The European Hamlet

Simon Glendinning

I

Reflecting on the condition of Europe in 1919, the French poet and essayist Paul Valéry offered what some thirteen years later he would call a "summary" of "the state of the European spirit facing its own disarray". Here is his extraordinary summary with no omissions, and all italics and ellipses in the original.

> Standing, now, on an immense sort of terrace of Elsinore that stretches from Basel to Cologne, bordered by the sands of Nieuport, the marshes of the Somme, the limestone of Champagne, the granites of Alsace…our Hamlet of Europe is watching millions of ghosts.
>
> But he is an intellectual Hamlet, meditating on the life and death of truths; for ghosts, he has all the subjects of our controversies; for remorse, all the titles of our fame. He is bowed under the weight of all the discoveries and varieties of knowledge, incapable of resuming this endless activity; he broods on the tedium of rehearsing the past and the folly of always trying to innovate. He staggers between two abysses – for two dangers never cease threatening the world: order and disorder.
>
> Every skull he picks up is an illustrious skull. *Whose was it?* [English in original] This one was *Lionardo*. He invented the flying man, but the flying man has not exactly served his inventor's purposes. We know that, mounted on his great swan (*il grande Uccello sopra del dosso del suo magnio cicero*) he has other tasks in our day than fetching snow from the mountain peaks during the hot season to scatter it on the

streets of towns. And that other skull was *Leibniz*, who dreamed of universal peace. And this one was *Kant…and Kant begat Hegel, and Hegel begat Marx, and Marx begat…* [*Kant… et Kant qui genuit Hegel, et Hegel qui genuit Marx, et Marx qui genuit…*]

Hamlet hardly knows what to make of so many skulls. But suppose he forgets them! Will he still be himself?...His terribly lucid mind contemplates the passage from war to peace: darker, more dangerous that the passage from peace to war; all peoples are troubled by it…"What about Me," he says, "what is to become of Me, the European intellect?...And what is peace?...*Peace is perhaps that state of things in which the natural hostility between men is manifested in creation, rather than destruction as in war*. Peace is a time of creative rivalry and the battle of production; but am I not tired of producing?... Have I not exhausted my desire for radical experiment, indulged too much in cunning compounds?...ambitions?... Perhaps follow the trend and do like Polonius who is now director of a great newspaper; like Laertes, who is something in aviation; like Rosencrantz, who is doing God knows what under a Russian name? "Farewell, ghosts! The world no longer needs you – or me. By giving the name of progress to its own tendency to a fatal precision, the world is seeking to add to the benefits of life the advantages of death. A certain confusion still reigns; but in a little while all will be made clear, and we shall witness at last the miracle of an animal society, the perfect and ultimate anthill. (HP, pp. 28-30)

To begin with, I want just to focus on the part of this passage that identifies a chain of ghosts proceeding from the skull of Kant. In 1919 it seems that Valéry sees that wonderful chain, like the invention of Lionardo, and the dream of Leibnitz, heading into disaster.

When Derrida cited Valéry's text of the European Hamlet from "The Crisis of Spirit" (1919) at the start of his book *Specters of Marx*, he was stopped in his tracks by the fact that in 1932, thirteen years later, Valéry cited the text *himself*, interpolated it into an essay of his own – originally a public lecture – entitled "Politics of Spirit" (1932). (You won't see this interpolation in the English edition of Valéry's essays, I'll come back to that.) Derrida was particularly struck by the fact that in the later text, when Valéry cites the European Hamlet from the earlier one, he did not cite *all* of it. He omits a sentence: he "omits from it only *one* sentence, *just one*, without even signalling the omission by an ellipsis: the one that names Marx, in the very skull of Kant" (SM, p. 5). In this essay, I will attempt to make sense of this omission, and to relate it to Valéry's overriding and interest in the condition of Europe in our time.

