

Emissaries of the Outside-Within: On the Speecherly in Marx's "Speech at the Hague"

Robert Faivre and Julie Tarrant

I.

Marx's address after the 1872 Conference of the International Working Men's Association in The Hague enacts a materialist, dialectical theory of language and, moreover, demonstrates *why* this theory is a powerful tool for developing class-consciousness through critique. Language does not come out of nowhere nor does it exist separately from or prior to its existence as "practical, real consciousness" (Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* 44). This means, as we argue in this essay, that any practice of language – from ideological mystification to explanatory critique – has its basis, its reason for being, in the social relations between people as they are organized in society. Social relations are always, first and foremost, social relations of production because, as Marx and Engels argue in *The German Ideology*, "the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, [is...] that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to 'make history'" (41-42). This point is, of course, quite obvious and, it would seem, unnecessary to make; however, the root of all idealist theories is the forgetting of this point. That is, the logic of idealism begins from the erasure of these material premises: the necessity of labor to produce the means to meet our basic needs, labor as the basis of social relations, and thus language as the "practical consciousness" that emerges out of the social necessity of labor and its development. As the social relations of

production develop, then so will the use of language and the whole of the superstructure.

Critique of idealism – from its “outside” – is possible and necessary, and increasingly so within capitalism, because as a mode of production capitalism is not only a totality but it is a contradictory totality; as the productive forces develop within capitalism, which is to say as social labor develops, it comes into conflict, increasingly, with the social relations of production, the class relations of exploitation that shape and limit production based on the profit motive inherent in these class relations. The development of the productive forces within capitalism makes possible meeting the needs of all the world’s people for food, clothing, and shelter; however, because capitalist social relations prioritize production for profit over production for need, what is possible is not actualized. It is not simply that, for example, the food produced is not distributed properly in the market and that people go hungry; rather, in capitalism, food is produced for creating profit, not for meeting need. This class priority explains why people go hungry and suffer “food insecurity.” It is from the perspective of labor (the proletariat) – that is, what it makes possible and what it needs – that critique emerges as the practical consciousness of the new society, the basis of which has been formed within capitalism.

Marx, in this speech, does not “reform consciousness [...] through dogmas, but through analyzing the mystical consciousness,” the idealist consciousness that is a product of the increasingly outdated social relations that become limits (“fetters”) on the productive forces and what they make possible (Marx, “Letter to Ruge” 144). In the nineteenth century, the dominant form of this mystical, bourgeois class (and thus class-interested) consciousness is the “readerly” consciousness that is based on a mimetic theory of language and metaphysics of history. As we explain, the “readerly” – a concept developed by Roland Barthes in *S/Z* to denote a humanist, mimetic approach to language that suppresses the “writerly” agency of the writer in producing a multiplicity of meaning (4-6) – has been updated in the contemporary as a “writerly” consciousness and

theory of language, in order to attempt to account for the "material" outside of language in ways that defend the existing social relations. Readerly and writerly, to put it more bluntly, are variations of idealism, each in a more or less sophisticated manner obscuring the material (class) relations of language and history.

In relation to the ubiquitous idealisms of the readerly and writerly, and the ruling class interests that they obscure and advance, we argue for the necessity of materialist theory – here called the "speecherly." The speecherly is the material logic of language and its outside, a logic grounded in the historical materialist theory of the dialectical development and causal determinations of the social totality in history. This materialist use of language works to develop class-consciousness and thus to enable social transformation to end the violences of class society.

II.

In his address after the International's 1872 Congress in the Hague, Marx begins by noting that the International chose to meet in the city that was not only the seat of feudal "diplomacy" where kings and potentates signed peace treaties while plotting wars, but also what one journalist characterized as "the most reactionary city in Holland," whose "ignorant population would 'tear to pieces' the 'scum of the Paris Commune'" (*Marx and Engels Collected Works* 23: 687 n. 194). Marx interrogates the ideological reaction to the Congress itself, stating,

When our decision [to hold the Congress in the Hague] became known, there was talk of emissaries we had sent to prepare the ground. Yes, we have emissaries everywhere, we do not deny it, but the majority of them are unknown to us. Our emissaries in The Hague were the workers, whose labour is so exhausting, just as in Amsterdam they are workers too, workers who toil for sixteen hours a day. Those are our emissaries, we have no others; and in all the countries where we make an appearance we find them ready to welcome us, for they

understand very quickly that the aim we pursue is the improvement of their lot. (254)

Marx directly takes on the ideological accusations of the reactionaries and dialectically subverts their class logic. Bourgeois “talk of emissaries” sent ahead of the convention by the International to “prepare the ground” is an assertion that workers in The Hague have no common interest with the International but have only a common interest within their city, region, and nation. The bourgeoisie’s parochial emphasis on national interest (difference *within* the class) over class interest (difference *between* the classes) functions as a denial of the reality of the shared interests of the proletariat and thus casts the International as an outside force interfering in the normal state of affairs. However, as Marx argues, what the International brings is not outside agitators, but rather a perspective outside the logic of the market and its cultural commonsense.

In the bourgeois accusation against the International of having sent “emissaries” to prepare the ground for revolution, Marx shows that language serves here as the means by which social relations are rendered static at the level of ideas. In this charge there is the assumption that there is the “true” language of the familiar and known (i.e., the inside), and the “false” language of the unfamiliar and unknown (i.e., the outside). The bourgeoisie was sending emissaries too, of course, so – for the readerly – the issue becomes whose emissaries are “true” and whose emissaries are “false.” In other words, there is an assumption of the validity of language as determined by whether it mimetically reflects or corresponds to the reality it references. The charge of sending advance “emissaries” is essentially to accuse the International of subverting the binary between what can be represented “accurately” and what is represented “inaccurately.” The International’s “emissaries” are said by the ruling class to be *false* emissaries – that is, improper representatives of the existing social order – because they speak from outside the boundaries of acceptable (post-class) representation. Therefore, language is established as a

static binary of inside/outside in which, in *readerly* mimetic fashion, it is assumed that communication is (only) communication when it directly reflects an unchanging world of clear, self-evident divisions and boundaries. The divisions and boundaries, that is to say, that reproduce the empirical realities of capitalist daily life.

In this sense, Marx's *speecherly* logic counters the *readerly* logic by showing that the language of "nation" and "emissaries" has a class basis. Both logics are class logics and are class-based theories of language. The *readerly* theory of language is evident in the logic of the bourgeois reactionaries raising the charge of "outside emissaries." The *readerly* is premised, as we have marked above, on a mimetic theory of language which understands language as a direct reflection of reality. This, however, begs the question. If language is a transparent reflection of reality, then the *readerly* cannot account for where other('s) language, the other perspective, comes from. For the *readerly* and its theory of language there is no possibility of an historical explanation of this other; hence the other is either simply rejected as bad logic (contradictory, wrong), or moralized as the bad or wrong language of an outsider to be outlawed and criminalized. This is because the *readerly* assumes a perspective, established by the existing class order as the dominant frame of reference, that reflects the ruling class interests. Other perspectives, such as those of workers who understand themselves as part of a *transnational* (i.e., *international*) class of the exploited (and, if differently, thus oppressed) are inadmissible from within the dominant frame. The national is a perspective in the interests of the existing order and the dominant interests in that it emphasizes *difference-within* by constructing workers as subjects of the market, thus focusing them on the differences within the working class, which is to say, on the scene of competition between and among groups of workers. Focusing on *difference-within* blocks development of class-consciousness of the *difference-between*, that is, the fundamental class difference between the class of workers and the class of owners. This construction of reality, which denies its own constructedness, does reflect something real, as

language always does, but this real is the surface appearances of the market, which is not the ultimate reality but is the site of the distribution of already produced and appropriated surplus-value. Because production of surplus value takes place in “the hidden abode of production” (Marx, *Capital* I:19) on the basis of private property relations that are obscured on the market by the apparent potentially “fair” exchange of labor for wages, the mimetic theory of language reproduces this disappearance of class by reifying market (distribution) relations. That is, by de-linking the relations of exchange from the social relations of production that shape them, the readerly de-materializes and de-historicizes these cultural/market relations.

It is from this de-materializing, de-historicizing perspective that there can appear to be a “true” or a “false” emissary (that is, a true representative versus a false agitator). This is because, for the readerly, the “true” is that which reflects reality accurately and the “false” is ruled outside. By this logic, workers’ support for the International is suspect because it does not reflect the “normal” appearances of the nation and imposes a set of ideas and values alien to the commonsense of the market. This otherness is rejected by the readerly, in short, on the basis of its opposition to the status quo and the interests the status quo enshrines. This is why “emissaries” of the International are seen as bad/false/outside. Because they represent a *challenge* to the dominant perspective and the dominant interests, they are read by the readerly as *bad* representation or *false* reflection that needs to be put outside the frame.

As Marx’s treatment of the charge of “emissaries” shows, however, what the readerly does is de-historicize both the “inside” and the “outside” perspectives, which is to say it works to naturalize the exploitative class relations and the “reality” that they produce. The readerly is a form of idealism because it inverts this outside perspective into a false or bad reflection of reality: a (spontaneous) wrong or immoral idea instead of another view from within the existing, contradictory social relations. Contradiction for the readerly is seen as a matter of true/false, right/wrong. But it is this sort of contradiction

which raises a logical (as well as ethical and historical) problem for the readerly, particularly as the social relations of production become more and more global and thus capital needs workers who are increasingly cosmopolitan. It is this problem, as we discuss below, that the writerly takes up: accounting for the other and the outside as something other than bad, false, or wrong.

