganda

who consider that "Marxism leads inevitably to the Gulag". On the contrary, the tragic prerequisite of the Gulag was precisely the non-use, rejection of the "critical spirit" of Marxism (Derrida 2008: 243).

Thus, the end of socialism for many designated the symbolic death of the Theory. However, by the beginning of the 2000s, the initial confusion had passed, as it became clear that 1989 "opened up a new critical space in which a spirit of debate and self-criticism could flourish amongst committed left intellectuals". (Pawling 2013: 61), and that with the collapse of the Soviet Communism "a certain version of Marxism" came to its end (Kellner 1994: 34). Eventually, Marxism had not only survived, but even strengthened its theoretical positions as the most argumentative critical theory of capitalism, which remains critically reflective towards its own conceptual ground. The more capitalism itself mutates, the more sophisticated the Marxist theory becomes, as it is able to "embrace" the social world in the totality of its social relations and establish causal relations in the intricacies of the capitalist production system. In retrospect, one can say that the collapse of socialism has produced liberating effect for Marxism, but also put forward new obligations. As Derrida points out,

> it will always be a fault not to read and reread and discuss Marx – which is to say also a few others – and to go beyond scholarly "reading" or "discussion." It will be more and more a fault, a failing of theoretical, philosophical, political responsibility. When the dogma machine and the "Marxist" ideological apparatuses (States, parties, cells, unions, and other places of doctrinal production) are in the process of disappearing, we no longer have any excuse, only alibis, for turning away from this responsibility. There will be no future without this. Not without Marx, no future without Marx, without the memory and the inheritance of Marx (Derrida 1994: 14).

I would add to this that for scholars in former socialist countries without Marx *there is no past either*. The close reading of Marx, as well as his predecessors and followers, that shaped the long history of this critical thought, helps to systematically analyze not only contemporary capitalism or to unmask the ideologies that serve to it, but also various issues of "real socialism" (be it the question of revolutionary violence, techno-scientific Imaginary, of nationalism and ethno-particu-

media of the Cold War. In general, Žižek describes the mode of using this concept as *Denkverbot*, as a refusal to interpret the questions of socialism through any other categories. This prohibition blocks the possibilities to conceive a radical alternative to the existing capitalist order through a kind of blackmail. As Žižek notes, everyone knows that there is corruption, exploitation and so on, but any attempt to change the situation (or even to discuss it in a public sphere) is condemned as ethically dangerous and unacceptable, as the one which reanimates "the specter of totalitarianism". In other words, "the reference to the 'totalitarian' threat sustains a kind of unwritten *Denkverbot* (prohibition against thinking)" (Žižek 2001: 3).

larism, women's emancipation, the problem of individual freedom, labour ethics under socialism and many others).

In the 1980s, American sociologist Alvin Gouldner, in response to the question "why study Marxism?", argued that a knowledge of Marxist theory is indispensable, as "Marxism is the genetic code, the germ plasm of the main twentieth century revolutions and of the societies they created (Gouldner 1982: 8). In support of this statement, I would say that Marxist theory (its both Soviet and Western versions) is important as a *discursive code of access* to the studies of Socialism and the postsocialist aftermath. It is difficult to imagine how one can engage in the archaeology of Soviet culture without understanding its conceptual foundations, as "real socialism" was a project, whose utopian substrate was a product of the spirit of Marxist theory.

However, it is rather "difficult to convince audiences outside the Marxist tradition of the usefulness of a Marxist framework when considering Eastern Europe. The problem becomes more grave when one considers the overwhelming indifference to, and rejection of, Marxist theory within Eastern Europe" (Kennedy, Galtz 1995: 3). Given this complex, if not to say, traumatic relation to Marx and Marxism in former socialist spaces, it is not surprising that interpretations of Derrida's book took completely different directions.

Specters of Marx opened up new possibilities for rethinking the relations between the Theory and History after the end of state socialism in Eastern Europe. There was no (longer) "statutory Marxists" who would have insisted on the "correct" reading of Marx and would have objected against any form of "revisionism", as it was in the Soviet times. The opportunity to get away from the political dimension by focusing on Marx as a "pure philosopher" (and, thus, to discover non-orthodox ways of reading Marx and his "sons") made sense in a context in which Marxism for many decades was seen primarily as a political ideology, including the philosophical version of Marxism-Leninism. At the same time, for leftist theorists in the former Post-Socialist countries, for those who were critical towards Marxism-Leninism, but did not abandon their engagement with Marxist theory after the collapse of socialism, the book gave important arguments against those who criticized Marxism as a discourse of totalitarianism, against the advocates of "methodological nationalism" and against those who hailed Fukuyama's idea of "the end of history".

