

# friendship and postmodern | utopianism

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In 1892 utopian politics died in Europe. Writing his monumental *Degeneration* that year, Max Nordau had observed the irreparable ill-health of *fin de siècle* utopianism, commenting at length on its lamentable enervation, exhaustion and hysteria. An optimistic prognosis, for by the time that more discerning physician Fredrick Engels appeared on the scene with his *Socialism, from Utopia to Science*, the patient was finished, leaving no discernible trace, no apparent legacy of the ‘eclectic ... mish-mash of ... critical statements, economic theories, pictures of future society’, with which it had been afflicted.<sup>1</sup> Yet believers insist that the ghost of utopianism returned to Europe in May 1968, and that it has been haunting the ruins of ‘the political’ ever since. This paper is written in the spirit of belief. It has two claims: first, and incidentally, that utopianism—namely, a politics of alternatives poised at the limits of thought and being, epistemology and ontology—is both expedient and inevitable in regard to a terrain where, *à la* Foucault, power is everywhere, ‘immanent to the social field, distributed through the brains and bodies of citizens’;<sup>2</sup> and second, and here is the crux of my argument, the movement in our time from nihilism to utopianism has required a careful renegotiation with ideas of community, communication, sociability, *conatus*. This process, most apparent within contemporary postmodernism, I would like to call, after Derrida, the politics of friendship. The rest of this paper is an attempt to describe the restless itinerary of such a politics, which entails, in the main, postmodernism’s departure from the cult of the hybrid subject toward a non-communitarian understanding of community.

## — THE CRISIS OF HYBRIDITY

The theoretical motivations of postmodernism and its allies are often explained as a reaction against the sort of a priori essentialism typified in Kantian notions of ethical agency, on the

one hand, and (predominantly) Marxist notions of political agency, on the other. Kant and Marx are, in this sense, inextricable.<sup>3</sup> The disciplined solidarities of revolutionary politics require an ethical agent tutored (via Kant) in habits of invulnerability to the anarchic domain of desire and inclination.<sup>4</sup> And faced with this ethico-political demand for an agent constitutively free from the heterogeneity of consciousness and the distractions of experience, postmodernism, perversely, has begged to differ. Principally, its departure from the Kant–Marx dyad has relied on the wild conjuration of an empirical or hybrid subject of desire: too slippery to be constrained within the unitary (and austere) solidarities of sex, race, nation, class; too whimsical to fix, in advance, the meaning of political/ethical action ‘independently of any articulatory practise’.<sup>5</sup>

There are many routes through which desire might be said to enter the enclave of postmodernism. Some say it arrived (into French philosophy) through Alexandre Kojève’s and Jean Hippolyte’s careless reformulation of Hegel as a philosopher of subjective longing (for recognition). Others blame the early Georg Lukacs and his belated imitators for a misreading of Marx as a theorist of need, who condemns, in his account of alienation, the tragic supersession (in the inexorable logic of capital) of use-value by exchange-value, such that the concrete embodiments of human labour (the muscles, nerves, cells, needs, of real sensual producers) are progressively erased within the abstract structure of the commodity form. Both routes spell trouble. Kojève’s neo-Hegelianism, arguably, re-animates a rapacious subject who can only claim satisfaction through the ‘negation’ or destruction of the desired object. And Lukacs’s distorted Marxism, likewise, infamously ends with the recommendation that the desiring/vital subject overcome alienation by refusing to countenance any independent object outside/apart from itself.

Tutored either by Kojève or by Lukacs, desire (in one rendition of this narrative) arrives into postmodernism under the sign of nihilism. And, indeed, designed to negate the political as we know it, the hybrid subject of new left, queer and postcolonial theories, among others, has performed admirably, leaving in its wake ‘splinters’, ‘fragments’, ‘instability’, ‘disarray’, ‘ruin’, and progressively exploding, in the words of Chantal Mouffe, ‘the idea and the reality of a unique space of constitution of the political’.<sup>6</sup> Negation, the philosophers tell us, may well be the prerequisite for a ‘different and positive reconstruction of the social fabric’.<sup>7</sup> However, on account of its radical unsocialisation, the hybrid subject has, I submit, proved ill-equipped to undertake the task of ‘positive reconstruction’. Why?

