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Jacques Derrida's Marxism: An Althusserian Analysis

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Abstract

The on-going research study tends to conduct the textual analysis of Spectres of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International (1994) by Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) to discuss and trace the impact of Marxism on him and in turns his responses towards it. He defended Marxism against world capitalism in the post-Cold War "New World Order" after the fall of Communism in 1989. He made a great contribution to the development of Marxist discourse from a deconstructive perspective. Therefore, the research paper focuses on the question, how did Derrida come under the influence of Marxism in his later career? It is mostly concerned with the critical responses of Derrida's contemporary Marxist critics to Derridean deconstruction in general and to the publication of the book cited-above in particular as well as Derrida's responses to them. In this way, the study attempts to explore the ways in which Marxism and deconstruction encounters and influences each other. Though it mainly concentrates on Derrida's text on Marx, his other works also come under discussion. Althusserian Marxist hermeneutics has been employed as the theoretical and analytical framework in this textual study.

Keywords: Return to Marx / Return of Marx, Althusserianism, Otherness, Neo-liberalism, Teleology, Neo-Hegelianism

Introduction

Derrida is the eminent Algerian-based French philosopher who originated the theory of deconstruction. Unlike his contemporary post-structuralist philosophers, his positions departed from Louis Althusser, Pierre

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Macherey, Michael Hardt, and many others in the 1960s. In his writings, no direct affiliation of French Communist Party (PCF) and the political implications of deconstruction were evident. His works have been concerned with deconstructive analysis of language, writing, meaning, and difference. Derrida himself confesses, "In *Spectres of Marx*, as in all of my texts of at least the past twenty-five years, all my argumentation has been everywhere determined and overdetermined by a concern to take into account the performative dimension (not only of language in the narrow sense, but also of what I call the trace and writing)".¹ However, his later works have been concerned with Marxism and the political implications of deconstruction. Derrida maintained a noted silence on Marx until the 1990s. The historical roots of his silence about Marx would merit in itself, starting with what is now quite a complex job of deciphering the third of the interviews published in *Positions* (1981). In these interviews, responding to the interviewers Jean-Louis Houdebine and Guy Scarpetta, Derrida suggests that his reading of Marx "at least, still to come".²

He also hints,

Thus, I will have to analyse what I consider heterogeneity, conceptualising both its necessity and the rules for deciphering it; and do so by taking into account the decisive progress simultaneously accomplished by Althusser and those following him. All this poses many questions, and today I could tell you nothing not already legible in the lacunae or notes to which you alluded, at least for anyone who wishes to pursue their consequences.³

More importantly, Marxism had come to terms with post-structuralism in the 1960s with the works of Lucien Goldmann, Althusser, Macherey and many others. In this way, these Marxist intellectuals had dialogued with post-structuralist thoughts to harmonise Marxism within the framework of post-structural discourses. The French Marxist Althusser revisited Karl Marx's *The German Ideology* in the light of Structuralism of Ferdinand de

¹ J. Derrida, E. Eagleton, F. Jameson, A. Negri et al., *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Derrida's Spectres of Marx*, Ed. Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 1999), 224.

² J. Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 62.

³ *Ibid*, 64.

Saussure, semiology, Lacanian psychoanalysis and the later work of Marx through a symptomatic reading of Marx.⁴ Macherey developed Althusser's Post-structuralist Marxist theory in his book *A Theory of Literary Production (original in French 1966)* and employed it to the study of art and literature⁵. This thread continues in the writings of Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, Catherine Belsey and many others. If Marxists have dialogued with post-structuralist thought, then the traffic has not been all one-way. In 1968, Michel Foucault, Slavoj Žižek and many other post-structuralist philosophers turned to Marxism and interpreted it within the post-modernist framework. In this way, they contributed to the development of Marxism as well as post-modernism. In this situation, deconstruction has originated and developed its theoretical origins.

In "The Spectre's Smile," Negri writes,

More specifically the genesis of deconstruction seems to go back to a mutual exchange with Althusser's work, in his 'lecture symptomale' and in his structural interpretation of the invasiveness of state ideological apparatuses, from Raiding 'Capital to his study *Sur la reproduction*. (It is interesting to note that in his later writings, Althusser repeats his conviction that Derrida is amongst the greatest philosophers of our time).⁶

Furthermore, the collapse of the Soviet Union and its bloc in 1989 discredited Marxism and the momentous events following the fall of the Berlin Wall promoted the triumphant claims by Francis Fukuyama, the Japanese-origin American intellectual of neo-liberalism, that history, understood by Friedrich Hegel as the march of spirit towards a final state of perfection, had now indeed, reached its promised end. Capitalism had prevailed as an apotheosis of human freedom and Marxism was now dead and buried. In his book *The End of History and the Last Man (1991)*, Fukuyama claims that with the Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, the world has acquired a capitalist perfection that forever consigns Marxism to

⁴ Louis Althusser, "Freud and Lacan", *New Left Review* 1, no.55 (May – June 1969).

