

Hauntology and History in Jacques Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*

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“One must also consider, to be sure, the singular involvement in the mobility of a highly differentiated, tactical and strategic context. But this should not prevent one from recognizing certain invariables beyond these limits. There is constancy, consistency and coherence here. There are discursive layers whose stratifications allows long sequences to remain subjacent to ephemeral formations.” Derrida.¹

Hauntology is part of Derrida's discourse dedicated to deconstructing reductionist essentialist and totalitarian thinking. Inconsistently, Derrida asserts hauntology is a category that is irreducible.² It follows from this argument that hauntology is, in and of itself, almost a radical mover and at least an apriori irreducible to what it extracts, displaces and deconstructs. In this essay I examine the paradox inherent in Derrida's claim for hauntology vis-à-vis its treatment of Marx's onto-eschatological conception of history. I believe that deconstructing Marx's *pensum* into “discursive stratifications” is a valid heuristic methodology that allows an analysis of differentials such as those created in different conceptualizations of temporalities. However useful such a technique is in posing new questions, if they are indeed new, in Marx's case at least, it does not demonstrate that Marx's ontology is hauntologically over-determined.

In this essay I examine Derrida's claim for a hauntological over determination of temporalities. Tactically, I believe Derrida avoids an all out confrontation by arguing

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge 1994 at 118.

² “We will take this category to be irreducible, and first of all to everything it makes possible: ontology, theology, positive or negative onto-theology.” Ibid at 51.

communality between his and Marx's approach, through a language of spectrality. I contend that while the language of spectrality is central to hauntology and, while Marx may metaphorical refer to spectres and ghosts as part of his symbolic rhetoric, this use of these symbolisms is decidedly not an ontological claim by Marx.

I believe there is a fundamental distinction between Derrida's notion of temporalities and Marx's and, I argue this distinction lies at the crux of the difference between Marx's ontology and Derrida's hauntology. I argue that while Derrida's sustains his claim for communality with Marx in the use of signifiers in language, Derrida's approach to history exposes hauntology as an extreme totalizing formulation that effaces the reality of presence, which is a determinant within Marx's ontology, eschatology and teleology.

Derrida's Hauntology and Marx's Onto-teleology and eschatology

Hauntology

The French word *hantise* is the etymological root for Derrida's hauntology. As a verb *hantise* is used much the same way as the English *haunting* but also expressing the return of the *revenants*³, their comings and goings with the caveat that the act of return is originary "*it begins by coming back*".⁴ As a noun it denotes the place inhabited by the *revenant*, the spirit, and spectres ghosts that keep returning; however it also implies an obsession, or fear, or continuous repetitive acts.⁵ As an adjective *hantise* denotes movement, inadvertent undetectable passage between loci and time frame to another time

³ Spirits, ghosts, spectres.

⁴ Derrida, *Spectres* at 11.

⁵ Ibid at 177.

dimension, although within the historical process, un-fixed,⁶ this movement never produces comfort but instead angst, imbalance, apprehension of untimeliness and a “disadjustment of the contemporary”.⁷ Derrida defines this as a disjuncture of temporalities best expressed as “*the time is out of joint.*”⁸ Temporalities remain in past-past perfect, past perfect, a future anterior, time modes, which never coincide and remain multiple temporalities that are never co-present. Derrida combines all these meanings and nuances into his critical category of hauntology alleging its un-deconstruct-ability given its mercurial capacity and disjuncture. (I believe in this instance Derrida shows he also can be dogmatic.) Thus the spectres of the past, the spirit of the future, the *revenants* continually intermingle in another temporality but reappear within/without ephemeral contexts. It is on account of this notion of disjointed time that Derrida argues hauntology fragments the totalizing elements in ontology, theology, etc.⁹

Hauntology is a commitment to deconstruction’s project of *differance*; hence to a destabilization of all reductionisms, essentialisms and dichotomies, ontologies, teleologies, and epistemological claims.¹⁰ Hauntology’s *differance* creates an expectation either for return and/or repetition of presences/absences,¹¹ and also the tension inherent in the phantasmagoria and obsession, anxiety and fear of mourning.¹² Derrida asserts that mourners are necessary. They are the inheritors of all that ensues

⁶ Ibid at 4.