The Territory of Ghosts and The Postsocialist Hauntology

In my view, *Specters of Marx* is one of the key texts for understanding *the Postsocialist condition*. "Postsocialist" not only with a reference to concrete spaces and to

the particular history related to them, but also on a global scale, when we think of the world without / after state socialism, of the metanarratives that sprung up on its ruins and of the theories that make use of or strive to make this global condition intelligible.

Taking into account the varieties of the interpretation of the "postsocialist condition", I, first of all evoke, the remarkable book by Nancy Fraser *Justice Interruptus. Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" condition* (1996) who was one of the first scholars to diagnose and conceptually substantiate this condition. Fraser characterizes the postsocialist condition as "a sceptical mood or structure of feeling that marks the post-1989 state of the Left. Fraught with a sense of the "morning after", this mood expresses authentic doubts bound to genuine opacities concerning the historical possibilities for progressive social change" (Fraser 1996: 1). She distinguishes three constitutive features of the "postsocialist" condition, namely: 1) "the absence of any credible progressive vision of an alternative to the present order", aggravated by the shallow claim of Fukuyama "that 1989 represents "the end of history"; 2) "the shift in grammar of political claims-making", that eclipsed the claims for social equality; 3)"a resurgent economic liberalism", that marketizes social relations, erodes social protection and worsens the life-chances of billions (Fraser, 1996: 2–3).

Needless to say, I totally solidarize with Nancy Fraser when using the concept of the "postsocialist condition", yet, if to return to the founding text by Jean-François Lyotard (*Postmodern Condition*,1979[22]), in the context of the given article, I am more interested in the analysis of the epistemological situation, of the conditions for the production of knowledge, intellectual discourses and paradigms of interpretation that we use when we examine our recent past and the *actual present*.

An ideological vacuum, that arose in former Soviet countries after the collapse of socialism produced a certain epistemological confusion, the methodological anarchism as well as disciplinary chaos, both in Humanities and in Social Sciences. In the first decade after the collapse of socialism, at that particular historical moment that can be defined as "negative moment"[23], Post-Soviet scholars desperately needed fresh theories and new languages for their analytical work. Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, Postcolonial theory – all these new paradigms appeared

[22] Lyotard 1979; Lyotard 1984.

[23] Achille Mbembe, a prominent postcolonial thinker, defines *the negative moment* in a following way: "A negative moment is a moment when new antagonisms emerge while old ones remain unresolved. It is a moment when contradictory forces – inchoate, fractured, fragmented – are at work but what might come out of their interaction is anything but certain. It is also a moment when multiple old and recent unresolved crises seem to be on the path towards a collision" (Mbembe 2015).

almost simultaneously, in the middle of the 1990s, and their arrival was clearly marked by the birth trauma, as they came and got established on the ruins of Marxism-Leninism. What was in the agenda of the 1990s for Post-Soviet scholars can be characterized as a need for "decolonizing of knowledge, of mind and the language" (Mbembe 2015). In other words, the "untimely" thoughts of Derrida on Marx arrived (again) *just in-time*.

It should be noted, that the key for Derrida question of "the ontology in Marx" was not the most important issue for many of his readers in Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, this book certainly *works* – as a prolegomenon to the ontology – the study of being / presence – of ghosts, that was named by him as *hauntologie*. It works as an analytical model for analyzing the *Zeitgeist* of the present times. It may seem to be strange, but the *Specters of Marx* became so "fashionable" that very soon a wholly new academic trend was established.

> The publication of Jacques Derrida's *Spectres de Marx* in 1993 (and its English translation, *Specters of Marx*, in 1994) is commonly considered the catalyst for what some have called the "spectral turn," marking the appearance of a new area of investigation (María del Pilar Blanco, Esther Peeren 2013: 2).

Today, within the framework of so called "Spectrality Studies" [24], one can find multiple modes of appropriation of Derrida's ideas in the analysis of such diverse phenomena as East European cinema, the memory of Stalinist repressions, African literature, urban space, the history of America's colonization and so on.

