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MARX: A SPECTRE HAUNTING...

“A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism”; thus began the Communist Manifesto (Marx and Engels 1976, 481), which was soon disregarded. Marx’s *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, published in 1859, was met with utter silence, which Engels complained, even before its publication, was due “to its abstract nature” (Mandel 1973, 80). Marx’s opus magnum, published during his lifetime, *Capital*, volume I, barely had a different reception. Nor were *Capital*, volumes II and III, edited by Engels, well-received; as Engels’s prefaces to all three volumes attest, the responses to *Capital* has been limited to now-obscure academics who were more or less trying to discredit Marx by any means possible.

Yet, detailed recent biographies show Marx occupied the curiosity of his fellows—and as the recent biographies attest, continues to do so. In this paper, I trace how Marx appears in non-Marxist literature, both popular and academic, in order to register the ways in which he continues to “haunt” our collective psyche. That is, I will elaborate the “many afterlives” Marx has in these publications. Nevertheless, I contend that all these articulations miss what makes Marx unique: his distinct class analysis, premised on a unique definition of labor—as a potential to produce surplus—with which he registers exploitative class relations and non-exploitative alternatives.

Just to list a few examples of how Marx appears in non-Marxist literature: four recent biographies—two by Francis Wheen, Mary Gabriel, and Gareth Steedman Jones for popular audiences—show an interminable interest in him. For Paul A. Samuelson (1962), a Nobel laureate in economics who famously synthesized neoclassical microeconomics with his version of Keynesian macroeconomics, Marx was nothing more than a “minor Ricardian”; yet, he spent quite a long time and much energy disputing the Marxian value theory as a quick look at his collected works would attest. Francis Fukuyama’s claim that we are at “the end of history,” with Western liberal democracies and neoliberal market capitalism as the only options, is at best a thinly veiled refutation of historical materialism attributed to Marx. A quick search of the *Economist*, well known for its conservatism, reveals Karl Marx to be a “keyword,” with at least 20 entries since 1990s. Not to mention French philosophers, who critically engaged with Marx’s writings, such as Jean Baudrillard (*The Mirror of Production*) or Jacques Derrida (*The Specters of Marx*). Last, but not least, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum consider Marx, alongside Aristotle and Adam Smith, to be one of the precursors of the capabilities approach. Human Development Reports, based on Sen and Nussbaum’s

capabilities approach, acknowledge Marx as someone who considered human beings, and their ability to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, as a goal in and of itself.

However, I will argue that all these articulations miss what makes Marx unique: his class analysis, based on one of his (self-acknowledged) contributions to political economy—differentiating labor-power, a commodity that the wage-laborer sells, from labor, the ability to produce more than what one consumes. With this distinction, Marx is able to articulate class processes as the performance, appropriation, and distribution of surplus—what is produced over and above what the laborers consume as their socially determined standard of living. In addition, he can register a class injustice, exploitation—when those who produce the surplus are not the ones who appropriate, thus, distribute it. This is what is precisely wrong with capitalism: capitalists do not produce any surplus in the form of surplus-value, only wage-laborers do, yet the former appropriate and disperse it. And that is what will be different in communal class processes—surplus's collective production, appropriation, and distribution. To quote Marx one last time (Marx and Engels 1979, 106), “let the dead bury their dead”; Marx refuses to be dead.