Derrida was also interested in Valéry's omission. But he was strangely single-minded about it: "The name of Marx has disappeared" he says (SM, p. 5). Indeed it has. But it wasn't just Marx's name. It was, as he sort of acknowledged, a sentence-worth of names, the sentence that had Kant and Hegel as well as Marx in it, and which "finished" (in the original) with an ellipsis, so who knows what, who, or how many names Valery omitted. But on the main point Derrida is quite right. This is a sentence (of elliptical inclusion) that Valéry *omits*, and omits without admitting omission, in his recitation of himself in 1932. What is going on here?

On his Marx hunt, Derrida noted that ghosts *appear* in the movement of spirit either with the *name*, where, as he puts it, spirit "assumes a body" (SM, p. 6) or, *when the name disappears*, with "that which *marks* the name" (SM, p. 9). So Derrida, single-mindedly interested in Marx, tried to work out where Marx's name was inscribed elsewhere in Valéry's text. And he

found something, and not too far away (though perhaps a little further than he acknowledges), in a remark of Valéry's that might specify a continuation of the chain of ghosts (and retaining Valéry's original Latin for the begetting) to Valéry himself: "*Marx qui genuit Valéry*". The remark appears in a text by Valéry ("*Lettre sur la sociéte des espirits*") that commented on his (Valéry's) own signature concept of "the transformative power of spirit", where he adds the supplementary specification that "*the spirit…works*" (cited, SM, p. 9).

Not much to work with, and perhaps it is being asked to do too much. In any case, as I say, it was not only Marx's name that had disappeared. Derrida says that "the name of the one who disappeared must have gotten inscribed someplace else" (SM, p. 5). Right. But it is that "someplace else", *for the whole name-list* (and more, as we shall see) that I want to track down in this essay.

Let's ask then, since it isn't just the name of Marx that went missing, what made *that* sentence ("*Enter Ghost[s] and Hamlet*"), with all those names, no longer work for Valéry in the later text ("*Exeunt ghost[s] and Marx*") (SM, p. 5).

First of all one may well wonder about the work done by more than that just that one sentence in the recitation in the later essay. For the whole self-quotation of the European Hamlet, with its omission, is completely omitted in the English edition of Valéry's *Collected Works*, marked more or less silently by the editor with an across-the-page ellipsis or "line of dots" (HP, p. 104). It's as if it did no work at all. In fact, as we shall see, the English text's omitting it all makes it even clearer why Valéry might have omitted just that one sentence when he included the European Hamlet in his new text. We will then be well on our way towards

specifying the "someplace else" where Valery's omission of names in 1932 are all inscribed. We will also see how the editor tried, nevertheless, in a certain way, to put some of it back.

II

The European Hamlet had seen how Leonardo's flying man had begat great swans that scatter bombs rather than snow on the streets of towns; how Leibnitz's dream of universal peace lay in shatters in war; and how *Kant qui genuit Hegel, et Hegel qui genuit Marx, et Marx qui genuit…* All of these are wonders of Europe's intellectual spirit, and all have begat…disasters. *Marx qui genuit Lenin* was already on the horizon for Valery in 1919. In 1932, when he wrote "The Politics of Spirit", Stalin could have been added onto that chain too. Derrida had shown in *Specters of Marx* that the Kant-Hegel-Marx line could also be taken in the direction of Valéry himself, in the generating labour of spirit. We should not expect a line of ghosts to proceed in one direction only, or in a single file. Nevertheless, the trending line in Valéry's text moves from tinselled dreams to tragic realities – and we will confirm a distinctively German trend in this direction later.

Derrida had a sharp eye seeing the line of great German spirits omitted from the self-citation in 1932. But actually, and Derrida didn't notice this at all, that was not the only moment of omission in the later text. The European Hamlet belongs to the closing paragraphs of the 1919 essay "The Crisis of Spirit" that Valéry recites and Derrida recalls and the editor omits from "Politics of Spirit". But that self-citation was in fact the second of two such self-citations in the later text. That text hosts another interpolation, this time from the opening paragraphs of the "The Crisis of Spirit". And in that first self-citation Valery makes four further secret omissions, three of which also contain names.

