

The Spectral Silence of différance: The Speech of Object-Oriented Exploitation

Jennifer Cotter

“[...] to the workers, in order that they may understand that we are not quibbling or word-juggling, but are dealing here with one of the most important points in the whole range of political economy; to the bourgeois, in order that they may convince themselves how greatly the uneducated workers, who can be easily made to grasp the most difficult economic analyses, excel our supercilious ‘cultured’ folk, for whom such ticklish problems remain insoluble their whole life long.” Frederick Engels, “Introduction” to Marx’s *Wage-Labour and Capital* (1891)

I.

*M*arx’s speeches to the German Workingmen’s Club of Brussels in 1847, which constitute the pamphlet *Wage-Labour and Capital*, produce concepts that break the silence on the exploitation of workers’ surplus-labor that occurs in production, behind the exchange of their labor-power for wages. In breaking the silence on the relations of exploitation behind “exchange-value” in capitalism, one of the most significant contributions that Marx’s speeches to the working-class makes is not only to acknowledge workers’ immediate concerns and conditions of life but to teach workers a *method of analysis* that enables them to understand and critique the totality of social relations of production behind their

immediate conditions of life. The speeches in *Wage-Labour and Capital*, in particular, teach workers to cut through the *language of the market* – i.e., the way in which their conditions of life are talked about and reified in the everyday language and platitudes of capitalist culture – which articulates the material interests of the ruling class masked as the “common” interests of all. The language of the market teaches workers to accept capitalism as natural, inevitable, and even as “desirable” to workers rather than as a fetter to their freedom from necessity. This is another way of saying that the speeches in *Wage-Labour and Capital* intervene in the *ideological appearance* that capitalism is a system of self-evident, natural laws that mutually benefit and guarantee equality, free-exchange, and democratic freedom for all, to the *underlying structure* of exploitation and the fundamental class antagonism between capital and wage-labor behind the working day that leads to the immiseration of the working class in spite of the wealth workers produce. In doing so, these speeches produce concepts and critique that not only demonstrate that capitalism is a system of exploitation and class antagonisms but that teach workers not to regard their exploitation as unchangeable because it is the result of a socially and historically produced and therefore collectively transformable mode of social production.

As Marx puts it in *Wage-Labour and Capital*, capitalism is founded on “*definite* social relations” of exploitation (29), meaning that, for example, poverty is not, as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson has claimed in contemporary market language, the effect of a “state of mind” (Fessler). Rather, poverty is the effect of “definite social relations of production” independent of a worker’s will in which wage-workers, who only have their labor-power to sell in order to survive, produce social wealth and are exploited by capital for profit. At the same time, Marx also emphasizes that capitalism is not only a definite structure of material relations of exploitation but a “*social* relation of production” because, like all modes of production, it arises from social and historical causes rather than inevitable or primordial laws of metaphysics or nature, human or otherwise (28-29; emphasis added). More specifically:

Jennifer Cotter, “*The Speech of Object-Oriented Exploitation*”

In the process of production, human beings work not only upon nature, but also upon one another. They produce only by working together in a specified manner and reciprocally exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations to one another, and, only within these social connections and relations does their influence upon nature operate, i.e., does production take place. (28)

Capitalism, Marx argues, like any other mode of production is “a social relation of production” and, more specifically, “it is a *bourgeois* relation of production, a relation of production of bourgeois society” (29). In the course of this discussion, and throughout the speeches, Marx raises questions of explanatory *critique* to workers to enable them to examine the totality of historical and material relations behind their conditions of existence. For instance, he raises the questions: “The means of subsistence, the instruments of labour, the raw materials, of which capital consists – have they not been produced and accumulated under given social conditions, within definite social relations? Are they not employed for new production, under given social conditions, within definite social relations? And does not just this definite social character stamp the products which serve for new production as *capital*?” (29). Marx, in other words, does not treat current conditions of existence – what is – as self-evident and transhistorical, he asks workers to inquire into and produce analysis and critique of the social relations and conditions – i.e. the historical and social basis – of their conditions of existence. In doing so, Marx is contributing to the capacity of workers to see through the ideology that obscures and justifies the conditions of their exploitation and to critique the social relations in which they are exploited. In this way, Marx’s speeches contribute to the class-consciousness of workers to enable them both to understand the definite material contradictions in which they are exploited and also enable them to understand how capitalism is socially produced and also, therefore, collectively transformable. In *Wage-Labour and Capital*, Marx not only produces explanatory concepts to break the silence

on exploitation, his speeches also teach workers to re-understand themselves as collective agents for social transformation to abolish the relations of exploitation.

The dominant (post)humanities today, however, teaches a method of interpretation – what Roland Barthes calls the “writerly” (*S/Z* 4-6) and Derrida calls “*différance*” (*Margins of Philosophy* 1-27) – that rejects explanatory concepts and, in turn, reduces class conflicts to interpretive conflicts and the ambiguities and play of meaning. In the logic of the writerly, “the possibility of conceptuality,” that is, the possibility of concepts that can *explain* an outside material reality, is undermined by *différance*, by which Derrida means the difference not between but within the sign and the play of signification (*Margins* 11). Moreover, *différance* is not only a disruption of the possibility of all explanatory concepts but a disruption of binary difference – the difference between – and, it is claimed, “the entire system attached to it [...] thereby disorganizing the entire inherited order” (Derrida *Positions* 42). In this logic it becomes impossible to grasp the material binary of class, which, as Marx lays bare in his speeches, is the effect of the totality of social relations of production that are rooted in private ownership of the means of production and the theft of workers’ surplus-labor by capital.

One of the functions of *différance* has been “putting into question the value *arkhē*” and, in doing so, silencing all inquiries into the “origin” of exploitation (*Margins* 6). Origins are rejected in the writerly on the grounds that they install a “metaphysics of presence.” Derrida posits that behind all *values* is not a “presence” but an “originary *différance*”; but one could no longer call it originary or final in the extent to which the values of origin [...] have always denoted presence” (*Margins* 9). In this way, the (post)humanities puts in ideological suspension the class contradictions of wage-labor and capital and the ensemble of social relations of production on which they are based. In the contemporary (post)humanities the interpretive logic of the writerly – of *différance* – updates the ideology of exchange-value in capitalism and represents exploitation as “unspeakable” by translating material contradictions of wage-labor and capital into post-

binary differences that are "onto-epistemologically" traversed (e.g., Dolphijn and van der Tuin 126-27) by *différance* and the free play of signification (e.g., Derrida, *Margins* 11) and, in more recent (post)humanist ontologies, the free play of objects outside of causality (e.g., Harman 175) and the "infinite" free flow of matter (e.g., Colebrook 75). From within this framework, the material contradictions of class, based on exploitation, are *ideologically* dissolved into a post-truth plurality of differences and singularities without determination, which disappears the material relations of production. This is the way in which the dominant (post)humanities empties social theory and critique of its use-value in becoming a material force for social transformation (Marx, Introduction 182).

For instance, in contrast to the way in which Marx's speeches raise questions of *critique*, in canonic texts of the writerly, such as Paul de Man's *Allegories of Reading*, effective "questions" are understood as "rhetorical" and, therefore, as endless-ends in themselves that, he writes, "radically suspend[] logic and open[] up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration" (10). Questions, in the logic of the writerly, lead to endless chains of questions without answers that *silence* workers' theoretical and conceptual inquiries into explaining the causes of their material conditions of life and culturally discipline and punish workers by treating them as "unsubtle" and "unsophisticated" for raising questions of *critique* that demand answers into the origin of their exploitation. This is the way in which the dominant (post)humanities teaches the contemporary workforces of capitalism not just the practical and technical skills workers need to be productive and exploitable labor for capital in the twenty-first century but the ideological and interpretive skills that capitalism requires of its workforce in order to adjust to their exploitation. As Teresa Ebert explains in "The Poverty of the (Post)Humanities," this is because "The task of the humanities under capitalism has been to develop an up-to-date interpretive unconscious in working people by which they spontaneously grasp the everyday through cultural meanings and values that naturalize capitalism and wage labor as the way things are and ought to be" (26).

To intervene in the privileging of the *writerly* in the (post)humanities today and its impact on dismantling class consciousness among workers, it is particularly urgent to return to examining Marx's speeches to members of the working class owing to the way in which they do not patronize workers – either their intelligence or the historical conditions of their exploitation – but produce concepts and theoretical explanations to raise the class consciousness of workers that speak to the development of the capacity of workers not only to grasp by the root the totality of material relations that lead to their exploitation but to become subjects of social transformation who can collectively bring about the end of material relations of exploitation. Marx's speeches to the working class emphasize the necessity of theory as explanatory critique to enable workers to more effectively transform their conditions of existence. The urgency of this approach for the working class is underscored by Marx in a debate with Wilhelm Weitling, among others, in Brussels in 1846. Pavel Annenkov recounts this debate and Weitling's argument that "his aim was not to create new economic theories but to adapt those that were most appropriate [...] to open the eyes of the workers to the horrors of their condition" and that "his modest spadework was perhaps of greater weight for the common cause than criticism and armchair analysis of doctrines far from the world of the suffering and afflicted people" (Annenkov, qtd McLellan 156). To this, Marx replies "Ignorance never yet helped anybody!" (Annenkov, qtd McLellan 157). In like manner, in his speeches, Marx doesn't condescend to workers by treating them as if they are not aware of the horrors of the conditions that they are daily afflicted with in capitalism. Instead, he teaches a method of critique and conceptual explanation and analysis that enables workers to explain *why* capitalism *produces* these horrors and to grasp by the root the totality of social relations of production that it is possible and necessary for workers to transform in order to end them – a method that continues to be urgent in the twenty-first century.

In the (post)humanities today, however, the writerly turns concepts into a "fragmentary whole" (16) that "speaks the event, not the essence or the thing – pure Event, a hecceity, an entity" (Deleuze and Guattari 21).

