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Peter Baker

THE WRITING OF EXISTENCE IN THE LATEST WORK OF ALBERTO MOREIRAS

ABSTRACT

This article approaches the latest work of Alberto Moreiras on infrapolitics as self-conscious acts of writing which think its own conditions, or its own contingent textual inscription. In this sense, I propose that we can read this work as being informed by a question, even a preoccupation, over what form or style of writing is appropriate to announce or re-veal the existential dimensions proposed by the notion of infrapolitics. In exploring three such untimely textual inscriptions, the article approaches the stakes of what Moreiras thematises under the name of infrapolitics through how it informs the performativity of Moreiras's own writing practice, exploring in the process the relationship that infrapolitics supposes to politics and to a certain critique of late capitalism, as well as other important concepts such as marranismo, the second turn of deconstruction, auto-graphic writing and demetaphorisation, among others.

KEYWORDS

infrapolitics, marranismo, style, deconstruction, inscription, auto-graphic writing, performance.

*One always inherits from a secret – which says
'read me, will you ever be able to do so?'*

Jacques Derrida

There is a serious question of style or form that can be read as informing the latest work of Alberto Moreiras. If Moreiras's trajectory has always reflected upon, in some way, that most existential condition of writing which resists being consumed by its reduction to the phantasms of our metaphysical tradition,¹

¹ For the sake of brevity I will not refer to this trajectory here. But by way of offering a brief outline, I would refer the reader to a series of different texts written over the past forty to fifty years of Moreiras's writing. One can refer to *La escritura política de José Hierro* (1987); the notion of "inversión autográfica" in *Tercer espacio* (1999); to the late writing of José María Arguedas from *The Exhaustion of Difference* (2001), as well as from numerous earlier articles, some of which reappear in edited form in this collection.



I wish to argue here that his latest writing seeks to much more explicitly perform what it seeks to announce, albeit obliquely, and precisely because it is never captured by writing, which can only ever leave its mark. This question can be considered to inform this writing almost symptomatically, remembering that the symptom for Jacques Lacan may well be inscribed in language,² but it is never subject to interpretation, to exegesis, it is addressed to no one, and is thus an absolutely singular relation to one's own passion or desire.³ If the notion of infrapolitics has been so difficult for so many to fathom, according to Moreiras's own account of its history in one of his most recent books, *Infrapolitics: A Handbook* (2021), then this latest series of writings could be thought of as an attempt to work out and work through the form in which such an indexing of the infrapolitical should be announced. As we shall see, this "announcement" or performative element is a recurrent preoccupation throughout this book and other recent writings. I suggest that one of the principle questions that informs Moreiras's latest writing is over the form or style that the announcement of the infrapolitical should take, where writing is always understood as the writing of life itself, or perhaps more accurately what sub-cedes and sub-sists of life beyond or below its metaphysical capture. And, in doing so, this question of form or style is posed explicitly as a question about the way out beyond, or perhaps beneath, the reduction of life to metaphysics.

Naturally, such an announcement cannot be a systematic presentation of a how-to, a technique or a *techne*, nevertheless ironically announced by the subtitle of Moreiras's latest work in its Spanish title (*instrucciones de uso* or instruction manual).⁴ Such a how-to must therefore become performative, inscribed in the very infrapolitical conditions of that singular life wherein it announces itself in and through writing, or at least as it symptomatically announces something of it or of its direction. This is made all the more difficult for myself as the author who pens this "analysis", which makes a claim to "present" Moreiras's latest work, perhaps even "explain" it or to "supplement" it somehow for an English-speaking audience, which cannot be understood simply as a work of translation or exegesis, especially considering the enormous body of work that Moreiras has already written on the topic in English and the subsequent translations into English of the works under analysis. As a former student and now colleague under Moreiras – with all the inescapable tropes of the paternal law and seminal texts which a reading of his work from my position cannot but engender – the attempt of a writing on his writing looks set to be an entangled, incestuous affair. We perhaps run the risk of clarifying nothing, and redoubling the phantasms, symptoms and obliqueness of what is announced.

2 In Lacan's words: "Thus, if the symptom can be read, it is because it is itself already inscribed in a process of writing" (1966: 445).

3 See: Lacan (2016).

4 The more recent translation, *Infrapolitics: A Handbook* (2021) echoes this irony in its subtitle with a tongue-in-cheek reference to academic handbooks which would presume to repackage ready-made academic discourses as consolidated forms of knowledge removed from their locus of enunciation.

So be it. Is there per chance any other possibility of writing? We must take very seriously the proposition stated by Moreiras in his exergue to *Infrapolítica* that “infrapolitics does not seek to present itself as textual exegesis” (Moreiras 2020: 15).⁵ Any exegetic analysis of Moreiras’s work would thus fall into inevitable contradictions. But then how to think about its textual inscription, about the fact that infrapolitics as a concept – if indeed we are able to consider it as such⁶ – has been inscribed textually as a mode of reflection, above all else? This should perhaps serve as a principle consideration for our strategy of reading, but one that we should nevertheless approach with some caution.

This article shall proceed, then, by offering reflections on what will be read as untimely or phantasmatic textual inscriptions, in the sense of examples of writing that attempt to consciously bear the mark of their own historical and existential circumstances (against what is often considered to be the unwritten rules of academic “objective” writing), at the same time as they assume and, in many cases attempt to overcome, a legacy by which they are inevitably marked. Beginning with the first inscription exploring the recent publication *Infrapolítica* (*Infrapolitics* in translation) to lay the foundation for our exploration of the term infrapolitics, in the second of our textual inscriptions we will explore how the issues relevant to infrapolitical reflection emerge in Moreiras’s writing via a certain frustration with the academic field of Latinamericanism by analysing the publication *Marranismo e inscripción* (*Against Abstraction* in English translation). Finally, in the third and final inscription we explore how such a textual inscription takes on a particularly suggestive form for the future of infrapolitical reflection in the recent publication *Sosiego siniestro* (*Uncanny Rest* in translation). We will argue that these textual inscriptions are openly concerned with writing’s performative function, and its relationship to this place “from which” such an inscription leaves its mark, as it is explicitly thematised under the name of infrapolitics. This involves, I suggest, a certain way of thinking about the relationship of life, or better, existence, to inscription.