Counting them in the order they occur in the text (but not taking them in order for a moment), the fourth omission is a little two-line quote from a Latin text by Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, a 4th Century Roman Christian Poet, cited by Valéry in 1919 in Latin. It is, even in translation, pretty obscure, so one can well understand that for the 1932 text, which as I say was given as a public lecture, it wasn't suitable. I won't say more about this omission, although more could be said. It is the first three omissions that are a real puzzle.

The first is the omission of "Elam", the name of an ancient state-like region to the west of Mesopotamia, that was the first in a list of three "beautiful vague names" – "Elam, Ninevah, Babylon" – that belong to worlds that have fallen into "the abyss of history", the abyss into which "we…now know" our own world too can fall (it is "deep enough to hold us all"). The second omission, from the same paragraph, removes two sentences that contain a list of names from our own world, which one day too, Valéry says, "would be beautiful names": "France, England, Russia", and he then adds (and later omits) that "*Lusitania,* too, is a beautiful name" (HP, p. 23). (The *Lusitania* referred to here is a British ocean liner that was sunk by a German U-boat in 1915 resulting in the death of 1,198 passengers and crew.) If the first two omissions are not already puzzling enough, the third omission is the most striking for us since it clearly anticipates the line of begetting that will singularly disappear in the second self-citation, the European Hamlet. With this third omission, two whole paragraphs of the original text are removed, paragraphs in which Valéry "cite[s] but one example", not of the loss of "beautiful things" but of our bearing witness to the "extraordinary phenomena" of what he calls "a paradox suddenly become fact". Here is what goes missing from the 1919 text in the third omission from the first self-citation in 1932:

> I shall cite but one example: the great virtues of the German peoples have *begotten* more evils than idleness ever bred vices. With our own eyes, we have seen

> conscientious labor, the most solid learning, the most serious discipline and application adapted to appalling ends.
>
> So many horrors could not have been possible without so many virtues. Doubtless, much science was needed to kill so many, to waste so much property, annihilate so many cities in so short a time; but *moral qualities* in like number were also needed.
>
> Are Knowledge and Duty, then, suspect? (HP, p. 24, first italics mine)

The line of ghosts proceeding from the skull of Kant is not itself a line of decline. They belong together as a chain of what "would be beautiful names". But like the other beautiful names in the European Hamlet – Leonardo and Leibniz – they do not exclude begetting evils. And in 1919 what Valéry seems most clearly, if not exclusively (these are ghosts, and Rosencrantz went to Russia), to have in mind was *German political "horrors"*. In 1933, in a different essay, Valéry made the point again, although without the exclusively German example:

> Nothing is more remarkable than to see that ideas, separated from the intellect that conceived them, isolated from the complex conditions of their birth, from the delicate analyses and the hundreds of tests and comparisons that preceded them, can become *political agents…signals…weapons…stimulants* – that products of reflection may be used purely for their value as provocation. How many examples there have been in the past hundred and fifty years! Fichte, Hegel, Marx, Gobineau, Nietzsche, even Darwin, have been put to use, turned into crude slogans. (HP, p. 275)

Derrida would sometimes recall Marx saying "I am not a Marxist" (he did so, however, in order, like Marx, to say the words in his own name, and hence as far as possible also without Marx) but we should not suppose that the "products of reflection" Valéry recalls here are not themselves "*stimulants*", or that the "*political agents*" that deploy them deploy "*weapons*" that are simply absent from the "conditions of their birth". Valéry's sense of the extraordinary

phenomenon of a remarkable "paradox" – that "great virtues" are "needed" in the carrying out of political horrors – should not obscure the general provocation to political agency (whether for good or ill) that belongs internally to the philosophical (and indeed scientific) productions he lists here. Adding a few years to Valéry's list from the last one hundred and fifty years that he looks back on, we could add Kant to the list (as Hegel showed regarding the French Revolution as a profoundly "Kantian" event) so that all of our three names would be there, along with some others. But all three disappeared from the second recitation, the imminence of their arrival anticipated in the paragraphs of the "paradox" of *begetting* omitted from the first. And perhaps that explains their omission: perhaps, they were then removed as no longer working, no longer doing their work.