The writerly, in other words, updates Weitzing's logic by speaking "the horrors" of capitalism while syphoning off the "event" from the underlying conditions that produce it. On the contrary, Marx is producing totalizing knowledge that locates the event and isolated "things" precisely as determined by the whole. In this way, Marx's speeches not only contribute to producing concepts that cut through the ideology of the bourgeois political economists and ideologists in Marx's time but, against the dominant fragmentary interpretive logic of the *writerly in the contemporary (post)humanities*, they also provide a theory of the "speecherly" for the re-activation of cultural theory as a material force for social transformation in the contemporary.

Before proceeding, however, it is important to clarify that the speecherly and the writerly are *not technologies* of communication. That is, they are not, *in the final analysis*, a reference to linguistic, verbal, aural, graphic, or visual *mediums* of communication, such as speech, writing, language, letters, pictures, zeroes and ones, etc. Rather, they are references to *modes of explanation*, of *conceptualization*, of reading, analysis, and critique – in short, of *theory*. An argument for the *speecherly* in contrast to the *writerly* today is, therefore, not an argument for the return to Plato's defense of logocentrism (i.e., the centrality of speech over writing as a more "authentic" medium of communication) in such writings as the *Phaedrus*. Rather, the *speecherly* is an argument for public knowledge and critique, for the production of struggle concepts and public knowledge that have use-value for the struggle for social transformation.

This is important to clarify because *The Phaedrus* and Plato's logocentrism, of course, have been the focus of now classic writerly texts such as Derrida's *Dissemination* in which, through a close deconstructive reading of the immanent contradictions within the *Phaedrus* and Plato's argument for logocentrism, Derrida deconstructs the binary of speech/writing not simply to "reverse" the binary of speech/writing and assert the primacy of the form of writing as a more authentic form of communication than speech but to install the undecidability of meaning as the condition of possibility of *both* speech and writing (*Dissemination* 61-

171). These texts have now formed the canonic writings of the transition of the humanities into the (post)humanities in which not only is the binary of speech/writing said to be disrupted but the “entire system attached to it [...] thereby disorganizing the entire inherited order” (Derrida, *Positions* 42).

Marx’s *speecherly* mode of cultural theory is not only in the form of his *speeches*, but also in his *writings*, just as the dominant *writerly* mode of cultural theory in the (post)humanities today can be articulated in the form of a speech, lecture, video, as well as writing. However, in the dominant *writerly* mode of the (post)humanities the immanent contradictions within speech or writing are turned into what Engels calls “ticklish problems” for the ruling class. For example, the *writerly* fetishizes the fact that Plato’s defenses of the primacy of speech over writing occurs in a piece of *writing* (e.g., Plato’s *The Phaedrus*), or that Derrida’s criticisms of “logocentrism” and initial arguments for *différance* first occur in the form of lectures – i.e., *speeches* – to the Société française de philosophie (27 January 1968), or that Marx’s *Wage-Labour and Capital* is given as a series of lectures and published in 1847 then revised posthumously in writing by Engels in 1891 to account for the concept of labor-power. All are treated as paeans to Derrida’s understanding that language (whether in speech or writing) is always already a “*pharmakon*” (a poison and a remedy) by which he means that the meaning of language is indeterminate and cannot be pinned down without participating in a metaphysics of presence because it is underwritten by the polysemia and play – or *free-exchange* – of other meanings (*Dissemination* 99).

Such “ticklish problems” are an ideological inversion of the material inversions of capitalism and its class contradictions: In the material relations of capitalism, the exploitation of workers’ surplus-labor by capital in production – i.e., the material binary of class – is obscured by what appears to be a “free-exchange” of commodities (including the commodity of labor-power) on the market. The dominant logic of *différance* in the (post)humanities further ideologically inverts this material inversion of capitalism by ideologically translating the free-exchange of commodities into the free-play and exchange of meaning.

Class antagonisms (binaries) are rewritten not as the effect of *material* contradictions of exploitation but as the effect of the *spectral* metaphysics of presence. In this way the logic of *différance* normalizes capitalism and the ideology of exchange-value by displacing explanatory critique of exploitation – thus placing material contradictions in ideological suspension – with the spectral materiality of the play of meaning in language.

The *speecherly* in Marx's theory is a reference to the way in which Marx contributes to the production of explanatory concepts for public critique of material relations of exploitation and, in doing so, contributes to the production of class-consciousness that enables workers to understand the material relations of their exploitation so that they can work to more effectively transform these relations. The *speecherly* in Marx, therefore, has implications for bringing about the *negation of the writerly* mode of understanding that has come to dominate the (post)humanities in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century: Marx's speeches break the silence on the disappearing of exploitation into a "post-truth" plurality of singularities without determination, and advance theory as explanatory critique for social transformation.

II.

In breaking the silence on the exploitation that occurs behind exchange relations, one of the most significant contributions of Marx's *speecherly* mode of theory, as I imply above, is that it intervenes in the everyday commonsense of the market, i.e., in "market logics" and "market language," and teaches workers a *method* of historical materialist conceptual analysis and explanatory critique that enables them to see through the empirical appearances of capitalism and the ruling class ideological inversions of their immediate conditions of life, in order to grasp the problem of exploitation by the root. Even the formal structure and conceptual progression of the speeches in *Wage-Labour and Capital* are organized in such a way as to underscore and enable this kind of analysis. In these speeches in particular, Marx's first intervention into

market logics and language is an intervention into the “language of wages.” Rather than taking wages as a self-evident fact or “thing,” the speeches begin with the question, “What are Wages?” and, as the speeches proceed, they progressively situate wages within what Marx calls the “ensemble of social relations” of production in capitalism that need to be transformed in order to end exploitation (“Theses on Feuerbach” 7). Marx raises questions of critique to workers to enable them to inquire not only into their immediate conditions of life, e.g., their wages, but also into the conditions behind their immediate conditions of life. Marx’s questions and explanations demonstrate that wages are “hieroglyphics” that require dialectical analysis and critique between their empirical *appearance* on the market in which they seem to be part of a free and equal exchange between capital and wage-labor, and their actual *structural basis*. Marx’s speecherly approach teaches workers to see through the hieroglyphics of wages and grasp how and why wages, contrary to all everyday appearances, are really the “trace” of a theft of surplus-labor that takes place at the point of production, and how and why freedom from exploitation requires not only struggling for raising their wages and immediate conditions of life but for abolishing capitalism and ending the exploitation of human by human.

For example, in the opening speech of *Wage-Labour and Capital*, “What are Wages?,” Marx demonstrates that at first *appearance*, wages seem to be what is “usually called the price of labour” (18), that is, the exchange-value of a “certain period of work or for a certain amount of work” (17). Yet this speech then turns to re-examine what is “usually said” about wages and demonstrates that what is actually exchanged for a wage is so many hours of the worker’s *capacity* to labor, i.e., the worker’s *labor-power* (17-18). Moreover, what workers receive in return for selling their labor-power on the market – i.e., their wage – does not represent what workers actually produce in the working day, which includes not only the value equivalent to their wages but a surplus-value beyond the value of their wage. Instead, “wages” represent the value of the commodities – the means of subsistence – that workers must purchase

to reproduce their only commodity to sell on the market, labor-power. In other words, behind what appears to be an “equal” exchange of “labor” and “wages” between capital and wage-labor, wages represent only the portion of the working day in which workers produce the value equivalent to their means of subsistence. The *remainder* of the working day is spent producing the *surplus-value* that is privately appropriated – *stolen* – by the capitalist class without payment to the worker. These speeches demonstrate that the value that workers receive in the form of money from the capitalist in exchange for selling their labor-power is not actual wealth and not a profit, but simply the cost to reproduce their labor-power for sale anew.

Moreover, the speeches not only begin to lay bare the question of “What are Wages?” they also demonstrate that “labor-power is a commodity” like any other commodity on the market, “which its possessor, the wage-worker, sells to the capitalist” (19). And, again, Marx raises a question of critique: “Why does [the worker] sell it? *In order to live*” (19, emphasis added). Workers, who own no commodity other than their labor-power, have no means under capitalism to live except to sell their life activity, that is, to “sell themselves, and that by fractions,” to capitalists, who privately own the means of social production (20). Yet, rather than taking this condition behind their conditions for granted as self-evident and eternal, the speech also begins to inquire further into the “conditions behind these conditions” to demonstrate that “labour-power was not always a *commodity* (merchandise)” (19). In other words, not only is the appearance of “wages” not a self-evident fact, neither is the appearance of labor-power as a commodity on the market, nor is the exploitation of workers a self-evident law of nature. Wages and the commodification of labor-power – i.e., the exchange of labor-power for a wage on the market – are not natural, eternal, or ontological conditions of life as such, they are the product of historical and social relations of production in capitalism.

It is in this way that Marx’s *speecherly* approach to “What are Wages?” teaches workers not only the *answers* to his questions into the

origins of exploitation, but also teaches workers a *mode of analysis* for critiquing the *empirical appearance* of capitalism and its market relations, to uncover the underlying material relations of production founded on exploitation, i.e., the *structure* that *causes* workers' conditions of life. After beginning with the question of "What are Wages?" the speeches then turn to raising such fundamental questions and issues as "By What is the Price of the Commodity Determined?" and in turn "By What are Wages Determined?" through which Marx establishes that while the value of wages and other commodities *appear* to be an effect of fluctuations of "supply and demand," that is, of exchange-relations, "the relation of supply and demand" itself – which is a competition between the buyers who "wish to buy as cheaply as possible" and the sellers who "wish to sell as dearly as possible" – is determined and driven by the *cost of production* (27). This is owing to the fact that it is the cost of production that "serves [capital] as the standard for [...] profit" and, regardless of the fact that price fluctuations mean that individual commodities will be bought and sold at prices above or below their actual value, i.e., their cost of production, *industry wide*, price fluctuations eventually "reckon to the cost of production" (27). Moreover, just as price fluctuations are "reckoned to the cost of production" industry wide for all other commodities, so they are with the price of wages for labor-power such that, "The minimum wage, like the determination of the price of commodities in general by the cost of production, does not hold good for the *single individual* worker, but for the *class*" (27). As a result, "Individual workers, indeed millions of workers, do not receive enough to be able to exist and propagate themselves; but the wages of the whole working class adjust themselves, within the limits of their fluctuations, to this minimum" (27). Workers, in other words, are employed and produce not according to their needs, but according to what is profitable to capital.