⁵ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

⁶ Antonio Negri, "The Spectre's Smile," in J. Derrida, E. Eagleton, F. Jameson, *Ghostly Demarcations*, 5.

the dustbin of history.⁷ On this point, Derrida came forward to defend Marxism and delivered his keynote lecture "Spectres of Marx" at an International Marx Conference titled, "Whither Marxism? Global Crisis in International Perspective" with his famous call for a return to Marx. The conference was organised by the intellectuals of the "Centre for Ideas and Society" at the University of California, Riverside in two sessions. It lasted from April 22 to 24, 1993.

In the "Introduction" to an anthology of the essays entitled, *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium of Jacques Derrida's Spectres of Marx (1999)*, Michael Sprinker, the editor of the anthology, sheds light on the importance of the conference. He states, "The conference title could not but evoke another, homonymic sense of Marxism's historical fate ('wither Marxism'), and it was mounted at a moment (April 1993) when the future of Marxism seemed bleaker than at any time since the defeat of the Second German Revolution in 1923".⁸

Eventually, a much-expanded French version of the original lecture published in 1993 and its English translation in *New Left Review*, 205 (May/June 1994) entitled, *Spectres of Marx*, has been eagerly awaited by a broad spectrum of the Leftist and Marxist intellectuals. Reviewing the book Alain Guillerme says, "We can thank Derrida for having written such a book during a period of rottenness".⁹

Similarly, Eagleton writes in "Marxism without Marxism," "It was perhaps this need to engage the political dimension more directly which inspired Jacques Derrida to fulfil a long-deferred promise and address the question of Marxism".¹⁰ The question of Derrida's long-awaited political affiliation with Marxism has been confirmed with the publication of *Spectres of Marx*, which declares that deconstruction is a kind of radicalised Marxism. This declaration pulled the rug from under those deconstructionists who considered Marxism to be a dead letter and shied away from the rhetoric of commitment as well as those Marxist critics of deconstruction who regarded Derrida's refusal as conclusive proof of his politics. Tom Lewis also expresses the similar views in "The Politics of 'Hauntology' in Derrida's

⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Free Press, 1992).

⁸ Michael Sprinker, "Introduction", quoted in J. Derrida et al, *Ghostly Demarcations*, 1.

⁹ A. Guillerme, book review in *L'Homme et la Société*, No. 111-12 (Jan-June 1994).

¹⁰ T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (London: Blackwell, 1996), 199.

Spectres of Marx.” He comments, “For many intellectuals and scholar-activists, the publication of Jacques Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (SM) ended a long wait for Derrida's formal statement on the relation between deconstruction and Marxism”.¹¹

Finally, this book dissipates Derrida's silence about Marx and Marxism. It was illustrated at the 1995 Applied Conference in Luton, where in a general discussion with Derrida, an irritated participant asked what he really thought about Marx? Derrida politely pointed to *Spectres of Marx*, the angry participant replied that he had read that but wanted to know what Derrida really thought about Marx.¹² Jean-Michel writes, “This was not a belated reconciliation with Marxism but rather the assertion that a concern with social justice had always been at the heart of deconstruction. The confrontation with Marx initiated the most insistent themes of the later writings, like mourning, justice, ethics, religion. “Derrida's last decade saw a spectacular turn to the ethical, the political, and the religious”.¹³

Therefore, *Spectres of Marx* rages a great debate on the relationship between Marxism and deconstruction that marks a major turning point in Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction in the post 1989 era. It is a comprehensive attempt to fill the theoretical gap between Marxism and deconstruction. In doing so, Derrida opens up an innovative debate on Marxism from a deconstructive perspective, arguing that Marxism is still very "urgent" for "today" after a century.

In this manner, he represents a comprehensive attempt to tease out a Marxist lineage for deconstruction. He finds in Marx's writing deconstructive insights of being and time that opens up to the hope of universal justice in an unknown future. He gives a new dimension to theory and practice. Macherey writes in “Marx Dematerialised, or the Spirit of Derrida,” “Derrida's book encourages a rereading of Marx's work which

¹¹ T. Lewis, “The Politics of 'Hauntology' in Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*, *Rethinking Marxism* 9, No.3 (1996): 19-39.

¹² G. Bennington, “Derrida and Politics”, in Tom Cohen (ed.), *Jacques Derrida and Humanities: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 210.