⁷ Ibid at 99 and 101.

⁸ From Shakespeare’s Hamlet - Ibid at 49.

⁹ “It does not belong to ontology, to the discourse on the Being of beings, or to the essence of life or death. It requires then, what we call, to save time and space rather than just to make up a word, hauntology. We will take this category to be irreducible, and first of all to everything it makes possible: ontology, theology, positive or negative onto-theology.” Derrida, *Spectres* at 51.

¹⁰ Ibid at 136.

¹¹ Author’s lecture notes Pol Sci 4091 York University, 2003.

¹² Derrida, *Spectres* at 108.

from the past and in their mourning, they iterate a promise of responsibility for the future.¹³

What does this all mean? Hauntology and spectrality work deconstructively as radical critique to question critical limits of dichotomies, obstructing totalities, and dialectics, by fragmenting rigid conceptualizations and totalities.¹⁴ The differential differance, presences/absences breaks the hegemony of language and in so doing searches for new conceptualizations or traces of the new in the old and the old in the new. Derrida argues he achieves this by opening the interstices, of language, and I believe this demonstrates his predilection for coining terms. Basically, this is Derrida’s tactical approach to Marx’s texts, always seeking “discursive stratifications” and “ephemeral formations” to produce a new discourse.¹⁵

Marx’s onto-eschatology

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles [...] Our epoch the epoch of the bourgeoisies, possess, however this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms [...] two great classes facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.”

*Manifesto of the Communist Party*¹⁶

“As soon as one of the social strata situated above it gets into revolutionary ferment, it enters into an alliance with [the proletariat] and so shares all the defeats that the different parties suffers one after another. [...] It seems unable to rediscover revolutionary greatness in itself or to win energy from alliances newly entered into.”

*Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*¹⁷

In dealing with Marx’s conception of history Derrida refers to the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* and the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*; therefore, for the

¹³ Ibid at 114.

¹⁴ Ibid at 127 and 162.

¹⁵ Op cit. as introduction to this section.

¹⁶ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. In R. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, (2nd ed.) (New York: Norton, 1978, English Edition edited by Engels in 1888) at 474.

¹⁷ Karl Marx. *The Eighteen Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. In R. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, (2nd ed.) (New York: Norton, 1978, English Edition edited by Engels in 1888) at 601.

purposes of consistency, I retain this delimitation. I believe class struggle is foundational to Marx's conception of history. I argue that this abstract inscription acts as a laser beam pointing to fissures within social relations circumscribed by property, and the layers of power relations resulting from the barricades created in capitalist societies - class antagonisms. Marx claims most societies¹⁸ have had class struggles, and therefore class struggle is not new in any epoch. What distinguish other epochs from capitalism are the new social relations resulting in outright exploitation through alienation and the appropriation of labour through productive private property.

When the employed and unemployed struggle to stay alive by resisting the efforts of the dominant class to control them, the least that could be said is they approach each other antagonistically. Naturally, the proletariat will tend to resist through different means in different epochs, in Marx's time outright revolution was not uncommon. However, revolutionary action was not unique to the proletariat, the bourgeoisie had its own struggles with the aristocracy, but could not find the required revolutionary ferment within its own conditions. The proletariat did; and this energy the bourgeoisie co-opted to level its scores with the aristocracy in different revolutions, especially the revolution of 1848¹⁹.

Thus, I argue that Marx problematized class antagonism by recognizing human neediness and power relations resulting in inter-class alliances especially in times of political turmoil erasing the clarity of vested interests and interests in common.²⁰ While there may be a clear economic status demarcation between members of classes Marx

¹⁸ For example the case of primitive communist societies.

¹⁹ Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, at 601.