But this, too, raises another question about underlying conditions: If, on the one hand, capital requires its total commodities to be sold above the cost of production and, yet, at the same time the exchange-value of commodities is at root determined by the cost of production and price

fluctuations "balance out" to the cost of production, how and why is capital accumulation, that is, profit possible? The speeches then turn to discussing further conditions behind the conditions in the "Nature and Growth of Capital," a speech that establishes that labor is the basis of all value, including the value that the capitalist has in money form to pay the worker wages, as well as to purchase raw materials and means of production. Labor is also the basis of the value of *all* commodities, which cannot be produced without human labor: the raw materials, the means of production and the worker's labor, all of which go into the value of a commodity, are the product of past or living human labor. And, finally, that labor is the basis of profit for the capitalist – that is, of *capital*, which is itself *accumulated labor* (30). In short, "all [the] components of capital are created by labour, products of labour, *accumulated labour*" (28). But capital is not an inevitable result of accumulated labor as such; rather it is an historical form: "*It is only the dominion of past, accumulated, materialized labour over immediate living-labour that stamps the accumulated labour with the character of capital*" (30). Capital or "accumulated labor" – wealth that is produced by living labor – does not serve workers or free them from the conditions of necessity that compel them to sell their life "piece by piece" in order to exist as wage-laborers. Instead, capitalism, whose sole purpose is production for profit, "consists in the fact that living labour serves accumulated labour as the means of preserving and multiplying its exchange value" (30). Herein lies the trace of the theft of surplus-labour *in production* that exists behind the exchange of wages for labor-power.

The concluding speeches then move on to addressing further issues related to the *relationship* of exploitation between capital and wage-labor including "The Relation of Wage-Labour to Capital," "The General Law that Determines the Rise and Fall of Wages and Profits," "The Interests of Capital and Wage-Labour Are Diametrically Opposed" and the "Effect of Capitalist Competition on the Capitalist Class, the Middle Class, and the Working Class." In these lectures, as I discuss further below, Marx demonstrates that capitalism is not a mutually beneficial system but a

fundamentally exploitative system in which the material interests of wage-labor and capital are opposed to one another. Moreover, the laws of motion of capitalism also lead to an increasing crisis of profitability in which capital seeks fresh supplies of exploitable labor-power such that “capital not only lives upon labor [but] like a master, at once distinguished and barbarous, it drags with it into its grave the corpses of its slaves” (48). The contradictions between wage-labor and capital, in other words, are not merely resolvable by, for example, raising wages but require fundamental social transformation of the ensemble of social relations of production. Marx’s speecherly approach does not simply pose facile questions that lead to rote and easy answers or that take workers’ immediate or concrete conditions of life for granted as given; rather, his speeches teach the workforce to analyze and critique the “concrete” as the “synthesis of many determinations, thus the unity of the diverse” (*Economic Manuscripts of 1857-58* 38). In other words, they teach workers to see past the surfaces of capitalism and, rather than taking the laws of motion of capitalism as laws of nature, to understand the totality of *social* relations of production that are historical and therefore transformable, which enables workers to more effectively work to transform them.

The effectivity of Marx’s speecherly approach in *Wage-Labour and Capital* for activating workers as subjects for social transformation is manifested in the fact that, in the course of their inquiry into the “language of wages” and the conditions behind immediate conditions of existence, these speeches also critique the logic and language of the market in a different sense -- by critiquing the *language of everyday life* in capitalism, which is also the *language of the market*, and the role of this language in silencing the source of exploitation. Throughout the speeches in *Wage-Labour and Capital*, in the course of producing explanations and concepts to break the silence on exploitation, Marx continually returns to re-examine “beloved bourgeois phrases,” i.e., what is *said* about wage-labor and capital relations by capitalists, by bourgeois political economists, and in the language of everyday life in capitalism (43). For example, Marx emphasizes that, contrary to what capitalists and the language of everyday

life in capitalism say about the mutual benefit of capitalism to both workers and capital, the *material relations* of capitalism contradict what is said about capitalism in the language of everyday life:

To say that 'the worker has an interest in the rapid growth of capital,' means only this; that the more speedily the worker augments the wealth of the capitalist, the larger will be the crumbs which fall to him, the greater will be the number of workers that can be called into existence, the more can the mass of slaves dependent upon capital be increased. (39)

This is because, contrary to the cultural commonsense of capitalism, even "higher wages" do not represent actual wealth, rather they continue to be rooted in exploitation and a "widening of the social chasm that divides the worker from the capitalist" such that "even the *most favourable situation* for the working class, namely, the most rapid growth of capital," upon which higher wages become possible, "however much it may improve the material life of the worker, does not abolish the antagonism between his interests and the interests of the capitalist. Profit and wages remain as before, *in inverse proportion*" (39).

However, in his critical re-examinations of what is said by the ruling class and in the everyday language of capitalism, Marx not only demonstrates how ruling class speech and writing and the everyday language of capitalism are contradicted by the material relations of capitalism and, in turn, why what is *said* misrepresents the actual conditions of capitalism, he also demonstrates the way the material contradictions of capitalism form the *unsaid* conditions behind what is said and, in turn, how they determine the meaning of ruling class statements about capitalism. To put this another way, Marx's speeches unpack the unsaid assumptions of ruling class speech and bring into sharp relief the way the everyday language of capital works *as ideology* that, contrary to the banality of the speech acts themselves, violently covers over the violence of capitalist exploitation of workers. Thus, Marx demonstrates,

Finally, to say that ‘the most favourable conditions for wage-labour is the fastest possible growth of productive capital,’ is the same as to say: the quicker the working class multiplies and augments the power inimical to it – the wealth of another which lords it over that class – the more favourable will be the conditions under which it will be permitted to toil anew at the multiplication of bourgeois wealth, at the enlargement of the power of capital, content thus to forge for itself the golden chains by which the bourgeoisie drags it in its train. (40)

To use, but resituate, the contemporary market language of the (post)humanities, Marx demonstrates that the “signifiers” of everyday life under capitalism are not “self-evident” and do not mimetically reflect the material contradictions within which workers’ everyday conditions of life are produced. In other words, the “slippage” between the sign and the referent – between market language and material relations of exploitation – is not an eternal play of signification, as is maintained in the writerly market logic of *différance*; it is ruling class ideology that is the historical effect of class contradictions and the fundamentally opposed material interests between workers and owners of the means of production. In continually returning to what is *said* about capitalism by capitalists, Marx’s speeches educate workers in how to critique the *unsaid* assumptions and the material contradictions underlying the way the economy is talked about by capitalists and the way it is represented in the language of everyday life in capitalism, and, in turn, encourage workers to see the way this everyday language obscures and normalizes the conditions of their exploitation as well as the material interest of capital in exploiting workers.

This is because the language of everyday life in capitalism is the cultural commonsense of the market and exchange, which, as Marx discusses, is “from the point of view of the *capitalist*” (36). To say that it is “from the point of view of the capitalist” means that it advances the *material* interests of capital. However, as Marx also demonstrates in the

course of his speeches, the cultural commonsense of the market advances the material interests of the capitalist *inversively* rather than *mimetically or différently*. The everyday language of the market and exchange is the way in which the ruling class "presents[s] its interest as the *common* interest of all the members of society" (Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* 60). In other words, what capital says about capitalism in the everyday language of the market and exchange does not *mimetically or transparently* reflect the material interests of the ruling class: rather it is the material interests of the ruling class "expressed in ideal form" in which it "give[s] its ideas the form of universality, and present[s] them as the only rational, universally valid ones" (60).

In order to intervene in the cultural commonsense, that is, to intervene in ruling class ideology, throughout *Wage-Labour and Capital* Marx poses questions for workers with the aim of critique not only of the everyday language of capitalism and the market, but of what passes as "knowledgeable" and "educated" discussion among classical bourgeois political economists. For example, he poses the question: "*Growth of productive capital and rise of wages*, are they really so indissolubly united as the bourgeois economists maintain?" (40). Marx then moves on to argue, "We must not believe their mere words. We dare not believe them even when they claim that the fatter capital is the more will its slave be pampered" (40). In other words, Marx is arguing that to understand the material interests of the ruling class, it is crucial for workers not to take what the ruling class *says* about itself and its (so called) "mutual interests" with workers as *self-evident*. This is owing to the fact that "consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life" not the other way around (Marx, "Preface" 263). For this reason, Marx argues that "We must therefore examine more closely into the following question: *In what manner does the growth of productive capital affect wages?*" (*Wage-Labour and Capital* 40). In the course of his analysis of the "contradictions of material life" upon which the expansion and growth of productive capital and even the rise of wages is based, Marx further demonstrates that, regardless of what the capitalist class or its individual members *say* or

believe about their conditions of existence, capital does not *actually* grow on the basis of “mutual benefit” and “mutual exchange,” it *actually* grows on the basis of the theft of workers’ surplus-labor in production (exploitation), and, more specifically, on the basis of increasing the rate of exploitation of workers in production and extending the command of capital over the surplus-labor of ever larger sections of the working class. In short, the material contradictions – i.e., the material laws of motion – of capitalism “continually throw[] capitalist production out of its old ruts and compels capital to strain ever more the productive forces of labour for the very reason that it has already strained them” (43). This is why, as Marx notes, at the same time that capital circulates its “beloved bourgeois phrases” about the benefit of capitalism to workers, “the law [of value] that grants [the working class] no respite” also “constantly shouts in its ear: March! March!” (43).