First Inscription: January 13 2017/June 15 2020⁷

The first of the existential inscriptions that mark one of Moreiras’s most recent books, *Infrapolítica: Instrucciones de uso* (Moreiras 2020a) concerns the fate of Derridean scholarship in (and beyond) the North American academy, to

5 All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own. Editions referred to throughout are the original Spanish *Infrapolítica* (2020a) and *Sosiego siniestro* (2020b) as these also reflect the dates of the existential inscriptions, though an English reader should note that English translations are now available (*Against Abstraction* (2020c), *Infrapolitics* (2021) and *Uncanny Rest* (2022), and I have adapted my original translations where I felt that it was better to use the official translation.

6 “And perhaps [infrapolitics] is not even a concept” (Moreiras 2020a: 80).

7 These dates refer to the original blog entry “Comentario a Glas” (2017) which later became the exergue for the book *Infrapolítica: Manual de uso* (2020a), and to the publication date of the latter.

which Moreiras's work has long made an important contribution. Criticising the historical reception of Derrida in the English language, particularly of its dissemination and, arguably, watering down in literary studies departments of the 1980s and 1990s in the United States, he sees the republication in Spanish of *Glas*⁸ as an opportunity to question this common-sense reading of Derridean deconstruction. Moreiras draws attention to Geoffrey Hartman's analysis of *Glas*, who comes to stand in for a certain North American reading of Derrida, for whom the value of deconstructive *écriture*, as what is left of absolute knowledge after Hegel, is nothing more than the "infinite displacement of the signifier [which] would offer the possibility of a return without return, of a gift without redress, of an experience that is not subsumable and thus irreducible to any fullness of the present" (Moreiras 2020a: 13). Yet Moreiras suggests that this reading of *Glas*, which seeks to encapsulate the Derridean project as an infinite deferral of meaning located in the literary mode of Genet's passage in the margins, is an insufficient reading of what Derrida attempts to put forward under the name of deconstruction here. There is something else located in the phantasms between the literary and the philosophical, a nexus which resists determination or capture, a gift without equivalence, finding within Hegel's own textual inscription an auto-graphic remainder which cannot be subsumed by any *Aufhebung*. It is this nexus which resists capture and which becomes, then, in this exergue, an opening onto something within the Derridean project which gives a foothold for infrapolitical reflection. This is what Moreiras calls the second turn of deconstruction, and Antigone is offered as its heroine, who offers a desire which is "unassimilable by dialectics", an unassimilability which is, according to Derrida's account, "recognised and affirmed by Hegel" himself (Moreiras 2020a: 17). Would this excess of desire with respect to what the dialectic consumes, what it cannot digest, belong to an irreducible, singular passion of Hegel's own? Whatever the case may be, what is clear is that it indexes an element excluded from the system of absolute knowledge which at the same time assures its possibility. And this is the opening which gives onto the possibility of thinking infrapolitics, its affinity with the Derridean question over what is left of absolute knowledge: "I would venture to propose", writes Moreiras, "running a risk that I know well, that infrapolitics is also precisely there, in this destructuring non-place that is the condition of every structure, in that unnameable pleasure [*goce*, also the Lacanian translation for jouissance]" (Moreiras 2020a: 18). It is this non-place which is also the location of a desire, pleasure, passion or jouissance, that becomes a starting point then for infrapolitical reflection.⁹

8 The edition referred to is: Derrida (2016).

9 Whilst not conflating these terms, it is not my intention here to disentangle or presume to be able to provide neat definitions or differences for such terms as desire or passion beyond their indexing an existential affective register that is of central concern to infrapolitical reflection. In Lacanian discourse, of course, demand, desire and jouissance play quite different roles in the affective economy of the psyche which correspond

It is curious that such a search for a starting point for the second moment of the Derridean turn would base itself, as in the reading strategy outlined here, on an (un)timely (in the sense that it gains a certain relevance some forty years after *Glas*'s original publication) focus on the performative dimension of the text, of how it seeks to put to work the remains of a Hegelian absolute knowledge which it simultaneously disavows. This performance is but a restating of Hegel, which is neither a reaffirmation, nor a simple commentary, but a putting to work of the dynamics of the Hegelian concepts in the emergence of consciousness, precisely, in the master-slave dialectic, to reveal there its undecidable, its secret, its non-place of capture, its *khora*. We have a series thus of textual inscriptions which, running from Antigone to Hegel's master-slave dialectic, to Derrida's *Glas* (via Genet), and to Moreiras's reflections, in which there is a question over what remains or moves irreducibly behind the scenes, and in each case where what comes to the fore is a certain passion, a facticity of existence, which may be read obliquely through the text. In this second turn of deconstruction, a question is raised over a strategy of reading or of writing (the two perhaps become indistinguishable here), a question over how this irreducibility should be exposed, announced or performed, and about the place of writing and of that facticity of life which drives the writing process.¹⁰ A question which insists, I argue, as a question, throughout Moreiras's writing in this book and elsewhere.

We must not underestimate the importance of this exergue, then, which announces a second turn in the "project" of Derridean deconstruction. This book is an attempt, writes Moreiras, to begin thinking a change in the terms which up until now we have understood by 'deconstruction' (Moreiras 2020a: 15). This attempt fundamentally concerns infrapolitics, its definition (assuming such a word would be appropriate) and its relationship to politics. It must be highlighted that, regardless of the importance of the place of writing in our reflections thus far, infrapolitics must be understood as a speaking "from" a particular region of thought and experience which, unlike a certain understanding of deconstruction, is not itself a writing, even if it concerns fundamentally the relationship between language, writing and thought. If, quoting from Derrida's *Letter to a Japanese Friend*, deconstruction is "a discourse or rather a writing which can compensate for the incapacity of the word to be equal to a 'thought'" (cf. Moreiras 2020a: 82), then, for Moreiras: "Infrapolitics is also a region where [...] an unconcealable gap occurs (*sucede*) between language and thought, but infrapolitics cannot even aspire to the status of a 'discourse or rather a writing'" (Moreiras 2020a: 82). What is at stake here? We might say, perhaps, that unlike how Derrida offers up deconstruction here as

to the imaginary, symbolic and the real respectively, though my use is not limited to Lacanian discourse. For a useful introduction to these terms in Lacan, see: Dor (1998).
 10 Throughout, facticity is understood to refer to debates in continental philosophy that arise from Martin Heidegger's existential analysis of Dasein. See in particular: Heidegger (2001: § 38).