²⁰ See headline quote.

does not assert that there is a clear psychological dividing line between them, rather he points to their ambiguities accentuated by political and economic conjectures leading to self doubt and inconsistencies within the different strata of each class. This analysis on his part, I believe, puts into question the attribution to him of a reductionist label.

The bourgeoisie and proletariat coincide to some extent in their aspiration for democracy (for the bourgeois as long as it preserves their status) their conflicting ideologies merging opportunistically through political expediency and sometimes coinciding in revolutionary uprisings. For the bourgeois the goal, under their ideological banner of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* always is to secure their privileges in productive property, for the proletariat a yet unarticulated aspiration to union of economic and political rights. At first the proletariat dream that change can be effected from within through alliances with a new emerging bourgeoisie, but after two revolutions they realize increasingly that a communist society can only be achieved through self-determination and must be separate from the tentacles of bourgeois power.²¹

A farce ensues when opposing interests appropriate the same language of emancipation with completely opposing goals and intents. In the *Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx relates how this occurs once the bourgeoisie and proletariat entangle their aspirations and hand the reins of governance to Bonapartist despots. However, most of the moves and counter moves Marx reads as an eventual and further entrenchment of Bourgeois privilege, whereas for the proletariat it is a painful lesson of a history that distances their attainment of an ultimate goal in a communist society.

²¹ “In bourgeois society, therefore, living labour is but a means to increase accumulated labour. In a communist society, accumulated labour is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the labourer.” Marx, Manifesto, *Marx-Engels Reader* at 485.

Despite these constraints the political proletariat voice emerges from Marx's writings, in them he expresses how these communists recognize their struggle is against ideological, cultural and political apparatuses, the modern nation states, and their domination through capital. For communists, clearly their goal entails the abolition of private productive property as the root cause of social and political inequality. Thus the communist goal is not time bound or limited. I believe Marx expresses the impediments to these goals arising from not only the hegemony of capital but also the interface with the contradictions arising from non-contemporaneous socio-econo-political and cultural conjunctures.

Thus, in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx maintains that while throughout history political agency is pivotal to social change, however, there are material, as well as ideological (political and religious) and cultural conjunctural constraints, and that when social changes occur they do so a-synchronously. Louis Althusser articulates this as Marx's recognition of the impossibility of contemporaneity. A contemporaneity expressed in Hegel's notion which presupposes a synchronous movement of linear time from which cross sections can be taken and read as history.²² I argue this realization is what Marx expresses, in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* in the language of his day, as cognition of what Althusser calls "relative and autonomous practices".²³

Both the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* and the *Eighteenth Brumaire* were pamphlets, full of rhetoric containing many metaphors of phantasms and phantoms, which was the rhetorical language of the day, but also, I suggest, expressing in this

²² Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital*. Paris: François Maspero, 1968 at 96.

²³ *Ibid* at 97.

language the emergence of the new conceptualizations within his ontology such as the proletariat. At the same time, in both these writings, Marx makes explicit assertions concerning the social and material conditions as the reality confronting the new proletariat class, which required a new political articulation. Part of this reality also is, I argue, that Marx undertook this task at the time when communists were deemed political outcasts because they challenged the status quo and therefore these pamphlets were meant to open the political space for articulating a challenge to social, economic and political ostracism.²⁴

History, Disjunction of Time and Temporalities

“The Eventness of the Event”²⁵

And to understand history, that is the eventness of the event, must one not reckon with this virtualization?” Derrida²⁶

Derrida asserts that in conjuring spectres, spirits or ghosts, in his writings Marx articulated the possibility of a disjunction of temporalities “*time is out of joint*”. This is the contradiction, which Marx faced according to Derrida. Thus, Marx in order to retain the logic of his ontological approach and in order to preserve the validity of his eschatological conception of history, had to subvert this contradiction through the employment of spectral language and by insinuating these presences/absences, which made the contemporaneous an impossibility. Derrida reasons Marx realized hauntings

²⁴ “It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views [...] and meet this nursery tale of the Spectre of Communism with a Manifesto of the party itself.” Manifesto of the Communist Party. In R. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, (2nd ed.) (New York: Norton, 1978, English Edition edited by Engels in 1888) at 473.

