Unconscious Writing in the Factory of the Social: A Class Theory of Negative, Allegorical Rhetoric

Stanley Harrison

My Name is Legion: for we are many.
—Mark 5:9

Classes form when the asset rich use their decisive control over the unequal distribution of the means of production to appropriate at least a portion of the social surplus that the asset poor produce through their labors. Classes form when social actors struggle for control of those productive assets that get used in the shaping of a particular pattern of exploitation. Under feudalism, lords exercised their ownership in the laboring body of the living serf to extract a portion of the social surplus, while those in the serf class struggled for individual liberty. The class structure under capitalism continues to take shape because capitalists use their ownership of the alienable means of production to appropriate a portion of the social surplus through market exchanges and the production of commodities, and workers struggle for the socialization of the means of production. State bureaucratic socialism appeared and then withered, but before it did, managers and bureaucrats planned for the appropriation and distribution of the social surplus through their hierarchal control of organizational assets, while nonmanagers struggled for the democratization of organizational control. One day, we may see the rise of socialism and witness the brand of exploitation that appears when experts use their certified possession of the inalienable assets "skills" and "knowledge" to cause a small portion of the social surplus to flow from workers to experts, while workers struggle for substantive equality. Whatever its face, exploitation follows when a real inequality in the distribution of productive assets empowers members of an exploiting

jac 27.1–2 (2007)
class to appropriate an unearned portion of the social surplus that members of an exploited class generate through contact with productive assets that they must use but may not own (Wright 8, 12–23).

Operating on this spartan definition, my immediate purpose is to suggest that *writing* as it appears within the structured relations of capitalist exploitation must give rise to a class theory of *writing*—that is, if real inequalities in the distribution of the productive asset *writing* cause a portion of the social surplus to flow from those who labor at *writing* to those who enjoy real economic ownership of the productive asset *writing*. Were capital to convert the act of writing in all of its particulars into a complex mass of alienable assets, and were capital to draw these alienable assets into the structured relations of capitalist exploitation, the writing theorist would be able to write about writing as a class relation. Capital, after all, would have made alienable assets of the environment wherein interpersonal writing occurs; *and* the empty interindividual space that confronts writers who want to use writing to communicate across time and space; *and* the ether upon which individual writers float and propel their written, interpersonal messages; *and* the written messages themselves that writers pass to each other; *and* the technologies that writers use to produce the written messages that they pass between themselves; *and* the personal identities that writers assume when they meet and communicate with each other; *and* the indispensable material substrate of each self-identified writer who only thinks and writes and self-identifies because the writing subject is an object both comprised of and sustained by matter. Having converted the act of writing in all of its particulars into a complex mass of alienable assets, capital would have presented asset poor writers, who must work at writing but do not own the means of written production, with access to alienable assets in writing. Capital, through shifting strategies of commodity production and market exchange, would have converted its decisive control of the alienable means of written production into a mechanism for extracting unearned portions of the social surplus from that class of asset poor writers that capital managed to dispossess of writing. And for having exploited the dispossessed class of asset poor writers, capital would have vaulted writing theorists into sudden, necessary relations with the class theory of writing.
On April 30, 1995, the State ceded control of the Internet to capital. On that day, the National Science Foundation decommissioned NSFnet, the state-funded Internet backbone, and the State stopped using “deductions from the social revenue” to pay for the production of the “general conditions” of the internetworked “processes of social production” (Marx, Grundrisse ch10.htm). On that selfsame day, capital took real economic control over the Internet, conourse through the Internet, congress within the Internet. Capital took fiscal responsibility for building both the Internet and the means of transport and communication through the Internet. Capital started paying “out of capital as capital” for the ongoing production of the general process of internetworked social production (ch10.htm). Capital started producing its private version of the fully automated, computer internetworked, machinofactured site of sociolinguistic possibility: the Internet. And, for this, the fabric of internetworked writing and everything touched by the fabric of internetworked writing started to emanate out of capital as capital.