¹³ J. Michel, “What Will Be the True Legacy of Jacques Derrida?”, in *Forum: The Legacy of Jacques Derrida*, by Emily Apter, Houston A. Baker, Jr., Seyla Benhabib, et al., 120, No. 2 (March, 2005): 486. Visit at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25486172>.

leads, on the levels of both theory and practice, to a free reappropriation of Marx's 'inheritance'.¹⁴

Actually, in *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida criticises not just Fukuyama's book but also Hegel's teleological conception of history. Teleology derives from the Greek telos (end or purpose) and logos holds that there is an inherent purpose or final cause for all that exists. Time moves inexorably forward towards a final fullness and self-identity of meaning. In this respect, Derrida counters that, like Sigmund Freud's theory of the return of the repressed, the dead past often returns to haunt the present. This haunting, far from representing the apparition of a ghost that must be exorcised and laid to rest, divides the present from itself in a way that opens up the possibility of radical otherness, an otherness that takes the hopeful form of unknowable possibilities for future justice. The ghost addresses us from the position of otherness, and we are forced to respond to its call. However, Derrida's book under investigation is remarkable in many respects. It is a timely work, which appears on the intellectual scenario when many Marxists are reluctant to call themselves Marxists. It opens up new horizon of Marxism in which lies many possibilities of its further development. Derrida calls his deconstructive Marxism as an open Marxism that is contrary to the Hegelian version of a deterministic formulation, based upon the logocentric thinking of base/ superstructure of society.

Literature review

Marxist critics of *Spectres of Marx* such as Aijaz Ahmad, Gayatri Spivak, Macherey, Alex Callinicos, Laclau, and Lewis seek to designate their commitment to Marxism by attacking it and they have criticised Derrida's deconstructive interpretation of Marxism. They regard Derridean deconstruction as a pernicious depoliticizing influence that leads the working-class to nihilist and sceptical positions in which there is no difference between right and wrong.

In this regard, Ahmad applauds Derrida's refusal of neo-liberal policies of international capitalism, his reconciliation with Marxism and "negation of

¹⁴ P. Macherey, "Marx Dematerialised, or the Spirit of Derrida," *A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society* 8, Issue 4 (1995): 17.

class-politics.” He writes in a puzzled tone that this is a kind of “funeral oration” which is homage to “a person not just an analysis of the texts”.¹⁵

Spivak also complains, “The ghost of Marx that Derrida is most haunted by returns to the bosom of Abraham, shorn of all specificity, mark of a messianism without content, carrier of merely the structure of a promise which cancels the difference between democracy and Marxism”.¹⁶

Macherey also expresses the similar views.¹⁷ Whereas Callinicos argues, “Without the substance of Marxism as well as its spirit, Derrida’s ‘ethical turn’ is likely to amount to little more than an avowal of left liberalism, and a rather weak one at that”.¹⁸

Similarly, Kate Soper opines, “When, in short, does working merely in the spirit of Marx cease to be Marxist and become, say, left liberalism, or the “radical democracy” of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who make no bones about describing themselves as “post Marxist”.¹⁹

Nancy Fraser has similar opinion, “deliberately not produced a discourse against revolution or Marxism in order to avoid contributing to the ‘anti-Marxist concert’ of the circa 1968 period...So, for the sake of the traditional leftist aim of not splitting the left, Derrida...refrained from a frontal attack while marking a series of ‘virtual differences or divergences’ from the revolutionary project”.²⁰

More measured and perceptive assessments are offered by Laclau (1995) and Callinicos (1996), the latter from a Marxist perspective. Because he had said so little on the subject prior to *Spectres of Marx*, the literature on Derrida and Marx focuses on this book.

¹⁵ A. Ahmad, "Reconciling Derrida: Spectres of Marx and Deconstructive Politics", in *New Left Review* 208 (November/December, 1994): 88-106.

¹⁶ G. C. Spivak, "Ghost-writing", in *Diacritics* 25, no.2 (1995): 66.

¹⁷ P. Macherey, "Remarx: Derrida's Marx", trans. T. Stolze, in *Rethinking Marxism* 8, no.4 (1995): 24.

¹⁸ A. Callinicos, "Messianic Ruminations: Derrida, Stirner and Marx", in *Radical Philosophy* 75 (January/February 1996): 41.

¹⁹ K. Soper, "Spectres of Derrida: The limits of hauntology", in *Radical Philosophy* 75 (January/February 1996): 28.

²⁰ N. Fraser, "The French Derrideans: Politicizing Deconstruction or Deconstructing the Political?", in *New German Critique* 33 (1984): 133 - 134.

Most importantly, *Ghostly Demarcations* provides wide-ranging and detailed Marxist critiques of Derrida's book on Marx and Derrida's response to them in which nine critics, including Macherey, Eagleton, Ahmad, Negri and others contribute. It has elicited responses from some of the most prominent Marxists and post-Marxists, Jameson (1995), Spivak (1995), Macherey (1995), Ahmad (1994), and Laclau (1995) among them.

