

DOI:10.14394/eidos.jpc.2021.0029

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## Broken Latin, Secret Europe: Benjamin, Celan, Derrida

### Abstract:

The author begins by analyzing Walter Benjamin's quarrel with George Kreis and the respective visions of culture advocated by both sides of the debate. Then, he offers a reading of a poem by Paul Celan in which the poet sides with Benjamin, but also makes his position more complex, ultimately offering a paradoxical figure of "the secret openness" or "open/public secrecy" as a remedy against the "mystery" of the Georgians. This idea can be seen as developed in Jacques Derrida's understanding of secrecy, which the author proceeds to analyze. The secrecy as a deconstructive rift in the public discourse, a split which tears it open, can be seen as opposed both to the undemocratic mystery and to the seeming openness of globalatinization. After considering the formal, political and (post)religious aspects of secrecy, the author ends with showing how literature as such is the most powerful medium of Derridean secret.

### Keywords:

Jacques Derrida, Paul Celan, Walter Benjamin, secrecy, literature

Yes, I want to talk about Jacques Derrida's understanding of secrecy and its far-reaching, politico-religious consequences. However, in order to get there, I must first take a look at a powerful piece by a poet to whom Derrida devoted much attention, namely Paul Celan. However, in order to get there, I must first take a look at a little text that the poem is rooted in, a text by a thinker of highest importance for both Celan and Derrida, namely Walter Benjamin. Thus, as the path is long and winding, let me begin my journey without further ado.

In 1930 Walter Benjamin published an essay entitled *Gegen ein Meisterwerk (Against a Masterpiece)*.<sup>1</sup> This short piece is a review of *Der Dichter als Führer in der deutschen Klassik* (or *The Poet as Leader in German Classicism*), a book by Max Kommerell. The author was a leading critic associated with Stefan George's Circle (George Kreis) with which, however, he was soon to break. For Benjamin, the George Kreis formed a key point of reference, even if mostly a negative one. For the first time he openly confronted the Georgians in his great essay on Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften (Elective Affinities)*, where he attacked the interpretation of Goethe's work offered by Friedrich Gundolf, another leading critic (or, at that time, the leading critic) of the group.<sup>2</sup> What was at stake was not just a conflict of interpretations, but a radical clash between two visions of culture. On Benjamin's reading, Gundolf's vision was that of the critic as the courtier or visier of the poet who, in turn, would be the highest priest of the cult of his own quasi-divine person, a magician who weaves a dense, mythical texture of cultural meanings. Benjamin himself, on the other hand, demanded autonomy for the critical enterprise which should aim at tearing this very texture apart in the act of redemptive deconstruction.

His review of Kommerell's book continues and radicalizes the attack. Benjamin acknowledges the quality of the book and goes as far as to claim that it would make a perfect Magna Charta of a decent German conservatism – if there only were such a thing. Moreover, he recognizes that his own stance springs from the same source as George's school, namely, German Romanticism. However, whereas the Georgians continue the Romantic tradition of the poet as the mythicizing leader, Benjamin develops the ironic and critical mode of Romantic thinking. Just as in his polemic against Gundolf, he stresses the necessity of criticism's self-affirmed autonomy or even the primacy of its deconstructive gesture. In the powerful conclusion of the essay, Benjamin explicitly attacks the project of the conservative revival of Germany advocated by the Georgians in general and by Kommerell in particular. What is meant is George's project of "Secret Germany," the spiritual, mythical, national community as distinguished from the sterile, bourgeois, fallen world of the "official" Germany.<sup>3</sup> This esoteric project, argues Benjamin, turned out to be only the reverse side and a reservoir of official German militarism. What Benjamin could not know – or perhaps could only suspect – was that it also paved the way for a far more virulent version of official Germany, even if some of George's people ultimately led the failed coup against Hitler (which, by the way, does not pertain to Kommerell who ended up as a loyal Nazi). Kommerell's intention, argues Benjamin in the closing words of his review,