The readerly represents the ideology of individualism and its celebration of the market, the site of intra-class competition, very much in line with the class interest of the bourgeoisie in maintaining the status quo. Competition amongst workers benefits the ruling class, but competition amongst competing capitalists also drives technological innovations, which in turn drive down the rate of profit and compel deeper exploitation of labor, which is the source of profits. It is this historical dynamic that, for the speakerly, produces "emissaries" who are workers themselves. These workers are, Marx argues, "ready to welcome" the International and its perspective, sometimes with no other "preparation" than the experience of the oppressive "reality/ies" of exploitation (e.g., unremitting toil with little reward) (254). This is because the International not only provides an historical explanation for *why* workers are subject to oppressive conditions of inequality and/or want, but also provides a guide to transforming the structures that produce these effects. It is not an alien force agitating the workers, but conceptualizing common interests across borders that appeals to the workers as members of the class. The speakerly, in other words, speaks openly about what the readerly "forgets": that is, the fact that it is not the appearance of the individual in the marketplace and the nation that is the historical essence of the citizen-laborer, but rather the difference of class in exploitation which unifies the members of the working class.

In his speech, Marx situates "emissaries" as always representatives of and for a class. The key to the speakerly is that an "emissary" is a representative not only of an existing social reality, but of a position within that reality, a position that is not simply "true" or "false," but a position with definite material interests relative to the continuation or

transformation of the existing society. The workers are “already” (as Marx says) the International’s emissaries “inside” The Hague by the fact of the exploitation of their labor by the ruling class. Their exploitation is the unspoken material reality of the language of the bourgeois emissary. This class language of the readerly is a mode of idealism that produces a cultural imaginary in which class as exploitation is erased in the context of class struggles through which the working class is becoming a class for-itself. One of the material conditions of the readerly, and its equation of appearance and essence, is the wage-labor exchange, in which the logic of the market covers over the social essence of exploitation with the ideology of “fair exchange.” Through the concept of the “working-day,” Marx shows the class split in workers’ expenditure of labor-power into necessary labor (or the cost of reproduction of labor-power) and surplus-labor (which capitalists appropriate as profit). The struggle over exploitation is not simply a struggle to ethically “balance” the relation of the wage to the cost of living and to private profit, and yet this is how the logic of the market presents the notion of a “fair exchange.” Marx shows that the wage itself, whether it appears to be “fair” or “unfair” compensation, is always based on the hidden division of the working-day into its two parts. In its silence on this split, the readerly uses the logic of fair exchange to equalize all relations as ethical matters that can be resolved between individuals, putting the actual relations out of view. It is the capitalists’ exploitation of the surplus labor of workers that constitutes the capitalist as a capitalist: it is this relation of exploitation that allows for not only the reproduction but also the *accumulation* of capital, which thus enables the capitalist to come back to the market with capital with which to purchase labor-power once again. In contrast, the worker who, at the site of the market, engages in a free and equal exchange of labor for wages but whose surplus labor is exploited in the “hidden abode of production” (Marx, *Capital* I:19) must use her wages as means of subsistence, to reproduce herself and her family from day to day and generation to generation, and thus returns to the market with only labor-power. For the readerly, having erased contradiction, the

existing appears in the static social order of the marketplace, in which individuals meet to conduct exchanges in accordance with established custom and law and within the terms of the market. For Marx and the speakerly, the social is the concrete manifestation of dialectical social *relations*. The working class exists by virtue of its relation to the means of production – that is, workers' position in the division of labor. These relations also determine and presuppose the class basis for the identity of capitalists – namely, their ownership of the means of production. The two congresses – that of the rulers and that of the workers – are articulations of the determinations of class in the existing social reality of capitalism; however, these class relations are obscured in the charge of "false emissaries." While thus taking note of the way language is used to produce ideological divisions among workers, Marx shows how the "emissaries" actually are proof of a deeper-lying class relation among the workers of the world in that their class interests, decided in the antagonistic base relation of the bourgeois and proletariat, actually precede what bourgeois ideology constructs as their national interests, as these latter are ultimately "differences within" class that obscure the "difference between" the classes. In this sense, the primary difference of class, which the readerly as a bourgeois logic obscures with the language of nation and other superstructural differences, is brought into view by the speakerly and thus is made available for potential recognition by the proletariat. Marx's speech thus connects the interests of the workers in attendance with the great struggle of working people everywhere for the "improvement of their lot," for freedom from need. In so doing, the speech shows that the real and transformable boundaries of the inside/outside are not "nation" but class.

In this context, the bourgeois speaks of workers as "false" emissaries because in the bourgeois use of language is the readerly assumption that anything challenging the social order is a misrepresentation of the existing. Marx's speech however, is a dialectical theory of the (class) relations of the present and the future. In the language of Marx, the workers are the "true" emissaries of the future because, dialectically, they represent what

has become materially possible through the development of the productive forces of labor. It is this that makes not only political action, but class-conscious engagement in the struggle for “political supremacy,” all the more necessary.

In other words, the speecherly understands language not as the static reflection of the world as it exists in appearance, but the expression of material developments that enables us to conceive of and discuss the objective social forces creating the conditions for a revolutionary transformation of the existing society. This is what enables the speecherly to become a basis for the conscious advancement of class solidarity: workers “inside” The Hague can connect with workers “outside” it through a language that goes beyond a mimetic representation of the world as it appears by grasping the underlying social relations that determine the conditions of existence and possibility. The speecherly does not simply (mimetically) reflect back to workers what they already feel – that only those who “already” “recognize” their class interests are appealed to or should be appealed to – rather, the speecherly helps to build the movement by building solidarity, which requires abstract concepts that go through appearances and grasp the world as a (transformable) totality.

Capitalism is not, of course, the first or only class society in history, but it is a distinct mode of production and society that has profound implications not only for the way the contradiction between the forces and relations of production manifests throughout the society, but also for the way class as the relations of production is mediated by language and by the political-cultural superstructure in all its manifold aspects. Contrasting capitalism and feudalism, for instance, unlike in feudalism, wherein the peasant was overtly compelled through direct force to give the lord the products of a day’s labor, in capitalism this division between necessary and surplus labor – the boundary of exploitation – is maintained through the “dull compulsion of economic relations” (Marx, *Capital* I:726). But this division is the difference that constitutes the classes; this difference is a *relation* – a relation between necessary labor

(for reproduction) and surplus labor (which in capital is appropriated by the bourgeois as the basis of profit). As an explanatory concept, "class" makes evident the necessary connections of cause and effect; such a concept is part of the analytics of solidarity – that is, the theory and material logic whereby reliable knowledge of the social totality in its structure and historical development is produced. This is why solidarity is the principle of the International. That is, what ties workers together – exploitation as the alienation of their *labor-power*, a life-giving force that because of the property relations becomes a power over them, a power wielded by capitalists – is not immediately apparent, nor is their common, objective interest in ending this exploitation. In fact, the spontaneous consciousness within capitalism is a market consciousness because it is the market that is the site of effects: what is and what appears to us in our daily lives. Workers' identities in the market correspond to differences of status (ultimately consumer power), that is, differences within the working class (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, nationality, citizenship status, employment status, etc.). From this market perspective, workers are not only isolated and separated from one another (as individuals and/or groups), but are forced into competition and therefore conflict with one another. Conceptual knowledge of material relations, for instance, is central to theory as the use of language to cut through the surface appearances of equality between wages and labor on the market, as well as degrees of status difference between and among workers, in order to grasp the opposition between the classes in the relations of exploitation in production.

III.

As we have been arguing, Marx's 1872 address, which is usually read for its significance in the historical development of political theory (i.e., the conflict between the communists and the anarchists, and the heightening class conflict between the proletariat and the last ruling powers of feudalism in Europe as the bourgeoisie consolidated its international empire), is also significant for its theory of the

determination of language, conceptuality, and consciousness as social relations. In this and other speeches, Marx's critique of the mimetic theory of language provides a guide for critique of not only this but all forms of the bourgeois logic aimed at blocking the transformation of the social relations of exploitation. To be more precise, Marx's speech provides a dialectical account from outside the logic of the market in internationalizing capitalism. Materialist critique as the analytics of solidarity, which Marx explains in the speech, articulates this "outside" to bourgeois logic; further, this "outside" use of language is already made possible *within* the class relations (i.e., as part of the class contradiction of capitalism), such that the speakerly speaks this outside from within the historical contradiction. As the counter-logic of what we call "the outside-within," proletarian critique speaks at once from within the capitalist relations and from outside bourgeois logic and language, from outside, that is, the "in-sider" logic of capital. In this sense, the "outside-within" counter-logic of the proletariat is the other side of the contradictory social relation dominated by the bourgeois logic that makes individuals in the market appear as the whole world.