Actually, I don't think that is all that's going on here. Nevertheless, with the third omission from the first citation and the single omission from the second, it looks like Valéry has gone to some lengths to make a paradoxical "*Germany qui genuit…*" disappear. And that alone is bizarre since he did so at a time (1932) when exactly that paradox was appearing once again on Europe's horizon. In 1939, when Hitler had already "proceeded against the weakest states on his frontiers" (HP, p. 469), Valéry had a new and more extreme example for the German example in full view: "What a strange people is that great people! They have produced admirable and universal works of the mind, and yet they deliver themselves up to a persecutor of the mind" (HP, p. 468). In 1932 something of that imminence was certainly already in view, and the reminder of the paradox that had become fact in 1919 would not have been out of place at all. Indeed, in that context one might think that the German example could hardly be omitted, especially in a text on the politics of spirit which, in its opening line states that the speaker proposes "to evoke for you the disorder in which we live" (HP, p. 89). It is very puzzling.

Beyond that puzzle (which I will try to sort out in a moment), I think the singular omission in the second self-citation will bear a supplementary interpretation. However, I want now to note that while the disappearance of Germany in 1932 is striking and odd, the fact that Valéry *omitted* what it seems *prima facie* so appropriate to *include* should make us wonder afresh what is going on here. And it sends us back to the second omission in the first self-citation, which might now take on a new significance. For with the omission of the "beautiful names" of "France, England, Russia" we can see that Valéry has removed the names of any European states whatsoever from his text. Indeed, with the removal of those names and "Elim" (and even "Lusitania" as the name of an old state-like region on the Iberian peninsula), he has removed the names of any *states* whatsoever. He has wiped his text clean of states. His new text in 1932 has no such beautiful state names at all. You'd think he meant it. I think he did.

III

In 1932 Valéry wants to speak in the third-person plural, to "evoke for you" something about "us" and "the disorder in which we live". The text gets going less personally, however, with reflections about "man" in general, and the orders and disorders of "the world of man" in general (HP, p. 91), and how things are "different with man" compared to the world of "an animal" (HP, p. 97). As Derrida notes the definition and difference of man outlined here will prepare for a discussion on a theme that Derrida more than most made us alert to: namely, that "*all politics imply a certain idea of man*" (HP, p. 103, italics in original). However, it is not just "man" that concerns Valéry but, explicitly, the "we" that is "*modern man*" (HP, p. 93, italics in original). And note: not modern man here or there, in this or that state, but modern man, he says and stresses, in "*all States*" (HP, p. 108, italics in original). Unfortunately for the English reader, the complete omission (by Valéry) of all actual state-

names is compounded by the English edition's complete omission (by the editor) of the two self-citations themselves, for in doing so it also removes from Valéry's text the only sentences in the original 1932 text that Valéry retained concerning any "someplace else". The English editor's omissions removed the name of *Europe* from the scene.

From the first self-citation, which is introduced in 1932 with a stress on the fact that his questions about "modern man" are not new but were already his concerns in 1919, we find four explicit references to Europe in the French text of "La politque de l'esprit**"**:

> *Un frisson extraordinaire a couru la moelle de l'Europe* [An extraordinary shudder ran through the marrow of Europe]. (PE, p. 202)
>
> *Et dans le même désordre mental, à l'appel de la même angoisse, l'Europe cultivée a subi la reviviscence rapide de ces innombrables pensées* [And in the same disorder of mind, at the summons of the same anguish, all cultivated Europe underwent the rapid revival of her innumerable ways of thought]. (PE, p. 203)
>
> *Tout le spectre de la lumière intellectuelle a étalé ses couleurs incompatibles, éclairant d'une étrange lueur contradictoire l'agonie de l'âme européenne* [The whole spectrum of intellectual light spread out its incompatible colours, illuminating with a strange and extraordinary glow the death agony of the European soul]. (PE, p. 203)
>
> *Il y a l'illusion perdue d'une culture européenne et la démonstration de l'impuissance de la connaissance à sauver quoi que ce soit* [The illusion of a European culture has been lost, and knowledge has been proved impotent to save anything]. (PE, p. 204)