Marx’s speeches, by contrast, talk to workers differently – and provide ways for workers themselves to begin talking to each other about wages differently – from the ways provided by the everyday language of the market that expresses the cultural commonsense of capitalism and, therefore, the economic interests of the ruling class masked as the interests of all. Marx does not patronize workers – their intelligence or conditions of life – by simply repeating what is already culturally and economically obvious to every worker who lives paycheck to paycheck: that higher wages are more advantageous than lower wages. From the industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century to the cognitive capitalism of the twenty-first century, any worker knows this and any worker who knows this also knows *in practice* that while higher wages are more advantageous than lower wages, higher wages do not necessarily translate into a higher standard of living when they are accompanied by a higher *cost* of living. Marx’s speeches not only *acknowledge* the material contradictions in which workers are living and that they come face to face with every day but by intervening in the cultural commonsense of capitalism, which ideologically blurs these contradictions, and by instead producing explanatory concepts, they contribute to workers’ understanding of *why*

this occurs and demonstrate that behind this phenomenon is the process of exploitation of workers – an historical and social process that can be and needs to be transformed by workers.

Engels underscores the necessity of explanatory concepts in his “Introduction” to the 1891 Edition of Marx’s *Wage-Labour and Capital*, which Engels edited to account for the concept of *labor-power* developed by Marx in the 1850s. As Engels points out, “Classical political economy borrowed from the industrial practice the current notion of the manufacturer, that he buys and pays for the *labour* of his employees” (6; emphasis added). Classical political economy, in other words, drew its concept for explaining the so-called purchase of “labor” by capital from the perspective of the capitalist class and its accounting practices. From the perspective of the capitalist class and its business practices, what matters is *how much* profit is made in selling commodities above and beyond the cost of the commodities needed to produce them (e.g., wages, the cost of raw materials and means of production, etc.) but not the *source* of profit in the exploitation of human labor-power. While “this conception [i.e., that capital purchases *labor* with wages] had been quite serviceable for the business purposes of the manufacturer, his bookkeeping and price calculation,” Engels continues, when the bourgeois concepts of the manufacturer were “naively carried over into political economy, it there produced truly wonderful errors and confusions” (6). Prior to Marx’s development of the concept of labor-power, for example, while classical political economy acknowledged to some extent that labor is the basis of new value, it could not account for *how* and *why*, in the production process, a capitalist could (ostensibly) pay for the “*labour*” of a worker with a given wage – e.g. 3 shillings for 12 hours of labor – and at the end of the 12-hour working day, have in his possession to sell a total of commodities produced during that day by the laborer with a value above and beyond the cost of wages, raw materials, means of production, etc. As Engels explains, by assuming that the capitalist purchases the *labor* of the worker with wages, “classical political economy ran itself into a blind alley” over the question of value:

If before this we got with our value of labour into a vicious circle, we now surely have driven straight into an insoluble contradiction. We searched for the value of labour, and we found more than we can use. For the labourer the value of the twelve hours' labour is 3 shillings; for the capitalist it is 6 shillings, of which he pays the workingman 3 shillings as wages, and pockets the remaining 3 shillings himself. According to this, labour has not one but two values, and, moreover, two very different values! (9)

As I explain further below, contemporary cultural theory, under the logic of the writerly, rather than laying bare the exploitation behind “two very different values” has instead made a fetish of the “insoluble” contradictions of bourgeois political economy – of what Engels calls the “ticklish problems” of the ruling class. It has turned theory into a commodified exchange-value of language games, entertainment, and conundrums for profit. Yet, what becomes an “insoluble contradiction” of value on the terms of classical bourgeois political economy as well as in the dominant (post)humanities, is not an ontological fact – that is, it is not a transhistorical and natural *insolubility* – but is rather an ideological effect. The absence of historical development – or, by contrast, the active suppression – of concepts that explain material contradictions makes these contradictions *appear* to be beyond explanation, critique, and collective material transformation and, therefore, “insoluble.” However, contrary to the understanding of classical political economy, the difference in value is actually owing to the fact that the capitalist pays not for the *labor* of the worker (the value that she actually produces in a given working day) but for the labor-power of the worker (the value of her capacity to labor in a given working day). Therefore:

What the economists had considered as the cost of production of the ‘labour’ was really the cost of production, not of ‘labour,’ but of the living labourer himself. And what this labourer sold to the capitalist was

Jennifer Cotter, "*The Speech of Object-Oriented Exploitation*"

not his labour. 'So soon as his labour really begins,' says Marx, 'it ceases to belong to him, and therefore can no longer be sold by him.' (10)

By developing the concept of labor-power, Marx not only produces an explanation of what the capitalist actually pays for with wages, *labor-power* not labor, but contributes critical concepts for breaking the silence on the process of the exploitation of the worker's surplus-labor at the root of production for profit. In paying for labor-power rather than labor of the worker, what the capitalist pays for is the cost of reproduction of the worker's capacity to labor for the working day and not the actual labor that the worker expends during the working day. Once the worker's labor-power is purchased, her actual labor – what she actually produces during the working day – belongs not to her but to the capitalist and the basis of profit is the fact that *living labor-power* is the only commodity that produces more value (surplus-value) than is equivalent to the value of its own reproduction (necessary-value). Put in other terms, in the Working Day of capitalism, the worker works part of the day producing value that is equivalent to her own means of subsistence (wages) and part of the day producing surplus-value which is appropriated by the owner and is the basis of *profit* for the capitalist class. This is exploitation, that is, the theft of workers' surplus-labor in production, which is the basis of the difference between "two different values" – wages and profit – and, the basis of the increasing gap and contradiction in social wealth between the ruling class and working class. As Engels puts it:

value is only another expression for labour, that expression, namely, by which is designated, in our capitalist society of to-day, the amount of socially necessary labour embodied in a particular commodity. But these values produced by the workers do not belong to the workers. They belong to the owners of the raw materials, machines, tools, and money which enables them to buy the labour-power of the working class. Hence, the working class gets back only a part of the

entire mass of products produced by it. And as we have just seen, the other portion, which the capitalist class retains, and which it has to share, at most, only with the landlord class, is increasing with every new discovery and invention, while the share which falls to the working class (per capital) rises but little and very slowly, or not at all, and under certain conditions it may even fall. (12)

The concept of “labor-power” is central not only for understanding that labor is the basis of value and social wealth, but that capitalism is a system founded on the exploitation of worker’s surplus-labor and that the *process* of exploitation takes place in the working day of capitalism: that is, profit is not rooted in the *exchange* of values in capitalism, but in the *production* of exchange-values. Labor-power is the only commodity on the market that, in the production process, produces more value – a surplus-value – above and beyond the value that is equivalent to its reproduction (i.e., to the reproduction of the labourer who can only live by selling her labor power for a wage). Moreover, profit in capitalism is based on the private appropriation of this surplus-value produced by workers, which takes place in the working day of capitalism in which workers work part of the day producing value equivalent to their wages (i.e., their means of subsistence) and part of the day producing surplus-value appropriated by the owner.

By producing the *concept* of “labor-power” Marx, of course, does not resolve the *material* contradictions of capitalism because material contradictions cannot be resolved by *concepts* but must be resolved by means of *social praxis*. However, in producing the concept of labor-power, Marx produces an explanation that cuts through the ideological mystification of exploitation and lays bare the material contradictions of wage-labor and capital, and the social conditions in which they arise, so that workers understand them and, therefore, are better equipped to work to transform material relations. The speecherly in Marx, to put this another way, is not simply an argument for the production of concepts that can intervene in ideological mystification and instead objectively “reflect” or

"represent" reality against such mystification. Such a view, as Marx discusses in another context, "overlooks the fact that after completing this work, the chief thing still remains to be done" ("Theses on Feuerbach" 7). This is because

The question [of] whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-worldliness of thinking in practice. ("Theses on Feuerbach" 3)

After the exploitation of labor is uncovered and explained conceptually, it can only be transformed by "revolutionary practice" (4).

However, by producing struggle concepts and talking to workers differently about capitalism than they are talked to in the everyday language of the market, Marx's speeches contribute to the collective project of activating workers' class-consciousness and, therefore, activating workers as subjects for social transformation. By producing a dialectical analysis of wages and their relationship to exploitation in production and, therefore, by talking to each other *differently* both about wages and about the relation of workers (wage-labor) to capital, other than in the conceptual terms provided by the language of the market and spokespersons of the ruling class, Marx's speeches contribute to enabling workers to educate each other to understand why it is not just getting higher wages that is at stake but transforming the social totality and ending exploitation and production for profit. In this respect, Marx's speeches are also a crucial public resource in the twenty-first century for re-activating the contemporary (post)humanities as a project in the service of social transformation and freedom from exploitation. The dominant (post)humanities today, as I discuss below, has by and large produced cultural knowledges that teach workers interpretive frameworks that put class contradictions in ideological suspension and teach them to accept capitalism and the conditions of their exploitation as normal, inevitable, insoluble, and ontological conditions of life as such. Marx's speeches not only uncover the material contradictions of capitalism, in critiquing the

everyday language of the market they teach workers to see through the appearance of exchange-relations in capitalism and the cultural strategies through which they are taught to adjust to their exploitation.

III.