In his speech, Marx explains and supports the decisions made at the convention: to oppose political abstentionism, to centralize the governance of the International, and to relocate the General Council to the United States. These tactical decisions are aspects of a coherent approach to revolutionary struggle underpinned by the principle of solidarity. It is, as Marx makes clear, because of the growing strength and organization of the international working class that those in power (the ruling class) are mounting their repressive forces, but this means, in turn, that workers need to organize themselves for the intensified class struggles ahead. Marx explains that at the same time the International, representing the working class, was meeting, "powerful representatives of feudalism and the past" – the emperors of Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary (*Marx and Engels Collected Works* 23: 685 n. 181) – were meeting in Berlin, preparing "new and more severe measures of

repression" against the proletariat (255). It is in light of this historical necessity that the International has made the decision to affirm that it is necessary for workers to engage in political as well as economic struggles in their different countries.

This decision is especially important at this moment because at this time there was a faction that "advocate[d] that the workers should abstain from political activity" (254). Unnamed in the speech, this faction was understood by those assembled to be those whom Mikhail Bakunin, one of the founders of collectivist anarchism, had convinced to form an "Alliance" meant to redirect the workers' movement away from socialist struggle for revolution and into anarchist resistance. In "Fictitious Splits in the International," one of many documents produced with and for the General Council, Marx and Engels critique the position and arguments of the anarchists regarding involvement in political struggles:

Anarchy, then, is the great war-horse of their master Bakunin, who has taken nothing from the socialist system except a set of labels. All socialists see anarchy as the following programme: once the aim of the proletarian movement, i.e., abolition of classes is attained, the power of the State, which serves to keep the great majority of producers in bondage to a very small exploiter minority, disappears, and the functions of government become simple administrative functions. The Alliance reverses the whole process. It proclaims anarchy in proletarian ranks as the most infallible means of breaking the powerful concentration of social and political forces in the hands of the exploiters. Under this pretext, it asks the International, at a time when the old world is seeking a way of crushing it, to replace its organization with anarchy. The international police want nothing better for perpetuating the Thiers republic, while cloaking it in a royal mantle. (121-22)

Marx's critique of anarchism is a critique of its displacement of the historical materialist theory of the state as a mediation of class. As Marx shows here, at stake in the conflict between the anarchists and the historical materialists is the understanding of the state and its role in class struggles and revolution. As historical materialism argues, the state is not an autonomous power but a mediation of class. The state in class society "serves to keep the great majority of producers in bondage to a very small exploiter minority" (Marx and Engels, "The Alliance" 467). It is not simply that the minority oppresses the majority through the state, but that the source of the power of the state is the exploited surplus labor of the workers, held as a power over them. The state mediates the conflictual relation between the classes and thus is a site of struggle. The state through its policies coordinates the distribution of already appropriated surplus-value. The anarchists advocate disengagement from the state as a way to deny and undermine its power, but in so doing, they silently accept the relations of production and render these relations of exploitation into autonomous power relations, denying class as conflictual and determining relations. They dematerialize the state, but more importantly dematerialize class, and in so doing, they negate the necessity of revolution. The social is, from the anarchist view, a Hobbesian war of all against all; it is from this view that disengagement in this war-like series of dominations and oppressions appears as the only progressive option. However, this approach – individualist and voluntarist – negates the possibility inherent in capitalism based on the development of the forces of production. Only by seizing state power as a means of abolishing private property can new labor relations be established – relations based on meeting needs, not accumulating profits.

The International works as an organization of and for the workers as a class, and this organization is necessary to counter and overcome the organization of the ruling class, both in its feudal remnants of emperors and in its international capitalist representatives of the bourgeois-led republics which have been replacing them. Marx, in the speech, states,

"One day the worker will have to seize political supremacy to establish the new organisation of labour [and...] overthrow the old policy which supports the old institutions if he wants to escape the fate of the early Christians who, neglecting and despising politics, never saw their kingdom on earth" (255). In other words, Marx argues that workers must not abstain from political struggles, but must engage in and learn from these struggles, because it will be necessary for workers to take over the state in order to abolish the private property relations of capitalism and to establish new social relations of production. At the conference, the International's General Council voted to remove Bakunin from the International. What is needed, they confirmed, as Marx reaffirms in the speech, is informed and engaged organization, not disorganized and non-coordinated acts of resistance that are easily put down by the police. Thus, in the speech Marx opposes the anarchist position because not to struggle for control of the state and the public resources is to accede to the existing class relations within the state. While political struggles are possibly peaceful to a point in some countries, taking place within the institutions of reform, in most countries, Marx notes, force will have to be met with force. In other words, "overthrowing the old policy" is not limited to civil debate and struggle at the level of politics, but will be a matter of forcible "seizure" of the state and its resources as part of the struggle to establish the "new organization" by putting down the "old institutions." In contrast to the International, the anarchists, having evacuated historical materialist concepts of their class content, leave workers "nothing [...] except a set of labels" in place of revolutionary theory (Marx and Engels, "The Alliance" 467). The working class that does not have the historical materialist concepts and theory necessary to understand politics, policy, and the institutions these policies support as they mediate the class relations, cannot and will not either grasp the need to or in fact be able to wrest political power from the ruling class, much less establish the new policies and institutions (i.e., the cultural and political superstructure) that will be needed to support the revolution and the new labor relations that form the economic basis of the new society as a totality.

This commitment to informed and organized struggle to end class relations is taken up in two other tactical decisions made at the convention: specifically, to centralize the governance of the International so as to better coordinate the different national efforts within the context of international class struggle; and to relocate the General Council to the United States, the emergent center of international capitalism, to which more and more workers were emigrating in the nineteenth century. Such class-conscious coordination is necessary to ensure that different efforts do not become atomized and separated from the class struggle, but appear on the international stage as support and influence for the struggles in the different nations. This point is emphasized by Marx when he argues that the Paris Commune fell, not out of some inherent weakness, but out of a need for coordination:

Citizens, let us bear in mind this fundamental principle of the International: solidarity! It is by establishing this life-giving principle on a reliable base among the workers in all countries that we shall achieve the great aim which we pursue. The revolution must display solidarity, and we find a great example of this in the Paris Commune, which fell because there did not appear in all the centres, in Berlin, Madrid, etc., a great revolutionary movement corresponding to this supreme uprising of the Paris proletariat. (256)

In accounting for the necessity of the decisions made by the International, Marx foregrounds the concept of solidarity as a “life-giving principle” for the International and thus for the proletariat, a foundational premise for making decisions and taking actions. By focusing on what the majority of the world’s people have in common in the social real – i.e., as laboring subjects of exploitation – Marx engages the listening subjects (as urgently now as then) in such a way as to affirm their common class position and interests as workers, and thus enables workers to take up that revolutionary subjectivity that all ideology seeks to suppress. The logic of the market interpellates workers (as consumers) into the

subjectivities needed to transfer value from them to the owning class, creating the appearance of workers as individuals who freely enter the marketplace; however, against this ideological formulation, the speakerly speaks out of the position of what is hidden from view – namely, that capital exploits labor and that exchange in the market is never free – and in this way intervenes in the cultural imaginary of capitalism and the ideological languages that support it by reproducing the surface appearances. In his address to the workers in Amsterdam, Marx speaks from a position of knowledge as a class partisan and calls on the audience as workers and citizens, putting these concepts to social use. By using the concept of “workers” alongside the invocation of “citizen,” Marx instantiates a materialist theory of language that understands language as social, and social relations as class-divided. The speech’s language is significant for its epistemological certainty, a certainty tested through critique. Marx’s speech, in linking the decisions made at the congress to the concept of solidarity, establishes the social use-value of the concept as a principle for decisive engagement in the social real. Solidarity, as class premise, is a dialectical use of language that invokes the common subjectivity of worker as citizen-philosopher, such that workers can see across differences of nationality, race, gender, ability, and other identities and recognize their fellow members of the proletariat.

This is why solidarity as a historical and historically-aware order of decision is different from the violence of collective (total) decision decried by the writerly in its defense of the ideology of bourgeois individualism. Because collective decision made in solidarity with the class is based in a recognition of the social real, not as fixed and final (as in idealism and metaphysics), but as historically changing and transformable. While the speakerly is critiqued by the writerly for “deciding” to prioritize one difference over other potentially recognizable differences, these decisions of the speakerly are not arbitrary impositions but are based in the conceptual recognition of the reality of class relations. Far from being arbitrary, collective decisions made in solidarity with the class are

historically informed by critical knowledge of real relations, material relations.

Solidarity is a “life-giving” principle because it develops out of and dialectically strengthens workers’ class consciousness – that is, workers’ grasp of the objective relations of class and thus their common interest as “all the workers in all the countries” in social transformation such that their collective product, including surplus value, is no longer privately appropriated by capital and made a power over the workers. This common interest is opposed to that of the capitalists, as a class and as individuals, in maintaining the existing social relations of production – that is, their interest in maintaining capitalism’s (primary) division of labor between exploiter and exploited. The principle of solidarity is “life-giving” because it enables workers to conceive of their common interest across differences and thus to develop as a class fighting together for-itself and not only existing as a class in-itself. In other words, in his speech, Marx advances a powerful analytics of solidarity through which difference is dialectically read in relation to the social division of labor.