Was to erect a warning about the future of Germany. Overnight, ghostly hands will write a sign saying "Too Late!" in huge letters ... This land can become Germany once again only when it is purified, and it cannot be purified in the name of Germany – let alone "secret Germany" that ultimately is only but the arsenal of official Germany, in which the magic hood of invisibility hangs next to the helmet of steel.<sup>4</sup>

On the 19th of July, 1968 Paul Celan, who had been reading and rereading a number of Walter Benjamin's essays for some time, wrote a few poems playing on selected passages from these texts. One of these poems, which explicitly mentions the place of Benjamin's death in its title and his own name in the text proper, is clearly related to the review of Kommerell's book. Here is the poem, in the rough translation by Casimir Rapatzky:<sup>5</sup>

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- 1) Benjamin, "Against a Masterpiece," 378–85.
  - 2) Benjamin, "Goethe's Elective Affinities," 323–29.
  - 3) On George's life project see Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and his Circle*.
  - 4) Benjamin, "Against a Masterpiece," 385.
  - 5) For the original see Celan, *Die Gedichte. Kommentierte Gesamtausgabe in einem Band*, 510.

PORT BOU – GERMAN?  
Arrow the magic hood away, the  
helmet of steel.

Left-  
niebelungs, right-  
niebelungs:  
purhified, purified,  
debris.

Benjamin  
says No to you, for ever,  
he says Yes.

Such an aeon, also  
as B-Bauhaus:  
no.

No Too-Late,  
a secret  
openness.

By filling his poem with a number of words and phrases borrowed directly from Benjamin's essay, Celan both continues his argument and partly but substantially subverts it. Thus, when he urges us to: "arrow away" (*wegpfeilen*) both the magic hood and the helmet of steel, rejects the archaic "aeon" even in its modernist disguise and sympathetically restates the critic's self-affirmation of his eternal "no," Celan clearly takes sides with Benjamin against the Georgians. However, his own ambiguous sympathy for leftist politics notwithstanding, Celan distances himself both from "left-niebelungs" and "right-niebelungs," thus questioning Benjamin's revolutionary hopes. Consequently and all-too understandably, Celan is not willing to support the ideal of purification of Germany in any form, not even in the one apparently advocated by Benjamin. Rather, he focuses on the status of those who – like Benjamin himself – have been forced to leave Germany in the name of a very different purification supported by Max Kommerell. As a German-Jewish poet living in Paris after the Shoah, he naturally sympathizes with all those who, like Heinrich Heine and Walter Benjamin, were more or less violently pushed over the river Rhine – thus literally *gerheinigt*, or purhified with additional "h." The Nazi purification is thus seen as an act of clearing the German throat, an act of spitting the disturbing Jewish "h" out of German mouth and over the mythical river Rhine. Perhaps it is also an attempt to reduce Abraham back to Abram or *Abraum* ("debris"), although – ironically – this very attempt ultimately ended in turning the supposedly purified Germany itself, both official and secret, into a pile of rubble.

What is most interesting, however, is precisely Celan's play on the ideal of secret Germany. As we have seen, Benjamin simply rejected this ideal, arguing very convincingly that secret Germany is only the arsenal of the official war machine, while claiming much less convincingly that it is too late for a full-fledged Georgian mythical revolution. Celan points out the obvious: it was not too late and it is never too late for such nasty things. It seems, though, that his "No Too-late" has a double edge. Namely, Celan may be also saying that it is never too late for an act of resistance. Such an act would be linked to the enigmatic idea of *ein geheimes*