Freed from the renunciatory protocols of Kantian and Marxist thought, the hybrid subject of desire (much like Hegel’s ‘master’ in *The Phenomenology of Mind*) is encouraged to approach the world/social fabric simply as the source of her enjoyment.<sup>8</sup> Contemporary politics, as Paul Gilroy argues, takes its cue from ‘the body as a seat of desires’.<sup>9</sup> Writing in similar vein, Michel de Certeau privileges a tactical politics achieved in those moments when ‘the housewife confronts heterogenous and mobile data—what she has in her refrigerator, the tastes, appetites,

and moods of her guests, the best buys and their possible combinations with what she has on hand at home'.<sup>10</sup> The relation of such an agent to what surrounds her is that of pure consumer, and one equipped to consume at will through a figurative or theoretical affluence. Always favoured by 'plenitude', 'excess', 'multivalence' and 'mobility', the liberatory potential of such a subject may only resonate, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, among others, have recently observed, 'with the situation of an elite population that enjoys certain rights, a certain level of wealth, and a certain position in a global hierarchy'.<sup>11</sup> Polymorphous and perverse, the hybrid subject is cloned, we might say, from the genetic substance of corporate capital and the world market.

To summarise: in its first (nihilistic) movement against a priori essentialism, postmodernism substitutes the austere and 'stripped down' subject of Kantian deontology with its antithesis, namely, the affluent and privileged subject of postmodern desire. In so doing, it raises a spoilt child, attentive only to the insatiability and availability of its own desires, who (to quote Charles Taylor out of context), 'being in face of a world which offers him no effective resistance tends to sink back into a stupor of self-coincidence. He approaches the stagnant pole where  $I = I$ '.<sup>12</sup> Having travelled this far, let us accompany postmodernism on the next leg of its journey, in the company of Maurice Blanchot.

#### — AN ANTI-COMMUNITARIAN COMMUNITARIANISM

One of the many problems with the project of hybrid subjectivity is that it, paradoxically, sets itself in binary opposition against the Kant–Marx dyad, contesting radical self-sufficiency with radical excess or desire. But, soon becoming '*mutatis mutandis* a copy of that by which it felt itself to be oppressed', it starts to replicate the crippling solipsism of its ethical antagonist.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps no postmodern thinker addresses these dangers more eloquently than Maurice Blanchot. His *The Unavowable Community*, especially, advises us that 'self-sufficiency' meets its greatest challenge not in the opposing pole of 'excess', but rather, in the more interruptive principle of subjective 'insufficiency', which in turn cannot be accomplished without association with other beings. A being, says Blanchot, achieves its 'awareness of ... insufficiency ... from the fact that it puts itself in question, which question needs the other or another to be enacted. *Left on its own, a being closes itself, falls asleep and calms down.*'<sup>14</sup> With this shift from an 'ethics of excess' toward an 'ethics of insufficiency', postmodernism begins its significant negotiations with the idea of communication/community, arriving in a frenzied anti-Kantian momentum at a junction already crowded with the travel-weary thoughts of contemporary communitarians.

For what has happened, of course, in the subtle turn of Blanchot's thinking is an imperceptible (and, as we will see, potentially hazardous) theft of tropes from Hegel's monumental effort, *contra* Kant, to lay down the ethico-political imperatives of inter-subjective community.

I do not wish to dwell on Hegel here. But for our discussion to proceed we need, for a moment, to pay renewed attention to the fact that any meaningful critique of Kantian autonomy conducted via the vector of community, communication, *conatus*, must pass through Hegel's endeavour to reconcile the claims of moral autonomy with the highest expressive unity within and between 'men'. The marks of this philosophical passage are proudly displayed by contemporary communitarians like Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel and Michael Walzer; each of whom foregrounds, *à la* Hegel, the 'thick' or embedded nature of ethico-political agency. Our ethical capacity, as Sandel insists, accrues from 'the particular people we are—as members of this family or community or nation or people, as bearers of this history, as sons and daughters of that revolution, as citizens of this republic'.<sup>15</sup> And in this theorem we can begin to see the first faultlines of a Hegelian inheritance, faultlines which postmodernism must repair before it can make any meaningful claim on a politics of community. What is the problem exactly?