From this historical materialist perspective and its analytics of solidarity, it is necessary to develop theory as materialist theory in order to establish the principle of solidarity “on a reliable base.” This principle is not a spontaneous product of the experience of exploitation in production or even the critical exposure of social conflicts, contradictions, and even the social crises these conflicts and contradictions (such as food insecurity or hunger or famine) inevitably produce. As opposed to bourgeois theory, historical, materialist (proletarian) theory is a class use of language that enables grasping not simply the *effects* of the existing class/production relations – what we call the “inside” or site of differences within classes (the market, or workers as consumers) – but that enables grasping the *relations* of class/production – difference between the classes – that shape the market and its culture from the “outside,” from private ownership of the means of production. In other words, materialist theory enables workers to understand the history of “what is” and also, at the same time, *what could be*. In contrast to historical materialist theory,

bourgeois theories work to re-mystify the social relations of production in the context of class struggles and suppress the development of materialist theory, de-linking the market relations (effects of class as relations of production such as status) from these relations of production and thus obscuring them.

The International as an organ of the class-conscious proletariat can coordinate and organize these many class struggles across the differences into one class struggle. Again, while the decisions made at the Hague Congress are tactical decisions, given the historical developments, they are made with the knowledge that all the various actions of workers in all the countries are only collective when they are made within a framework of solidarity as the "life-giving principle" of the proletariat as a class in- and for-itself, and thus the basis in practice of collective, class agency. As Marx explains in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, while the development of capitalism "transform[s] the mass of the people of the country into workers," this development "has created for this mass a common situation, common interests," such that "This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself" (211). The proletariat as a class in-itself is the mass of workers positioned within the existing social relations of production as those who must sell their labor to the owners of private property. Marx writes, "In the struggle [...] this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests" (211). The common, objective situation of workers in the relations of production is the material basis of the development of a class for-itself, a self-conscious class, a class organized to meet and extend its own interests and not the opposing material interests of the ruling class. It is through class struggles that the class for-itself emerges and develops.

IV.

The cultural imaginary or cultural commonsense that erases class often appears as, but is not, natural; rather, it is historically (re)produced. "Class" as a totality of social relations – antagonistic social relations of

labor and property – is erased, disappeared in this cultural commonsense. But what is taken for granted in this cultural imaginary is taken for granted in large part because the idealist bourgeois philosophers and theoreticians have, since the nineteenth century and the rise of the working class movement and resistance, explicitly and unrelentingly taken the side of the ruling class and attacked “totality” and the concept of class underpinning it. The forms of this attack – class war on the terrain of theory – have necessarily shifted as the needs of capital in terms of the secondary division of labor have changed and as the contradictions of capitalism have deepened with the increase of exploitation. Since the collapse of the post-war boom and its Fordist class compromise, the level of contradiction (inequalities, but also the contradiction between what is and what could otherwise be for health and well-being of workers) has reached such a high level that the bourgeois ideologists have been compelled not simply to attack and attempt to discredit particular materialist concepts but to attack conceptuality in general. They put concepts in ruins, hence the ongoing war on “totality” and any totalizing logic. Like the readerly, the post-Fordist ideologies are forms of bourgeois idealism. Of particular importance in this context has been what we are calling the writerly, which has been influential in delegitimizing the speakerly as a mode of building class-consciousness.

The writerly, as we marked earlier, provides a critique of the readerly and the way it lends support to the existing power relations within capitalism. Specifically, the writerly intervenes in the readerly devaluing of the national, cultural, ethnic “other” that was necessary to justify exploitation within early (industrial) capitalism of the nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries. As Marx and Engels argue in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, the dynamic of capitalism is globalizing, with “modern industry [...] establish[ing] the world-market” (486) and indeed “a constantly expanding market [that...] chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe,” thus “drawing from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood” and establishing international and an increasingly global base for capital as

the bourgeois enterprise that overcomes the parochialism of feudalism and enforces the "universal inter-dependence of nations, making "National one-sidedness and narrowmindedness [...] more and more impossible" (488). Even so, for now, "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (486), which is why Marx calls for the international proletariat to engage in political struggles within their home nations and for the International to coordinate these struggles on the international, increasingly global level, such that these struggles do not remain contained as so many "internal" struggles *within* borders but take on the quality of a unified class struggle across cultural differences and national borders. In this light, the anti-colonial movements in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America appear not simply as diverse, intra-national struggles for independence but as (sometimes coordinated, often disjointed) participants in the broader, global struggle for international interdependence of the proletariat. These struggles to end colonialism, in the age of the imperialism of the bourgeoisie in its globalizing pursuit of profit, capital, and markets, mark a historical determinant in the collapse of the effectivity of the readerly in blocking class-consciousness. The writerly is a border-crossing correction of the readerly, updating the underlying market logic for global times; however, this critique, as we argue, is an *immanent* critique of the readerly and, in the end, updates and thus reproduces in a more historically effective form, the class logic of the readerly. That is, the writerly maintains the basic market logic as the bourgeoisie becomes truly global and needs an updated account of difference-within to silently justify the difference-between of class.

The dominant early form of "the writerly," a term established by Roland Barthes in his "constructivist" phase, was "textualism," the arche-logic of which is established and promoted by Jacques Derrida. Although Derrida's textualism is critiqued by most post-textualist theorists, what Derrida articulates is, in many ways, still the logic of capital. Here, we will take as our tutor text Derrida's "Cogito and the History of Madness" (*Writing and Difference* 31-63). This text is one of many that demonstrates

Derrida's intervention on the question of the value of the "other" and exemplifies the textualist, writerly critique of the mimetic theory of language and the metaphysics of history produced by readerly (industrial/fordist/colonialist) forms of bourgeois ideology.

In "Cogito and the History of Madness," Derrida critiques the readerly logic of inside/outside in order to establish a more ethically satisfying account of language, consciousness, and the social. In this text, which Derrida develops out of his reading of Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*, Derrida argues that "it is not by chance that such a project [as Foucault's] could take shape today" in that "a certain liberation of madness has gotten underway" by which "the concept of madness as unreason [...] has been dislocated" (38). Derrida's project, then, is to work to enable the further emergence of this liberation. Whereas for the readerly, the conceptual distinction between "reason" and "madness" appears self-evidently logical and a simple reflection of what is, Foucault shows that this has been a matter of institutions and practices producing an episteme in which civilized reason defines that which shall be known as madness. Derrida follows through on this epistemological insight to show how both reason and madness are constructed such that reason contains madness as its other. In this sense, the writerly – here evidenced in Derrida's textualist writerly approach – intervenes in the readerly's devaluing of the other. In the logic of the readerly, the other to the norm is "wrong" and is cast out as mad, bad, and false; however, Derrida shows that reason itself, by which we judge good/bad, reasonable/mad, or inside/outside is not a simple reflection of "what is" but a complex construction of the real. Further, the idea of "reasonable" is itself based on making the distinction reason/unreason or sane/mad, and thus "madness" is not simply excluded as the other of "reason," but rather is foundational to our construction of reason. When Derrida proposes that "the reign of finite thought can be established only on the basis of the more or less disguised internment, humiliation, fettering and mockery of the madman within us" (61), he is questioning whether reason, with its "structure of exclusion" (42), is in fact other to madness, or whether

rationality itself is, rather, *constituted* by a denial of the irrationality at the base of any attempt to be rational, and thus always self-divided by this (irrational) "trace." His figure of *dissension* – "a self-dividing action, a cleavage and torment interior to meaning *in general*, internal to logos in general, a division within the very act of *sentire*" (38-39) – appears in his theory as an internalization within language of the exclusion of meaning's excess (madness, non-meaning). This outside to language is not historical but existential; it is the infinity of non-meaning, the indetermination of all meaning(s). Through this figure, Derrida locates the division between reason and madness (sense and insensibility, discourse and silence) not outside reason but within Reason itself, such that "As always, the dissension is internal. The exterior (is) the interior" (39). In this writerly view of language, the instability of meaning is produced by a paradoxical internalized exclusion whereby that which exceeds the presumed meanings of everyday communication and discourse constantly undermines these meanings. Reason in general, in this view, as well as all meaning, is constructed out of the epistemological encounter of language with "the infinite and undetermined totality" (56) of non-meaning. Thus, Reason and reasoning are temporary (not infinite but defined) constructed instances of meaning, subject to the instability of dissension, rather than what the readerly posited as unmediated reflections of reality in language and understanding.

For the writerly, through Derridean textualism, the readerly and its mimetic theory of language is shown not simply to be "wrong," but rather to be an incomplete appreciation of the real epistemological situation in which thinking, writing, and speaking occur. In this sense, Derrida offers a timely correction of the readerly that shifts the ground from the readerly's theory of the real and logic of how language relates to the real. Rather than reflecting (and representing) the real in language, Derrida argues, language constructs the real such that all our ideas and institutions are temporary constructions that need to acknowledge the effect of dissension and thus remain open to unpredictable (because

unknowable before the fact, knowable only in the trace) change because non-meaning is infinite and available to the continued series of epistemological encounters by which reason and language construct new meanings.