*Offen*, “a secret openness” with which Celan closes (and reopens) his poem. One might be tempted to read this formula along the lines of Rilkean or Heideggerian imagery, a path I would not follow, however, as it might easily lead us back in the vicinity of Georgian mythomania. Rather, I would point out that *offen* means “open,” but also “public” and as such it is opposed to *geheim* in a passage from Kommerell’s book quoted by Benjamin. Thus, if Benjamin rejects the double structure of secret Germany backing the public/official one, Celan seems to be offering a paradoxical recombination or superposition of the two modes. The act of resistance advocated by Celan does not claim for itself any separate, esoteric domain. Rather, it moves in the open, in the public discourse, but it is always characterized by a secrecy that cannot be eliminated, like a fold or rift on a seemingly smooth surface. At the same time, however, the very moments of secrecy are also the true moments of openness, as they reopen the allegedly open, public discourse to the utterly unexpected. This secret/open act of resistance might be identified with the poetic act itself, which on this reading incorporates the deconstructive gesture of the Benjaminian critic. Such an act permanently affirms its own eternal No directed against the project of purification and distorts, breaks its language with the additional “h.” On such a reading, Port Bou, the ultimate borderline of Walter Benjamin’s life, is more German than any purified territory of German language.

It is tempting to link this structure of Celan’s *geheimen Offen*, of the public-but-secret reopening of what only claims to be open, to the secrecy that came to be one of the most persistent themes in later writings of Jacques Derrida. Derridean secrecy seems to be largely isomorphic with the one suggested by Celan’s poem, with Derrida showing various metaphysical, linguistic, political and religious aspects of this structure. At its most abstract, the theme of secret is analyzed in the third chapter of the otherwise rather annoying essay entitled “Passions,” the first two chapters of which are devoted to such fascinating questions as “What is an invitation?,” “What is it to respond to an invitation?” or even “What is the ‘What is?’” Now, after such a treat, Derrida suddenly offers a very lucid and consistent analysis of secrecy. He defines the idea of secret very carefully, though negatively, along the lines of an apophatic procedure, which presents it as escaping a series of binary oppositions. Thus, the secret is “neither phenomenal nor noumenal.” It is “neither sacred nor profane.” It “belongs no more to the private than to the public,” and “it is no more in speech than foreign to speech.” However, perhaps most importantly for our purposes, the secret is not “the content of any esoteric doctrine” and it should never be understood as “mystical.” As Derrida says very clearly, the secret “does not conceal itself. Heterogeneous to the hidden, to the obscure, to the nocturnal, to the invisible, to what can be dissimulated and indeed to what is nonmanifest in general, it cannot be unveiled. It remains inviolable, even when one thinks one has revealed it.”<sup>6</sup> If the secret is not mystical, esoteric, or hidden, then its neither-nor character vis-à-vis the list of the binary oppositions can be easily understood. Derrida’s secret is not a noumenal, sacred treasure, hidden in the safe of our most private subjectivity beyond any speech. Rather, it is a moment that, without claiming a separate domain for itself, disrupts the realm of the phenomenal and the revealed, as well as the public sphere of speech. Only as such, as a rift in the linguistic, communal, and exterior, it can and indeed should be seen as the moment of silence, solitude, and interiority.

This structure of secret solitude as a deconstructive rift in the public, open domain is nicely captured in a distich by Angelus Silesius quoted by Derrida in “Sauf le nom,” a poem which slyly plays on the word *gemein*, in other words “common” in the double sense of the word:<sup>7</sup>

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6) Derrida, “Passions,” 24–27.

7) Derrida, “Sauf le nom,” 53. Leavy’s translation fails to capture both the pun and the rhyme.

*Die Einsamkeit*

Die Einsamkeit ist noth: doch sey nur nicht gemein:  
So kanstu überall in einer Wüste seyn.

Or, in the rough translation by Alexander Schütz-Lipski:

*Solitude*

Solitude is a must: but please don't be common:  
Everywhere can you be in the desert, moron.

It is also in “Sauf le nom” that we might get a first glimpse of the political dimension of this secret solitude as defined abstractly in “Passions.” Close to the end of this brilliant text, one of the two or more speakers that Derrida wittily divides himself into in the conversation recorded in “Sauf le nom” questions the appalling elitism of the secret in its relation to the democratic ideal. However, another Derrida powerfully defends the idea of “a double injunction,” of a paradoxical combination of keeping the secret *and* the desire for democratic universality.<sup>8</sup> Well, all right, but how does it work?