How to explain the enormous popularity and almost universal applicability of Derrida's "hauntology" in different contexts? I think, that few factors should be taken into consideration. Firstly, it has to do with a centuries-long tradition of dealing with ghosts in different cultures, which took new impetus in the Post-secular age:

> Ghosts, spirits, and specters have played vital roles in oral and written narratives throughout history and across cultures, appearing as anything from figments of the imagination, divine messengers, benign or exacting ancestors, and pesky otherworldly creatures populating particular loci to disturbing figures returned from the dead bent on exacting revenge, revealing hidden crimes, continuing a love affair or simply searching for a way to pass on (María del Pilar Blanco, Esther Peeren 2013: 1).

[24] Even the short bibliography of texts whose authors contributed to the development of "Spectralities Studies", would be a persuasive argument that confirms the existence of this strand: Auchter 2014; Blanco, Peeren 2010; Blanco, Peeren Esther 2013; Buse, Stott 1999; Chambers, Malik Amna et al. 1999; Etkind 2009: 182–200; Leeder 2015; Litchfield 2014; Luckhurst 2002: 527–546, et al. I would also like to mention an article by Benjamin Cope, inspired by Derrida's book, that is dedicated to Post-Soviet Minsk: Cope 2008: 498–521.

Secondly, one should not also forget that in the 1980s–1990s a significant epistemological shift occurred in the studies of history and memory, and the attention of many scholars from different disciplines turned to the studies of personal and collective trauma and its symptoms, which demonstrate "the subject's failure to internalize a past event, in which something from the past emerges to disrupt the present" (Weinstock 2004: 5). Hence, the conceptual metaphor of spectrality has become linked "to the discourse of loss, mourning, and recovery". In other words, the moment has come to reconsider the ghost "as actuality, metaphor, and concept" (Blanco, Peeren 2013: 10–11)[25]. And another feature has to do with the question of the formation of knowledge, as the ghost invokes what is placed outside it, excluded from perception and, consequently, from both the archive as the depository of the sanctioned, acknowledged past and politics as the (re)imagined present and future (Blanco, Peeren 2013: 9).

Thirdly, as has already been mentioned above, the book of Derrida was very timely in a sense that it opened the possibility to conceptually reconsider the relations with the past, in a moment which definitely was marked by the dramatic disjoint of times, at least, this would be right to say in relation to Eastern Europe (after 1989).

On the other hand, I would argue, that the phantom character of the memory of socialism had been predetermined long before the Soviet Union collapsed. The very first line of the "Communist Manifesto" (1848), by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels – "A specter is haunting Europe, the specter of communism" – had defined the destiny of the communist idea for many decades to come. If Marx and Engels had been able to anticipate the further developments related to the fate of their program, they would have been surprised by the fact that the second statement of "Manifesto" was equally prophetic: "All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre" (Marx, Engels 1948).

But what are these fears caused by? After all, the ghosts are phantasmatic and can only exist in our imagination, appearing only to those who seek to see them. Looking *back to the future*, we find a paradoxical situation: the Soviet Union is long gone, the fate of Marxism has long been unrelated to building communism as a state system, but for those who want to see the spectres of Communism, everything looks as if nothing changed[26]. If we keep in mind that the ghosts from ancient times

[25] The negative side of this popularity reveals itself in the excessive exploitation of ghost as a theoretical concept, as the tropes of spectrality and haunting seem to become ubiquitous and are applied to almost any cultural phenomenon. Roger Luckhurst has noted that "the ghost as figure of trauma has become almost a cliché, reinforced as it was throughout the 1990s by an elaborate critical discourse of spectres and spectrality" (Luckhurst 2008: 93).

[26] Only the structural position of the "Empire of Evil" and the role of the political Other now prescribed to Russia, as if it was an *ideological* (not only economic) heir of the USSR, which is very far for the actual state of affairs.

(or, at least, in the vein of Shakespeare's prophetic vision) were perceived as a sign of an approaching catastrophe, it is not surprising then that amid growing geopolitical tensions, increasing economic inequality, uncontrolled migration (caused by military conflicts and poverty), the crisis of the political identity of former left and right parties, the consolidation of protest movements and other problems, which in their integrity are perceived as symptoms of revolutionary situation, we understand better, why the "phantom" (more accurate to say, demonological) rhetoric has become so popular in today's political and media discourse.

Lyotard, probably, would also have been surprised to see, how quickly the new / old "Grand narratives", the most powerful of which is nationalism, have returned and got established in the former socialist spaces. Nationalistic metanarrative is effectively used in political discourse, academia, media and popular culture, playing, thus, a significant role in recoding of the cultural memory of the post-Soviet subject. However, nationalistic historical narratives are full of gaps, of discursive inconsistencies and logical contradictions, in particular when it comes to the memories on socialist past. As any other ideology, it tends to construct the coherent, homogenous, universal view of the world, that expels the Other from the scene. Grand narratives are repressive in their very essence, for one metanarrative always seeks to oust the other, imposing its own conceptual matrix and values.