The writerly intervention in the readerly is “timely” in that Derrida is offering a different way to account for the other in the wake of anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggles. Rather than “bad,” “false,” or “outlaw,” the other is best understood as different from the accepted norm, in that normality is constructed through the internalized exclusion of difference. Thus, at the time Derrida is writing, this writerly recognition of inside/outside as construction rather than reflection is timely in that it opens a space for recognition of the speech of the postcolonial and anti-imperialist other(s), speaking as others, giving other perspectives. The writerly teaches the epistemological and thus ethical imperative of listening to the other in that all meaning is constructed and thus merits recognition. For the textualist writerly, this ethics is a matter of registering the historical as the disrupting traces in language of exclusion and its consequent dissension.

Derrida’s textualist writerly logic thus offers a way to rethink the readerly accusation of the “false emissary.” Those who speak are constructed as speaking “falsely” if they speak from outside the norm and as speaking “truly” if their speech conforms to the norm. When Derrida writes, “if discourse and philosophical communication are to have an intelligible meaning [...they] must carry normality within themselves” (53), he is marking that for speech to be intelligible, that is, for speech to have a recognizable meaning, it must fit within norms by internalizing epistemological norms. However, the true, for the writerly, is not simply that which is constructed in language, but is also that which exceeds “intelligibility,” and thus provides occasion for the events which disrupt the norm as “history.” The true, for the textualist writerly, is that which is open to dissension, not – as for the readerly – that which fits within the limits of the already-known. If, for example, we were to follow Derrida’s logic, then the very concept of “true” emissary is

already a double move that deconstructs the possibility of truth as emerging from within its own articulation. Specifically, in the terms Derrida establishes, an "emissary" is, in the most basic sense, a representative – or, more linguistically, a "sign" – of the people they are selected to represent. In this sense, the multitude of differences within society are reduced to "the people," a sign that erases difference. The "emissary" is thus a sign for the "people," which is itself a sign without referent. Furthermore, like all signs, there is the added slippage that there is no guarantee of the emissary representing accurately what they claim to represent, as an emissary can always vote against the people. The readerly response, as we have seen, is that the emissary is determined to be "true" or "false" based upon whether their actions align with the interests of the people they are (supposed to be) representing. If not, they can be declared "false" and replaced. Yet, a Derridean approach would argue that if we take the readerly perspective and assume that the emissary is the representative of the people, then we would also need to accept that any decision the emissary makes is, in essence, the people's decision. This is because within the readerly logic, the "emissary" is assumed to be the equivalent sign of the absent "people," as it can be substituted for the people when they are not present. The emissary thus constructs the people they are supposed to represent in their actions as emissary, which then also serves as the very basis of their legitimacy. In other words, the "people," which is itself already a reductive abstraction of multiple perspectives, are actually established by the voice of the emissary, rather than the other way around. In this sense, the consequence of the Derridean critique is that neither the "emissary" nor the "people" exist outside of the logic of representation. Each produces the other and serves as the other's basis for existence. The result, then, is not that we should conclude that the "true" emissary is really false, and vice-versa, but that there is no basis upon which any determination can be made about truth or falsity except that all such declarations exist only through a self-producing system of substitutions and exclusions. What we are left with, in short, is a fundamental indeterminacy at the

heart of all representation that threatens to undermine any and all attempt to “close” off the play of meaning.

Derrida’s critique of representation at first appears significantly different from the readerly and its static reduction of the social. Whereas for the readerly, a given representation either conforms to the existing reality or does not, Derrida puts representation into question in that he regards the social real (“the real, factual, existent totality” 56) as a construction of language in its oscillation of “crisis and reawakening” (61) whereby speech both opens up language to “that which exceeds totality” (60), the “infinite and undetermined totality” (56), and at the same time creates the “factual” totality of the social by drawing it out of the sublime totality of excess. The real, for Derrida, is structured by logos, repeatedly (interminably) created out of the material, which he posits as simply matter without determination or priority. On the basis of this writerly notion of the material, Derrida proposes that philosophy can bring to language what is lost in daily discourse. What philosophy brings to language is a “wandering” (59), which is not the use of language for communication but a state of being open to where language leads in following the traces of dissension. Philosophy is free to wander by not seeking after conclusions and their violent closures, but rather by remaining open to the possibilities beyond determinations. This is an ethics that appears to avoid conclusions, through the attempt to be “true” to the essence of the “infinite and undetermined reality” beyond language and factual totality. Matter, for Derrida, is the reality for which language, system, and the social can never fully account. To be ethical is to be true to matter and to the relative limits of speech; to attempt to think and act ethically, for the writerly, is to attempt to maintain “a precomprehension of the infinite and undetermined totality” (56) as the basis for thinking and a check on decision.

The textualist writerly has its effectivity in its critique of mimesis and the readerly assertion of existing norms, and further has an historical basis (not only an existential one) in the need to recognize the (post)colonial and anti-imperialist others. When Derrida writes that “All

our European languages, the languages of everything that has participated, from near or far, in the adventures of Western reason – all this is the immense delegation of the project defined by Foucault under the rubric of the capture or objectification of madness" (35), Derrida seeks to make visible a certain "complicity" with the projects of not only imperialism and colonialism but the "civilizing" rationalism that, in the writerly view, projects them onto the world. The writerly seeks to avoid this complicity by exposing it and by proposing the freedom of "wandering" (59). However, Derrida's critique and the writerly logic it employs ends up repeating the logic of the market, updating its rhetoric. While Derrida sees the real, including the social, as a language construct, the real is more than an effect of language and the social does have a determination and priorities based on the property relations and the class division. The writerly puts this out of view, by collapsing, as Derrida does here, all of Western thought and discourse into one "Order" of "complicity" (35), erasing the division of Europe and the West by class. Through this generalization, the writerly reproduces the bourgeois logic of the social as the market by denying the reality of the property relations and class, and thus – very much like the readerly in effect, if through different language – works to block the development of class-consciousness necessary for the proletariat as a class-for-itself and thus transformation of the social relations of exploitation.

Dissension, the split that Derrida locates within language, is a writerly de-materialization of the real division in the social of the *difference-between* of the classes, installing the writerly emphasis on *difference-within* as a condition of language itself. However, the unstable split in language between meanings is not a transhistorical trace of the epistemological encounter with the infinite; rather, it is the contradiction in language of class logics, that is, the material contradiction of the classes reproduced at the level of language in the relation of the ideological justifications of the bourgeoisie and their counter-logic in the explanatory critique of proletarian theory. The instability in language is not a rupture within epistemology itself but is the contradiction of

conflicting practical consciousnesses – namely, the individualizing consciousness of the ruling class and the class-consciousness of the proletariat. These contradictory consciousnesses – and their contradictory logics: market ideology and the proletarian counter-logic of solidarity – are in conflict not only within language but they are enabled by the class conflict in the social relations of production outside language. The bourgeoisie needs ideological practical consciousness for justifying exploitation and private profit; transformation of these social relations necessitates proletarian class-consciousness and its vital principle of solidarity.

At stake in the writerly correction of the readerly and its maintenance of the erasure of class is the effectivity of critique as a means of intervening in the social. The writerly theory of language and the social, through its immanent critique of the readerly, amounts to a displacement of materialist critique. In reducing language and “the adventure of Western reason” to a “complicity” (with no outside) to deny madness (excess to reason), Derrida also reduces critique to a “denunciation” within the “compromised” Order of this language: “Order is then denounced within order” (35). Because of this, Derrida concludes that language cannot be a means of critique: there is no possibility of knowing outside of language because madness (excess) is “an essential necessity from which no discourse can escape, even the discourse that denounces a mystification or an act of force” (65). Derrida rejects critique – speech that does not simply reflect (the appearances of) “reality,” but enables understanding of the historical social relations that produce “reality” – on the basis of the violence of logocentrism as self-presence. For Derrida, what replaces critique is an ethical openness that “avoids the error” of coming to a (principled) conclusion (59) and acknowledges that it is “impossible” to “situate [meaning] in its total historical form” (44). What is possible and necessary is a movement of oscillation between meaning and non-meaning, through dissension, and the construction of the next epistemological series.

Derrida’s advocacy of an ethical wandering has a contemporary parallel in the figure of the “nomad” developed by Gilles Deleuze, whose

new vitalism updates the writerly logic in a post-textualist rhetoric. As a "corrective" to the textualist emphasis on language as the basis of the social, the new vitalism, like the new materialism, emerges to offer an account for the outside as materiality, especially the materiality of the body and of matter. However, like Derridean textualism, these (new and newer) post-textualist theories are *writerly* theories that update the earlier writerly theories of language, the material, and history as sites of indeterminacy and ethical oscillation and ultimately only update the (bourgeois) class logic of the writerly. What brings about change – history – is not language, but is that that disrupts language from its outside, and for Deleuze this is any force that disrupts the familiar codes and appears in language not as codes but as "proper names," that is, as "designations of intensity that could be inscribed upon a body that could be the earth or a book" (146). The nomadic body is that which "suffers" the intensities or vital, disruptive forces from the outside.