In contrast to Marx's *speecherly* mode of theory, which produces explanatory concepts for public critique that break the silence on class contradictions and the relations of exploitation, the dominant (post)humanities advances what Roland Barthes calls a *writerly* mode of theory that treats the bourgeois "insoluble contradiction" as an existential and ontological condition of human communication, language, and human life as such (*S/Z* 4-6). The writerly rejects explanatory concepts – concepts produced to explain material contradictions outside of language in order to enable the transformation of these contradictions through social praxis – on the grounds that they are impossible, because, as Saussure contends:

in language there are only differences *without positive terms*. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. (120)

In the writerly, not only are there "no positive terms" that can make *reference* to an outside material reality, and "only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from" language, but language itself is underwritten by what Derrida calls *différance* – the polysemia and play of meaning caused by the "difference within" the sign rather than the difference between signs. In the logic of the writerly, "such a play, *différance*, is [...] no longer simply a concept, but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general" (*Margins* 11). Through the paradigm of *différance*, the writerly rejects both the idea that language can *refer* to and explain an outside material reality and that an outside material reality – any conditions outside of language – can be understood as the underlying cause of differences in language. All such reference to material relations outside of language – anything outside of

the "non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences" – is regarded as a metaphysics of presence. In this view, language is its own autonomous and irreducible (im)materiality.

In place of a metaphysics of presence, however, the writerly puts forward what Teresa Ebert and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh demonstrate is a "metaphysics of the negative," which puts in place of traditional metaphysical "first principles" based on "presence" the "anti-ontology of language" (*Class in Culture* 50). Through the "metaphysics of the negative," the writerly substitutes for explanatory critique and material transformation of the historical and social presence of material contradictions of class, the "always already" spectral presence of insoluble contradiction, epistemological crisis, and language games. The metaphysics of *différance* puts forward the negation of presence and the play of signification as the new (metaphysical) conditions of possibility of what exists. The logic of *différance*, in other words, puts in place of historical and material causes – such as the social relations of production – a causeless-cause, a (non)origin that is said to be "outside" of language and historical causality. In this "anti-ontology of language" *language* and *concepts* are dehistoricized: they are cut off from the social relations of production and class contradictions in which they are *historically* produced.

In Marx's speakerly mode of theory, by contrast, language is not an irreducible and autonomous (im)materiality. Instead, language as Marx and Engels argue, "is practical [...] consciousness" (*The German Ideology* 44). "Consciousness," they argue "is [...] from the very beginning a social product" and remains so as long as humans "exist at all" (*The German Ideology* 44). More specifically, it is "The mode of production of material life," which is brought about by social and historical causes, that "conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life" and, in this way, it is not the consciousness of humans that determines their existence, "but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Marx, Preface 263). As "practical consciousness," language and concepts do not arise in an historical vacuum but become possible and are produced

under definite social relations of production, definite historical and material relations. As Marx demonstrates in his speecherly analysis of “bourgeois phrases” and the everyday language of the market, “practical consciousness” is not a spontaneous, mimetic or transparent reflection of the material relations of production in which it is produced; rather, it refracts and can invert the material relations from which they arise: “if in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process” (*The German Ideology* 36). For this reason, Marx argues, “In studying [social] transformations it is always necessary to distinguish the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out” (Marx, Preface 263).

Through the institutionalization of the “anti-ontology of language,” the dominant (post)humanities dehistoricizes both bourgeois phrases that mystify material contradictions and obscure them and the “struggle concepts” that are produced to intervene in ideology and uncover the class contradictions in which workers live so that they can more effectively transform them. In doing so, the dominant (post)humanities empties language and consciousness of their social purpose as arenas through which people “become conscious of [class] conflict and fight it out” (Marx, Preface 263). Language is emptied of its “use-value” and the contemporary workforces of capitalism are taught to regard conceptual and explanatory knowledge with spectral and theological suspicion as *always already* impossible rather than with historical and praxical “ruthless criticism of all that exists” (Marx, “Letter to Ruge” 142) that tests conceptual knowledge and the “this-worldliness of thinking in practice” (Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach” 3).

In this way, the (post)humanities translate class contradictions into interpretive conflicts underwritten by polysemia and the play of

signification. *Différance*, it is claimed, is not only a disruption of binary difference, such as class, but, from within the play of meaning, it is a disruption of the "entire system attached to it [...] thereby disorganizing the entire inherited order" (*Positions* 42). In this logic it becomes impossible to grasp the material basis of class contradictions and the cause of inequality between owners and workers, i.e., the cause of the *difference* between profit and wages, which is an effect of private ownership of the means of production and the theft of workers' surplus-labor by capital in the working day. The contradictions between wage-labor and capital are understood in terms of post-binary differences that are dissolved not by means of revolutionary praxis but by means of the undecidability of meaning and "plurality" of interpretation (Barthes 6) such that "who are the owners, who the producers, who the managers, and who the servants, becomes increasingly blurred in a production system of variable geometry, of teamwork, of networking, outsourcing and subcontracting" (Castells 506).

One of the functions of Derrida's theory of *différance*, and his metaphysical theory of language, has been to articulate a *writerly theory of value*, based on exchange-relations, in contrast to Marx's speecherly, *labor theory of value*, by "putting into question the value *arkhē*" and, in doing so, suspending all inquiries into the "origin" of "surplus-value" (profit) in the exploitation of workers' surplus-labor in production (*Margins* 6). In other words, *différance* "put[s] into question [...] the provisional secondariness of the substitute" and, in doing so, posits that behind all values is not a material "presence" or "origin" but "something like an originary *différance*; but one could no longer call it originary or final in the extent to which the values of origin, *archi-*, *telos*, *eskhaton*, etc. have always denoted presence – *ousia*, *parousia*" (*Margins* 9). In the interpretive logic of *différance* there is no presence "behind" or "underneath" any value – "Whether we are concerned with the verbal or the written sign, with the monetary sign, or with the electoral delegation and political representation" (9) – just the movement of *différance* and, "thus, the name 'origin' no longer suits it" (11).

Derrida's theory of value both draws from and "decenters" Saussure's theory of value in *Course in General Linguistics*, in which he transposes the ideology of exchange-value, which is the historical and social product of the capitalist mode of production, onto the universal and transhistorical structural ground of *all* value systems (linguistic, economic, etc.), regardless of the historical and material conditions and class relations in which they are produced. "Language," Saussure argues, "is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others" (Saussure 114-15). Thus, the "value" of any sign is not fixed or "self-evident" – it is not autonomous or pre-given – but is interdependent on the other signs within the same system of language.

As Saussure's own remarks indicate, his theory of "value" is rooted in exchange-relations; he indicates that in both linguistics and political economy "we are confronted with the notion of value; both sciences are concerned with a system *for equating things of different orders* – labor and wages in one and a signified and signifier in the other" (Saussure 79). He argues that value in both linguistics and political economy is determined by the same process. "[F]rom the outset," Saussure contends, "even outside language all values are apparently governed by the same paradoxical principle" (115). On the one hand, "they are always composed [...] of a *dissimilar* thing that can be *exchanged* for the thing of which the value is to be determined," and, on the other hand, they are also always composed "of *similar* things that can be *compared* with the thing of which the value is to be determined" (115). Thus, according to Saussure's argument, a "five franc piece" is, on the one hand, exchanged for a "fixed quantity of a *different* thing, e.g., bread" and, simultaneously, "compared with a *similar* value of the same system, e.g. a one-franc piece, or with coins of another system (a dollar, etc.)" (115). In the same manner, he contends, "a word can be exchanged for something dissimilar, an idea" and, at the same time, "it can be compared with something of the same nature, another word" (115). In other words, according to Saussure's logic, "value" (of a language sign, money, labor, wages, a commodity) is an effect of *exchange relations*.

Derrida's "*différance*," and *the writerly* more generally, is rooted in the same theory of linguistic and economic value as a product of "exchange." Following Saussure, for example, Derrida's *writerly* theory of value dismantles the idea that "value" is a self-evident and a "positive" term rather than determined in relation to "values" with which it is exchanged. However, Derrida's theory of "value" is also a decentering of the "difference between" of Saussure's theory of value and exchange. Whereas Saussure's theory of value articulates an understanding of the logic of exchange in which the market appears to be stable and self-balancing, Derrida's *différance within*, not between, is a "high textualist" version of the everyday language of the market in a time of "free floating currencies" and fictitious capital.

Derrida's argument for an "originary *différance*" behind all value is, in effect, a re-reading of the problem that Engels addresses in his critique of the way that classical bourgeois political economy reconciles "two very different values" to a matter of "accounting" rather than exploitation. Engels' argument, as I have elaborated, is for the necessity of Marx's concept of labor-power in explaining that behind the difference between "two very different values" – i.e., wages and profit – is actually the trace of a theft of workers' surplus-labor by capital in production. By contrast, Derrida's *writerly* theory leads to the conclusion that value is created solely by the *relation* – the system of exchange in which each exists without positive value – that leads to "very different values." Just as Derrida's critique of "classical semiology" and his theory of language and signification in general – of *différance* – is a critique of the transparency or self-evident "value" (i.e., meaning) of the linguistic sign and an affirmation of the understanding that linguistic value is polysemic, undecidable, and can be exchanged for incommensurable signifiers in an endless chain of signification, the *writerly* critique of classical political economy is that "values" are never inherent, but are shifting and incommensurate. In the terms of the *writerly*, the existence of what Engels refers to as "two very different values" between wages and profit is not an accounting error as it is for the view of classical political economy, which assumes that there is self-

evident and autonomous value independent of the market relation between labor, resources, and the commodity-form. Instead, the *writerly* reads the “two very different values” in terms of an *incommensurability* or *supplementarity* between the values, such that a remainder or “dangerous supplement” – surplus-value – always already unpredictably results from the incommensurability and unpredictability of exchange.