It is precisely at this stage that the argument and terminology of that messy and great essay entitled “Faith and Knowledge” may be of much use. Namely, it is rather clear that in its political dimension Derridean secrecy stands in clear opposition toward two different but complementary forms of violence. On the one hand, as we have already seen both with Celan and with Derrida, the ideal of the public *secret*, of *geheimes Offen*, can be read as radically opposed to the violence embedded in the undemocratic, esoteric *mystery* of the Georgian-style visions of closed ethnic or religious communities that, for all their mysticism of the magic hoods, are, on the exoteric level, all too happy to use the helmets of steel. On the other hand, however, Derridean secrecy, precisely as secrecy, is also opposed to the ideal of full revealedness – the alleged elimination of all secrets in the democratic-yet-hegemonic vision as embodied in what Derrida in “Faith and Knowledge” calls “globalatinization,” in which secularized Christianity turns into the imperialism of the democratic West.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Derridean secrecy effectively questions two forms of hegemony: the hegemony of the esoteric nationalism based on the ideal of mystery and the hegemony of exoteric globalatinization based on the ideal of full openness. As such, the secret is the essential moment of what, again in “Faith and Knowledge,” is defined as “a universalizable culture of singularities,”<sup>10</sup> the project of both universal and heterogeneous Europe to come where we speak one language which is always more than one: namely, what might be called *broken Latin*, the common disrupted by the secret.

Speaking broken Latin means speaking as Derrida did on Capri: “not far from Rome,” but “no longer in Rome” at the same time.<sup>11</sup> However, the discourse on Capri concerned a very specific subject, which I have not even touched upon yet, namely the subject “religion.” It is clear that the non-Georgian, indeed anti-Georgian ideal of secret/public Europe which speaks that broken Latin cannot be properly formulated and properly understood without a reference to its religious dimension. For another name of the hope for, or the promise of, “a universalizable culture of singularities” that forms the proper content of the ideal is certainly Derrida’s “messianicity.” And this very messianicity without messianism – which is abstract and yet, in its very abstraction, focused on the promise of the singular – must be seen as the heart and soul of the disruptive logic of Derrida’s

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8) Ibid., 83.

9) Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge,” 50–52, 66–67.

10) Ibid., 56.

11) Ibid., 44.

secret. Indeed: the globalatinized order claims to be based solely on rational *knowledge* and, moreover, to realize in secular terms the promise of the universal egalitarian morality of the Christian teaching, but – according to the ruthless dialectic of enlightenment – it always breaks the promise by assimilating all singularities into the element of the general. Opposing this logic, the secret, messianic moment of *faith* ultimately unrelated to any revealed doctrine, needs to prick and break the Latin *Offenheit*, in order to reopen it and save the singular name. The ideal of *geheimes Offen* is a remnant of religious *Offenbarung* reduced to the deconstructive moment which, in a messianic gesture, keeps reopening the *Offenheit* of public opinion. Moreover, on a deeper level, it constantly questions and reopens the all-too hegemonic order of philosophical *Offenbarkeit*, of the rationality which claims to precede any positive revelation. On the other hand, it is precisely this very *Offenbarkeit* that is constantly stripping all historical *Offenbarung* of its content and reducing it to the residual secrecy.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, then, we can see Derrida as designing a highly efficient post-secular, messianic machine, which emerges from a *mutual deconstruction of faith and knowledge* and is designed to disentangle us from the dialectic of enlightenment which keeps breaking its promise of singularity.