Deleuze's nomad, who "stay[s] in the same place and continually evade[s] the codes of settled people" (149) appears as a means not only for resisting the "codification" and "recodification" of "bureaucracy" (such as the state, and also any form of organization, gathered under the figure of the "despot") but for "decodification." The nomad is thus open to experience "intensities," that is, "a dynamic flux that carries us away even further outside" (146), which is what Deleuze regards Nietzsche as having achieved in his aphoristic writing. Deleuze celebrates Nietzsche's use of the aphorism – language that "transmit[s] something uncodifiable: the notion of style as politics" (143) – as a means for cutting through the familiar codes of the social real and producing experiences of intensity, of "drifting" and "embarkation" or "deterritorialization" (144), which decode the despotic and provide moments for escape. Deleuze proposes that Nietzsche's aphoristic language channels an exterior force that does not have a content but provides a style (a form) for whatever in the current society is cutting through the normalizing codes. The aphoristic has no content but is a style of language ready to transmit any force that is exterior to current bureaucracy and organization. Like Derrida's

“wandering” philosopher, Deleuze’s nomad finds in the ineffable “outside” a means – a style – for ideologically suspending and evading engagement with the contemporary social and political struggles. In this sense, both Deleuze’s nomad and Derrida’s wandering philosophy are figures of the anarchistic rejection of the communist project of taking over the state, which they read as “complicity” with the same failed language games that dooms all social formations, regardless of their class character. Thus, in a similar logic to Derrida’s rejection of critique as a denunciation of order from within Order, Deleuze asks, “what is the purpose of such thought that pretends to express its dynamism within the compass of laws (while rejecting them), of contractual relations (while denying them), and of institutions (while ridiculing them)?” (143). What is needed, for the nomad, is not the emissary’s representations within or relative to the established codes of the ruling despots, but rather a recognition that as “our societies become progressively decodified and unregulated” (143), then the deterritorializing movement away from all forms of organization (re-codification) is more and more a necessity.

Deleuze associates “philosophic discourse” with “the imperial state,” as the code of “sedentary people” (148). More explicitly than Derrida, for whom philosophy separated from the need for communicative discourse is a means for avoiding the violence of logocentrism, Deleuze asserts that “the problem for revolutionaries today is to unite within the purpose of the particular struggle without falling into the despotic and bureaucratic organization of the party or state apparatus” (149). Here, in the same logic as Bakunin and the “Alliance” of anarchists which is rejected by the International as counter-revolutionary, Deleuze equates the collective organization of the proletariat for class struggle with the oppressive violence of totalitarian régimes. For Deleuze, through the anti-readerly logic of the anarchist writerly, any form of organization is “despotic,” and thus to be avoided by taking up the spontaneity of nomadic embarkation, wherever that may lead – outside within. For Deleuze, much like Derrida’s wandering philosophy, “drifting” and “embarkation” direct the social subject as nomad not toward critique of

the despot, but rather into spaces of "escape" from "law, contracts, and institutions" (142). Both of these influential versions of the writerly, then, replicate the logic of the anarchists' call to abstain from political struggles within the state, and thus reproduce the "free" individualism of the market logic of capitalism.

V.

Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* is exemplary of one of the newer post-textualist writerly theories of "new materialism," which develops out of an engagement with several of the theorists to whose work new materialism is most indebted (including Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as well as Bruno Latour and Henri Bergson). Bennett's work is an example of the double move of bourgeois ideologies that distance themselves from outdated theories, working to address the emerging contradictions – in Bennett's case, particularly the ecological destruction rooted in capitalism's profit-driven, anarchic development in the wake of neo-liberal policies aimed at buoying the rate of profit – and at the same time reproduce the class logic of those outdated theories in new rhetorical forms. Bennett, that is, provides an ecological aura to the writerly blackout of class as relations of production.

One of Bennett's claims to provide a materialist theory that breaks from textualism is her critique of what she sees as an over-emphasis by "constructivist" theories on subjectivity and human agency. As opposed to these theories (such as Derridean deconstruction), Bennett argues for the effectivity of such concepts as "thing-power": "The notion of thing-power aims [...] to attend to the it as actant; I will try, impossibly, to name the moment of independence (from subjectivity) possessed by things" (3). Of note here is that for Bennett an "actant" – which, as she notes, "is Bruno Latour's term for a source of action; an actant can be human or not, or, most likely, a combination of both" – has an agency independent of human subjectivity or consciousness (9). Bennett argues that while

human experience [...] includes encounters with an outside that is active, forceful, and (quasi)independent [...] the impulse toward cultural, linguistic or historical constructivism [...] interprets any expression of thing-power as an effect of culture and the play of human powers [and thus] the constructivist response to the world also tends to obscure from view whatever thing-power there may be. (17)

Clearly, part of what constitutes materialism (versus idealism) is its understanding that the material is an “outside” in the sense that it exists independent of human consciousness. However, materialism is also a theory of determination; for materialism, versus idealism, not only is there a material “outside” independent of consciousness, as we have argued, but materialism takes as a foundational principle a theory of consciousness/language *as determined by* that material outside. The new materialism(s) are different from historical materialism in that historical materialism attends to the way material relations structure all aspects of human life, including their relation to nature, objects and language. In contrast, what Bennett puts forward – as we see in her understanding of language (and consciousness) as an “assemblage” that includes but is *not* determined by the material “outside” – is a rejection of historical materialism and its theory of determination and instead, an updated form of idealism cloaked in a materialist rhetoric. This rejection of the materialist theory of determination of language/consciousness by its material outside is, as we have argued, central to the writerly theories and their class logic.

Although she does not explicitly make this claim, Bennett’s theory is also an attempt to break from the textualist writerly in terms of its localism, or “insider-ism” which is (in)famously represented by Derrida’s claim that “There is nothing outside of the text” (*Of Grammatology* 158). The era of globalization, Bennett writes, “call[s] for new conceptualizations of the part-whole relation” (23). Here Bennett is attempting to address the question of the relation of the local

to the global, and thus she works to supersede the parochialism of traditional humanist theories and the monadic subject. Bennett takes up Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "assemblage" as a way to re-conceive "relations." One of the reasons Bennett is drawn to the concept of assemblage, she argues, is the way this concept allows for a re-understanding of agency such that both human "intentions," for example, and nonhuman "bacteria" are considered "actants." Bennett writes, "the efficacy or effectivity to which that term [agency] has traditionally referred becomes distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field, rather than being a capacity localized in a human body or in a collective produced (only) by human efforts" (23). In other words, for Bennett, this concept is useful for the way it works to enable us to "distribute" agency across different kinds of "beings" or "materialities," including both human and nonhuman beings.

Writing, for Bennett, is itself a matter of assemblage. Exemplary of Bennett's theory of language is the following discussion of her own writing in *Vibrant Matter*.

The sentences of this book also emerged from the confederate agency of many striving macro- and microactants: from "my" memories, intentions, contentions, intestinal bacteria, eyeglasses, and blood sugar, as well as from the plastic computer keyboard, the bird song from an open window, or the air or particulates in the room, to name only a few of the participants. What is at work on the page is an animal-vegetable-mineral-sonority cluster with a particular degree and duration of power. What is at work here is what Deleuze and Guattari call an assemblage. (23)

Here, in contrast to the textualist theory according to which the subject is spoken by language rather than the reverse, sentences are the effect of assemblages of "matter." Matter, according to this logic, writes. Matter, for new materialists, includes the objects, things, affects, and here even memories that exist in complex webs, which impact human lives in ways

to which humans have been inattentive, as a result (according to new materialists) of their anthropocentric concern with the human subject who acts in the world and manipulates matter in accordance with reason. New materialism's concern with matter, however, is a displacement of the material relations of class. It is a rejection, in other words, of historical materialism, for which, in the words of Jameson, materialism means "determination by the mode of production" (*Political Unconscious* 46).

From Bennett's perspective, "sentences," her term for writing and thus discourse and language, is a "group" or the product of a "group," which has neither an outside (materiality of relations and history) that structures it, nor a determinative actant or relation:

The effects generated by an assemblage are, rather, emergent properties, emergent in that their ability to make something happen is distinct from the sum of the vital force of each materiality considered alone. Each member and proto-member of the assemblage has a certain vital force, but there is also an effectivity proper to the grouping as such: an agency of the assemblage. And precisely because each member-actant maintains an energetic pulse slightly "off" from that of the assemblage, an assemblage is never a stolid block but an open-ended collective, a non-totalizable sum. An assemblage thus not only has a distinctive history of formation but a finite life span. (24)

Here we see that Bennett emphasizes that the agency of an assemblage is a constitutive relationship agency that is "emergent" in that it is "distinct from the sum of the vital force of each materiality considered alone." However, while Bennett in one instance distances her theory of the materialism of assemblages from the traditional humanist, monadic subject, in the next she updates the notion that the individual (re)emerges (and like everything else) out of nowhere. Each "member actant" is a singularity: it is driven by an "energetic pulse" that differs slightly from

all others, which is what makes the assemblage always open, non-totalizable, which is another way of saying irreducible to class.