Much of these reviews has stemmed from different responses, some vociferous and vigorous, some stimulating and some misguided responses to Derrida's text, together with Derrida's characteristically patient and meticulous reply to these reviews, an essay titled 'Marx & Sons.' Some Marxists treat the subject sympathetically, some dismissively and the others very carefully. In "Spirits Armed and Unarmed: Derrida's Spectres of Marx," Warren Montag regards that Derrida's defence of Marx against Marx.

He writes, "Such is Derrida's surprising defence of Marx (or at least his prolegomenon to any possible defence of Marx), a defence of Marx against himself, against his intransigent critique of every apparition of spirit and of every spiritualism in philosophy".²¹

Likewise, Eagleton joins the discussion. He states,

Derrida has now taken Marxism on board, or at least dragged it halfway up the gangplank, because he is properly enraged by liberal-capitalist complacency, but there is also something unavoidably opportunist about his political pact, which wants to exploit Marxism as critique, dissent, conveniently belabouring instrument, but is far less willing to engage with its positivity. What he wants, in effect, is Marxism without Marxism, which is to say a Marxism on his own coolly appropriative terms.²²

Furthermore, Eagleton continues to criticise Derrida's indifference, to historical materialism. He states,

²¹ W. Montag, "Spirits Armed and Unarmed: Derrida's Spectres of Marx," in Derrida et al, *A Symposium on Derrida's Spectres of Marx*, 71.

²² T. Eagleton, in Derrida *Ibid*, 86.

Derrida's indifference to almost all of the actual historical or theoretical manifestations of Marxism is a kind of empty transcendence – a typically deconstructive trumping of some alternative position which leaves one's own case invulnerable only in proportion to its contentedness.²³

Similarly, Lewis claims that deconstruction has adopted the reformist version of socialism and Derrida reconfigures Marxism around the ethical demands of hospitability. He claims that deconstruction has neglected the Marxist conception of class-struggle and mode of production.

He states, “Derrida suggests a reformist road to socialism precisely at the end of a period in which the political and moral hollowness of traditional social democracy could not be in greater evidence”.²⁴

The accusation comes from Lewis, who accuses Derrida to dispel ‘some post-structuralist myths about the working class today’.²⁵ In “Reconciling Derrida: 'Spectres of Marx' and Deconstructive Politics,”

Ahmad joins the discussion. He levels an objection against Derrida,

The discussion would have been more fruitful had he offered reflections on the political and philosophical adjacencies between Fukuyama's end-of-history argument and the announcements of the end of all metanarratives that one finds routinely in the work of so many deconstructionists.²⁶

Consequently, the Marxist critics are not entirely right in claiming that Derridean deconstruction is contrary to Marxism because they do not take seriously Derrida's sincere attempts to transform the traditional commonsensical ideas of class-solidarity and Hegelian Marxism. Unfortunately, the essays by Eagleton, Ahmad, and Lewis are much weaker. They often seem to be little more than crude attempts to score points

²³ Ibid, 87.

²⁴ T. Lewis, *The Politics of 'Hauntology'*, 158.

²⁵ Ibid, 149.

²⁶ A. Ahmad, “Reconciling Derrida”, 89-90.

against postmodernism/ post-structuralism rather than considered attempts to deal with any of the issues raised by the book.

Consequently, Derrida scatters about his own apotropaic defences, declaring early on in his book,

If today it were possible to produce a new reading of Marx that would be necessary in order to 'understand and transform' [modern economics, geopolitics, literature and science], I would subscribe to it with open arms. If I could participate in such a project, I would do so with no reservations. Is it, moreover, certain that I am doing none of that now? . . . I state that I consider myself Marxist to the extent that I think that Marx's text is not an immobile given, and that we must continue to work, etc.²⁷

On the contrary, responding to his Marxist critics in *Marx & Sons*, Derrida also defends his theoretical position against the critiques of Marxists.

He states, "Therefore, as a hypothesis or postulate: about what an inheritance in general can and must be, namely, necessarily faithful and unfaithful, unfaithful out of faithfulness. This book is a book about inheritance, though it should not be confined to the 'sons of Marx'".²⁸

He further states, "To whom is 'Marxism' supposed to belong? Is it still the private preserve or personal property of those who claim or proclaim that they are 'Marxists'?"²⁹

Derrida responds Ahmad, "This is obvious when he criticises me, but also when, on the strength of a good many points of agreement that I shall not consider, he says that he 'accepts' what I say 'with a sense of comradeship'. This communitarian concern for familial reappropriation, this jealous claim to 'proprietaryity', here as in other domains, is the very subject of my work: in this book and, for thirty years now, in everything Ahmad calls, in a

²⁷ J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 220-221.