It is worth remembering, however, that the messianic is only one of the two key terms or names that animate the italicized part of “Faith and Knowledge.” The other term is, of course, *khora*. It is in this essay that Derrida, for the first time in such a systematic way, puts side by side these two crucial categories of his later thought that have been developed independently elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> The sheer fact of this juxtaposition cannot be overestimated. It would seem that the messianic should be associated with the dimension of time, while *khora* is to be linked to the dimension of space. True. However, Derrida’s messianic is time as spaced, while his *khora* is space as temporalized. *Khora* is a temporalized space: it is the abysmal, shifting desert ground which opens the space for things, but at the same time initiates their subversion, passing away and dissemination. The messianic is a spaced time: the necessarily localized vectors of emancipatory promise are scattered across the space rather than unified in one grand narrative, secular or religious. What is essential, though, is the permanent deconstructive interplay between both elements. On the one hand, the messianic without *khora* is in constant danger of turning into a full-fledged messianism, which ultimately cares less about the singular and more about the realization of an overall, pre-determined order of a theological and teleological pattern. On the other hand, without the politico-religious emancipatory promise embedded in the messianic urge, *khora* is in constant danger of turning into a pagan *apeiron*, a desert, nomadic version of Heidegger’s rural Being, which – even though it forms “the very place of an infinite resistance”<sup>14</sup> – might be opposing the globalatinized world not in the name of the messianic promise of the singular, but in the name of an archaic immanence. Thus, it is only the permanent oscillation between the two elements that gives rise to the spatiotemporal framework of Derrida’s politico-religious project of Europe to come, the dynamic texture with the ever-present, deconstructive folds or rifts of secret scattered across the surface, the very moments of the messianic opening of the allegedly open and globalatinized homogeneity.<sup>15</sup>

Now, a complementary argument for the secret/public Europe can be found in Derrida’s reading of Jan Patočka’s *Heretical Essays on the Philosophy of History* in the first two chapters of *The Gift of Death* which

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12) Ibid., 54–55.

13) For messianicity, see Derrida, *Specters of Marx*; and Derrida, “Force of Law,” 228–98; for “*khora*” see Derrida, “Sauf le nom” and “*Khora*” 35–85, 89–127.

14) Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge,” 59.

15) It must be noted that *khora* does make a cameo but important appearance close to the end of *Specters of Marx* where – fleetingly but brilliantly – Derrida links his messianic urge to “a materialism without substance, a materialism of the *khora*.” It makes perfect sense: only the spectral, dispersed materialism of the *khora* is compatible with the messianic which permanently questions the present state of the material Being, but does not assume any substantial Beyond. See Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 212.

slightly precedes “Faith and Knowledge.”<sup>16</sup> In his book, the Czech philosopher sketches the passage from the orgiastic, demonic religions of mythical immanence through Platonism to Christianity. This passage is also the process of making the very historico-philosophical conditions of ethical responsibility. According to Patočka, responsibility is impossible in the framework of mythical religion where the subject is connected to the immanent source of meaning without being capable of becoming fully singularized and taking a moral stand toward singular others. Platonism marks the moment of the turn toward the intellectual, individual ethics, which gets us out of the mythical cave into the light of Goodness. However, what is still needed is the passage from the Good to God, which enables me to become the fully constituted, singular subject of ethical responsibility for the equally singular other. While drawing this line, Patočka traces also the making of true secrecy: from the sacred mystery of the demonic which erases the human through the Platonic disclosure of rational individuality to the true Christian secrecy of the singular subject of ethical responsibility.

While praising Patočka, Derrida secretly deconstructs his simple pattern. Radicalizing Patočka’s praise of the heretical, as well as his claim that the actual potential of Christianity has not been fully realized, he opts for the vision of Christianity as something that is always “to come” in the heretical gestures of dissidence. Thus, Patočka’s three-stage model turns into a rather different scheme. Resorting to a Benjaminian/Adornian terminology, we may say that, for Derrida, the passage from the sacred mystery of mythical religion to the rational revealedness of Platonism encompasses the whole dialectic of enlightenment: from the sacred of the archaic myth to the secular but remythicized order of globalatinization. Again, the vicious circle of this dialectic can be broken only by the dissident, resistant secrecy of *geheimes Offen* that leads us out the Platonic/Latin Egypt of knowledge not into the Promised Land of any stable religious faith, but into the desert of necessarily heretical and permanently uncertain ethical decision aiming at saving the singularity of the other. And if it is true that globalatinization means also the return of myth, then we can understand why in “Faith and Knowledge” Derrida identifies the antimythical, disruptive disenchantment as “the very resource of the religious,” in other words the heretical. Conversely, it would be equally correct to point to the heretical gesture as the proper act of disenchantment.<sup>17</sup>