We can understand more fully Bennett's new materialist writerly logic and its consequences when we consider how, from this logic, one understands the question of the (class) emissary. If the "emissary" can never speak about (theorize) and represent the class interests of the international working class because, for the readerly, the "emissary" is a foreign outsider who doesn't belong, and for the writerly is an "outsider" who is always the effect of the "inside" and resists all representational closure, then for new materialism's updating of the writerly, the "emissary" can never be extricated from the traces of its local (non)human assemblage. Thus, by this logic, to speak of the class interests that unite workers is to ignore the way in which matter writes. Sentences are written by assemblages whose confederate agency cannot be understood as an effect of labor relations except through a violent act of anthropocentrism that erases matter's voice. Human "speech" becomes the closure here, not of the free play of meaning but of the vibrant meaning of matter. The singularity of free play is rewritten as the event of nonhuman assemblages; meaning is of the moment, in matter. The readerly and the writerly and its new iterations all represent the speecherly as impossible in more or less sophisticated ways, in order to re-instate a theory of language and meaning cut off from the mode of production. In her discussion of "her" "sentences" as assemblages, while Bennett does refer to "macro-" versus "micro-" actants, *macro* and *micro* do not mark a determinative priority, but indicate matters of scale. Presumably, the "intestinal bacteria" she refers to are some of the micro-actants to which Bennett refers. In contrast to a traditional humanist approach that would treat bacteria as a marker of the "nonhuman" as "outside," and human(-ness) as "inside," Bennett makes such distinctions as inside/outside irrelevant, if not a sign of human hubris; bacteria, memories, bird songs and air particulates all work together as actants that have effects in the world and create (non)human meaning. Going even further than textualism's critique of representation,

meaning, here, is not only not representational but it is no longer restricted to the (human) domain of language. Yet, what “matter” says nonetheless betrays an uncanny familiarity to the writerly in its effort to dismantle binaries (like inside/outside) and to sever assemblages from class. For Bennett, the closest that there can be to an emissary of the (nonhuman) outside-within is the human actant who attempts to “refine their senses,” along the lines of the Romantics who “did so in part to be able to better detect *natura naturans*” (117). This attempt to “discern” (120) the “signaling” (117) of the nonhuman other is an ethical project of appreciation, aimed at raising awareness of “the violently reckless ways” of human consumption and production (113), but a project that, Bennett admits, “will not solve the problem of human exploitation or oppression” (13).

We see this blurring of inside/outside and the complete disappearance of material relations in her chapter on “Edible Matter.” Here, she develops a “model of eating” in which “Eating appears as a series of mutual transformations in which the border between inside and outside becomes blurry: my meal is and is not mine; you both are and are not what you eat” (49). In positing the inside/outside division as a division between human and non-human, Bennett displaces the inside/outside division between language or, more broadly, the ideological-political superstructure, and the economic base in the social relations of production. What Bennett ignores in her theory of eating is that eating is not only the “transformation” of metabolism, but is also consumption, which always occurs within relations of production. There is, in other words, a material *outside* to her “outside.” Moreover, by blurring the boundary between (what she conceives of as) inside and outside, like the other forms of the writerly, she enables positing the history of language/ideas as having its own immanent law of motion autonomous from the capitalist relations of production, the profit motive embedded within those relations, and the class struggles over the socially produced surplus that is privately appropriated by capital. This law of motion, as we demonstrate below, is, in a different rhetoric, the “law” of excess within.

Although each member actant has its own "energetic pulse" that is slightly different from the others, it exists and acts only as part of the assemblage, and thus is a moment of Derridean *différance*, an effect that has no content but its relations, its difference from its others. Moreover, assemblages are always "ad hoc" and have a "finite existence," which is to say that history – from the logic of assemblages, which are always "ad hoc" (23), as in all writerly theories – is contingent and based on an excessive force of the other within. For Derrida, this excess is "madness" within reason; for Bennett, it is an "energetic pulse" of individual actants that is always maintained and always "slightly off" from that of the assemblage as a non-totalizable whole. The contingent nature of the assemblage of actants is especially evident in another figure Bennett invokes: "the Deleuzian 'quasi-causal operator,'" which "by virtue of its particular location in an assemblage and the fortuity of being in the right place at the right time, makes the difference, makes things happen, becomes the decisive force catalyzing an event" (9). Which actant will become an operator in any given instance is unknowable in advance and can be difficult to discern even after the fact, as Bennett emphasizes in her reading of the 2003 US-Canadian blackout.

The electric grid is, for Bennett, a good example of a powerful, heterogeneous assemblage and the dynamics of distributive agency. Bennett draws on the work of the U.S.-Canada Power Outage Task Force and its report on the blackout to theorize the blackout and how it illuminates the grid as an assemblage. Bennett argues that the task force "insist[ed] on a variety of agential loci" including "electricity," the "power plants," "transmission wires," "a brush fire in Ohio," "Enron FirstEnergy and other energy trading companies," "consumers," and "the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission" (26). Not surprisingly, given her project of providing a "corrective" to the erasure or minimizing of the role of nonhuman "actants," Bennett starts her analysis of the blackout with a discussion of "electricity."

Especially significant to Bennett's discussion of electricity is the distinction between active and reactive power. Bennett explains that when

voltage and current are in sync, electricity is active power, which powers smaller appliances, and when these waves are out of sync, it is reactive power, required for powering larger electric motors. Reactive power is the force that maintains voltage in a system, as it is “vital to the active power that accompanies it” (26). Bennett notes that the “production of reactive power *reduces* the amount of salable [active] power produced” (27). According to Bennett, “companies lack the financial incentive to do so” and “thus [it] came in short supply” (27). In actuality, Bennett is pointing out that producing reactive power is a cost of production and thus there is a financial incentive for energy producers not to have to produce it. Bennett, however, sees the problem not primarily as a matter of the role of the profit-motive in energy markets, but rather as a matter of the tragedy of the commons, Garret Hardin’s term for how common ownership means no one is responsible. This rhetorical move – making the grid into a commons and disappearing private property – naturalizes the anarchy of capitalism as the inevitable tragedy of the commons, and turns the market relations into transhistorical (human) nature. To naturalize the anarchy of capitalism and therefore posit the effects of the drive for profits in the context of competition among capitalists renders collective planning and decision a virtual impossibility.

Further, Bennett characterizes the blackout as a matter of “unintended consequences” of all the various actants – from the nature of electricity to the role of deregulation – which Bennett reads through what she calls a materialist vocabulary in terms of Latour’s notion of “slight surprise of action” (qtd Bennett 27). This idea emphasizes the apparent spontaneity of events such as the blackout (and indeed of the functioning of the electrical grid altogether). In this view, electricity is an actant that “sometimes goes where we send it, and sometimes it chooses its path on the spot” (28). Through these moves, Bennett both rewrites the social relations between energy producers as certain natural facts, erasing the profit motive, and she makes electricity into an unpredictable actant (if not an operator), which furthers the contingency of effects (aleatory causality). Here we see that while Bennett claims to provide a global theory that

relates the local, individual, or regional to the totality, she actually de-links local, individual issues and problems from the englobing social relations of production. For instance, the deregulation she refers to was neoliberal deregulation of the energy market that was necessary from the perspective of capital in its attempts to combat the falling rate of profit, which is a structural limit of capital.

If electricity is as unpredictable as Bennett indicates it is, then it is not clear from her explanation why there are not blackouts all the time, and indeed in a completely random distribution. In fact, blackouts occur only under certain circumstances, usually predictable and preventable, and when they do occur, they are not without knowable cause and they are certainly not at random. For example, in the contemporary moment, power blackouts are often one of the effects of hurricanes. Both Texas and Puerto Rico suffered blackouts during the 2017 hurricane season; however, while Texas had the infrastructure and other resources needed to repair the grid and restore power, Puerto Rico did not and as a result suffered its blackout longer and more deeply. The difference between the aftermath of the Texas and Puerto Rico blackouts is not unpredictable and random, but is the effect of definite social relations of production for profit. The anarchy of the market is not random, but follows the dictates of capital, producing contradictions that can be known and explained in terms of causes of greater and lesser determination. Knowledge of these determinations is a condition for their transformation; however, such knowledge is precisely what is put out of view by the post-textualist writerly theory advanced by Bennett. Electricity, the grid, and the blackout function in this theory as figures of "a world that is not predetermined but open, a land of opportunity for creativity, surprise, and choice" (90). The consequences of this writerly logic are the same as those of the readerly: in effect, they function to reproduce the boundaries of the knowable and the sayable. What is possible in the way of meeting needs within the anarchic structures of capitalism is not only taken as natural but as something to be celebrated.

Bennett takes up vital materialism “as an affirmation of free activity” (90), but it is the freedom of the ruling class (market freedom), not the freedom from necessity. By this logic, in place of explanation and transformation, Bennett reproduces a similar consciousness to that celebrated by Derrida’s philosophical wandering: not reaching after explanations or seeking definite cause, but to “try to linger in those moments [...] fascinated by objects” and feeling a “sense of strange and incomplete commonality with the out-side” (17). This “lingering” is an opportunity to fall back into “discredited philosophies” (18), pre-dating the development of science and social science: to appreciate such lingering is a practice of the subject for whom freedom from necessity is already achieved.

VI.