From the second self-citation (the European Hamlet), we find two further references to Europe in the French text, and the introduction of that self-citation (obviously also omitted in the English edition) introduces one more too:

> *...je vais vous lire encore quelques pages du même essai dont je vous ai parlé. J'y ai résumé, en forme de monologue, l'état de l'esprit européen devant son propre désarroi* […I want to read you a few more pages from the text I spoke about earlier, where I summarised, in the form of a monologue, the state of the European spirit facing its own disarray]. (PE, p. 216)
>
> *Maintenant, sur une immense terrasse qui va de Bâle à Cologne, qui touche aux sables de Nieuport, aux bords de la Somme, aux grès de Champagne, au granit d'Alsace, l'Hamlet européen regarde des millions de spectres*. [Now, on an immense sort of terrace of Elsinore that stretches from Basel to Cologne, bordered by the sands of of Nieuport, the marshes of the Somme, the limestone of Champagne, the granites of Alsace, our Hamlet of Europe is watching millions of ghosts]. (PE, p. 216)
>
> *"-et moi" , se dit-il, "moi l'intellectuel européen, que vais-je devenir*?" ["What about Me," he says, "what is to become of Me, the European intellect?" (PE, p. 217)

So, in all, seven references to Europe in Valéry's later text, and none to any states. Stripped of its self-citations the English version of the French text is uncannily bear. With all state names omitted by Valéry himself, the *only* references to a place (apart from a few scattered city names) which would gather the text as *a discourse on (some)place* gets omitted too. All that is left is just man, the animal, and modern man. But what the citations set on the stage so vividly and expressly, and what is presented in these two self-citing centre-pieces of Valéry's whole talk, is precisely the "someplace else" that is the somewhere where we moderns are: Europe.

Europe: *that* is where those state names got inscribed. Retaining those state names would shatter the scene into something constantly comparative (it's not so bad here, it's worse here, that place is just strange, it's really bad (again) here, etc). Without fear or favour to any

particular state in Europe, even Germany in 1932, it is all about the fate of the spirit of modern European man as such and in any state, in what Valéry calls, once more, a "phase", a "*critical phase*" of "our civilization", and its "*age*" (HP, p. 93, italics in original).

In stripping out all the references to state names in the self-citation, and so, along with all the others, stripping out Germany and the evils the great virtues of "its peoples have begotten", the skull of Kant and its begetting onto an open question of its further begetting no longer does its work for Valéry either. It doesn't work now that earlier reference has gone. So it had to go too.

IV

So far so good. However, as I have indicated, there is room for a supplementary interpretation of the omission of the Kant-Hegel-Marx sentence, a further reason for its not working. And this is related to what comes to the fore when it is just a question of the "*critical phase*" of modern European man, which is the theme of Valéry's Europe theme. It is, he says, a question of "*one* remarkable feature" of "the modern world": the "strange contrast" and "curious split" between "man" as understood in the lexicon of modern politics ("the *citizen*, the *voter*, the *candidate*, the *taxpayer*, the *common man*"), and "man" as understood in the lexicon of modern science ("contemporary biology, psychology, or even psychiatry") (HP, p. 92). In a time after Darwin, and even a time after Freud, and perhaps, let me add, also a time after Marx, our whole self-understanding is changed. As early as 1906 the young Valéry, writing in a letter to André Lebey, noted – and I would stress, noted with Marx but also beyond Marx – that with the arrival of Darwin "the whole of history is changed. I mean all thinking about history" (HP, p. 6). He means thinking about the meaning of history. Marx too had thought that the idea of a teleology of nature had been dealt a "death-blow" by Darwin. But he accommodated the blow, and maintained the idea of a teleological sense of history

nonetheless. Valéry is not so sanguine, and sees in the transition into an age in which, as Edmund Husserl would put it around the same time, "the total worldview of modern man…let itself be determined by the positive sciences" (CES, p. 6), a situation in which we modern Europeans were struggling to see meaning in world history at all.