How do we interact with the ghosts of Soviet past? When Derrida speaks of those who "want to exorcize, conjure away, deny, or ignore" the ghosts at any price (Derrida 2008: 252), I cannot stop thinking about the fact that in the countries that were born or restored on the ruins of the socialist world, one can distinguish two explicit strategies of dealing with the "ghosts" of socialist past: one of them can be called *evocation*, while the second one has to do with *exorcism*. If "evocative" strategy consists in the attempt to hold on, to bring back to life, to foster the "reincarnation" of the ghosts of Soviet culture, the "exorcist" strategy, on the contrary, aims to banish them forever, to erase their traces from history handbooks and tourist guides, to make them disappear among other ghosts of the past and, eventually, even to render their absence imperceptible (by simply removing their material remnants from the public spaces, and, thus, literally – making them "invisible").

Charity Scribner, in her book *Requiem for Communism*, notes, that traces of the socialist past may be doomed to oblivion, but to this day they continue to be a very important component of European cultural memory (Scribner 2003: 3). The question of what is to be done with the remnants of Soviet / socialist art in public spaces (films, painting, "office" art in the factories, Palaces of Culture, former collective farms, monumental sculpture and Soviet modernist architecture) has been heavily politicized in the countries of former socialist block. The politics of

De-sovietization, that started in the beginning of the 1990s and gained a new impulse in the course of last years engendered several waves of iconoclasm and lead to the intentional destruction of public monuments from the Soviet period[27]. In the beginning that was a movement from "below", nowadays this pressure is imposed from "above". The heated political debates in Post-socialist countries have blocked the possibilities of constructive reworking of cultural memory and the integration of cultural heritage of the socialist era into contemporary culture and artistic production. Katarzyna Marciniak, a Polish scholar, poses a reasonable question, with which I can only agree: "How can one deal with the socialist ghosts without either romanticized nostalgia or disavowing amnesia?" How can one acknowledge these ghosts without "automatically demonizing the era of totalitarian repression"? (Marciniak 2008: 18).

Instead of concluding remarks (in order to leave the above posed questions open for further discussion), I would like to refer once again to the *Specters of Marx,* in which Jacques Derrida reminds us of the ethical responsibility towards the ghosts. He claims that we should learn how "to live with ghosts", "to live otherwise, and better. No, not better, but more justly" (Derrida 1994: xviii).

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[27] In the early 1990s (during the first wave of De-sovietization) Soviet / Russian artists Komar and Melamid claimed that "the time has come to stop this destruction! […]. Historic monuments are a nonrenewable resource. Instead of further destruction, we propose transformation through art" (Komar, Melamid 1992). Later on, Bruno Latour noted that the destruction of images quite often becomes "a fabulous source of *new* images, *new* media, *new* works of art" (Latour 2002: 22).

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DERRIDA ŠMĖKLŲ TERITORIJOJE

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje aptariama keletas Jacques'o Derrida tekstų, jo parašytų XX a. dešimtajame dešimtmetyje: *Sugrįžus iš Maskvos, SSRS*, (1993), *Marxo šmėklos: skolos būvis*, *gedėjimo darbas ir naujasis Internacionalas* (1994) ir *Marxas ir Sūnūs* (1999). Nuodugniai skaitydama veikalą *Sugrįžus iš Maskvos, SSRS* straipsnio autorė nagrinėja šiuos klausimus: kokį vaidmenį Derrida intelektualinėje biografijoje atlieka „autobiografinio-kelionės-liudijimo" žanras, kurį formuoja Europos intelektualų, aplankiusių SSRS įvairiais jos istorijos laikotarpiais, tekstai; kaip kelionės dienoraštis gali virsti politine diagnoze ir ką bendro turi dekonstrukcija ir pertvarka (*perestroika*)? Kiti du tekstai yra svarbūs analizuojant kitus bendresnius su tuo susijusius klausimus: kaip ir kodėl *nesavalaikiai* Derrida apmąstymai apie marksizmo lemtį tampa aktualūs čia (Rytų Europoje) ir *dabar* (praėjus trisdešimčiai metų po socializmo žlugimo) ir kaip „šmėkliškumų" tyrimai prisideda prie mūsų *postsocialistinio būvio* supratimo?

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: dekonstrukcija, hauntologija, marksizmas, šmėklos, *perestroika*.