Lest we forget, the projected Hegelian community, outlined in the dialectic of the master and the slave, relies exclusively on the principle of reciprocal recognition, such that I can only enter into inter-subjective or communal alliance with another whom I recognise as myself. So too, my 'interlocutor' cancels my alterity, seeing in me, as Taylor paraphrases, 'another, but one that is not foreign, which is at one with himself'.<sup>16</sup> Hegel, it would appear, has merely replaced Kant's self-identical subject with a self-identical community: the latter extending, in Blanchot's observation, the former's 'relation to himself, perpetually repeated'.<sup>17</sup> Communitarian or partialist thought, no less, absorbs Hegel's valorised relation of Same with Same, always privileging commitments to those who are either 'proximate', 'given' or, in some inalienable way, 'our own' (of the same nation, family, community, republic, revolution and so on).

Now a number of questions present themselves, both more and less obvious. Does loyalty to 'my own' liberate me of ethical obligations to all those who are not of my own nation, family, community, republic, revolution? Where do I go when the burdens of my deviancy put me at risk precisely from those who are unquestionably 'my own'? If, following the advice of philosopher Marilyn Friedman, I defiantly choose or 'elect' my affinities, will I escape the deadlock of self-identical community?<sup>18</sup> Will my voluntary affiliations, still desperately seeking similitude (of sexual, intellectual, political, ethical, aesthetic orientation), endlessly replicate the deadlock of self-sufficient unity?<sup>19</sup> How, in other words, can I quarrel with Kant in the language of Hegel while quarrelling with Hegel in such a way that I don't return to Kant; that is to say, can I oppose radical individualism with community while opposing communitarianism so that I don't return to a position of radical individualism/autonomy? Thus we arrive at the heart of our problem.

Seeking from the outset of its journey an open (anti-essentialist, inconsequentialist, non-teleological) ethics and politics of possibility, postmodernism produces a negative and solipsistic subject of desire. Such a subject can only be taught, remedially, to call itself into

question through the lessons of community, communication, sociability. Although indispensable, however, the very idea of community (found or elective) presupposes closure: a circular return, ad nauseam, to the tedious logic of the Same. Now what? The arrival, to put it simply, of utopianism; the reappearance of a long-forgotten ghost from 1892. For if, notwithstanding its necessity, the very idea of community is, from a postmodern perspective, inevitably unworkable, inoperative, negative, then we can only speak, under erasure, of an impossible community: perpetually deferred, yet-to-come. In what remains of this paper I propose to describe the contours of this ingenious compromise (let us call it anti-communitarian communitarianism) through the trope of a 'politics of friendship'.

#### — POLITICS OF FRIENDSHIP

First, let me tell you a story. Late January 2002: it's mid-morning and the sun is already cruel over the Great Victorian Desert in South Australia. A woman gets out of her four-wheel drive and starts determinedly to walk toward the infamous Woomera mandatory detention centre for 'unprocessed' asylum seekers. Inside the centre, desperate inmates (mainly Afghan, Iranian or Iraqi) have turned their protest against the inhuman conditions of their confinement inwards, sealing their bodies against the inducements of food and speech with rough stitches through their lips. The white Australian woman who has come to fast with them in silence carries a placard bearing, in uneven home-made letters, the following consolation: 'You are not alone'. She wants to perform her consolation, to embody it, within view of the detainees, face-to-face, but a news camera on site catches the demise of her incipient project: an enraged security guard blocks her progress and pushes her back into her abandoned car. She breaks down, diminished by her failure. Yet something, however imperceptible, is achieved in that single moment of violent dismissal when the guard allegedly policing her interests as a legitimate Australian citizen turns on her as though she were the illegal *arrivant*, the house-breaker, the foreigner. What name may we give to this disarticulated mission? One woman forfeiting the not inconsiderable pleasures of consensus with her own community and elected government for the sake of an ephemeral communication with 'aliens' widely perceived as a potential threat to the integrity of the Australian state. What might we call this minor (insignificant?) gesture of self-endangerment in the name of a peace, committed, as a Levinas might tell us, to a tentative proximity to the other, and signifying 'the *surplus* of sociality over every solitude—the *surplus* of sociality and of love'?<sup>20</sup> Let us, with seeming arbitrariness, call it the politics of friendship.