However, one crucial area of our life had yet to be swamped by positive science: our politics. Our time, Valéry suggests, is one in which there has emerged what he calls a profound "antinomy" between "political *reality*" and "scientific *truth*" concerning our self-understanding, the "conception of man" in each (HP, p. 104). This was not always so, says Valéry. There were "periods" where such a "gap" did not exist. And this is because the self-understanding that belongs to the "science" side of this contrast had not always been the product of positive science – not the upshot of "objective research, founded on verifiable evidence (which is the exact meaning of the word 'scientific')". Rather, it was the product of what belonged to "the conception of man…formulated by the philosophy of the time" (HP, p. 104). In this earlier time the lexicon of European science about man (which was primarily the lexicon of European philosophy about man) and the lexicon of European politics more or less aligned: the same conception of man belonged to both. But, says Valéry, not today, no longer today. And it is then, exactly then, that Valéry quotes himself, and cites the European Hamlet *sans* the generation of the ghosts Kant-Hegel-Marx and the open ellipsis of what might be generated in turn by Marx.

Leonardo and Leibniz – they comfortably belong to that older time, and the European Hamlet sees the decline into positivist techno-scientific modernity, its killing machines and wars, that befalls them. But that other skull – the skull of Kant – that perhaps belongs to a line of generations in time that does not just represent that former time. On the contrary, it represents

a line that is at least caught up in the general movement *between* these times, belonging, in part at least, to the movement towards an increasing domination of our self-understanding by positive science. These generations represent something of what goes on between the times that interest Valéry.

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida draws attention to a significant shift within the history of philosophical history in the line Kant-Hegel-Marx from texts that were "philosophical and religious" to ones which were "philosophical and scientific". The status of the philosophical had always implied some idea of itself as a science (which gets called "metaphysics"), but in the shift we see in the generation of Marx the irreligious character of its criticism is inseparable from its commitment to grounding its claims not in abstract ideas, still less in Providence, but in the empirical study of real human beings in society. Of course, this shift is not only in Marx or since Marx. Indeed, beyond Marx, even the philosophical (teleological) part of the project of philosophical history that Marx retained is overwhelmed by what Valéry calls "the growth of a positivist mentality" (HP, 106).

Nevertheless, with Kant-to-Marx we are concerned with what went on between then and now. A "between" in the movement in European spirit between "a certain idea of man…and a conception of the world" which had belonged to philosophical science in the past, and the idea of man and a conception of the world that belongs to (philosophy-displacing) positive science today (HP, p. 106). But, now, and this is Valéry's main point: "The idea of man implied in political notions" has *not* followed a related development. And so the idea of man in modern politics and the idea of "man" in modern science are now profoundly misaligned: "there is already an abyss between them" (HP, p. 103).

However, Valéry does not recommend closing that abyss by pushing our conception of man in politics towards what we now have from positive science. Not at all. The situation is far more distressing, almost pure distress, because that gap-closing effort would only make things far, far worse:

> Let us give an example: if we tried to apply, in the realm of politics, the ideas about man which we find in the current doctrines of science, life would probably become unbearable for most of us. There would be a general revolt of feeling in the face of such strict application of perfectly rational data. For it would end, in fact, by classifying each individual, invading his personal life, sometimes killing or mutilating certain degenerate or inferior types… (HP, p. 103)

Michel Foucault's celebrated elaboration of a conception of modern biopolitics anticipated the world of this gap-closing. And, indeed, he picked up a word that had been incubating in the West since the 1920s. The German physician, Hans Reiter – an enthusiastic supporter of and participant in enforced racial sterilization, who undertook experiments on typhus inoculation at Buchenwald concentration camp during the Second World War, and who edited a book on "racial hygiene" – used the word (affirmatively) in the 1930s. An American biologist, Robert Kuttner – an enthusiastic supporter of eugenics and co-founder of the "Institute of Biopolitics" in the 1950s – used it in relation to what he called "scientific racism". Biopolitics would belong for Valéry to a disaster of realignment between modern science and modern politics. When he wrote the original lecture in 1932 Valéry thought his projection was "exaggerated" (HP, p. 104). Only four years later, he added a footnote to his essay when it was prepared for publication in 1936: "A recent piece of legislation in a certain foreign country has fulfilled this prediction by prescribing several such strictly rational methods" (HP, p. 103).