Heightened awareness of internetworked writing-as-exploitation and heightened sensitivity to the need for a class theory of writing follow when we classify social being touched by the fabric of internetworked writing as a productive asset that capital controls for the purpose of appropriating an unearned portion of the social surplus. We already know that capital controls the environment built of machinofactured internetworked writing, as it does any intellectual property good, through a strategy of selective exclusion, through “control of access to consumption at the direct point of sale” (Bettig 80). But in so doing, capital also takes control of the indispensable material substrate; the expressive, cogitative manifestation; and the working futures of the materialized social being, or writing-identified-writer. No body may become a cogitative, expressive subject unless the subject is also an object. It is as Theodor Adorno reminds us: the cogitative, expressive subject depends for its existence upon “Something,” an “indispensable substrate” that is not identical with, reducible to, or separable from the expressive manifestation of the cogitative subject (135). No one may think or speak unless their thoughts and rhetoric permeate and become permeated by entities which are, themselves, indivisible from the cogitative, expressive subject. This simple understanding becomes potent when we recall that
before the would-be subject of internetworked writing can exist, the writing subject must be passed through the crucible of exchange. The writing subject, or the purchasing agent for the writing subject, be it a school or a state-run library, must contract with and make payment to capital before capital will put the cogitative, expressive subject in touch with the capitalized, internetworked “processes of social production.” However it gets done, the cogitative expressive subject must pay for access to the machines that machinofacture the fabric of internetworked writing and the machinofactured fabric of internetworked writing—both of which are elements of the indispensable material substrate of the writing-identified-writer. Because writers who aspire to exist and work at the internetworked core of the unevenly developed capitalist world system must participate in the process of capitalist exchange before capital will agree to process them into machinofactured social beings, they must agree to be drawn into the structured relations of capitalist exploitation. In other words, they must pay before they may become materialized internetworked social beings who may then enter into work contracts with internetworked employers and receive the wages they must have if they are to continue becoming materialized in the form of internetworked social being. They must pay to be and be of writing and, therefore, must experience a “fall in the value of labor power” before they may be in and of writing, and, thereafter, become devalued wage-earning labor (Harvey, Limits 30). As it were, they must pay to benefit capital in every moment of their machinofactured experience of writing-as-exploitation.

To draw the previous set of conclusions is, of course, tantamount to saying what we already know but cannot easily or comfortably say: the Internet is an automated system of machines that capital owns and operates for the purpose of transforming raw materials (asset poor writers) into materially altered finished goods that capital machinofactures for the purpose of appropriating a portion of the social surplus through the mechanism of market exchanges. The Internet, in other words, is nothing less than a factory of the social that capital operates for the purpose of producing and organizing writing-as-exploitation. Capital uses its control over the automated system of writing machines (read: internetworked computers) that produces the digitized everyday in order to transform the
site of internetworked writing into a social factory: an automated system of writing machines / that produces and distributes machinofactured living commodities / who must contract with capital / if they are to become the raw materials / that the social factory converts into the commodity form of social being/that writing-identified-writers must buy in unit installments / before they may contract with internetworked capital to exchange labor-power for wages / that they must return to capital / if they are to become processed / by capital’s automated system of writing machines / a.k.a. capital’s factory of the social / a.k.a. the social factory. Set in motion, the social factory processes relatively autonomous language users as any factory would raw materials. Capital’s social factory converts primary inputs into final outputs. Capital’s factory of the social works upon and transforms the raw material of relatively autonomous language users into the materially altered social being of the internetworked writing-identified-writer that, having been produced, capital markets, just as it would any other finished good, commodity, alienable use-value. Capital enjoys real economic ownership of the productive asset writing through its real economic ownership of the forces of production that capital uses in the direct, rationalized production of the writing-identified-writer who, according to design, must pay to become the self-purchasing alienable use-value that capital machinofactures for the purpose of transforming writing into writing-as-exploitation.

To recognize a factory condition in capital’s deployment of “the” so-called “Internet” is really only to see what I have been describing from the outset: capital’s privately owned factory system of automated writing machines overwrites writing in all of its particulars for the purpose of drawing a class of writers dispossessed of writing into the structured relations of capitalist exploitation. Because capital controls the alienable means of written production, asset poor writers must come before and take the shape of capital if they would write. Through its real economic ownership of internetworked writing in all of its particulars, capital succeeds in converting the non-class of relatively autonomous social beings who had always used the social property writing in the procession of everyday life into a class of factory-produced writing-identified-writers who have been dispossessed of the private property “social
writing” (Harrison). Through its real economic ownership of private-social writing, capital positions itself to deliver an *economic determination in the first instance* upon every writer who needs pay to become a machinofactured point of presence on the privately owned and operated field of internetworked writing. Indeed, capital positions itself to organize each writer that capital deploys around its factory system of internetworked writing machines to become a member of an exploited writing class-for-itself—that is, a group of writers who do not own the means of sociolinguistic production, who become devalued through contact with the internetworked social, and who, as members of a class-for-itself, do not know that they belong to the exploited class of writers dispossessed of writing (566).