a compensatory practice, infrapolitics cannot be used for such ends. It can at best inform such a practice; it is not “useable” at all in the same way as a writing could be. As Moreiras emphasises:

Infrapolitics is neither an analytical tool nor a form of critique, neither a method nor an act of operation, infrapolitics occurs, always and everywhere, and its taking place [*suced*er] calls to us and calls for a transformation of our way of looking, to some type of step towards another mode of politics, strange and unthematizable, which is also, and which should be, a different mode to politics. (Moreiras 2020a: 80)

There is nothing in infrapolitics that can make a *techne* of infrapolitics, or of that space which the term indexes. Nevertheless, its taking place calls for a transformation in our way of looking and to a step *towards* another way of doing politics which is at the same time informed *by* this something other than politics. This thing is strange and unthematizable, and also invokes an ethics (“should be”) at the same time as the infrapolitical itself is absolutely irreducible to any ethics.¹¹ It is not utilizable in the way that a discourse or a writing could be, and yet, Moreiras claims that it holds an affinity with deconstruction insofar as this *could be* the role of an infrapolitical reflection. In other words, we can understand that Derrida’s definition here of a practice of writing which seeks to compensate for what Heidegger might have called the forgetting of the question of being is a practice which we can also call infrapolitical reflection. But is this the main purpose of infrapolitical writing here in *Infrapolítica*? Is this, in other words, what his writing attempts to perform? I would suggest not, or at least not principally. Perhaps even in those instances where we find such examples of infrapolitical reflection as a “compensatory writing” à la deconstruction, we should consider this kind of reflection as a secondary effect of another kind that insists on making itself felt throughout Moreiras’s latest work, and shares a closer affinity to Derrida’s reading of Hegel(’s reading of Sophocles) above. I would suggest that this first kind of infrapolitical reflection seeks, within writing, to bring attention to this taking place, to this *suceso* in Spanish.¹² It is an invitation to this call of infrapolitics to transform our way of looking, to paraphrase the citation above.

This role which is explored and which attempts to announce itself under the name of infrapolitics is intimately and explicitly tied to the role of politics. And, indeed, understanding what Moreiras thematises as the specific domain of the political in the history of thought is necessary if we are to appreciate the subtlety of his argument here. As has been stated elsewhere, the philosophical lineage of the notion of infrapolitics must be situated in the Heideggerian

11 In an early work on the notion of infrapolitics, “Infrapolitical Literature”, Moreiras writes that: “infrapolitical action exceeds the political and it exceeds the ethical, but it is still practical action oriented to the relation between people” (2010: 191).

12 *Suceso* in Spanish literally means “taking place”, but its suffix (*su-*) refers to something below or beneath, as in the English submarine or sub-zero.

problematic of the ontico-ontological difference and our current historical moment, understood as the moment of the consummation of metaphysics, its own epochal finality.¹³ It is in this space of contemporary globalised capitalism, which is also at the same time the totalisation of metaphysics' hold over the determination of our living conditions, in which politics appears as going hand-in-hand with this image of totality, in which even the most radical politics thus becomes nothing other than an internal fold within the same metaphysical game. "In the time of the self-consummation of onto-theology", writes Moreiras, "politics is onto-theological through and through even when it sees itself in a counter-hegemonic or resistant role. That this determination has been erased or forgotten is not an objection – it rather specifies its ideological nature" (Moreiras 2020a: 83). This totalisation of the social space through its reduction to onto-theology is the basis for Moreiras's argument that the categories of the social, the cultural, the subjective and the political collapse into one another, and become short hand for all that it is possible to think with regards to our own living condition.¹⁴

A consistent theme throughout Moreiras's most recent work has been to reflect upon how this saturation of the political field – present in his analysis since at least his reflections in *The Exhaustion of Difference* (2001) – is particularly relevant in our contemporary moment. The consummation of the onto-theological and metaphysical structuration of history is, at the same time, the era in which the real subsumption of late capitalism has created a generalised system of equivalence, which reduces life to its calculability. These reflections in *Infrapolítica* find many echoes, in the work for example of Felipe Martínez Marzoa on the logic of Marx's *Capital* and in Jorge Alemán's reading of the Lacanian notion of capitalist discourse.¹⁵ The place and relevance of infrapolitics as a step-back from politics, therefore, is also a step-back from the absolute dominance of an economy which reduces life to calculability, which Moreiras calls, drawing from Jean-Luc Nancy, general equivalence.¹⁶ "If general equivalence can be considered today to be a totalising principle over the administration of life, and thus as the very domain of politics", writes Moreiras, "then a subtraction with respect to this principle destroys such a totality" (Moreiras 2020a: 107). In this sense, he furthers: "To think infrapolitics is always in every case to think what the exception is to general equivalence" (Moreiras 2020a: 107). Moreiras explicitly relates this total calculability to the absolute totality of politics through the example of hegemony theory. In his words:

13 See Heidegger (2003) for more on these debates in the Heideggerian corpus.

14 It is this sense in which, as we stated earlier, it is too easy to misunderstand the stakes if we think about this facticity of our own living being in substantial and subjectivist terms, and the term "life" lends itself to this confusion. Moreiras states with respect to this issue: "When we say 'existence' it is not just 'life' that is meant, and this is not because infrapolitics has no interest in life in general, but rather because, precisely, it approaches life from an interrogation of existence, that which we can provisionally define as the human mode of relating to life" (2020a: 127).