²⁵ Derrida, *Spectres* at 63.

²⁶ Derrida, *Spectres* at 117

prolong time away from contemporaneity and therefore Marx, Derrida argues, vacillates, and sees no solution to this problem and appropriates the language of spectrality.

Derrida minimizes this influence, and instead argues that this indicates Marx's unresolved contradictions in historical materialism. I agree with Derrida that Marx's use of spectral language is not coincidental, however I do not concur that it is an indication of unstated contradictions in Marx's approach to history. Instead, I suggest the use of this language enunciates a new conceptualization - the emergence in history of the proletariat. Derrida does not prove spectrality in any way affected Marx's views on the history of class struggles or the power relations embedded in all antagonisms, on the contrary. I must concur with Derrida that Marx employed the language of spectrality as a mechanism, which allowed Marx to hint at the problem of temporalities that was beyond the signification of language and limits of any knowledge achievable in his epoch. However, I believe Derrida confines Marx to a realization that he was haunted by the iterations of spectres of the future and the past, and argue this conjecture is based on hauntology's limit in dealing with the reality of presence, since spectralized absences over-determine presence in Derrida's approach.

Memories are hauntings. Either by the ghost of one's self or that of an-Other from a different temporality be that the past or the future. Derrida says, "[...] I have just discovered, in truth I have just remembered what must have been haunting my memory: the first *noun* [italics in original] of the *Manifesto*, and this time in the singular, is "spectre": "A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism".²⁷ Hauntologically, the spectre appears in different temporalities: the spirit is present with

²⁷ Ibid at 4.

Marx when writing these lines; the spectre of communism haunts the ruling classes of Europe of that epoch, the ghost haunts Derrida's memory, iterating that first virtual spectral word of the *Manifesto* and he cannot ignore its call.

First, Derrida takes the concept of memories to be the inheritance of acquired knowledge along with the spirits (in this case through memory contained in the legacy of texts) of those engaged with intellectually; in Marx's case, examples are Kant, Hegel, Striner, to name only a few. Derrida admits to his own haunting benefiting from a longer line of ghosts (the writers who inform his thinking)²⁸. Second, although I agree Marx wrote freely of spectres et al, he used this language metaphorically; however, from this it is impossible to assert or negate that Marx pre-recognized a virtual- relative-time- dimension. Derrida asserts that in using this language of spectrality Marx indicates an unconscious consciousness, (i.e. he was being haunted by the ghosts of the future) of the difficulty of proceeding neatly from past to present to future due to the embroilment, entanglement and fissures created by the relativity of spectral virtuality.²⁹ However, in assuming this spectral extreme, I suggest that Derrida blissfully ignores presence, a presence which Marx acknowledged, which even though un-contemporaneous nevertheless co-existing with independent/interfaced social practices, each with its particular growth and decline rate, and in what Althusser calls "*particular time*".³⁰

What then is Derrida's hauntological conception of time?

²⁸ Ibid at 6.

²⁹ The incredible suffering angst and anxiety that resulted from the totalitarian dogmatism of the Soviet block states.

³⁰ Althusser, *Reading Capital*. Althusser argues Marx rejected the model of contemporaneity "*continuous and homogenous time* [italics in original]" at 99. "We can argue from the specific structure of the Marxist whole that it is no longer possible to think the process of development of the different levels of the whole *in the same historical time* [...] On the contrary we have to assign to each level a peculiar time." Ibid at 99.