²⁸ J. Derrida, E. Egleton, 219.

²⁹ Ibid, 222.

phrase I shall let him assume the responsibility for, 'his [my] deconstruction'".³⁰

In this way, commenting on Spivak's criticism of *Spectres of Marx*, he also states,

What will never cease to amaze me about the jealous possessiveness of so many Marxists, and what amazes me even more in this instance, is not only what is always a bit comic about a property claim, and comic in a way that is even more theatrical when what is involved is an inheritance, a textual inheritance, and, still more pathetic, the appropriation of an inheritance named 'Marx'! No, what I always wonder, and even more in this instance, is where the author thinks the presumptive property deeds are.³¹

Finally, Derrida confesses his insensitivity of camaraderie.³² In "Marx's Purloined Letter," Jameson points out that use-value for Marx is not a lost purity; the way things once were before contamination by the market, when objects were valued purely for their use. For there was fetishism in the past as well, though of a more directly religious or political nature. "Use value lies thus also in the future, before us and not behind us".³³ This objection is correct as far as it goes: Derrida, like Lyotard, would be wrong to think that Marx looks back in nostalgia to a time uncorrupted by the market. It is obvious that Derrida does not address this objection in his response to Jameson in *Marx & Sons*. In fact, Marxist critique of Derrida's book fails to visualise the critical significance and political implication of Derridean deconstructive Marxism.

However, he attempts to open up Marxism to very different concept of class-struggle that "begins with the thought of its own contingency".³⁴

³⁰ Ibid, 223.

³¹ Ibid, 222.

³² Ibid, 265.

³³ J. Derrida, E. Eagleton, F. Jameson, and A. Negri, *Ghostly Demarcations*, 55-56.

³⁴ C. Fynsk, "Derrida and Philosophy: Acts of Engagement", in T. Cohen (ed.), *Jacques Derrida and Humanities: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 165.

Ross Abbinnett also justifies Derrida's deconstructive Marxist position. He writes, Derrida attempts to open the political affiliations to the general economy that capital has consistently transformed the "material conditions of its reproduction".³⁵

In this brief literature review, the article has attempted to highlight Marxist critique of Derridean deconstructive and Derrida's response to it to elucidate the main argument. However, Pierre Bourdieu's sociological critique based upon the relationship of Derridean deconstruction to social sciences is not included in it. This body of criticism and counter-criticism between Marxist critics and Derrida greatly contributes to the corpus of literature on the topic of relationship between Derridean deconstructive Marxism and Marxist deconstruction. Moreover, the textual analysis of Derrida's text provides a panorama of post-structuralist Marxist hermeneutics that is a suitable analytical and theoretical framework of this study, which not only presents political implications of Derridean deconstruction but also highlights Marxist critique of Derrida's text. Therefore, conducting the textual analysis of Derridean text, this theory is a great urge of the post-modern age, which cannot be overlooked.

Derrida's Return to Marxism

Derrida turned to Marxism and he was influenced by Althusser's neo-Marxism in his later writings in general and in *Spectres of Marx* in particular without recognising Althusser's impact. However, he mentions Althusser only a few times in his book on Marx but his close textual analysis of Marx's texts opens a new theoretical dimension that is strikingly identical to that of Althusser. Nevertheless, more significant is the fact that throughout *Spectres of Marx* references to Althusser are limited to one or two comments about Althusserianism. Indeed, Derrida's response to Althusser's work has been subterranean in his books, although one can arguably read between the lines to find it.

Derrida writes,

In saying that, one is in opposition to two dominant tendencies: on the one hand, the most vigilant and most modern reinterpretations of Marxism by certain Marxists

³⁵ A. Abbinnett, "Spectres of Class: Marxism, Deconstruction and the Politics of Affiliation", *Journal for Cultural Research* 10, no.1 (January 2006), (Routledge: Taylor & Francis), 22.

(notably French Marxists and those around Althusser) who believed that they must instead try to dissociate Marxism from any teleology or from any messianic eschatology (but my concern is precisely to distinguish the latter from the former); on the other band, anti-Marxist interpretations that determine their own emancipatory eschatology by giving it a metaphysical or onto-theological content that is always deconstructible.³⁶

Montag writes,

But it appears that, in the guise of a critique of 'those around Althusser', Derrida has in fact reversed his own positions".³⁷ In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida poses the most important questions about the future of Marxism as well as of capitalism. Negri writes, "Here, the question 'whither Marxism?' is inextricable from the question 'whither deconstruction?', and both presuppose a 'whither capitalism?' As far as deconstruction is concerned, responding to the question 'whither Marxism?' in one way or another becomes the same as responding to the question 'whither capitalism?' In one way or another in what way? This is our focal interest in reading this book of Derrida's.³⁸

Undoubtedly, *Spectres of Marx* is of paramount importance for these questions in many respects. Ahmad writes, "It struck me that Derrida himself had opened up the space for a dialogue – a contentious dialogue, maybe-between Marxism and poststructuralism, specifically deconstruction, as it now stands, after the dissolution of Communist states in the former Soviet Union and East-Central Europe".³⁹ He criticizes Derrida, "It is odd that in affirming his association with Marxism - or as he puts it, 'a certain spirit of Marxism'-Derrida yields none of these grounds, restates them in fact with great firmness, introducing now a tone of

³⁶ J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 89-90.