It is also *The Gift of Death* which, in its further chapters devoted to Søren Kierkegaard, enables us to identify the origin of Derrida’s postsecular religion which is Christianity only to the extent that Christianity means simply messianicity.<sup>18</sup> Namely, the unfounding father of this deconstructive religion is, not surprisingly, the Biblical Abraham. In his essay on the Tower of Babel, Derrida argues that God destroyed the Tower by revealing his name, which can be thus identified as “Confusion.”<sup>19</sup> The Divine Name ruins the tower of the homogeneous empire and breaks our Latin which from now on will be always infected with the virus of *differance*. Thus, in a lecture delivered at the Franz Kafka University of Muri, Casimir Rapatzky argued that in a truly heretical gesture Derrida identifies the Tower of Babel with Mount Sinai as the site of revelation of the Divine Name. Now, without questioning this identification suggested by my mentor and colleague, I would like to point out that it should be substantially extended. Namely, it can be argued that in *The Gift of Death* and in Derrida’s other writings dealing with the figure of Abraham,<sup>20</sup> this site of disruptive revelation is further identified with Mount Moriah. For in his deconstruction of Kierkegaard’s reading of Abraham’s story, Derrida argues that whereas for Kierkegaard’s Abraham, decision marks the passage from the talkative logos of the ethical stage of existence to the utter secrecy and silence of the religious stage; we should rather see this deci-

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16) Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 1–52.

17) Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge,” p. 99.

18) Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 53–115.

19) Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel,” 104–11.

20) See especially Derrida, “Hostipitality,” 358–420.

sion as a disruptive inscription in the very field of the ethical, with the silence of Abraham as the deconstructive moment of secrecy which troubles the domain of language. Thus, I would suggest that the Name of God, the virus of deconstruction injected into human language with the destruction of the Tower of Babel, should be identified with the silence to which Abraham was forced when travelling to Mount Moriah. And if we recall Celan's poem and his play on the word *Abraum* (debris) and the name of Abram/Abraham, as well his resistant apology of the impure and disruptive letter "h," we might take the final step. Namely, we may identify this moment of deconstructive revelation with the very insertion of the additional "h" into Abraham's name which tears him apart and makes him hospitable to the other. Surely, the change of the name happens earlier in the story, but it is only after the Akedah that God calls Abraham *twice* with his new name for the first time, as if only now confirming the change and, perhaps, reaffirming and thus properly establishing the Babelic revelation of deconstructive secrecy.

It is this secret tradition – the tradition of secret – that Derrida's post-secularism tries to receive, cultivate and transmit. However, cultivating this tradition is deeply paradoxical, as it combines repetition with beginning everything from scratch. In his analysis of the very phenomenon of physical trembling that Derrida develops in *The Gift of Death*, he suggests that every new trembling is a repetition of some earlier shock.<sup>21</sup> This analysis gains its full meaning in the light of what we said about the Abrahamic revelation: when we tremble, when we make the stable structures of ethics and language tremble again and again, we are repeating the original Abrahamic trauma. But then again, if this odd revelation is about silence that has no separate domain of its own, there is no teaching to be transmitted and so the reception of this secret tradition means also "reinventing" things anew.<sup>22</sup> Every post-secular act of secret deconstruction, every reinscription of the impure "h" into the German or Latin language, interrupts, opens and reinvents European history.