Derrida's alleged evidence of Marx's spectralization in the *Manifesto* brings Derrida in a direct confrontation with Marx's ontological approach to history. He intends to solve the dilemma by hauntologically opening spectral spaces otherwise closed in linear temporality. Thus, Derrida presents one of the forms of history as the "eventness of the event".³¹ This eventness, Derrida argues, expands the binary or dialectical logic of actuality by circumscribing the *differance* of absence. In terms of history this means potentially anything is history as events of the past regarded from a virtual future, a past never experienced in present presence which, Derrida argues, is an impossibility given the predominance of a plurality absences. Through this eventness Derrida proposes a conception of time in which he privileges absence³², as the event, which makes temporalities possible, and as an indicator of events in disjointed instances such as *l'histoire*³³. Texts such as the *Manifesto* are good examples of the "eventness of the event".

Hauntologically texts circumscribe 'historical' embodiments which are forever haunted by those spectres that informed the thinking of the writer, the spirit of the text which touches the embodied ghosts of its readers, and the legacy it creates. Derrida argues the *Manifesto* is such an event, displaying its different temporalities: the haunting of the ruling classes of Europe by the spectres of the communist states of the future, the presence and absences of the classes Marx evokes, the *Manifesto's* iteration to future generations, but always in a different voice. At the same time, I argue, Marx insisted on co-existence and the material reality confronting workers in capitalism. If the purpose of Derrida's hauntological deconstruction is to dismantle limiting borders, in this case

³¹ Ibid at 63.

³² Ibid, "due to the "impossibility to discern between the spectre and the spectre of the spectre" at 117

³³ Ibid at 18. There is a double meaning to *l'histoire* here it could mean history or the story.

Marx's concepts such as class antagonisms in the *Manifesto* given its 'eventness', Derrida would have to show how the presence and absence of one class in the other either solves, or further problematizes these social relations. Instead, Derrida insists he solves this paradox through an articulation in new hauntological language and this, I argue, is a tautology because the solution is only a restatement of the problem.

The *Manifesto* can either be viewed hauntologically in its full spectral iteration or, as I believe Marx would have it, a declaration addressed to communists, non-aligned workers and even members of the ruling classes in Europe speaking defiantly appropriating power by workers while symbolically eroding the corridors of privilege. I concede the *Manifesto* is and 'eventness of an event', for example, vividly in the forefront are depictions of the material circumstances Marx saw workers face in the inhuman conditions of the England of his epoch - death resulting from disease and hunger, arising from exploitation through in-human working conditions is far from spectral. Also, there is no doubt of its 'eventness' and particular time as an instrument through which Marx meant to interpellate,³⁴ not as an ephemeral iteration, but rather as a clear strategic ideological call positioning the politics of workers' resistance to exploitation.

Would Marx's knowledge of this *differand* affect a word contained in the *Manifesto*? I do not believe it would. Anyone could see the difference between destitute poverty and opulence; it took Marx to question the causes of this economic disparity and privilege. The *differance* points to the call of an ethical relation³⁵ existing between persons, in turn it also questions the privilege of extreme wealth in the light of

³⁴ Althusserian term denoting an ideological hailing of a Subject.

³⁵ The call to justice in a gesture of openness in the spectre of the Other. Derrida, *Spectres at 109*.

devastating poverty. Hauntology's differance even insists this disparity is unethical (how could it otherwise after Marx). However, Marx's fundamental distinction is his insistence that the elimination of this disparity should not ever lay at the whim of a benevolent gesture of openness in the face of a deadly power battle for survival in the econo-political realm where, Marx insisted, there was always a danger of co-optation, adaptation and capitulation. Thus, hauntology cannot eradicate this conjuncture, but it does draw to our attention that all the events leading to the production of the *Manifesto* were disjointed events - an exiled communist, Marx, setting his pen against the power of the emerging capitalist states.