15 See: Martínez Marzoa (1983) and Alemán (2012).

16 See: Nancy (2014).

We increasingly live our entire lives, with diminishing differences, within a horizon of exhaustive calculability. In political terms, even the theory of hegemony, which is the last doctrine of the left, based as it is on the formation of chains of equivalence, is little more than a methodology of political calculability in the service of an alternative administration of the general political body, which is still no more than alternative *administration* of the general political body. (Moreiras 2020a: 109)

It matters, then, not just what one does, but how one does it. Resisting the system does not take a step back from the totality of the political field and its alliance with the onto-theological structuration of history, as hegemony theory demonstrates clearly.¹⁷ Remembering that hegemony is always about an articulation, a collective signifying act that becomes consolidated or “sedimented” in chains of equivalence, we might be able to relate this kind of articulation to what Moreiras elsewhere in *Infrapolítica* calls prophetic language. The example comes from the Mapuche messianic resistance movement studied by Florencia Mallon in her book *Courage Tastes of Blood*, which invoked the return to an essentialised and mythical originary ground. Mallon’s own self-confessed difficulties in arriving at the conclusion of the problematic nature of this discourse, where her starting point no doubt had been to focus on how to represent the subaltern voice within history, once again demonstrate how the reflections from *Infrapolítica* draw attention to the thinkers’ own inscription and existential angst in their writing. What I really want to draw attention to, however, is the performative nature of this prophetic discourse. Moreiras thus distinguishes in this point between two kinds of articulation, the prophetic language of, in this case, a certain Mapuche discourse that Mallon writes of, and another, what he calls a post-hegemonic type. The emphasis on style or manner is important here, as it is not about questioning, by any means, the importance of Mapuche resistance to capitalist onslaught, but rather a focus on the way in which such resistance is articulated and, thus, whether or not it forms yet another hegemonic articulation which ends up confirming the political game of metaphysics (or in this case of the Chilean state), or whether it is able to adopt a standpoint which takes a step back from this totality of the political field. “But learning from the past to move towards a post-hegemonic democracy”, writes Moreiras, “or, more modestly, towards a post-hegemonic democratisation, implies the radical renouncing of all prophetism, of any charismatic call. The way forward should be non-prophetic” (Moreiras 2020a: 100). And thus we find an explicit reflection on what I have argued forms a central preoccupation for Moreiras in *Infrapolítica*: how to announce, perform a writing which finds itself letting the infrapolitical be, and thus brings it to the fore, when the infrapolitical is necessarily a question of writing’s erasure of the ontico-ontological difference. What mode would be appropriate for allowing this existential facticity that traces itself in writing to be felt by the

17 The reference is to hegemony theory by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and its subsequent theoretical elaborations.

reader, to resist a “prophetic” writing? The above reflection on different types of speech act must be considered significant in this light. There is thus a certain impossibility or aporia of writing that is thematised and simultaneously haunts *Infrapolítica*, I would argue. It evades attempts to make it present and yet this evasion must be simultaneously resisted and respected, I would argue, in order for the writing to be able to announce this step back from politics in which the act of writing is always already implicated, or inscribed.

One has the impression that this strategy of reading, then, attempts to pinpoint something in the text which escapes it, and even pinpointing this strategy of writing which is to allow this “from where” to move within it must fail at every attempt. Perhaps it cannot be any other way. But let me try to approach it from a different angle. Against a certain militant leftist tradition which would identify a counter-hegemonic politics as the horizon for action on the left (thus still restricted to the totality of politics), Moreiras draws from the controversial debate sparked by Oscar Del Barco in his interview “No matarás”, where he condemns absolutely any justification for murder against some claims from the militant leftist tradition in Argentina. As Moreiras points out, Del Barco’s argument is as clear as it is simple:

I know [...] that the principle of ‘Thou shalt not kill’, like loving thy neighbour, is an impossible one. [...] But I also know that upholding this impossible principle is the only possible thing to do. [...] To uphold the impossible as possible is to uphold what is absolute in every human being, from the first to the last. (Del Barco cf. Moreiras 2020a: 92)

Moreiras is interested in this absolute of each and every man that would render impossible any programmatic politics of a militant left, where ethics is suspended by the political and vice-versa. It is instead to emphasise, again paraphrasing Del Barco, the sacredness of man, a sacredness which, according to Moreiras, “always and in every case de-metaphorizes, de-alegorizes, insofar as the sacred is the uncompromising holding-fast to the literality of a non-equivalent singularity” (Moreiras 2020a: 95). We find ourselves close here to the Derridean reading of Hegel; there is something that sticks, something in that singularity of the sacredness of man which, if we are to stick by it, takes a step back from any totalising system which could inform any militant politics. And this sticking point is rehearsed throughout the book as the factual (non-) place from which infrapolitical reflection finds its opening.

These reflections come strikingly close to Lacan’s teachings on the ethics of psychoanalysis in his 1959–60 seminar (see: Lacan 1992). Like Del Barco, Lacan appears to come out in favour of the imperative to love thy neighbour as a basis for thinking the ethical import of psychoanalysis. It is well known how Lacan exposes the Kantian categorical imperative and the Sadean project of limitless desire as both bearing the mark of an unresolved aporia that would make of them both the most totalitarian kind of moralism. If the Sadean law is ultimately unable to escape its own aporia that the imperative to do away

with the law becomes its own ethical law, the Kantian categorical imperative, in its universalism, is unable to see that it forbids a genuine ethical relation insofar as it denies the singularity (sacredness, in the terms used above) of our existence. Both misrecognise, in other words, that the desiring being that we are is fundamentally constituted by both the law *and* its transgression. De Kesel demonstrates the importance of Lacan's conclusions on this point with reference to his reading of Kant's reflections on the limits of moral freedom. Kant famously argues that the moral freedom of man is demonstrated through two situations, one in which the moral man avoids death, and another in which he chooses it. In the first, the individual will be executed if he sleeps with the woman he desires; in the second, he must choose either to bear false witness and have some innocent person killed, or be killed himself. It is Lacan's discussion of the second example that is more pertinent to our discussion. For Kant, the fact that a man would choose death over bearing false witness demonstrates the *Faktum* of his moral freedom. Yet what he does not question is the interchangeability of these two options, whereas Lacan's entire reflection attempts to think what in the human psyche resists the moral economy of goods (*biens*), their supposed interchangeability. Indeed, for Lacan what stands out in this example is precisely the absolute non-calculability involved in such a decision. This non-calculability at the heart of the decision is not based on the uncertainty of the consequences of my decision – we know that the man will be killed if he does not bear false witness – but rather on the fact that, something that would be unacceptable in Kant's view, the subject and the object of the moral law are not the same, as made evident in the ego's own self mis-recognition.