In so doing, capital has produced the elements that might combine and set off a class theory of writing. Capital has used its real economic ownership of the alienable means of internetworked writing to posit the existence of class relations between asset rich and asset poor writers and, at the same time, to draw ongoing struggles for the alienable means of internetworked writing into the structured relations of capitalist exploitation. For this, writing theorists find themselves vaulted, as previously suggested, into sudden, necessary relations with the class theory of writing.

---

**An Overview of Positions on Classed Writing**

Capitalist exploitative control of the assets used in the production of internetworked writing justifies the launching of a class theory of writing. But being so justified does not mean that writing theorists are positioned to launch a class theory of writing. After all, our manner has never been to argue that writing subjects are dispossessed of writing even as they are machinofactured by a privately owned and operated social factory that transforms the raw material of relatively autonomous social being into an alienable use-value that capital circulates for the purpose of drawing writers into the structured relations of capitalist exploitation. Nor has it been our custom to argue that the structured relations of capitalist exploitation prohibit the class-in-itself of writing-identified-writers from
both writing and, at the same time, taking up position in internetworked social relations for the purpose of challenging either capital's real economic ownership of the means of sociolinguistic production, or capital's enactment of writing-as-exploitation. Instead, the way of writing theorists has been to regard language as a social, as opposed to a private, property. Our fashion has been to characterize language as an activity that necessarily circulates within but is necessarily never the product of factory processes. Our mode has been to classify one's own identity, along with one's material substrate, as being an asset that is neither alienable nor reducible by capital. Our habit has been to assume that identity formation is never a moment in the capitalist direct production process that draws writing-identified-writers into the structural relations of capitalist exploitation. And, so, the purpose of our complex style of theorizing has been to prepare writers to take up position within the relations of production for the purpose of launching discussions about the technologically mediated, socially negociated production of each writer's overdetermined, polysemous, relatively autonomous, symbolically enacted identity—but not about writing-as-exploitation.

Would-be theorists of classed writing know that theory tends to locate the "arena of the class struggle" in the vital, dynamic, multi-accentual sign (Vološinov 23)—not in the struggle against the real inequalities in the distribution of the productive asset writing that cause a portion of the social surplus to flow from those who labor at writing to those who enjoy real economic ownership of the productive asset writing. Struggle-in-the-sign flames up, the story goes, when agents in dominate class locations try to "impart a supraclass, eternal" "uniaccentual" "character" to signs that appear within overdetermined, "varidirectional contexts" (23, 80), and when subalterns try to leverage the "inner dialectic quality of the sign" in hopes of either intensifying the emancipatory potential in the dialectically charged sign, or stopping signs crisscrossed with ideological accents from becoming univocal and "degenerating into allegory" (23). Struggle-in-the-sign is never characterized as being ancillary to struggle for ownership of the forces of production used in the machinofacture of the alienable sign-consuming identity that experiences the relations of production as writing-as-exploitation.
The presumption here is that the act of writing empowers writers to take up position within the relations of semiotic production and, there, to revolutionize the always already relatively autonomous relations of semiotic production.

Even when theorists locate the arena of the class struggle in writing as a private, alienable, productive asset, they tend to reduce class-struggle-for-the-sign to liberal democratic struggles intended to ameliorate class difference by making the internetworked social more congenial to the needs of the technological underclasses. Very much in the manner of Jeffrey Grabill, liberal theorists struggle to expand public access to writing technologies because they are concerned that "the technopoor" may be "missing something" (313). Such approaches neither question nor countermand capital's rights of ownership in writing. They assume capital's rights of ownership in the forces of production. They gift capital with its primary mechanism for drawing internetworked writers into the structured relations of capitalist exploitation. And they concede to capital that capital's industrial processing of writing-identified-writers by capital's factory system of writing machines is not tantamount to the production of writing-as-exploitation. In fact, the presumption is, as before, that once one acquires "the Internet," internetworked writers are empowered by their facility with writing to take up position within the relations of semiotic production and, there, to struggle-in-the-sign and, perhaps, to revolutionize that which always already passes for the relatively autonomous relations of semiotic production.