And yet this is not all. We began with the Georgian vision of secret Germany, with the poet as the highest priest of mystery and the critic as his servant, we moved to Benjamin's rejection of this vision and the praise of the deconstructive gesture of the critic, and then we arrived at Celan's reaffirmation of a differently conceived secrecy of the poetic gesture which, being itself disruptive, incorporates a Benjaminian moment of criticism. Thus, if I am right that Derrida's post-secular understanding of religion may be seen as a powerful extension of Celan's stance, then it is only natural that we should end with poetry or rather – to use the term Derrida prefers – with literature. Indeed, already in the essay on "Passions," the moment of secret is directly, though paradoxically, linked to the medium of literature. Literature – which Derrida defines as the "right to say everything" and perceives as coexistent with democracy<sup>23</sup> – while being the medium of the seemingly full unveiling, remains the most faithful guardian of the secret. Derrida says: "There is in literature, in the exemplary secret of literature, a chance of saying everything without touching upon the secret."<sup>24</sup> This theme is elaborated in the essay on *Literature in Secret*, which forms the appendix to the second edition of *The Gift of Death*.<sup>25</sup> Here, Derrida points out that if it is the case that a text becomes literary when it loses its rigid referential anchors and gets delivered to the public, then the aspect of deconstructive secret is born in a literary text *at the very same time* when the text is revealed through publication. If this argument holds, then it is, indeed, literature that is the proper site of this secret which "does not conceal itself." It is the incurable indeterminacy of the most public

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21) Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 53–55.

22) *Ibid.*, p. 80.

23) Derrida, "Passions," 28.

24) *Ibid.*, 29.

25) I am using Adam Kotsko's translation accessible at <https://itself.files.wordpress.com/2007/01/derrida-literature-in-secret.pdf> (the access on 31 Nov 2015).



language of literature that passes on the tradition of the secret, disruptive Name of God, the tradition of what in “Sauf le nom” is called so aptly “the endless desertification of language.”<sup>26</sup> It is not surprising, then, that the essay on *Literature in Secret* traces the origins of literature to Abraham himself and his own secret and presents the history of literature as the story of the permanent desacralization of the Scripture, a desacralization which nevertheless keeps the secret even more faithfully. Ultimately, then, it would be something that might be called a *literary theology* rather than any form of faith or knowledge that Jacques Derrida advocates in his writings for the sake of his messianic utopia.

And if Abraham is the unbounding father of Derrida’s post-secular religion, then this religion also has its strange, non-redemptive, literary messiah. In the essay devoted to *khora*, Derrida shows how this notorious third element in Platonic cosmology makes and breaks the very structure of Platonism, as it receives, but at the same disrupts the imprint of the forms and thus, as “the strange mother,” it spectralizes the transmission from Father (the form) and Son (the phenomenon). Derrida argues that a structurally analogous position is occupied in Plato’s *Timaeus* by Socrates himself who – being neither a philosopher, nor a poet – receives but also subverts the cosmological narrative. Derrida says: “Socrates is not *khora*, but he would look a lot like it/her if it/she were someone or something.”<sup>27</sup> And yet there is somebody who looks even more like *khora* or, more precisely, like the abysmal *khora* as brought into permanent interplay with the messianic and thus employed in the name of the universal culture singularities, so explicitly and lucidly praised in “Faith and Knowledge.” I mean that Falstaffian Socrates from a book so dear to Jacques Derrida’s heart, a very corporeal, but strangely spectral, a very clumsy, but strangely effective figure of uncertain gender, a man-woman who disrupts the biological link between a father and a son and thus sets the son free as a singular man and author, while secretly and silently and hopelessly begging the son to write down the story of his-her singular suffering, that strange Jewgreek or Greekjew, that melancholy *differance incarnate* which disperses a city into literature, that non-redemptive yet disruptive literary messiah of the public/secret Europe speaking broken Latin, the one who always inadvertently affirms the power of saying No. Yes, I mean him, I mean Leopold Paula Bloom. Yes.

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26) Derrida, *Sauf le nom*, 55–56.

27) Derrida, *Khora*, 111.

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