At most, this is a theory of (re)distribution and circulating values differently: surplus-value is treated as ontological and assumed to be inherent in all social systems, regardless of the historical development of their forces of production or class basis, and so *at most* it calls for the continual *play* – i.e., redistribution – of value to address the contradictions of inequality under capitalism. But, more generally, what is at stake in Derrida’s theory of value is an interpretive framework that teaches the workforce to ontologize finance capital and the manufacturing of fictitious values – of financial bubbles based on credit and the play of speculative values – in order to stave off the economic crisis of capital. In the *writerly*, in effect, all value becomes “fictitious”; labor has no “value” except what it can be exchanged for as a wage, the commodity has no “value” except what price it can fetch, and thus the entire system is itself a shifting relation without determinacy. The *writerly* re-defines the concept of value in order to render the production of surplus-value as the effect of an inexplicable system of exchange and the play of signification as a process that is inherent in all value-relations, rather than the effect of social relations of exploitation, and it does so in a way that reflects developments within capitalism while also opening up new avenues for thinking about the organization of production for profit. If the classical political economy is the mode of interpretation of the gold standard, when value is considered “self-evident,” the *writerly*, as articulated in Derrida’s “*différance*,” is the post-Bretton Woods system of “free-floating” currencies and trade agreements. Yet, when the financial bubble bursts and, as Marx puts it, exchange is “reckoned to the cost of production,” it is “whole hecatombs of workers, who perish in the crisis” (*Wage-Labour and Capital* 48).

We can see the class interests of the writerly further, if we re-turn to another one of Derrida's examples in his criticism of classical semiology: "the electoral delegation and political representation" (*Margins* 9). In writerly fashion, Derrida argues that democracy is "a non-representable concept" (*Politics of Friendship* 306) because there exists a "tragically irreconcilable and forever wounding" (22) internal *différance* within democracy: on the one hand, "there is no democracy without respect for irreducible singularity or alterity" and, on the other, "there is no democracy without the 'community of friends' (*koína ta philōn*), without the calculation of majorities, without identifiable, stabilizable, representable subjects, all equal" (22). In other words, according to Derrida, "democracy" exists always as a sign in representational "crisis," divided against itself, regardless of the social, political, or economic conditions in which it is practiced.

However, as Marx's speeches explain, the "lack" of political representation and crisis of representational democracy is not, at root, a semiological or epistemological crisis of *representation* and signification explained (away) by a trans-historical play of meaning and metaphysical lack of presence. Rather, the crisis of representational democracy is the *historical* and *social* crisis of democracy under capitalism, in which there may be formal and legal freedoms for workers, such as voting and *formal* legal freedom to "choose" representatives, but in which the state, electoral delegations, and elected political representatives manage social wealth on behalf of capital and production for profit. The ruse of "the electoral delegation and political representation" recently evident in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election and the daily unfolding and self-destructing of the Trump régime in the United States is not the semiological impossibility of representation or the effect of a "post-truth" ontology; rather, it is an historical and social effect of bourgeois democracy, democracy under capitalism, in which what is actually represented are the interests of competing capitalists within the ruling class.

Marx's *speecherly* mode of explanatory critique provides a conceptual frame for workers to enable them to understand the social,

historical, and material *causes* of the ruse of democracy under capitalism. As Marx explains in *Wage-Labour and Capital*:

The worker leaves the capitalist, to whom he has sold himself, as often as he chooses, and the capitalist discharges him as often as he sees fit, as soon as he no longer gets any use, or not the required use, out of him. But the worker, whose only source of income is the sale of his *labour-power*, cannot leave *the whole class of buyers, i.e., the capitalist class*, unless he gives up his own existence. He does not belong to this or that capitalist, but to the *capitalist class*; and it is for him to find his man, i.e., to find a buyer in the capitalist class. (20)

In other words, Marx demonstrates that capitalist society *appears* to be free and equal for all of its members; for example, the wage worker, the (so called) “free laborer” *appears* to have a “choice” compared to the slave who is sold outright as a commodity “once for all” (19). The wage-worker has the formal legal freedom to choose which capitalist employs her but, under capitalism, owing to economic necessity, a wage-worker (who only has her labor-power to sell in order to survive) does not have the choice not to sell her labor-power to the capitalist class in order to live. It should also be noted that formal legal freedom to choose does not mean actual material freedom in historical fact since millions of workers in capitalism today cannot “choose” to quit their job with one capitalist, no matter the pay or working conditions, if there is not another capitalist available to employ them. Marx points out that “the worker perishes if capital does not keep him busy. Capital perishes if it does not exploit labour-power, which, in order to exploit, it must buy” (32).

What appears on the surface as a society of mutual benefit – as a free and equal society in which each person’s material interests are “represented” – is instead a society of class contradictions; a society *materially* founded on exploitation of workers by capital, the result of which is that within the existing relations of production workers are bound by material necessity to sell their labor-power to capital for a wage in order

to live. Within a society founded on these class contradictions, while on the one hand "*the fastest possible growth of productive capital is, therefore, the indispensable condition for a tolerable life to the labourer,*" on the other hand, owing to the process of exploitation on which capital is founded, the growth of productive capital is the "Growth of the power of accumulated labour over living labour; growth of the rule of the bourgeoisie over the working class" (32).

The speecherly in Marx's public texts cuts through the fiction of representational democracy to uncover the material basis of its crisis by demonstrating that "what the boasted community of interests between workers and capitalists amounts to" is that "as long as the wage-labourer remains a wage-labourer, his lot is dependent on capital" (33). Put in other terms, representational democracy under capitalism is a fiction because of the *presence* of material contradictions of production in which "If capital grows, the mass of wage-labour grows, the number of wage-workers increases; in a word, the sway of capital extends over a greater mass of individuals" (33). What workers are "free" to do in such a system is to exercise formal freedoms: the freedom to sell their labor-power to be exploited by the highest bidder and the freedom to vote for which candidate will serve as the representative of the "common affairs" of the class that exploits them. In other words, the contradiction between the language of democracy and its practice is not a consequence of representation; rather, the failure of representation is the consequence of the material contradiction between the interests of capital and labor.

While the writerly mode of interpretation advanced in the dominant (post)humanities does not confirm the *classical* bourgeois theory of democracy under capitalism with its "boasted community of interests between workers and capital" and instead, contends that there is no presence to representational democracy, it attributes the lack of presence of democracy to a *metaphysical lack of presence* as such; to the pan-historical movement of *différance*. Through the logic of the writerly, the bourgeois (post)humanities updates the ideology that capitalism is of "mutual benefit" to all into the idea that class relations

are mutually “undecidable” and a “mutual risk.” In doing so, it dehistoricizes the social and historical basis of the “democracy of owners” and teaches the workforces of capitalism that this is a situation beyond historical, social, and praxical, collective change. Contrary to the immanent logic of the writerly, *différance* is not the “non-origin” and condition of possibility for “the general system of this economy”; rather *différance* is a ruling class ideology that, like all ideology, is itself the effect of historical, social, and material causes that result from the intensification of material contradictions in the mode of production. *Différance*, and the writerly more generally, has served as an updating of the *language of the market, of ruling class ideology*, for capitalism when its (older) classical terms are no longer as effective for ideologically containing the crisis of profitability under capital and the fact that class relations are a fetter to the productivity of labor. It is the way the (post)humanities has taught the new workforces of capitalism the “practical consciousness” of neoliberalism – with its assault on workers’ collective struggles, its deregulation and privatization of public institutions, its speculative values, its subordination of more areas of the globe and levels of existence to production for profit and its increasing crises – which is itself not a break from wage-labor and capital relations and the exploitation upon which they are founded, but a continuation of them.

IV.

In the wake of the economic crisis of capital in the early twenty-first century, “high textualist” articulations of the writerly – which celebrate surplus-value as an effect of the play of speculative values – has come under pressure in a time of disappearing financial values when “fictitious capital” is being “reckoned to the cost of production” and capital must seek new ways to extract surplus-value from workers (*Wage-Labour and Capital* 27). The writerly theory of value which is at the core of the contemporary (post)humanities, is now being renewed into new (post)humanist ontologies from new materialism, to speculative realism,

to object-oriented ontologies. The new (post)humanist ontologies formally distance themselves from the "constructivism" of textualism on the grounds that the "textual approaches associated with the [...] cultural turn are inadequate for understanding contemporary society" (Coole and Frost, *New Materialisms* 2-3). Yet, rather than abandoning the *writerly*, (post)humanist ontologies actually raise *différance* to a new metaphysical level of abstraction by asserting the irreducibility of "things-in-themselves" (Harman 171). In doing so, they translate the "writerly" – and the way it updates the language of the market and exchange, which conceals the theft of surplus-labor in production – into a new ontological basis of *Being* as such.

According to the new ontologies of the (post)humanities, there is always a certain irreducible "surplus" value within the object that, it is claimed, cannot be fully captured by any relations at all. For example, Graham Harman in "The Road to Objects" argues that an object always "retains an unexhausted surplus deeper than our relation with it" (174). According to Harman's object-oriented ontology, "the failure of both theory and praxis to exhaust the things of the world" is not at root epistemological, but rather it is ontological: it is not the effect of "some tragic mental feature of humans and a few smart animals" but, he claims, "it is a limitation of relationality in general" and that "relations in general fail to [grasp] their relata" (174, 171). In Harman's view, "real objects" are autonomous entities that have *no causal* relations with or effect on one another; rather, they can only have an "indirect or vicarious causation" because, so his narrative goes, real objects "cannot touch" one another and instead "withdraw from one another" (176). This is a theory of *acausality* and indeterminacy in which objects, and their "unexhausted" surplus, ontologically exist as unique singularities in no relations of determination or cause and effect whatsoever.