Our first archive, the history of friendship in western political philosophy, complicates the project. For, far from being secret and unacknowledged, as we might desire it to be, the contiguity between friendship and politics appears endemic to this system. 'Western political speculation', as Horst Hutter reveals in his book *Politics as Friendship* (1978), 'finds its origin

in a system of thought in which the idea of friendship is the major principle in terms of which political theory and practice are described, explained and analysed'.<sup>21</sup> There is another more serious problem that Derrida, writing some two decades after Hutter, alerts us to. The configuration of political thought which so possessively captures friendship as its founding metaphor 'rarely announces itself without some sort of adherence to the State, to the family, without ... a *schematic* of filiation: stock, genus or species, sex (*Geschlecht*), blood, birth, nature, nation—autochthonal or not, tellurian or not'.<sup>22</sup>

We will explicate the precise implications of this Derridean impasse in a moment, but, first, let us give full weight to the verdict that the canonical forms of western politics achieve their taxonomy within a 'schematic of filiation'. In other words (with a little help from Edward Said), these forms—indeed, 'the political' itself as we know it—gain their inspiration from the domestic space of the family, thereby perpetuating in public life the perennial romance of self-repetition, similarity, resemblance, the order of the same.<sup>23</sup> Within such a schematic, the actions of the woman at Woomera, with whom we began this discussion, do not, needless to say, deserve the name 'politics'. But do they deserve the name 'friendship'? And here lies the rub.

In search of answers, let us, briefly, return with Hutter and Derrida to Aristotle: the thinker whom both critics credit (admiringly and regretfully, respectively) with the decisive announcement of politics as friendship in western thought; a metaphoric association elaborated and augmented in the thematic unity between the *Nicomachean Ethics*, with its close attention to the ethical obligations of *philia*, and the *Politics*, with its close attention to the political obligations of citizenship. The gap between these two texts (between, we might add, *philia* and citizenship, friendship and politics) is bridged by Aristotle's conception of friendship as a *homophilic* bond owing principally, if not exclusively, to fellow citizens. If the *Politics* upholds the *polis*, or State, as the natural and highest representation of human sociability, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, quite simply, privileges friendship as the best rehearsal of citizenship, the elaboration, always within the boundaries of the *polis*, of a being-in-common. 'Friendship', writes Aristotle, 'seems to be the bond that holds communities together, and lawgivers seem to attach more importance to it than justice'.<sup>24</sup>

This nativist conception of friendship, developed, we must remember, in historical conditions of extreme vulnerability for the minuscule Greek city-state,<sup>25</sup> borrows heavily, if wishfully, from the sparse vocabulary of filiation: 'a friend is another self'; 'The basis of affection is equality and similarity'; 'a friend is what is most similar'.<sup>26</sup> The actions of the woman at Woomera, it would appear, may not even deserve the name friendship unless we can identify another model of friendship capable of proceeding without recourse to 'a horizon of recognition'.<sup>27</sup> We also need another contingent and nomadic model of the political, independent from the burdensome nomenclature of naturalness, homogeneity, origin. Our demand, in a sense, is of philosophy itself, which bears, after all, influential etymological traces

of *philia* in its own name and purpose. This is what we ask: if friendship already inhabits the heart of the political, might we not in some fugitive night of thought smuggle in its place a radical substitute, an infiltrator who might unwork the logic of political similitude? Give us an anti-communitarian community? And what, then, might such a friendship be?

We do not, for the moment, need to stray beyond the confines of post-Socratic philosophy. For the Aristotelian model of *philia*, with which we are quarrelling, meets its most immediate challenge in the fragments of Epicurus and his followers, where friendship is construed, very differently, as *philoxenia* or a love for guests, strangers, foreigners. And in sharp contrast to Aristotle this ethic of fidelity to strange friends is predicated upon a principled distaste for the racial exclusivity of the *polis*. The *polis*, as Philodemus insists, is an unfriendly place: 'If a man were to indicate a systematic inquiry to find out what is most destructive of friendship and most productive of enmity, he would find it in the regime of the *polis*.'<sup>28</sup>