Lacan demonstrates the consequences of this insight by adapting Kant's example to surprising effect. He asks himself what would happen if a despot were to ask the man to bear *true* witness against another fellow man, someone who *might* receive the death sentence as a result. As De Kesel notes, this appears to reintroduce an element of calculability into the moral decision. Rather than weighing up a truth against a lie, instead now there appears to be a weighing up between two truths: "either I remain faithful to the universal truth that forbids me to lie, or I choose the truth that the other is my equal and that he, just like me, loves life more than truth" (De Kesel 2009: 156). Whereas for Kant these truths may be considered equivalent because they are subject to the universal reason of man, for Lacan there can be no equivalence between them. And it is precisely the recognition of an irreducible singularity nevertheless common to both upon which the recognition of the other as neighbour, for Lacan, is founded. In De Kesel's words:

What binds me to my fellow man (and even to myself) *beyond* the symbolic law is the "thing", the ultimate, completely *singular* object of desire. This is precisely why my fellow man is not only my equal, but simultaneously – and in a more fundamental sense – my "neighbour". What binds him to himself, what binds me to myself, what binds us together at that level is a symbolically

noninterchangeable, singular “thing”. Precisely because (like myself) my neighbour is ultimately based in such a “thing”, the truth to which this “neighbour” refers no longer corresponds to the truth of the universal (symbolic) law. (De Kesel 2009: 156)¹⁸

This sacredness of the singularity of existence as a non-relation to self (and thus to the other) finds this other *Faktum* not picked up by Kant: one which recognises in the neighbour that transgressive desire which makes each one of us irreducible to any universal law. And as is well-known, this example comes to bear upon the figure of Antigone in Lacan’s seminar, that irreducible desire in Hegel’s absolute via the Derridean reading discussed above. Lacan is very clear on this point. In his reading of Sophocles’s play, what Antigone remains faithful to is not a family member *as such* (it is not the *polis* versus the family structure), but to Polyneices *as* signifier – that is to say, in my reading, as symbolically non-interchangeable. Antigone’s blinding beauty concerns her ability to point towards both the limits of the law (against Kant) and the limits of transgressing the law (against de Sade). On the one hand, even if it corresponds to the symbolic dimension of language, the bearer of the signifier can never be reduced to its universal law. On the other hand, transgression itself must be a singular instance in order to resist the temptation to become another universal law. The example is particularly relevant to these reflections on infrapolitics, in my view, because they concern precisely those elements of existence which absolutely resist both the universalism of calculability (the law of general equivalence) *and* any reduction of the issue to a question of mere subjectivity. They concern a passion or a desire that is *ex-centric* and comes from a place beyond or beneath the *polis* – perhaps from the tomb of Antigone, where she is fated to live her second death.

Between Del Barco, Lacan and Moreiras, we find an attempt to approximate ourselves through reflection to a respect for an absolute singular existence, or at least relation to existence, which is always and constantly at threat of being violated, and violated precisely through the political order. In Moreiras’s writing, I suggest, we find not only a reflection upon that singularity of existence but also an attempt to assume writing’s own aporetic limitations as that which constitutes and is constituted by an impossible relationship to that facticity which sub-cedes it and can never be captured by it. Infrapolitical reflection would be the name for a compensatory writing for that constant erasure, in its approximation to deconstruction, but, beyond this, it is a writing which assumes its own conditions of textually inscribing the mark of that passion that moves beyond or beneath its legibility. This is perhaps brought to the fore and thematised even more clearly in our second of three inscriptions under discussion.

¹⁸ It is striking that the example seems to draw a parallel with the moral dilemma presented in Javier Marías’s *The infatuations* (2013), which is discussed elsewhere by Moreiras (see below).

Inscription 2: October 1998/January 2015¹⁹

Marranismo e inscripción (2016) is a daring and deeply personal book about the status of Latinamericanist reflection today. As Moreiras relates in the book's introduction, the idea for this publication emerged from an interview held in the Universidad Complutense de Madrid in 2015, where the author was asked to reflect upon the state of the field and upon his own personal career trajectory. A series of chapters are offered as a contextualization of the issues that are raised in this first interview, so that the reader is able to better situate its central problems. The author explains in the introduction that: "I thought that the interview could only be understood in the context of other essays of mine over the last years that either had an explicitly polemic nature or spoke about the professional field or my inscription in it" (Moreiras 2016: 14). In this sense, *Marranismo* is situated as within the legacy of Hispanism, and of more general debates in the North American academy over the last thirty years in the field from one of its most respected scholars. The book could be said to rehearse certain events that were determinate for the professional field in general and for Moreiras's career in particular, and as the chapters progress the reader has the sensation that the book liberates itself from these events, marking a movement towards a different type of reflection that we may be able to read with some justification as Moreiras's central proposal for the book. It marks thus another textual inscription, and announces something from within that inscription, marking a starting point for another kind of work that indexes more explicitly the theme of the infrapolitical. By drawing attention to the chapters as not being an organic whole but a series of interventions and polemics which cannot be removed from the author's own inscription in the professional field, *Marranismo* performs some of the central theoretical stakes of the book, which include the question of life and its inscription in writing.

There are a number of quasi-concepts which make an appearance throughout the book that in many ways provide a guiding thread on how to read the various chapters and are clearly developments, as Moreiras himself acknowledges in one of the published interviews, on earlier concerns in the author's work such as *Tercer espacio* (1999), *The Exhaustion of Difference* (2001) and *Línea de sombra* (2007). These quasi-concepts include auto-graphic writing; marranism; posthegemony; as well as, and especially, infrapolitics, whose thematization is the object of the final chapter and interview. It picks up, in that sense, on concerns that had marked Moreiras's work and articulates them in new and thought-provoking ways, paving the way for the more recent publications under discussion in this special issue. Indeed, what a discussion of these terms share is a question of life or existence, beyond or perhaps below its determination by politics, and by a metaphysics of presence or of subjectivity, following a leftist-Heideggerian and Derridean vein which is present

19 The dates refer to the fifth meeting of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group in Duke University and to the interview which opens *Marranismo e inscripción*, respectively.