In contrast to some of the varieties of (post)humanist ontologies, such as new materialism, that regard matter as a single "ontological field" of protean and diverse Deleuzian intensities and flows, "without any unequivocal demarcations between human, animal, vegetable, or mineral"

until they are inculcated into human consciousness (Bennett 116-17), in Harman's object-oriented ontology, objects do not "melt together into a single system" or form a "monolithic lump" that is "broken into pieces by consciousness" (174). On the contrary, he contends, the "real world" is "from the start" made up of individual objects "each of [which] must have specific real qualities" (174). For Harman, an "unexhausted surplus," therefore, resides *within* the object itself owing, he contends, to its unique and "specific real qualities" outside of any relations. At most, this implies a theory of "surplus-value" as the effect of the natural, elemental, or physical properties of matter and the way these can have causes and effects that exceed the uses currently discovered by "the work of history" (Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, 45) as is evident when Harman argues that objects are "always deeper than our perceptions or theories of them [and] they are also deeper than our use of them" (174).

But for Harman, a "surplus" resides in the object that is *ontologically* beyond the reach of human history: "real objects" and their "unexhausted surplus," Harman claims, are "withdrawn from all theoretical, practical, and even causal access" (174). It is worth noting that in spite of his denials, Harman's explanation of *why* he claims this is itself a definitionalist and, therefore, correlationist explanation: "real objects" are beyond explanation, praxical transformation, and causal access, according to Harman, because "the *definition* of a real object is simply a unified thing with specific qualities that withdraws from any attempt to grasp it" (177). In other words, in the logic of this narrative, "surplus-value" is not the effect of the dialectical praxis of human labor, the level of historical development of productive forces, or the social relations of production such as capitalism in which workers produce surplus-value for capital in exchange for the means to live. Rather, Harman posits a "surplus-value" that exceeds all historical explanation and social determination and is a transhistorical and mystical feature of absolute reality as such.

While object-oriented ontology distances itself from the "constructivism" of Derrida and other canonic writerly theorists, Harman

also articulates a *writerly* theory of value that ontologizes capitalism and the language of the market. "Real objects," Harman contends, exist as singularities of "unique real qualities" that "cannot touch" each other directly and are not directly "interchangeable" with each other: "otherwise [...] hammers [would be] equally able to function as drills, kidneys, dolphins, or monkeys depending on the whim of the observer. But this is ridiculous" (174). Still, he contends that "there must be some [...] medium through which they interact" indirectly (174), yet, "this intermediary cannot itself be a real object" because the "intermediary between two objects [...] must be capable of making direct contact with both of the other[s]" (176). This argument is exemplary of the way in which object-oriented ontology articulates a metaphysics of the market in which exchange-relations are writ large as a new ontological basis of Being. Harman transposes onto absolute reality the exchange relations of capitalism in which commodities that never "touch" each other and are not exchanged directly with each other, and whose use-values are dependent on "real qualities" that are not interchangeable with the unique qualities of other use-values, are *nonetheless* exchanged *indirectly* through the universal equivalent for exchange-value: *the medium of money*. In other words, this is an *ontologizing* of exchange relations, and exchange-value, in capitalism and making the *logic of exchange* appear to be the elemental and natural basis of objective reality.

Object-oriented ontology is a ruling class commodity fetishism that *ideologically disappears the dialectical praxis of labor and the social relations of production into the free play of "things" themselves*. According to Harman, when two real objects actually "touch" or form a link "there is only one place where that can happen, and that is on the *interior* of an object"; in short, they "become a new object" (177). For Harman, "every relation forms a new real object" (177) such that the formation of a new object is a relation between objects, devoid of labor, and a relation is not a relation at all but is itself a new object. This is the way in which object-oriented ontology silences the fact that the source of "surplus-value" – of profit – is the exploitation of workers' surplus-labor

by capital in the material relations in which commodities are produced. What mediates the relationship between two distinct objects and is the means through which they “become a new object” is *actually*, as Marx argues in his speeches in *Wage-Labour and Capital*, the *dialectical praxis of human labor*. It is human labor that mediates the interaction between two objects – whether products of nature, transformed by human labor into raw materials ready for use, or means of production that are themselves the products of labor – and transforms them into a new object. Object-oriented ontology, however, teaches a mode of interpretation and theory that disappears the dialectical praxis of labor behind the production of new commodities as well as the social relations of production in which labor takes place.

Harman marginalizes the mediation of objects by human labor because he regards humans, as well as all human relations (whether human relations with objects or human relations with each other) to be “real objects” and, therefore, his narrative implies, beyond explanation and praxical change. By this logic, the “dialectical praxis of labor,” in which humans interact with nature and transform it and, in doing so, transform their own needs and nature, is itself an “*object*” rather than a dialectical and material relation. This ontologizes the language of the market and the material interests of the ruling class, in which human labor-power is a “thing” like any other “thing.” In the language of the market, the wage-laborer and “labor-power” is an *object* like any other that, along with raw materials and means of production, is part of the cost of production to the capitalist. Yet, labor power is a commodity – and a worker’s life activity is an “object” for exchange – only under specific *historical and social* relations of production. This is the effect of production relations in capitalism in which capital owns the means of production and accumulates the social wealth produced by workers while workers do not own anything but their labor-power to sell in order to survive.

Without addressing social relations of production based on the exploitation of workers’ surplus-labor, and the conditions of dire necessity

in which wage-laborers sell their lives – their life activity – “piece by piece” in order to secure the means to live, Harman’s remarks that human “objects” are also “deeper than our use” of them is, *at best*, affective consolation for exploitation (174). By ideologically dissolving living labor into things themselves, object-oriented ontology actually advances the idea that what Marx calls “fixed capital” – objects, machines, means of production, etc. – *produces* surplus-value. However, while capital “cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production” (Marx and Engels, *Manifesto* 487) – i.e., producing new means of production or “fixed capital – it is not “new technologies” that produce new value. Fixed capital is itself the “accumulated labor” of workers under previous cycles of production, and its value is merely transferred in the production process, through depreciation, to new commodities. Living human labor is the only commodity on the market that can produce new value, and it becomes *part of the value* of commodities – it is *labor* that adds a surplus-value to what Harman refers to as “the interior of a new object” – along with the value of raw materials that go into the commodities (which are not only products of nature but that also require human labor for their production and use), as well as the portion of value transferred from the means of production, which are themselves the products of past labor. New technologies are produced and used in production as tools to increase the *rate of exploitation*, i.e., to accelerate the production process so that workers can produce more surplus-value within a given working day. It is workers – i.e., living labor – that produces new value while being exploited. In other words, object-oriented-ontology, which posits the immanent surplus-value of objects without labor, is an ideological articulation of the way in which capital uses new technologies to squeeze “unexhausted” surplus-value out of the exhausted wage-laborer.

This *writerly* theory of ontology rewrites exploitation as an invisible law of nature. That object-oriented ontology is not a point of departure from the writerly can also be seen in Harman’s theory of writing itself. In *Immaterialism*, Harman argues that “good writing” is non-conceptual: it is

“vivid writing that brings its subject to life rather than replacing it with bundles of explicit and verifiable qualities” (32). This is because he begins with the impossibility of concepts. He writes, “any claim that a thing is convertible into knowledge cannot account for the obvious and permanent difference between a thing and knowledge of it” (28). On this basis, he fetishizes the ruling class “insoluble contradiction,” which as I marked above, is an ideological and historical effect of material contradictions, as an ontological paradox. In Harman’s narrative, owing to the ontological “impossibility” of producing explanatory concepts, at most “we can only reveal things obliquely, looking for paradox rather than literally accurate predicates as our entryway to a thing” (32). As Harman’s “lessons” in “good writing” make clear, object-oriented ontology marginalizes explanation of objective material relations as “bad writing” and instead of offering a more materialist view of objective reality, it articulates the key *moral* mission of the dominant (post)humanities: to teach the contemporary workforces the interpretive skills to be “good subjects” of capital who see it as “bad” to contribute to the explanatory critique and collective social transformation of the material conditions – the class contradictions – of their exploitation and who will look at their exploitation, and their objectification in capitalism, as self-evident, natural facts that are beyond the reach of human intervention – that is the dialectical praxis of human labor – and social transformation.

V.

Through the logic of the *writerly*, the bourgeois (post)humanities silences workers’ inquiries into the class contradictions of capitalism and the origins of exploitation, marginalizes the teaching of theory as explanatory critique of the totality of social and material relations of production that must be transformed in practice for freedom from exploitation, and instead teaches the contemporary workforces of capitalism the reified cultural and ideological skills that are useful to capital because they lead workers to see capitalism as beyond theoretical explanation, beyond labor, beyond historical determination and, therefore,

as beyond social transformation. In this way, the dominant (post)humanism is a *différance* within classic bourgeois humanism or, to put this another way, it is not a break from humanism but is its "latent side: the difference of humanism with itself as it adjusts to the heightening class contradictions" of capitalism (Cotter *et al.* 2). Through the writerly, the contemporary (post)humanities has, by and large, enacted an ideological shift away from classic bourgeois humanist justifications of wage-labor and capital relations without challenging the private property relations and the exploitation upon which they are based. These ideological shifts have to do with shifts *within* capitalist production itself, owing to the intensification of its class contradictions, but not a break *from* capitalism or its underlying material contradictions. The dominant (post)humanism has become viable as an ideology – of epistemology, ontology, life, matter, being, differences, etc. – in a globalized system of commodity production and exchange that has subsumed people, objects, animals, plants, differences, etc. all as "interchangeable" commodities and as a "totality of exchanges in constant flow and taking place more or less over the whole surface of society" (Marx, *Manuscripts of 1857-58* 123) while at the same time concealing the exploitation of workers' surplus-labor at its root. At the same time, it is a mode of production that is increasingly prone to crises of profitability as it invests further into fixed capital to cheapen the cost of production while it still needs "fresh exploitable" labor to increase profit (*Wage-Labour and Capital* 46).