Sticking to what appears to be his intention – of omitting names of states – Valéry does not name the "foreign country" in question. But there, wherever it was, modern science was becoming part of modern political reality. He was probably thinking, once more, of Germany. (For example, the "Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring" came into force under the National Socialist regime in 1934). As we shall see in a moment, the editor of the English edition is confident that it was Germany that Valéry had in mind. But eugenics laws were not in fact confined to Germany at that time. It could have been one of quite a number of foreign countries.

Biopolitics is one intuitive form of distressing realignment. However, it was not the only one on the horizon. The Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union also wanted scientifically to re-fashion "man" through the "application of perfectly rational data", in their case principally on the basis of a (supposedly) social science rather than a (supposedly) biological science. That being said, eugenics did not simply disappear in the pre-War Soviet Union either, although its association with Nazism later made it as unwelcome there as it increasingly became elsewhere. Nevertheless, a general scientific spirit was part of the fabric of Marxism, as it was already in Marx. Both Engels and Lenin went out of their way to present Marx's work as "Scientific Socialism", stressing, for example, that the questions Marx posed concerning the transformation of the state in communist society "can only be answered scientifically" (Engels), Lenin adding that the answer given by Marxism had indeed been developed "by using firmly established scientific data" (SR, pp. 89-90). Non-Marxist views, by contrast, were condemned by Lenin as being "scientifically wrong" (SR, p. 84). Science – or at least an idea of science – is central to the language of "spiritual" progress in the politics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; so much so that we no longer call it spiritual progress but scientific progress, or just progress.

All of this provides a supplementary reason why the sentence with our line of ghosts might need to disappear. The work of the second self-citation (the citation of the European Hamlet) was to illustrate a changeover from a time in which the understanding of the world and the significance of our lives proposed by science and the idea of man belonging to politics were more or less aligned. The line of ghosts proceeding from the skull of Kant does not represent that aligned (let's say) Renaissance condition and misaligned modern condition, but belongs to the movement of increasing misalignment. Valéry wanted to represent then and now, not what went on between then and now. The sentence does not really work anymore. It had to go.

V

The editor of the English edition could not resist responding to Valéry's omitting to state-name the "foreign country" which realized his modern-alignment prediction, adding a footnote to Valéry's footnote which asserts that "there is little doubt" that he is referring to Germany (HP, p. 583). Intriguingly he then adds a sort of footnote to his own footnote to a footnote, sending the reader to another footnote of his own, a note where he (the editor) identifies two books that Valéry must have had in mind but omitted to mention when he wrote (in another essay, from 1937) of "two books…by two different theorists of the nineteenth century" to illustrate a point. Valéry's point there is in fact an importantly related one to our discussion. He was insisting in that essay that "reflective thought…endows action with the means…of becoming real" (HP, p. 367). And he writes (without naming them) of "Two states, two very great and powerful states, owing their ideas to these two books" (HP, p. 368). The two books, the editor insists, must be Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867) ("of course") and Gobineau's race-theoretical *Essai sure l'inégalité des races humaines* (1854) (HP, 600). This footnote then chases us further round the houses, referring to another essay in the volume (from 1926) in which Valéry comments explicitly on "the attention Gobineau's work

[had] aroused in Germany" (HP, p. 536), and then finally to another essay in the volume (from 1937) in which Valéry names the two books by name himself (HP, p. 551). The editor who had omitted the self-citations which had omitted the German philosophical/scientific production-line that had made its way into Russian politics, restores the name of Marx that Valéry omitted, adding to it the name of the (more implicitly omitted, if one can say that) French philosophical/scientific production that had made its way into the German politics that Valéry didn't name either.