throughout the author's previous interventions and mark his more recent writing, in particular in the notion of the second turn of deconstruction discussed above. These quasi-concepts are also concerned with how life is inscribed in writing in ways which can either threaten to reduce its existential properties to a logic of identity (which would be Moreiras's general critique of Latinamericanist writing, and can also be related to the domain of the political in general as discussed above) or that can, inversely, provide a space in which to reflect on life without reducing the latter to politics or identity in general, what the author calls, at this stage, "infrapolitical" reflection. This second kind of writing is particularly apparent, for Moreiras, in certain literary and philosophical texts which he explores in a number of the later chapters (each themselves, therefore, instances of textual inscription). Once again, what we find is that the personal and performative nature of this book is key; Moreiras's writing reveals the operability of these concepts not only for academic discourse in the field, but also for one's place within it, which *Marranismo* shows is always at stake whenever one chooses to write. It is therefore a call for reflection on our professional practice in all its dimensions, including its most apparently everyday elements. Indeed, *Marranismo* suggests, through its own putting on stage of the writer's dilemma, that the conditions of writing are never at the mercy of the writer; rather, we are already situated in a scene of writing beyond our control, that we inherit without ever fully knowing what it is that we have inherited. Reading *Marranismo* in light of the later publication of *Infrapolítica*, therefore, can be useful to bring out more explicitly this thematic of inscription and the question over how infrapolitics should announce itself in Moreiras's most recent writing. This is certainly one of the possible ways of interpreting Moreiras's provocation to the reader when he writes that "for me, the sequence of writings that I offer is more than the story of a professional trajectory, and contains secrets that only appear in its trace and for the astute reader, if there is one" (Moreiras 2016: 14).

The first chapter presents the reader with the interview which formed the basis of the book. In it, Moreiras speaks of the trajectory of Latin American Studies from the 1980s, mapping out the shift from literary studies as the "queen of the humanities" to the rise of theory, to culturalism and to subaltern studies, and finally to a shift towards more properly political questions from 2001 onwards. Many of the themes that will be prominent throughout the book make an appearance in this first interview, such as autographic writing, posthegemony and infrapolitics. One of the key events whose specter can be traced throughout the book first makes an appearance here; 1998, when a conference was held by the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group and which saw the dissolution of the group over deep theoretical disagreements which, Moreiras suggests, were to have a decisive impact on the shape of Latinamericanism over the next fifteen years and on Moreiras's professional career in particular. Although not all of these are mentioned explicitly in this first chapter, it is fair to say that the book as a whole identifies three general trends within the field, and the object of many of the chapters that follow will be to identify

the limits of each of these approaches in order to offer a fourth possibility: infrapolitical reflection. These three broad trends are post-subalternism, identified with the figure of John Beverley; the decolonial school, identified with Walter D. Mignolo and Ramón Grosfoguel; and neocommunist, identified with the work of Bruno Bosteels.²⁰

A great deal of the chapters that follow can be read as a rehearsal of the effects of the 1998 conference or of events that are associated with it, and in this sense can be read as making explicit the performance of a certain work of mourning, its working through in writing, and thus symptomatic of a passion, frustrated by institutional and existential conditions, which attempts to make itself heard through the writing. In the second chapter, “Mi vida en Z”, Moreiras recounts the events that through disagreements in the university led to the author being increasingly isolated by his colleagues and that, eventually, made him feel that he eventually needed to leave. This chapter demonstrates the way in which, by compiling these essays as part of a collection with common themes, they are given new meaning, as it becomes clear that this reflection is not only a personal testimony about the misfortunes that one encounters if you find yourself in the talons of superiors bent on destroying your professional career, it is also a question of the figure of the *marrano* as the heterodox seeking to survive in an order in which she finds no place; in other words, of infrapolitical life. “Taking for granted that there is no moral law”, writes Moreiras at the beginning of this chapter, “and that everything is a question of either winning or losing, then the question gets shifted: what does one want to win? Pride and dignity are figured in the response to this question, which for me was never a *political* answer” (Moreiras 2016: 63). If not a political answer, then the question of pride and dignity are located at a different level, at a level which takes a step back from the political and addresses another set of problems entirely. Moreiras makes it clear in his reflections that these existential (actually lived) questions and how they are narrativised cannot be separate from the task of thinking.

Indeed, central to these set of reflections in *Marranismo* is the question of narrativisation, whether this be in an autobiographical or historical mode. Whereas many of the chapters in the book rehearse and can be read as overcoming certain impasses of theoretical positions within Latinamericanism, the fifth chapter is significant in its announcement of a “second turn” of deconstruction, thus echoing the exergue to his more recent *Infrapolítica* (2020a). In this chapter, Moreiras turns to the question of deconstruction in the field of Latin American Studies based on his experience as one of the first and most important proponents of the possibilities for deconstruction within the professional field. Providing a history of deconstructionist reflection in Latin American Studies, Moreiras outlines the importance of deconstruction as a means

20 It is certainly notable, in that sense, that only the latter (Bosteels) is given any real attention in the latest two books by Moreiras under discussion here. This suggests a move away from these pitfalls of Latinamericanism towards another space of reflection in this later work.

to rethink the possibilities of a field, of what it means to teach about Latin America (or Spain) from the outside, without this constituting a “presentation” of Latin American or Spanish “difference”, offered for the consumption or for the aesthetic enjoyment of the dominant other who regards the culture with disinterest. He turns to the recently published 1964–5 seminar by Derrida on *Heidegger and the Question of Being and History* to suggest that the starting point of a second deconstructive turn should engage with Derrida’s early proposal that all deconstruction and all awakening of thought seeks the ongoing demetaphorization of onto-theological mythologies. This demetaphorisation will become a key function of infrapolitical reflection when faced with the metaphorical language of metaphysics, which is also to read, in the reading here provided, politics.

The final chapters of *Marranismo* mark a shift from this “sticking point” of the year 1998, as if marking a liberation from what that date traces as a result of its being worked through in the writing itself. It also marks a move away from a specifically Latinamericanist-based reflection to one that extends also to Spain. It is significant, I think, in this context that the emphasis continues to be on the role of narrative and in particular of denarrativisation. In the chapter “El tiempo desquiciado”, for example, Moreiras offers an analysis of Antonio Muñoz Molina’s *La noche de los tiempos*, which in its turn is supported by a reading of his *Todo lo que era sólido* which is, for Moreiras, in dialogue with the former in a number of important ways. These texts become an opportunity to reflect on three transformative moments of Spanish history simultaneously, breaking with the official chronology to explore the inherent interrelatedness of their times: the Spanish Civil War, the transition to democracy, and the contemporary moment of crisis and the new hope that the 15M and other similar movements have inspired. Moreiras draws on his own coincidental parallels with Antonio Muñoz Molina, who is of the same generation as the author, to reflect on the experience of the transition among disenchanted young adults like himself and Muñoz Molina in the 1970s, asking what this meant for a whole generation of Spaniards, and what it might mean for a whole new generation of Spaniards today. Once again drawing the parallel between the practice of autographic writing and the infrapolitical theory that he explores, Moreiras points towards those dimensions of life which exceed politics even in the moment of political transformation itself, and the generational inscription of himself and authors like Muñoz Molina which is not reducible to any historicisation of the Spanish political experience. The final chapter, “Conversations on the question of infrapolitics”, turns more explicitly to the question of the quasi-concept of infrapolitics, explaining its relationship to the critique of metaphysical thought in Heidegger and Derrida, and speaking about the notion in relation to both politics and ethics as the twin figures of what was once called practical philosophy. The themes of autographic writing and theoretical fiction which are present throughout the chapters are here more heavily emphasized, and perhaps provide us, as the author himself suggests in the preliminary note to the book, with a different