This is, of course, contrary to the way in which the bourgeois (post)humanities represents itself and its teaching of the logic of the writerly. Instead, it represents itself as acknowledging, recognizing, and including "differences within" rather than what it contends is the exclusionary and totalizing logic of class. The ruling class (post)humanities represents the *rejection* of class-consciousness and dialectical materialist critique as more inclusive of "differences within," as Rosi Braidotti claims when she contends that it is necessary for the contemporary (post)humanities to do away with "any reference to [...] violent dialectical oppositions" in order to focus its teachings on "the

centrality of the relation to multiple others” (56). Yet, like Derrida’s contention that the fiction of representational democracy is owing to a metaphysical lack of presence rather than to historical and material – i.e., dialectical – contradictions of capitalism, new (post)humanist ontologies turn discrimination and violence against “multiple others” in capitalism into ontological, elemental and existential conditions of life and reality as such. The (post)humanities asserts that *reality-in-itself* is ontologically composed by *différance* in which “what is absolute is contingency” (Colebrook 74) and, therefore, immediate conditions of life can only be explained by “the precarious, accidental, contingent, expedient, striving, dynamic status of life in a messy, complicated, resistant, brute world of materiality” (Grosz 2). Accordingly, the (post)humanities “explains” violence and discrimination against the “other” as an effect of a transhistorical irreducible ontology: “Discrimination,” claims new materialist Jaspir Puar, “like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them” (Puar 382). In other words, following the logic of the writerly and *différance*, the systemic and structural violence against the “other” in capitalism is “explained away” as astructural, acausal, accidental – in short, in terms that ontologize the bourgeois market language of “no fault.” In doing so, like the classic textualist theories of *différance*, they update the bourgeois humanist understanding of capitalism as a society of “mutual benefit” into the idea that it is a society of “mutual risk.” In such a view, material contradictions of gender, sexuality, race, and class are collapsed into a post-dialectical “flat ontology” in which all are equally complicit in the inequalities generated within and beyond society, regardless of one’s position in global wage-labor and capital relations.

The writerly call to enforce the “absence of any reference to [...] violent dialectical oppositions” does not unleash the power of “multiple others” as is claimed (Braidotti 56) because binaries are not simply signs in representational crisis grafted onto an otherwise aleatory and flat

ontological field; rather, they are the effect of material processes and contradictions in the social division of labor – of “definite social relations” of production founded on exploitation (*Wage-Labour and Capital* 29). Instead, the writerly is a suppression from the contemporary (post)humanities of the teaching and development of explanatory concepts with which the global workforces can critique the contradictions of their immediate conditions of life – from violence against immigrants, to sexual assault and police brutality, to lack of medical care, failing schools, empty retirement accounts, to environmental degradation, global militarism and wars for profit – and understand the totality of material relations in capitalism behind their conditions of existence in order to more effectively transform them in practice.

By contrast, Marx’s speecherly approach offers guidelines for the development of an explanatory critique of violence and discrimination against the “other” and enables workers to inquire into the social and historical *origins* of discrimination against the “other” in *class relations* – private property relations – and the exploitation of workers’ surplus-labor for the profit of a handful of owners. When Marx returns to what is *said* about capital by bourgeois political economists, he also reveals the tautological logic through which the language of the market posits not only class, but also race, as a natural, self-evident ontology: “Accumulated labour that serves as a means to new production is capital. So say the economists. What is a Negro slave? A man of the black race. The one explanation is worthy of the other” (28). Yet, rather than taking race and racism as “self-evident,” as the language of the market does, Marx makes clear that it is “only under certain conditions [that] he become[s] a slave” (28). At a time in which slavery under capitalism is normalized and naturalized through the production of racist ideology that represents slavery as an ontological character or quality of an individual of the so called “black race,” Marx contributes to enabling the development of a critique of racism among the working class by laying bare that slavery is not an essential or natural condition of “being Black” but an historical relation of exploitation, “a social relation of production” (29). The colonization of Africa and the

exploitation of millions of people as slaves is no more “natural” or “ontological” than the exploitation of millions of people as ‘free’ wage-labor. Neither the slave nor the wage-laborer is an ontological identity: both are class positions that are the product of historical relations of production based on exploitation. “Race” and racism, on these terms, can be shown to be a *social* relation, and, more specifically, a *social relation of capital*, with its material basis in class relations and the theft of workers’ surplus-labor by capital. The fact that racism survives and is actively reproduced past the formal abolition of slavery and the formal outlawing of trafficking in human life in the United States and internationally (although, of course, slavery continues to exist in the contemporary global economy) is that racism is not simply a social relation of slavery but a social relation of wage-labor and capital; it continues to be used as what Marx and Engels call an “instrument of labour” which makes labor “more or less expensive to use” (*Manifesto* 491).

In a similar manner, in the course of his critique of “beloved bourgeois phrases” about capitalism’s mutual benefit and claims that it provides “opportunities” for all workers, Marx demonstrates the way in which “age” and “gender” are used as “instruments” to naturalize the way in which capitalist development throws higher-waged workers out of the workforce and replaces them with “fresh exploitable” workers at a cheaper rate: “what then do these beloved bourgeois phrases prove? Nothing more than that now four times as many workers’ lives are used up as there were previously, in order to obtain the livelihood of one working family” (*Wage-Labour and Capital* 47). And in exchange for the same wage that capital used to pay one worker, it now gets the surplus-labor of multiple workers. Put in other terms, “race,” “gender,” “sexuality,” [...] are not irreducible singularities that exist in a transhistorical, accidental-acausal, ontological vacuum; rather they are ideological tools or “instruments” used by capital to normalize the lowering of the “exchange-value” – i.e., the wages – for labor-power and “making it less expensive to use.” In turn, they become ideological justifications for relative increases in the rate of exploitation because, by cheapening the cost of labor-power, they shorten

the time the worker spends in the working day reproducing the value equivalent to her wages and increase the time the worker spends producing surplus-value. Furthermore, they are reproduced to provide a way to teach workers to interpret as natural the *social* division of labor and the way they are pitted in competition with one another by capital – a situation in which “labourers compete not only by selling themselves one cheaper than the other, but also by doing the work of five, then ten, then twenty” (44).

Through the logic of the writerly the dominant (post)humanities teaches the workforces the cultural skills that global capitalism needs them to have to adjust to their exploitation and to remove fetters for capitalist profit: to be culturally flexible subjects who are at once at home with “multiple differences” and at the same time ontologize their commodification, their exploitation, the exigencies of capitalist profit and crisis, the violence against “others,” as the effect of an accidental, unchangeable, metaphysics of capitalism. Marx’s speakerly approach, which teaches the global workforce how to critique the totality of historical and social relations of production in which they are exploited and activates workers as subjects for social transformation, is an intervention into the bourgeois (post)humanities and a transformation of them into a materialist project of freedom in which theory becomes a material force for social transformation. While the bourgeois (post)humanities works to remove the ideological fetters to exploitation by teaching workers to ontologize it, the speakerly in Marx advances a materialist (post)humanities that teaches the workforces of capitalism the *revolutionary* role of labor: to remove the material fetters to the freedom of *all* of humanity from necessity; that is, the fetters of class relations, private ownership of the means of production, exploitation, production for profit, and the concentration of social wealth into the hands of a few.

Works Cited

- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Trans. Richard Miller. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1974.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

- Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity, 2013.
- Castells, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society*. 2nd Edition. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Colebrook, Claire. "Disaster Feminism." *The Subject of Rosi Braidotti: Politics and Concepts*. Ed. Bollette Blaagaard and Iris van der Tuin. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. 72-77.
- Coole, Diana and Samantha Frost, eds. *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Cotter, Jennifer, Kimberly DeFazio, Robert Faivre, Amrohini Sahay, Julie Torrant, Stephen Tumino, and Rob Wilkie, eds. *Human, All Too (Post)Human: The Humanities After Humanism*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016.
- de Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- . *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- . *Politics of Friendship*. Trans. George Collins. London: Verso, 2006.
- . *Positions*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Dolphijn, Rick and Iris van der Tuin. *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012.
- Ebert, Teresa. "The Poverty of the (Post)Humanities." *Knowledge Cultures*, Vol. 4, No. 6 (2016), 25-54.
- Ebert, Teresa and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh. *Class in Culture*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2008.
- Engels, Frederick. "Introduction." Karl Marx. *Wage-Labour and Capital*. 1891. Ed. Frederick Engels. New York: International Publishers, 1986. 5-13.
- Fessler, Pam. "Housing Secretary Ben Carson says 'Poverty is a State of Mind.'" *NPR.org*. 25 May 2017. Web. 26 May 2017.

- Grosz, Elizabeth. *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution and The Untimely*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Harman, Graham. *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016. Print.
- . "The Road to Objects." *Continent*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2011), 171-79.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital*. Volume I. *Marx & Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 35. New York: International Publishers, 1996.
- . *Economic Manuscripts of 1857-58. Marx & Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 28. New York: International Publishers, 1986.
- . Introduction. *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Marx & Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 3. New York: International Publishers, 1975. 175-187.
- . "Letter to Arnold Ruge." September 1843. *Marx & Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 3. New York: International Publishers, 1975. 141-145.
- . Preface. *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. Marx & Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 29. New York: International Publishers, 1987. 261-265.
- . "Theses on Feuerbach." *Marx & Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 5. New York: International Publishers, 1975. 3-8.
- . *Wage-Labour and Capital*. 1891. Ed. Frederick Engels. New York: International Publishers, 1986.
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. *The German Ideology*. Vol. 1. *Marx & Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 5. New York: International Publishers, 1975. 19-96.
- . *Manifesto of the Communist Party. Marx & Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 6. New York: International Publishers, 1976. 477-519.
- McLellan, David. *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*. London: Macmillan Press, 1973.
- Plato. *The Phaedrus*. New York: Penguin, 2005.
- Puar, Jaspir. "I Would Rather Be a Cyborg than a Goddess: Intersectionality, Assemblage, and Affective Politics." *Meritum*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (July 2013), 371-90.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye. Trans. Wade Baskin. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965.