³⁷ Montag, in Derrida, *Ghostly Demarcations*, 1999, 73.

³⁸ Ibid, 6.

³⁹ Ahmad, *Ghostly Demarcation*, 89.

religious suffering at odds with deconstruction's own virtually euphoric self-affirmation of the past".⁴⁰

On the contrary, Derrida explains that deconstruction is not wholly at odd with Marxism but it is "an attempted radicalisation of Marxism".⁴¹ Derrida puts, "his own methodological perspective, deconstruction, would be unthinkable without Marx".⁴²

Derrida assesses the past 100 years as entailing "the techno-scientific and effective decentering of the earth, of geopolitics, of the Anthropos in its onto-theological identity or its genetic properties, of the ego cogito – and of the very concept of narcissism whose Aporias are . . . the explicit theme of deconstruction".⁴³ He elaborates, "Certain Soviet philosophers told me in Moscow a few years ago: the best translation of perestroika was still deconstruction".⁴⁴

He further writes, "There has been, then, this attempted radicalization of Marxism called deconstruction (and in which, as some have noted a certain economic concept of differential economy and of expropriation, or even of the gift, plays an organizing role, as does the concept of work tied to difference and to the work of mourning in general)".⁴⁵

Eagleton confirms Derrida's claim, "Jacques Derrida claims that he has always understood his own theory of deconstruction as a kind of radicalised Marxism".⁴⁶

On the other hand, Ahmad dismisses Derrida's claim. As he writes, "Much of what Derrida says on this account one can accept readily, with a sense of comradeship, the past acrimonies between Marxism and deconstructionism notwithstanding. But what does he pose against the neo-liberal consensus and the particularist closures of Europe, as he speaks, in his own words, 'in the name of a new Enlightenment for the

⁴⁰ Ibid, 108.

⁴¹ J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 92.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid, 98.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 89.

⁴⁵ J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 115.

⁴⁶ T. Eagleton, *Ghostly Demarcation*, 35.

century to come'? First, an affirmation of Deconstruction itself as a radicalization of Marxism".⁴⁷

However, Derrida's claim carries forward the function of criticism inherent in Marxism but he has not designated deconstruction as a theoretical discourse and termed its influence on contemporary political life as minimal. He chooses a certain Marxist term such as 'specific social process of production' and 'distribution of surplus labour'. He appraises Marx, stating, "He doesn't belong to the communists, to the Marxists, to the parties; he ought to figure within our great canon of Western political philosophy".⁴⁸ "Upon rereading the Manifesto and several other great works of Marx, I said to myself that I knew of few texts in the philosophical tradition, perhaps none, whose lesson appears more urgent today".⁴⁹ He further writes, "The name of Marx has disappeared"⁵⁰ from philosophico-political debate, but the Spectres of Marx still haunt the post-1989 world. Derrida not only traces the well-known references to King Hamlet's ghost (and others) in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and meditates on Marx's famous phrase about the "spectre haunting Europe" at the beginning of *The Communist Manifesto* ("a spectre is haunting Europe-the spectre of communism"⁵¹) but traces the rhetoric of ghostliness in part three of *The German Ideology* and in the chapter on the commodity in volume 1 of *Capital*. Derrida writes, "This transformation and this opening up of Marxism are in conformity with what we were calling a moment ago the spirit of Marxism".⁵² Correspondingly, however, Derrida's text is a messianic one, but possessing "a messianism without religion, even a messianic without messianism"⁵³ which has to do with the promise, the 'rebellious force of affirmation' that sets everything off and is concerned with a "formal structure of promise' that at once 'exceeds' and 'precedes' both Marxism and the religions that Marxism criticizes".⁵⁴

⁴⁷ A. Ahmad, "Reconciling Derrida: Spectres of Marx and Deconstructive Politics", in *New Left Review* 208 (November/December, 1994): 92.

⁴⁸ J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 38.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 13.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 2.