Aristotelian and Epicurean conceptions of friendship clearly demand competing types of loyalty, which in turn produce mutually contradictory effects. *Homophilic* loyalties are enlisted as a source of security (for the State, community, citizen/ethical subject). Conversely, and much to the puzzlement of contemporary commentators, *philoxenic* solidarities introduce the disruptive category of risk into Epicureanism's otherwise determined espousal of the ethical benefits of cultivated *ataraxia* or invulnerability, and *autarkia* or self-sufficiency.<sup>29</sup> Any sort of friendship (local or global) is emotionally risky as it might bedevil the tranquil Epicurean sage with anxieties of affective dependence. But friendships toward strangers or foreigners, in particular, carry exceptional risks as their fulfilment may at any time 'constitute a felony *contra patriam*'.<sup>30</sup> An eloquent appraisal of such *philoxenic* risk is available in the updated Epicureanism which informs E.M. Forster's famous defence of friendship in *Two Cheers for Democracy*:

I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the guts to betray my country. Such a choice may scandalise the modern reader, and he may stretch out his patriotic hand to the telephone at once and ring the police ... Probably one will not be asked to make such an agonising choice. Still, there lies at the back of every creed something terrible and hard for which the worshipper may one day be required to suffer, and there is even a terror and hardness in this creed of personal relationships, urbane and mild though it sounds. Love and loyalty to an individual can run counter to the claims of the State. When they do—down with the State, say I, which means the State would down me.<sup>31</sup>

There is, as Forster reminds us in the histrionic rhetoric of his Epicurean predecessors, something unquestionably political and risky in the choice of 'friend over country'. Notwithstanding the obvious practical dangers of such choosing (felony, treason, un-American



activities), *philoxenia* is not reducible to a form of masochistic moral adventurism or absolutism, to a sort of ethics-as-bungie-jumping-at-any-cost school of thought. The expenditure is rather more existentially profound, involving as it does, the potentially ‘agonising’ risk of self-exile which haunts any ethical capacity to become (to suffer oneself to become) foreign to ‘one’s own’ and, above all, to oneself. Derrida’s notes on ethics-as-hospitality are apposite here: ‘the stranger, here the awaited guest, is not only someone to whom you say “come”, but “enter” ... come in, “come inside”, “come within me”, not only toward me, but within me: occupy me, take place in me’.<sup>32</sup>

#### — TOWARD UTOPIA

To explicate fully the import of Derridean hospitality/Epicurean *philoxenia*, we need, at this stage, to recall the themes with which we began our discussion. Postmodernism’s journey from nihilism to utopianism, we proposed, relies on two factors. First, it requires a subject/agent open to forms of sociality capable, *contra* Kant, of exacerbating the condition of its insufficiency. Second, such a sociality would have to be articulated, *contra* Hegel, within a community that was never itself, that is to say, never self-identical or ‘fusional’.<sup>33</sup> Both conditions are, arguably, realised within the twinned tropes of hospitality and ‘guest-friendship’. The ethical agency of the host/friend relies precisely on her capacity to leave herself open, in Blanchot’s terms, to the risk of radical insufficiency. Poised in a relation where an irreducible and asymmetrical other always calls her being into question, she is ever willing to risk becoming strange or guest-like in her own domain, whether this be home, nation, community, race, gender, sex, skin, species. So too, the open house or open heart of hospitality and friendship, respectively, can never know guests/friends in advance, as one might a fellow citizen, sister or comrade. Such sociality might take the political form of Judith Butler’s coalition, ‘an emerging and unpredictable assemblage of positions’.<sup>34</sup> Or, it might arrive in the form of Donna Haraway’s fabulist cyborg community, ‘permanently partial ... monstrous and illegitimate’.<sup>35</sup> Always unfinished, yet-to-come, like the deferred interracial friendship between Aziz and Fielding in *A Passage to India*: “Why can’t we be friends now?” said the other, holding him affectionately. “It’s what I want. It’s what you want.” But the horses didn’t want it ... the earth didn’t want it ... the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House ... they didn’t want it, they said in their hundred voices, “No, not yet,” and the sky said, “No, not there”.<sup>36</sup>