The general presumption that writing theory should never take its fundamental orientation from engagement with the struggle for real economic ownership of the forces of semiotic production may even be found in that germinal contribution to the class theory of writing, Walter Benjamin's "The Author as Producer." Benjamin argues that the "revolutionary struggle... between capitalism and the proletariat" requires that revolutionary writers take up position in the relations of production for the purpose of revolutionizing the relations of production (238). This, he adds, should prove sufficient to socialize the means of production and contribute to the struggle for general emancipation from the capitalist mode of exploitative production. Toward this end, Benjamin dissuades writers from adopting the manner of the "informing writer"—that is, one
who exposes the limits and failures of the current system, who funnels revolutionary themes through capital’s productive apparatus, who contributes to the development of free thinkers inclined to oppose private ownership of the alienable means of production, but who introduces no new literary techniques that promise to revolutionize current relations of literary production and energize the revolutionary struggle between capitalism and the proletariat. Having noted that capitalists can profit as easily from the sale of revolutionary as establishment themes, Benjamin asserts that writers contribute to the revolutionary struggle when they behave not in the manner of the informing writing but, instead, in the manner of the “operating writer,” or one who develops progressive literary techniques, not themes, that result in the production of cultural forms, or written compositions, that involve contemplative writers and consumers of writing in the behavior of operating writers. Where the operating writer produces texts that produce operating writers who produce texts that produce operating writers who produce in kind, Benjamin’s operating writer produces collaborators, actors, producers and, in so doing, presents a direct challenge to capital wherever capital seeks to expand or even maintain its already limited ownership over the means of literary production. For having taken up position in the relations of production for the purpose of revolutionizing the relations of production, Benjamin’s operating writers position themselves to revolutionize the social relations of production to the point that writers will not only become the non-exploitative publishers of other writers but also agents who challenge capital where capital restricts access to the means of literary production for the purpose of profiting from ongoing renewal of “authors,” or the “long-since-counterfeit wealth of creative personality” (232).

For all its elegance and one-time correctness, Benjamin’s solution to the problem of writing-and-capital runs into the same trouble that contradicts theorists who lend themselves to struggle-in-the-sign and struggle-for-access to struggle-in-the-sign. Today, the relatively autonomous relations of written production that writing theorists presume and hope to revolutionize have been privatized. Any and all deployments of asset poor writers around the privately owned, industrially organized forces of sociolinguistic production take writers up and position them
within the structured factory relations of capitalist exploitation. Because internetworked writers must write if they are to be, they cannot escape from or take up position against the structured relations of capitalist exploitation—that is, if they are to be and write at the level of the transnationally internetworked core of the unevenly developed capitalist world system. Writing and writing theories that bespeak the need to revolutionize the social relations of written production are always already contradicted by asset rich writers who own the alienable means of writing and who use their real economic ownership of the means of sociolinguistic production to profit from writers that capital both machinofactures and then invites to theorize about such things as the need for writers to become producers who compose texts that, in turn, invite audiences to become operating writers; or the need to increase public access to the digitized social; or the need to struggle-in-the-sign and, in so doing, intensify the emancipatory potential in the dialectically charged sign. Where capital once profited as easily from publication of revolutionary and establishment themes, capital now profits from the machinofacture of both revolutionary and establishment subjectivities. Nothing that anyone writes after having been processed by the social factory alters the condition of writing-as-exploitation that contradicts even the most concerted efforts to revolutionize that which capital has already revolutionized: the factory relations of machinofactured private-social production. And there is nothing that any writer or writing theorist who struggles to take up position in the machinofactured relations of sociolinguistic production can do to resolve the contradiction in writing that draws writers inexorably into the structured relations of capitalist exploitation.

Simply put, writing, in our time, has been contradicted by writing.

By way of demonstration, I want to point out that internetworked writers who enjoy no real economic ownership in the means of internetworked sociolinguistic production but who exercise “effective control” over the inalienable assets “skill” and “knowledge” may attempt to take up position within the relations of social production for the purpose of forging alliances with capital, receiving disproportionately high salaries, operating as “net exploiters” (Wright 26, 30), and, at the same time, socializing the relations of production. As such, members of a comparatively small group of internetworked writers occupied in
managerial, bureaucratic, or specialist positions, may participate in and benefit from the capitalist appropriation of an unearned surplus value despite their lack of ownership in the means of production. Johndan Johnson-Eilola and Stuart Selber make this point when they point out that the relationship between skilled, knowledgeable, and credentialed writers and capital need not be "repressive or disempowering" (116). Technical communicators, for example, may stand on common ground with corporations that are not necessarily adverse to constructing "all aspects of communication as constructive, social activities" (136). Writers who want to socialize the site of internetworked writing may receive corporate support for the composition of hypertexts that "expand rather than contract processes of communication" (124) and that "oscillate between cycles of automation and user control," rather than simply speeding up "the pace of work by translating repetitive, predictable human activities . . . into machine instructions" (119). Because corporations can derive profit from the production of texts that both expand processes of social communication and increase user control in the typical writer's encounter with automating technologies, Johnson-Eilola and Selber argue that technical writers may forge successful alliances with corporations through the composition of texts that raise the "prestige, responsibility, creativity, and power" of the internetworked writer (132).