lens through which to read the chapters that precede this one. The notion of auto-graphic writing is brought directly into conversation with the notion of life or existence; Moreiras writes:

The writing that interests me does not seek subjective constitution through truth. Rather, it seeks truth and results in destitution. It seeks truth in the sense that it seeks in every case to traverse the fantasy, and produces destitution in the sense that traversing the fantasy brings us closer to the abyss of the real. (Moreiras 2016: 200)

Perhaps, through these inscriptions, Moreiras's writing indicates a working towards such a proximity to the abyss that will appear in his later work.

In *Marranismo e inscripción* Moreiras would appear, in a way which is at the same time very serious and tongue-in-cheek, to offer his latest publication as the remedy (the *pharmakon*, that is, both remedy and poison) to both a personal and professional malady, as his own "traversing the fantasy", and the theme of writing as both malady and cure is thematized explicitly in one of the eighth chapters of the book. In so doing, he exposes a number of theoretical impasses in the field, but also exposes his own professional trials, appearing to lay all bare for the reader. There is no doubt something that feels perhaps contradictory or at least odd about this, in a book which seeks to explore a dimension of life that can never be reduced to its re-presentation in writing. It is perhaps suggestive, therefore, that the book's epilogue – an appendix, a supplement, itself not a chapter, but something whose function could be to undo the architectonics of the book organized through its chapters – about the infrapolitical dimensions of Javier Marías's novel *Los enamoramientos*, ends with the idea of a writing which exposes the limits of narrative's capacity to lay bare life in all of its dimensions. Speaking of the central characters, Moreiras states: "Javier, in the ears of María, cannot but be deceitful with the truth, because Javier's truth is beyond all narrative and is tied up with a radical de-narrativization" (Moreiras 2016: 223). Whatever the existential imprint Moreiras would have suggested could be read in the traces of the previous chapters, therefore, something will have always escaped them, and in this sense Moreiras's own writing participates in such a performative de-narrativization. Our tracing in circles of a certain problematic of performance or announcement may not be in vain, therefore, if we accept that we are on the hunt for something which by definition always escapes. Perhaps, as Moreiras suggests, this may be true of literary production in general:

Perhaps literature would be nothing other than the secular attempt to touch that border of narration beyond narration. This is the infrapolitical dimension of literature, its *actio in distans*, without which literature cannot be anything other than communitarian allegory, and as such fallen. (Moreiras 2016: 223)

What is clear is that the auto-graphic elements of Moreiras's writing are performative of a much more general critique, provocation and proposal, that

develop in this earlier moment of writing as a critique unfolding from out of a specific engagement with an academic disciplinary field. This, I suggest, is further radicalised in the third and final of the textual inscriptions under discussion.

Inscription 3: March 20–May 18 2020²¹

Thus far, my argument has been that in order to properly understand the stakes of what Moreiras proposes by the notion of infrapolitics as he discusses it in his latest work, it is necessary to understand the importance of a problem which is thematised, albeit perhaps not directly, in this writing – how to announce or perform that which indexes or attempts to index that unnameable whose placeholder is “infrapolitics”, that space of a “from where” which cannot be determined or pinpointed by writing, given that it is always what bears its mark and at the same time escapes capture by the writing process. If infrapolitics has to do with a facticity of existence beyond or below the ontico-ontological difference and metaphysical closure, then it must make itself felt in that practice of reflection which has nevertheless been unable to capture it, yet without which that singular existence cannot take on its own singularity, appropriate itself, or think itself. We are met with an aporetic condition which, we can say, by reading how this set of questions explicitly informs a strategy of writing in the inscriptions concerned in *Marranismo* and *Infrapolítica*, Moreiras’s writing attempts to fully assume in its exposition and, in so doing, make it all the more felt. If we were looking to trivialise the matter, we perhaps might argue that the singularity of Moreiras’s experience detracts from the universality of its implications. This would no doubt be a misunderstanding of how infrapolitics already operates beyond such binaries as singular and universal, similar to the futility of the attempts to reduce deconstruction to a play between public and private concerns. Nevertheless, it seems to me that it is precisely insofar as it so clearly addresses such an issue, that the last of our textual inscriptions, the recent book *Sosiego siniestro* (2020b), is perhaps the most powerful exposition or indexing of the infrapolitical region to date. It is so, I would argue, precisely because it locates its textual inscription within a fundamental contemporary moment which we share and which is brought to light by the Covid-19 pandemic as an irruption of the real into the imaginary-symbolic order, as we may say in Lacanese or, to paraphrase Jorge Alemán, insofar as it touches upon our common solitude. In what remains of this article and by way of conclusion, I will briefly address some of the stakes of reading *Sosiego* from this perspective.