There is no moral as such to my story; utopianism, some might say, is just a matter of taste: you either want it now or you prefer to wait for it for as long as it takes. But at this time in world politics when our solidarities simply cannot be fixed in advance (America or Afghanistan; liberalism or the agonism of the particular; citizen or refugee), a utopian mentality shows the way forward to a genuine cosmopolitanism, always open to the risky arrival of



those not quite, not yet, covered by the privileges which secure our identity and keep us safe. Of all the stories to be told in conclusion we might recall, especially, that of the Buddha who must leave the consolations of filiality for the unknown and terrifying promise of universal compassion; or, of the epic hero Arjuna, who must wage a terrible war against his own kin, eschewing all the learnt maxims of nativist ethics in order to arrive at an as-yet undefinable and unknowable capacity to pluralise the Self and to apprehend it in/as all creatures, all things, *atmaupamyena sarvatra*.

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1. Fredrick Engels, *Socialism, from Utopia to Science*, trans. Edward Aveling, 1892, New York Labor Press, New York, 1968, p. 21.
2. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000.
3. Alasdair MacIntyre, in *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Duckworth, London, 1997, p. 261, convincingly claims a Kantian patrimony for both modern liberals and Marxists:  
The key intellectual opposition of our age ... is that between modern liberal individualism and some version of Marxism or neo-Marxism. The most intellectually compelling exponents of this view are likely to be those who trace a genealogy of ideas from Kant and Hegel through Marx ... Marxists have always fallen back into relatively straightforward versions of Kantianism or utilitarianism. Nor is this surprising. Secreted within Marxism from the outset is a certain radical individualism.  
Chantal Mouffe, in *The Return of the Political*, Verso, London and New York, 1993, p. 13, likewise asserts the continuities between liberalism and Marxism, arguing that 'neither liberalism with its idea of the individual who only pursues his or her own interest, nor Marxism, with its reduction of all subject positions to that of class can sanction, let alone imagine', the 'entirely new perspectives for political action' ushered in by new social movements.
4. For a thoughtful account of socialist feminism's stigmatisation of female subjectivity as anarchic and regressive, see Cora Kaplan, 'Pandora's Box: Subjectivity, Class and Sexuality in Socialist Feminist Criticism', in Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn (eds), *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, Methuen, London and New York, 1985, pp. 146–76.
5. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, trans. Winston Moore and Paul Cammack, Verso, London, 1985, p. 177.
6. Laclau and Mouffe, p. 181. The language of postmodern nihilism is freely invoked, for example, by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, New York and London, 1990, pp. 14–15: 'The insistence in advance on ... "unity" as a goal assumes that solidarity, whatever its price, is a prerequisite for political action ... Perhaps also part of what dialogic understanding entails is the acceptance of ... breakage, splinter, and fragmentation'. Butler's work is always scrupulously attentive to the need to imagine new political configurations out of the ruins of the old. But postmodern thought in general, as Slavoj Zizek complains in *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, Verso, London and New York, 2000, frequently tends toward an absurdist reduction of the political: "dispersionists" condemn politics as unifying, totalitarian, violent, and so on, and assume the position of ethical critics who reveal (or voice) the ethical Wrong or Evil committed by politics, without engaging in an alternative political project'.
7. Laclau and Mouffe, p. 189.
8. Charles Taylor in *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and London, 1975, p. 154, suggests that the relation of master and slave in Hegel's notes on 'Lordship and Bondage' is, in effect, that of consumer and producer: 'The relation of the master to what surrounds him is

- that of a pure consumer; the hard task of transforming things and preparing them for consumption is that of the slave.'
9. Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, Hutchinson, London, 1987, p. 227.
  10. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1984, p. xix.
  11. Hardt and Negri, p. 156. Žižek, p. 220, among many other critics from the left, raises similar objections to hybridity/hybrid subject:
 

It is easy to praise the hybridity of the postmodern migrant subject, no longer attached to specific ethnic roots, floating freely between different cultural circles. Unfortunately, two totally different sociopolitical levels are condensed here: on the one hand the cosmopolitan upper- and upper-middle-class academic, always with the proper visas enabling him to cross borders without any problem in order to carry out his (financial, academic ...) business, and thus able to "enjoy the difference"; on the other hand the poor (im)migrant worker driven from his home by poverty or (ethnic, religious) violence, for whom the celebrated "hybridity" designates a very tangible traumatic experience.