Law of Invincible Anachrony

“But synchrony does not have a chance, no time is contemporary with itself, neither the time of the Revolution, which finally never takes place in the present, nor the times that follow or follow from it. What happens? Nothing, other at least than forgetting. First of all this task, which was moreover the task of their time [...] that is already dislocated, disjointed, off its hinges (“out of joint”) [...] It was already on the program of anachrony, in “the task of their time.”” Derrida³⁶

While Derrida attempts to deconstruct all ontologies including Marx's, he argues there is a radical critique inherent in Marx's, compatible and equivalent to the hauntology's deconstructive radical critique. Hauntology, Derrida argues, facilitates a separation between Marx's ontological approach and his historical materialism by opening interstices in the closed conceptualizations in Marx's ontology such as class antagonisms. Derrida argues hauntology's differance between Marx's radical critique and Marx's onto-eschatological approach to history allows a demarcation of fissures

³⁶ Ibid at 111.

signalling the disjuncture of history with time and therefore the impossibility of closed antagonisms.

Disjuncture, for Derrida, implies many stratifications of history unfolding in their different moments: first the “the pure history of spirits [...] the history of the possessed [...] the impure history of phantoms” and last but not least “the impure impure history of spirits”.³⁷ Unfortunately, Derrida does not explain what is pure or impure about all of this and how degrees of purity lead to different stratifications in history. At issue of course is Derrida’s contention of the impossibility of the embeddedness of Marx’s social radical critique in Marx’s ontology.

Derrida provides a text proof from Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte*. In this text Marx, among other things, critiques the bourgeois revolutions of 1789 and 1848; he sees them as contentless, and tragic appropriations of the symbolisms of bygone eras, parodies of untranslatable languages, ideas and symbolisms.³⁸ Marx points to the parody of the symbol of power behind the Roman eagle, its constitution, but most of all the tragedy of its intrigues and decapitations while the spectre of new oligarchies lay in the waiting. According to Derrida this occurs because of spectralization, adding these appropriations transform the spirit of these revolutions into their own spectres, i.e. “the impossibility to discern the spectre of the spectre.”³⁹ Thus, what is once the spirit of one revolution becomes the spectre of the another revolution, haunted by their ghosts who in a dance macabre between these

³⁷ Ibid at 120.

³⁸ Marx in Derrida, *Spectres* at 108.

³⁹ See footnote 32.

temporalities iterate a pre-cognition of the failure of these revolutions due to their lack of content, which for Derrida is the result of time's disjuncture - the *time is out of joint*.

Derrida concurs with Marx that the revolutions of 1789 and 1848 resulted in grotesque acts of performative parody lacking in content, and both ended with a what Marx calls a "hog-head"⁴⁰ and Derrida a "mask"⁴¹ at the helm of power, as the *revenants*. The spirit of republican revolution of 1789 hauntologized the spectre of the Roman republic. This, for Derrida is a matter of "spectropolitics"⁴². Who inherited the Roman eagle as the symbol of the republic? Not the plebeians, but Napoleon the new Caesar. And the counter-revolution begins because the revolution never occurs, precisely at time's disjuncture, there are too many corpses and the survivors want to bury them, not the bodies, but the failure they signify, the failure of the inheritance and the renewed act of mourning.

For Derrida the actors of the counter-revolution of 1848 learnt the language of what was now the old revolution of 1789, not only did they appropriate, but improved it, and its strategies; seeking unenforceable alliances with the populace, utilizing the rhetoric of *égalité*, *fraternité*, *liberté*, while expert power brokers lay in the wait. The spirit starts the revolutions, its spectres, its good and bad ghosts, hard to distinguish between them, haunt and halt its passage to the future.

I argue that the difference between Marx and Derrida's radical approaches arises from Marx's *raison d'être* of the proletariat, and in Derrida's insistence on the possibility of their absences. Lived experience, the necessary act of being, is Marx's path to the

⁴⁰ Marx Ibid at 595.

⁴¹ Derrida, *Spectres* at 113.