Valéry's text retained the names of cities, regions and landmarks of both place and history, but in his representation of the "disorder in which we live" in the original text, the "somewhere where *we* are" is marked exclusively supra-nationally, in the name, only, of Europe. He spoke, one might say, to the universality of a modern condition of all European humanity as such, in all states, in every state. And, one might add, he remained rigorously faithful to his sense of his own French particularity in doing so: "specializing in the sense of the universal" (HP, p.436). However, something fundamental to the classic discourse of Europe's modernity has changed in this project: this is now a discourse of modern Europe's disorder, "its own disarray", and not, or no longer, a discourse of Europe's modern exemplarity: no longer a philosophical history of the emancipation and progress of "man" with Europe at the front, as it had previously been understood in philosophical history – in Kant, in Hegel, and in Marx. It is, in other words, a universal European history of the crisis of the culture of universal history, the crisis of the particular culture which had seen itself heading off towards a universal future of freedom for all humanity, elaborated so confidently in the variations of philosophical history that we find in Kant, Hegel and Marx. Modern Europe, for Valéry, was still caught up with a global trajectory: commodifying its scientific and technical attainments and distributing them to the whole of humanity as "articles…that

can be imitated and produced almost anywhere" (HP, p. 35). The history of the world was still understood as inseparable from Europe's modernity spreading out with "the most intense power of radiation", and on a truly global scale (HP, p. 31). However, "the modern world with all its power, its prodigious technological capital, its thorough discipline in scientific and practical methods" (HP, p. 92) was not forging anything like a political heading towards a final "end of man" of the kind the Great German thinkers had imagined and dreamt of. On the contrary, our current situation has completely changed. *The discourse of Europe's modernity had become a discourse of modern Europe's crisis* – and of the European spirit in disarray:

> Will Europe become *what it is in reality* – that is, a little promontory on the continent of Asia?
>
> Or will it remain *what it seems* – that is, the elect portion of the terrestrial globe, the pearl of the sphere, the brain of a vast body? (HP, p. 31)

Europe's greatness had always been a kind of "appearance", not a natural reality, but Europe had *made itself* by *calling itself to appear* – like a kind of spectral pearl – as an "advanced point of exemplarity" for global humanity (OH, p. 24). But this pearly appearance was dissolving, Europe's old spirit dispirited and shattered. The great Eurocentric and teleological discourses of world history, the discourses that belonged Kant (in a teleology of nature), to Hegel (in a teleology of spirit), and to Marx (in a teleology of the democratic state), these great discourse of Europe's modernity were dying. In Flaubertian style, Valéry concludes that his "subject", the only one he can keep to, is now "the impossibility of concluding" (HP, p. 112).

Whither Europe? We now no longer know where we are going at all; we have lost our heading. "*We are backing into the future*", says Valéry, and "*headed I know not where*" (HP, p. 113, italics in original). We, we late moderns, are still in that phase. Whether, today, this

can still be grasped in the old philosophical-historical concept of "crisis", in terms of a "world crisis" or Europe crisis", is something we are only now beginning to think.

Bibliography

OH Derrida, Jacques, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, trans. P. A. Brault and M. B. Naas, Bloomington: Indiana University Press (1992).

SM Derrida, Jacques, *Specters of Marx*, trans. P. Kamuf, London: Routledge (1994)

CES Husserl, Edmund, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. D. Carr, Evanston: Northwestern University Press (1970)

SR Lenin, V.I., *State and Revolution*, Chicago: Haymarket Books (2014)

HP Valéry, Paul, *Collected Works of Paul Valery, Volume 10: History and Politics*, ed. J. Matthews, London: Routledge & K. Paul (1962)

PE Valéry, Paul, "La politique de l'esprit", *Variété III*, Paris: Gallimard (1936)