⁵² *Ibid*, 59.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

Furthermore, commenting of Fukuyama's book, Derrida argues, Marxism haunts the supposed end of history insofar as it maintains a call for and from otherness, asking us to seek a justice beyond the free market. In this manner, he challenges the triumphant affirmation of neo-liberal global capitalism, which remains, he claims, haunted by the spectre of its rejected Marxist antagonist. In this manner, he endorses a quasi-religious view of time, what he calls "a messianic eschatology"⁵⁵ that differs from Hegelian teleology inasmuch as it welcomes difference and endless impurity rather than oneness and final purity. However, he turned to the reading of Marx but he never lost his theoretical interest in a certain spirit of Marxism. As Fabbri opines, "In 1993 in *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida wrote that he did not want to give up "a certain messianic spirit of Marxism".⁵⁶

Derrida's book is in fact, a sarcastic and harsh critique on the neo-liberalism of Fukuyama. Derrida writes, "The incantation repeats and ritualises itself, it holds forth and holds to formulas, like any animistic magic. To the rhythm of a cadenced march, it proclaims: Marx is dead; communism is dead, very dead, and along with it its hopes, its discourse, its theories and its practices. It says: long live capitalism, long live the market, here's to the survival of economic and political liberalism!"⁵⁷

In fact, Alexandre Kojève prompted Derrida to react to Fukuyama's thesis by recalling, "eschatological themes . . . were, in the 50s . . . our daily bread".⁵⁸

For him neo-liberalism of Fukuyama is nothing but a poor imitation of the dead European theologians who consider history as a progress of a disembodied spirit towards an ahistorical, timeless, and changeless end. Derrida challenges the new "dominant neo-liberal discourse of Fukuyama". In his painstaking analysis of Fukuyama's text, he associates himself with Marxism and his main argument is a rejection of world capitalism as well as is a new call for a "new international." In this way, he affirms "the necessity for a new culture that would invent another way of reading and analysing Capital, both Marx's book and capital in general."

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ L. Fabbri "Philosophy as Chance: An Interview with Jean-Luc Nancy", in trans. Pascale-Ann Braut and Michael Naas, *Critical Inquiry* 33 (Winter 2007): 436.

⁵⁷ J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 52.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 14.

Eagleton writes,

The high humourlessness of Derrida's literary style-French 'playfulness' is a notoriously high-toned affair-reflects a residual debt to the academic world he has so courageously challenged. But there is no doubting the political passion at work in this book. If Marxism has become more attractive to Derrida on account of its marginality, it is also more appealing in the light of the unsavoury political alternatives to it. He is stirred to unwonted anger by the smug triumphalism of the New World Order, and relentlessly pursues the hapless Fukuyama through a series of admirably irate pages.⁵⁹

Montag writes,

Finally, it would seem that the importance of *Spectres of Marx* lies rather in the questions and problems (rather than any answers or [resolutions]) that are produced by its movement, by the turbulence of its conflicts. How do we live the present, in its very non-contemporaneity with itself, without a spirit always walking before us, reassuring us with its non-presence, its negativity, as if to live would paradoxically be the ultimate death?⁶⁰

Sprinker writes,

The environment for Derrida's lecture thus seemed an unlikely one for him to renew, if not precisely to redeem, an old pledge: to confront head-on the relationship of deconstruction to Marxism, to subject Marx's texts to the same kind of exegetical rigor that Derrida himself had already brought to bear on those of Plato, Rousseau, Heidegger and many, many others. *Spectres of Marx* does partially satisfy that expectation, especially in its final two sections, which engage in close textual analyses of, respectively, *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and *The German*

⁵⁹ Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 85.

⁶⁰ Montag, "Spirits Armed and Unarmed, 80-81.

Ideology. But if one comes to book in the hope that now, at long last, Derrida's (or deconstruction's, which is not quite the same thing) relationship to Marxism will be profoundly clarified or definitively resolved, one will almost certainly be disappointed.⁶¹

In fact, Derrida's text on Marx is not a pure Marxist one but a hybrid of deconstruction and Marxism. In this manner, Derrida attempts to deconstruct Marxist ontology. In "Lingua Amissa: The Messianism of Commodity-Language and Derrida's Spectres of Marx," Werner Hamacher explains Derridean concept of Marxist ontology. He states, "Accordingly he distinguishes between the 'Marxist ontology grounding the project of Marxist science or critique' and a 'messianic eschatology' which as the unrealised promise of justice and democracy goes beyond every critical ontology of what is present at hand and of what is predictably or programmatically graspable".⁶²

Most significantly, Derrida suggests the formation of the new international in a spectral term. He has a desire for momentous social revolution, even for "unimaginable revolution"⁶³ because "the world is going very badly",⁶⁴ as he emphasises throughout that "essay in the night" called "Spectres of Marx." Callinicos criticises his spectral international. He argues, "The spectre of international which Derrida invokes; it exists merely as an ideological phantasm whose revolutionary demands remain withdrawn from the material dynamics of historical transformation".⁶⁵

Derrida defends Marxism,

In this respect, Communism has always been and will remain spectral: it is always still to come and distinguished, like democracy itself, from every living understood as plenitude of a presence-to-itself, as totality of a presence

⁶¹ J. Derrida, Eagleton, et al, *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Derrida*, 1.