⁴² Marx, in Derrida *Spectres* at 107.

becoming of the future. On the other hand, an ephemeral impossibility haunts Derrida's continuum of presences/absences. Obviously the two radical critiques head in opposite directions. I argue that Derrida does not contemplate the factor of critical distance. Derrida reminds us he is the future of Marx's past and that Marx is dead, although of course Derrida does not have to go to this trouble.⁴³ Whichever way Derrida wants to look at it, in 1848 Marx was alive, Derrida was not. Marx speaks in the present tense (although not as synchrony with historical time) yet, Derrida argues against the possibility of this reality because of the anachrony of a present non-contemporaneous with itself, which Marx would agree. What Marx would disagree with, I believe, is the impossibility of his presence on planes of co-existence.

Marx is there in 1848 almost *in situ*, from a particular vantage point he sees the mis-adventurous alliance of a group of people with patterns of social behaviour, which he chooses to call the proletariat, and another equally non-homogeneous grouping fighting to retain its power, he calls the bourgeoisie.⁴⁴ What concerns Marx is the deadly sacrifice of the proletariat in this revolution.⁴⁵ Marx looks at the revolutions of 1789 and 1848 and in the latter he sees something new emerging, something that must break with the past, the proletariat,⁴⁶ a proletariat that had paid the price of a tragic political alliance, made under duress with the bourgeoisie. In other words, Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* is in no

⁴³ Derrida, *Spectres* at 114.

⁴⁴ Not that Marx was the first to use these terms.

⁴⁵ "On the side of the Paris proletariat stood none but itself. More than three thousand insurgents were butchered after the victory, and fifteen thousand were deported without trial." Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire, Karl-Engels Reader* at 601.

⁴⁶ "Having secured its arms in hand, the proletariat impressed its stamp upon it and proclaimed it to be a social republic. There was thus indicated the general content of the modern revolution, a content which was in most singular contradiction to everything that, with the material available, with the degree of education attained by the masses, under the given circumstances and relations, could be immediately realized in practice." Marx, *Eighteen Brumaire, Karl-Engels Reader* at 600.

sense a synchrony – rather, an analysis of unevenly developing process with diverse conjunctures and temporalities.

I argue that despite some similarity in Derrida and Marx's positions on synchronicity, co-presence/presence as reality separates Marx's radical critique from Derrida's. Derrida evades the fact that Marx recognizes other actors in social struggle. It is not a matter of a dichotomy between Proletariat and Bourgeois exclusively; Marx names other players and actors in this social struggle along with their stratagems for power. I should note that Marx also asserts that neither the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat are homogeneous,⁴⁷ which coincides with Althusser's "autonomous practices".⁴⁸ All of which indicates a non-synchronous approach but not Derrida's extreme of virtual non-presence.

I believe the harsh lessons of the proletariat are indelibly marked in Marx's psyche. Marx wants it to be clear that in the next revolution, the revolution of the proletariat, it shall not be thus, it cannot be, and the proletariat needs to articulate its own voice.⁴⁹ Hence, Marx clamours for two clear objectives: a democracy of political and economic equality and the unity of workers worldwide.⁵⁰ I believe for Marx the painful socio-political lessons of two revolutions through unfortunate alliances do not warrant their repetition. Therefore, Marx insists that the new revolution must forget any alliances that co-opt the power of the proletariat, and now communists, who have nothing to lose

⁴⁷ Marx, Manifesto, *Karl-Engels Reader* at 479-480.

⁴⁸ "On its side stood the aristocracy of finance, the industrial bourgeoisie, the middle class, the petty bourgeois, the army, the lumpen proletariat organized as the Mobile Guard, the intellectual lights, the clergy, and the rural population." *Ibid* at 601.

⁴⁹ *Ibid* at 490.