The particular relevance of Žižek's and others' critique to my argument is that the postmodern subject of desire draws even the 'real' traumas of hybridity into a principally libidinal vector as a form of defiant 'enjoyment'. This subject faces the world as one might a supermarket, bearing an excess of choices, homes, identities, opportunities and so on.
  12. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 156.
  13. The phrase is borrowed out of context from Seamus Deane, 'Introduction', in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, A Field Day Co. Book, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, p. 8.
  14. Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris, Station Hill Press, Barrytown, New York, p. 5. Compare Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2000, p. 3:
 

before being a question to be dealt with, before designating a concept, a theme, a problem, a program, the question of the foreigner is a question of the foreigner, addressed to the foreigner. As though the foreigner were first of all *the one who* puts the first question or *the one to whom* you address the first question. As though the foreigner were being-in-question, the very question of being-in-question, the question-being or being-in-question of the question. But also the one who, putting the first question, puts me in question.
  15. Michael Sandel, 'Liberalism and the Limits of Justice', in Robert C. Solomon and Mark C. Murphy (eds), *What is Justice?*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, p. 354.
  16. Taylor, p. 153.
  17. Blanchot, p. 3.
  18. For a compelling defence of 'chosen' or 'voluntary' communities see Marilyn Friedman, *What Are Friends For: Feminist Perspectives on Friendship, Personal Relationships and Moral Theory*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1993.
  19. Edward Said's thoughts on 'affiliation' in *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983, p. 22, are apposite here:
 

The affiliative order ... surreptitiously duplicates the closed and tightly knit family structure that secures generational relationships to one another. Affiliation then becomes in effect a literal form of re-presentation, by which what is ours is good, and therefore deserves incorporation and inclusion in our programs of humanist study, and what is not ours in this ultimately provincial sense is simply left out.
  20. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Peace and Proximity' (1984), in Adrianna T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (eds), *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1996, p. 165.
  21. Horst Hutter, *Politics as Friendship: The Origins of Classical Notions of Politics in the Theory and Practice of Friendship*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Ontario, p. 2.
  22. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, Verso, London and New York, 1997, p. viii.
  23. See Edward Said's discussion of 'filiation', p. 111–25.
  24. Aristotle, *The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. J.A.K. Thomson, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1955, p. 258.
  25. Aristotle's *Ethics* were composed at a time when, following the expansionism of Philip and Alexander, the small and culturally self-contained city-state was being compelled to join the ever-expanding circle of a wider, more impersonal, imperial community.
  26. Aristotle, pp. 294, 272.
  27. Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 35.
  28. Cited in Benjamin Farrington, *The Faith of Epicurus*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1967, p. 31.
  29. This point is made by Marios Constantinou, 'Spectral *Philia* and the Imaginary Institution of Needs', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 97, no. 1, Winter 1998, pp. 156–7: 'Epicurean ethics is ...

- confronted with a paradoxical difficulty: the altruistic bond of friendship entails vulnerability to dependency on external attachment. Does not altruistic friendship interfere with, even disrupt, the self-sufficient state of *ataraxia*?' Phillip Mitsis raises similar concerns in his *Epicurus's Ethical Theory: The Pleasures of Invulnerability*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London, 1988, p. 124: 'A ... difficulty confronts Epicurus's account of friendship ... Epicurus claims, for instance, that for the sake of friendship we should run risks, *dei de kai parakinduneusai charin philias* ... It is unclear, however, that he can justify any risk-taking given his model of pleasure and rational agency.'
30. Constantinou, 'Spectral *Philia*', p. 156.
  31. E.M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy*, Edward Arnold, London, 1951, p. 66.
  32. Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 123.
  33. See Blanchot, p. 7: 'a communion ... a fusion ... a unity (a supra-individuality) would expose itself to the same objections arising from the simple consideration of the single individual, locked in its immanence'. In 'The Other in Proust' (1947), in. Sean Hand (ed.), *The Levinas Reader*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, p. 164, Levinas makes a similar point, arguing that most projects of communication fail on account of their misguided aspiration for 'fusion': 'If communication bears the mark of failure of inauthenticity ... it is because it is sought as a fusion'.
  34. Butler, p. 14.
  35. Donna J. Harraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Free Association Books, London, 1991, p. 154.
  36. E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, 1924, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978, p. 289.