The *sosiego* under discussion which forms part of the book’s title, which can perhaps be translated as state of calm or tranquillity (*Uncanny Rest* in its more recent English translation [Moreiras 2022]), is the starting point for these reflections. The *sosiego* offers an uncanny calm as the pandemic takes hold

21 The dates refer to the events that appear in diary-like form in *Sosiego siniestro* (2020b). Quotes throughout refer to the English translation with Duke University Press, *Uncanny Rest* (2022).

and each of us, together and on our own, are confined by government order and in the common good to limit the impact of the public health crisis. And this *sosiego* is *siniestro* or sinister insofar as it is a state of calm which is somehow uncanny and, thus, lends itself in fact to a state of restlessness. It is this shared, singular (un)settlement which becomes, then, targeted from this singular experience and of its inscription in writing, as a calling from this “from which” that infrapolitics indexes. “The habitual has been put on hold”, writes Moreiras in this book which adopts the form of a diary, “and there is an unchosen leisure, an anxious lack of occupation, and anxiety increases from my attempts at taking advantage of it, of capitalising on it. I want to be able to use this strange lapse as a possible entry into my own life, from which I seem to have been uncannily separated; to realize what is this halted time, which nevertheless continues onward” (Moreiras 2022: 3). This diary thus offers a series of infrapolitical reflections but that are themselves inscribed as part of a deeper meditation upon existence, a meditation of an experience or relation to existence in common, and therefore an invitation to share in it. Through reflections on contemporary responses to the pandemic from theorists such as Giorgio Agamben, similar to many of the reflections found in *Infrapolítica*, this search for existence becomes one that is irreducible to politics. It is a question, writes Moreiras, that is interested in “the possibility of recovery, in confinement, of an existential exteriority, of an *ex-scription* neither directly communitarian nor directly political” (Moreiras 2022: 15). It would be difficult to gloss over here the number of issues that are brought to bear upon this task – the false dichotomy between biopolitical governance in the name of public health versus the health of the economy, the critique of a call to return to a renewed subjectivity; the issues of a teleological structure of history in Gramsci, among others. Without doubt the most significant of these from our perspective, however, is an attempt which emerges about half way through this diary of confinement and picks up an almost anxious pace as the narrative progresses: namely, how to think about an assumption or appropriation of our existence which must necessarily go further than other calls from critical theory for a transformation in subjectivity (and implies therefore the question of how to think such an appropriation outside of any subjectivist and thus voluntarist logic). This becomes articulated, at some moment in the diary, as a decision of existence, which should be understood also as a decision *for* existence, a risky decision to take a step back from politics as the administration of life.²²

What insists in this, aside from the important theoretical reflections that inform this way of thinking about existence, is a move away from a concern felt in *Marranismo* over narrativisation or de-narrativisation to a concern built upon an anxiety over the decision of existence and how to appropriate it, to thus live in relation to one’s own existence authentically. It insists, it is compulsive, repetitive, and so the symptomatic nature of this drive becomes

22 Moreiras takes this notion of the decision of existence from Jean-Luc Nancy. See: Moreiras (2017) and Nancy (1993).

thematized more and more explicitly, and with it, a sense of anxiety over the decision, over the question: “How, in any case, are these pages, my pages, inscribed in this?” (Moreiras 2022: 94). Our shared experience of a suspension of the normal time of capital, history or metaphysics (shadows of the same phantasm), allows for a reassessment of the appropriate way to dwell in this time and of our belonging to or in it. “What I have been calling the decision of existence is, after all, nothing more than the attempt”, writes Moreiras, “repeated and ceaseless and belligerent, to listen to and take responsibility for the ontological difference in my life and in every life: to appropriate my time and to live that difference between becoming who I am or becoming only its mirage and slavish parody” (Moreiras 2022: 96). Infrapolitics is about the assumption of this task for thought, which refuses to become a willing slave of the metaphysical closure, and seeks to renew the political field in such a way so that we may all seek out such a freedom. The task of emancipation is displaced with respect to our political traditions, and inscribed within the question of existence itself, of *how* to live, for which the question of how to write should not at all be considered separate.

The shared loneliness of this *sosiego siniestro* or uncanny rest becomes then, I argue, a powerful indexation of the restless (non-)place of infrapolitics, not analysed, but re-vealed through a self-conscious (if such a word is appropriate in this context) assumption of the existential condition of the textual inscriptions which shape, mark, haunt and inform the series of writings that are here under discussion. What Moreiras’s latest work offers is a practice of reflection, of infrapolitical reflection, insofar as it represents an attempt to think the existential *Faktum* of this (non-)place (or to re-veal it, which amounts to the same thing). What is thus intentionally obscured and displaced at every stage of this writing is a question over the act of writing itself, which becomes perhaps a passive act in the Derridean sense, where that separation between *dynamis* and *energeia* becomes undecidable. But neither is it the remaining in a non-actualised state, as proposed by the latest work of Giorgio Agamben as a new mode of ontology. “Potency or impotency, but there’s something more”, writes Moreiras, “something else, that overflows and escapes those two conditions. That something else is the condition of condition, the infrapolitical condition, the original gift” (Moreiras 2022: 44). How to think it? The question perhaps cannot be answered in any final way, or its answer will have always been singular and contingent, and Moreiras’s writing is perhaps above all an attempt to demonstrate this in its own performative inscription. But the question is not rhetorical either. Perhaps the question is addressed to that person who may be prepared to answer the call to reflect upon the infrapolitical, or perhaps it is the call of the secret itself, asking to be read. Perhaps, indeed, they are one and the same thing. What is clear is that, contrary to all hopes and expectations, the response to this crisis which is a crisis of our planetary existence – and this is of course not only limited to the pandemic – cannot be found within our tired political tradition.

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Piter Bejker

Spisi o egzistenciji u najnovijem delu Alberta Moreirasa

Apstrakt

Ovaj članak pristupa najnovijem radu Alberta Moreirasa o infrapolitici kao samosvesnom aktu pisanja koji misli svoje uslove ili sopstveni kontingentni tekstualni natpis. U tom smislu, predlažem da ovaj rad možemo čitati kao informisan pitanjem, čak i preokupacijom, o tome koji oblik ili stil pisanja je prikladan za najavu ili ponovno otkrivanje egzistencijalnih dimenzija koje predlaže pojam infrapolitike. U istraživanju tri takva neblagovremena tekstualna natpisa, članak pristupa ulozima onoga što Moreiras tematizira pod nazivom infrapolitika kroz način na koji informiše performativnost Moreirasove vlastite prakse pisanja, istražujući pritom odnos koji infrapolitika pretpostavlja prema politici i određenoj kritici kasnog kapitalizma, kao i drugih važnih pojmova kao što su marinizam, drugi obrt dekonstrukcije, autografsko pisanje i demetaforizacija, između ostalog.

Ključne reči: infrapolitika, marinizam, stil, dekonstrukcija, inskripcija, autografsko pisanje, performans.