Unlike the writerly figures of lingering, wandering, and the nomad, which dematerialize language, disconnecting it from material relations, the speecherly emissary locates language in relation to the material relations. As Marx and Engels emphasize in *The German Ideology*, “it is quite immaterial what consciousness starts to do on its own [...] because] the *division of labour* implies the possibility, nay the fact that intellectual and material activity – enjoyment and labour, production and consumption – devolve on different individuals” (45). When consciousness (thought) “wanders” or “lingers” as if “on its own,” it is not actually separated from the social relations that make such thinking possible; rather, it is manifesting the social contradiction, such that in an historical era when workers are compelled to labor and struggle in conditions of necessity, the emissaries of the bourgeois separate themselves from workers and allow their thought to “wander” and “linger” as if freedom from necessity is realized – not just temporarily secured for the few, but historically realized for all. Through idealized representations of the conditions of consciousness, the writerly romanticizes “limitlessness” and, in doing so, ideologically converts capital’s need to cross boundaries as part of intra-class competition into the freedom (liberty) of all individuals. But market freedom (liberty) is not identical to emancipation. To the contrary: freedom *within* the market and class relations is not freedom *from* class

necessity. The relative freedom of the owning class is opposed to and dependent upon the structural necessity of the laboring class to sell its labor-power on the market; the owning class is free to exploit, and indeed must exploit labor to realize profit, whereas the laboring class is not free from exploitation. The transformation of the relations of production is needed because the structure of the working-day shapes freedom on the market and the profit-motive structures the working-day. Thus, the transformation of the working-day, which requires transformation of the social relations, is necessary to realize a new social real in which the working class is emancipated from class relations and realizes freedom from necessity.

From the perspective of the textualist writerly, this speakerly logic of materialism and such relational concepts as *difference-between* and *difference-within* are understood as epistemological constructions, with no more epistemological value than any other thinking. Materialism, which seeks to develop the explanatory concepts needed for grasping the real, differs in a fundamental way from the idealist philosophy of what can be called "matterism," such as that expressed by Derrida and other writerly thinkers. Matterism, or the idealism of matter, denies the existence of social relations and attributes "materiality" to language (as in the textualism of Derrida) or to objects, forces, and things (as in the vitalism of Deleuze, for example, the new materialism of Bennett and others, and to an extent in the "matter" of non-meaning in Derrida's textualism). Matterism is an idealism in that it denies the existence of difference-between of class relations and amplifies the singularities of "individuals" (difference-within) such that sheer difference exceeds conceptuality. From the perspective of the writerly, Derrida cannot explain why "a certain liberation of madness has gotten underway" (38). He takes the existence of Foucault's project as evidence that such a liberation has begun, and his own project is to further this liberation. This apparent "liberation," however, noted by Derrida at the end of the post-war boom in the advanced capitalist economies, is a transcoding of the class relations of capitalism. That is, the appearance of "limitlessness" as liberty is an ideological representation of the necessity, and increasingly within contemporary global capitalism, the ability of capital to move across

national and cultural boundaries in order to find new markets and labor forces for exploitation. This freedom of capital to cross boundaries is a structural necessity for the capitalist class in its efforts to buoy the falling rate of profit, an inevitability of the market and of the intra-class competition between capitalists. However, the liberty of capital is *not* freedom for the working class, in that the free market is not a condition of freedom for workers but is the basis for their intra-class competition and is structured by the working-day. That is, the ratio of surplus labor to necessary labor and the way in which this ratio – the level of exploitation of workers – determines the ability of workers to access the wealth that they produce through their labor as well as shaping, in totalizing ways, the social relations by this opposition of surplus labor to necessary labor and the profit motive underlying this opposition.

In the speecherly notion of the emissary as a class emissary – the proletarian citizen-philosopher who does not separate from the social struggles – the difference of class and the concept of solidarity are advanced instances of the “practical consciousness” that explains the social contradictions that the various forms of the writerly are set on denying, containing, and disappearing. For the speecherly, the writerly decision to be open to indecision is a decision to take the side of the existing dominant order of decision – not to submit to some grand universal but rather to accept the existing historical order of decision. This is precisely what capital needs from the advanced theoreticians. Like those that follow from it, Derrida’s writerly theory of language and the social real inverts the actual historical structure of society such that “the real, factual, existent totality” includes the social as a language-effect, bringing the social real inside language and making it into the space of representation, an inside determined by the outside, which for the writerly is simply matter. This matterism of the writerly displaces causal explanation with a vision of history as an oscillating series (“crisis and reawakening”) of disconnected events and renders the social as a field of disparate individuals with uncertain connections. The boundary between undefined matter and representation, outside and inside, is blurred, such that the division between them appears

as the division within, and thus the dissension in language displaces the possibility of real, organized, certain dissent and struggle within the social real to transform this social real.

The writerly's alibi of a debilitating denialism about representation is countered for the speakerly by critique of the social and by taking up theory as praxis – that is, the *use-value* of concepts is found in actual practice by explaining the real. The speakerly articulates the aim of the International – *revolution* – which has its praxical basis in what Marx identifies as the core principle of the International: *solidarity*:

Citizens, let us bear in mind this fundamental principle of the International: solidarity! It is by establishing this life-giving principle on a reliable base among all the workers in all the countries that we shall achieve the great aim which we pursue. (256)

The language of Marx's speech here, like all his speeches, emboldens and energizes his listeners not only because it is decisive and sharp but because he brings to bear in these (often short) pieces the power of his accumulated theoretical knowledge developed through painstaking work and praxis over decades. This is not simply, in other words, a rousing call to action, but a call to praxis. As Marx argues throughout his writings and speeches, revolution – social transformation based on the end of capitalist private property (class) relations – is both necessary and possible because capitalism, as a mode of production, is a *contradictory* totality. The fundamental contradiction of capitalism, like other modes of production that preceded it, is the contradiction between its forces of production and its relations of production (Preface 263-64). The aim of the International is to bring about the transformation of the private property (class) relations of capitalism and establish a new society based on relations of production that can and will prioritize production for meeting historically developed and developing needs. Everything else that Marx, as a revolutionary, says and does, follows from this aim.

The speakerly logic takes up the material as based on real premises, which is consequential for understanding and intervening in history. For the speakerly, history is transformable because the relations that shape

and determine it are social relations, available to explanatory theory. However, for the writerly, history is an unpredictable and volatile tableau of “events” cast up by the undifferentiated infinitude of non-meaning matter. By making language into that which constitutes the social, Derrida reverses the actual determination of language by the social relations, a reversal that makes all decisions appear arbitrary and all reasoning appear as interchangeable and equivalent in the marketplace of ideas. This reversal is part of an inverted ideological representation of language, consciousness, and their social determination by the class relations. The idea that decisions are arbitrary and that no one argument or theory more effectively explains reality than any other is an idea in service to the reigning social power. When Derrida claims that language proceeds through an essential operation of exclusion of the infinite, he thereby attributes not only language but the factual real it produces to a process beyond social determination and priority, effectually making the existing social relations (which are relations of determination and priority) into an apparently arbitrary but also an essentially universal and thus unchangeable situation. Bennett, in the preface to *Vibrant Matter*, claims that she is offering a complementary theory to historical materialism and its procedures of “demystification”; however, what Bennett actually proposes, under the rationale that “there is also public value in following the scent of the nonhuman” (xiii), is in fact an opposing, anti-dialectical theory of the material that erases class and all other structures of relations. In its various iterations, the writerly theory is an exemplary instance of what Marx calls “the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships that make one class the ruling one; therefore the ideas of its dominance” (*German Ideology* 59). By making decision and the knowledge that enables decision into arbitrary matters, the writerly produces an ethics of indecision and an ideological theory that makes all social organization, regardless of historical conditions and material relations, seem “despotic” and turns social transformation into an open impossibility.

The difference of the speakerly lies in the organizing principle and the means of decision. The aim of the International is the aim of the speakerly: to develop class-consciousness so that the struggles to defend workers' interests and to support and extend workers' struggles for social transformation are supported by the International and its members. Marx emphasizes that, along with the decisions at The Hague to centralize the decision-making process in the General Council and to relocate the general council to the US, where workers were emigrating and becoming more concentrated, the decision to encourage and enable workers to engage in politics is based on the recognition that workers everywhere are those who shall "one day [...] have to seize political supremacy to establish the new organization of labour [...] and] overthrow the old policy which supports the old institutions" (255). That is, the questions of organization (centralization, coordination, etc.) and political engagement are *praxical* questions, not writerly ones, in that if the workers are going to prepare for and make possible the transformation of the social real, then they need to be engaged in the contemporary political struggles within the existing social relations and thus in the efforts to extend these struggles outward toward the formation of a new social real.

Works Cited

- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Trans. Richard Miller. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1974.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Nomad Thought." *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*. Ed. David B. Allison. New York: Dell Publishing, 1977. 142-149.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.
- . *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014.

- Marx, Karl. *Capital*. Vol.1. *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 35. New York: International Publishers, 1975.
- . “Letter to Arnold Ruge.” September 1843. *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 3. New York: International Publishers, 1975. 141-145.
- . “On the Hague Congress.” *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 23. New York: International Publishers, 1976. 254-256.
- . *The Poverty of Philosophy*. *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 6. New York: International Publishers, 1976. 105-212.
- . Preface. *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 29. New York: International Publishers, 1987. 261-265.
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. “The Alliance of Socialist Democracy and the International Working Men’s Association.” *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 23. New York: International Publishers, 1976. 454-580.
- . “Fictitious Splits in the International.” *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 23. New York: International Publishers, 1976. 79-123.
- . *The German Ideology*. *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 5. New York: International Publishers, 1976. 19-539.
- . *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*. *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Works*. Vol. 6. New York: International Publishers, 1976. 477-519.