⁵⁰ *Ibid* at 500.

and everything to gain must unite in their purpose and forge ahead towards the making of a communist society.⁵¹

Derrida turns his thumb on this. Yes, he argues Marx is well aware of the law of “fatal anachrony”⁵² that the living look to the future but in looking to the future there is always the thought of hope and the mourning of death. There will be an act of mourning, forgetting the past is refusing a spectral inheritance and this is an impossibility. For Derrida a new revolution, will be haunted by the political revolutions of the past, today’s social revolution occurs in the morrow.⁵³

Derrida argues Marx’s is the first radical critic to deconstruct history; Marx in pointing to these revolutions located history’s hauntological anachronous rhythm and the violence, the arrhythmia of its revolutionary pulse and the violence in reciting the glories of hog-heads.⁵⁴ I argue that this arrhythmia cannot be the basis to separate Marx’s ontology to a distinct and separate branch of radical critique; on the contrary it tends to give an empirical example of Marx’s ontology. Derrida wishes to *contextualize* the component of Marx’s treatment of the *Eighteenth Brumaire* to coincide with a hauntological deconstruction as radical critique, which, of course is his prerogative. In effect, I can almost say, Derrida paraphrases much of Marx’s thoughts on the matter, except that Derrida will not take issue with Marx’s co-existence with other “eventnesses” or Marx’s articulation and conception of the proletariat. In their place Derrida

⁵¹ “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have the world to win” Ibid at 500.

⁵² Derrida, *Spectres* at 113.

⁵³ Ibid at 116. (It is beyond the scope of this essay to examine this social tomorrow, which for Derrida is the singularity of the messianic promise. Obviously both Derrida and Marx have their distinctive eschaton, although Derrida would wince at this term.)

⁵⁴ Ibid at 112.

reconstructs panoplies of spectres and ghosts re-entering and exiting on spectral temporality.

Conclusion

Derrida is intent on deconstructing the dichotomy of bourgeois and proletariat class relations and what he considers its limiting essentializing discourse. However, Derrida does not give us an alternative vantage point for critical analysis (apart from stating that there are ghosts and spectres all over the place) through a new political articulation for social disparities produced by economic and political inequality. Instead Derrida implies a new antinomy – spectres and proletariat. I argue that if Marx had not articulated class antagonisms in the terms that he did, given the limitations of language which Derrida concedes, how else could he (Marx) have articulated this part of his radical social critique? The ghost of the bourgeois in the worker, spirit of the worker in the bourgeois? Why not their blood types as type “O” flows in both their veins? That cuts across all gender, racial, ethnic, age and disability borders, which the neutrality of spectralization effaces. The fact is that Marx detected the unemployed beggar (she or he, young or old, disabled or not) knows the difference, and, Marx given the prevalence of unemployed beggars, employed living in dire poverty, wanted to seek the socio-politico-economic causes of this *phenomenon*, not its spirits or spectres.

In Derrida’s defence, he shares Marx’s commitment to a determined effort to question the world of appearances. Derrida questions the synchronicity of time and history; he has the benefit of being of a generation post the relativity of science⁵⁵. His indeterminateness allows him to move anachronously and uncommitted, he can at any

⁵⁵ Not that I am alleging he is a full blown relativist, yet I argue he shows tendencies in this direction – see quotes on pure and impure history on page 16 of this essay.

time plead the spectral ‘amendment.’ For Derrida everything is spectral because he argues nothing is fully present, unlike Marx who argues for emergence of presence and co-existence. .

I conclude Marx clearly hopes the proletariat will progress from being a spectre to being a real revolutionary force, but this does not require that the proletariat must be fully present in Derrida’s metaphysical sense. Since Derrida’s future is ephemeral and evanescent he does not contemplate that the spectral can become a reality. It is precisely this contention that limits hauntology and hardly marks it as an over-determining category. Marx, on the other hand, contemplates co-existence and the emergence of new “spectres” to reinforce the real content of the revolution, as opposed to being withheld by the traps of old modes of thoughts and action. I believe the reason Marx rejects the synchronicity of a Hegelian essential section lies in the acuity of his perception of “relative autonomous practices” which develop unevenly, a-synchronously while over-determining each other.⁵⁶ I believe it more plausible to contemplate these over-determinations of co-existents and emerging or diminishing forces as opposed to Derrida’s version of over-determination through spectralized absences.

⁵⁶ Althusser, *Reading Capital*, at 94-108.

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