⁶² Hamacher, W "Lingua Amissa: The Messianism of Commodity-Language and Derrida's Spectres of Marx," in Derrida et al, *Ibid*, 199-200.

⁶³ J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 82.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 77-78.

⁶⁵ A. Callinicos, "Messianic Ruminations: Derrida, Stirner and Marx", in *Radical Philosophy* 75 (January/February 1996): 40.

effectively identical to itself. Capitalist societies can always heave a sigh of relief and say to themselves; communism is finished since the collapse of the totalitarianisms of the twentieth-century and not only is it finished, but it did not take place, it was only a ghost. They do no more than disavow the undeniable itself: a ghost never dies, it remains always to come and come back.⁶⁶

Hamacher writes,

The questions sketched in the background of Derrida's Marx book-at least some of its questions-can presumably be paraphrased as follows. How can the future bear witness to itself? And how, as the future, can it attest to its futurity? How is it possible that the sheer possibility (under whose aspect alone actuality exists at all) does not appear as a void of the actual but rather as the way of its arrival - as a path of actualization remaining open to other arrivals? The figure, which comes closest to answering these questions, the figure of figuration, is the spectre in all its disparity - as phantom, spirit, ghost, appearance, and spectrum. It is that figure' which massively and under the most disparate names haunts Marx's texts - whether as phantasmagoria or enigma, as fetish or ideology, as theological whim or objective veil - and which is the phenomenon, or phenomenon of phenomenality, for which the walls and cloths between fields as various as literature and philosophy, psychoanalysis, economics, theology and politics are permeable.⁶⁷

Conclusion

This article has carefully examined the relationship between Derridean deconstruction and Marxism with special reference to Derrida's book under investigation, which marks Derrida's affiliation with Marxism and his harsh critique of international capitalism. The post-industrial capitalism sustains itself by economically exploiting millions of toiling peasants, proletarians, and nations of colour. It is now in crisis. This decadence and retrogression

⁶⁶ J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 13.

⁶⁷ Hamacher, *Lingua Amissa*, 183.

of the world capitalism influences Derrida who has been silent about Marx for thirty years of his philosophical career and announces his affiliation with Marxism as well as indebtedness to Marx. He advocates the urgency of Marxism against neo-liberalism of the global capitalism. Therefore, this was a great turning point of his philosophy that startled Marxists and his follower deconstructionists. Derrida's deconstructive Marxism helps him assign to himself an intellectual role of Horatio: "Thou art a scholar, speak to it, Horatio." Contrary to Marxists, he takes his own way of defending Marxism through deconstruction against capitalism.

Some Important Definitions***

1. **Althusser's Philosophy:** Althusser's philosophy is based on anti-humanist interpretation of Marxism, in which he sought to counter the prevalent interpretation of Marx's theory as an essentially "humanistic" and "individualist" philosophy in which history is a process of telos. He asserted that this "Hegelian" interpretation overemphasized the early Marx, who was yet a humanist Hegelian. Althusser revisited the scientific mature Marx of *Capital (1867)* and other works, in which he attempts to develop a new "science" of history focused not on human beings but on the impersonal historical processes of class struggle. This post-Structuralist interpretation is called Althusser's philosophy.
2. **Deconstruction:** Jacques Derrida introduced a critical method of analysis of literary and philosophical language. It is called deconstruction. It studies the internal function of language and conceptual systems, the relational quality of meaning, and the assumptions implicit in forms of expression.
3. **Neo-Hegelianism:** It is the doctrine of the idealist followers of Hegel that was prominent in Europe and the United States between 1870 and 1920. The term is also sometimes applied to cover other philosophies of the period that were Hegelian such as Benedetto Croce and of Giovanni Gentile. Neo-Hegelianism in Great Britain developed originally as a natural sequel to the semi popular work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle.
4. **Neo-Marxism:** "Neo-Marxism" is a twentieth century Marxist critical theory developed by Adorno, Benjamin and others that sought to simultaneously critique (classical) Marxism while retaining many of its

*** For readers.

essential features such as socialist and communist project at its heart in a new manner. This school of thought was associated with the Institute for Social Research at Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany (Frankfurt School), which developed it, and is roughly the philosophy advanced by the formal doctrine of Critical Theory, which it produced and applied.

5. **Postmodernism:** It is a term that denotes a theory or a group of theories, concerning the relationship between human beings, the world, and the practice of producing and reproducing meanings.
6. **Otherness:** It is a condition of the symbolic order, which means the existence of someone or somebody outside us, which is the condition of being a subject.