The forging of alliances with capital is not the only way that writers and writing theorists can attempt to take up position in the machinofactured relations of sociolinguistic production for the purpose of revolutionizing internetworked social relations. In particularly "good times," writers who are asset poor in the alienable means of internetworked social production but asset rich in skills and knowledge may take the wealth gained through successful alliance with capital, invest it in the acquisition of financial capital or production capital, and in so doing orchestrate a move into the class of capitalist exploiters (Wright 30). This they can do, argues Jeffrey Nealon, by stealing themselves against the more ugly realities that go along with full participation in any social system. People in the world will no doubt experience misery for coming in contact with a social system that promotes the promotion of certain writers into the capitalist rank and file. "All good things," Nealon points out, "are bathed in blood at their origin" (832). Bearing this in mind, Nealon recommends that writers stop
denouncing "capitalism as a misery machine," try saying "Yes" to capitalism long enough to "map the ways in which misery is produced by capital," and respond to the production of misery by working to modify the capitalist machine so that it supports "a different series of outputs" (834–35). He continues: were would-be capitalists to start thinking of themselves as a mutual fund, rather than a subject, they might begin diversifying their portfolios of the self and, in so doing, follow the "revolutionary path" through the stock market. Rather than "moralistically" denouncing or judging capitalism, and, in so doing, proving ourselves to be the "most reactive pustule of resentment," Nealon would have us "see what (else) it can do!" by experimenting with its "speeds and slownesses" (833, 834). Rather than withdrawing "from the world market," we should move "in the opposite direction," "go still further . . . in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization." (834). When we realize with Nealon that the "problem . . . is not capitalism," but, rather, "the style of subjectivity that capitalism has produced and rewarded," we will finally be able to take up position within internetworked social relations—to "lodge" oneself "on a stratum"—and, there, work to revolutionize the relations of production—to speed up and modify capitalism until it becomes a different sort of machine (833, 835).

There are, of course, still others who would take up position within the privately owned relations of social production for the purpose of opposing the consequences of capital's penetration into the domain of social production. When, for example, internetworked writers produce writing under less than fortuitous circumstances, they may not only become aware that anyone who "can telecommunicate can always be teleterminated" at the hands of capital "by cheaper services uploaded from anywhere on the planet" (Dyer-Witheford 143–44) but may also seek alliance—even if only in theory—wit the dominant exploited group, the proletariat located in polarized class locations (Wright 30). Toward this end, M. J. Braun argues that internetworked writers may take up position within internetworked social relations for the purpose of revolutionizing attitudes toward internetworked social relations. They might, in other words, take it upon themselves to write from contradictory, polarized class locations and, for this, to demand that no one be
satisfied making "claims about what these machines allow us to accomplish—claims about nonlinear thinking, reading, and writing and about how those practices have decentered us as subjects, somehow freeing us from the bonds of the rational world view" (157). They might make plain that internetworked writers should consider "not only the presence of the programmer laboring over all those zeros and ones in our machines, but also the presence of the minimum-wage worker who could have died making the CD we just popped into our machine" (157–58). They might impress upon the congress of internetworked writers that everyone should compose "ethical antagonism" to compositions that promote either alignment with or movement into capitalist class locations and that, in so doing, obscure the fact that such compositions impart the hope of "more democracy" (not less exploitation) to those who write at the core of the unevenly developed capitalist world economic system (154, 158). And, finally, they might work to revolutionize internetworked social relations by fostering development of working class consciousness in internetworked writers, by inclining everyone to remember that writers' alliances with capital and writers' orchestrated moves into capitalist class locations very often get executed at a cost of more immiseration for those who work, for example, in "electronic assembly plants" in California's Silicon Valley that feature the same kinds of sweatshop conditions that prevail in third world nations: "overcompetitive subcontracting, poverty-level wages, piece-rate compensation, chemical and ergonomic hazards, routine health and safety violations, no medical benefits, retaliation, and an immigrant, largely female, non-union work force" ("Living").

If this brief review of scholarship devoted to the relationship of writers to capitalist writing demonstrates anything, it is this: anyone may do precisely what any of these respected writers suggest: take up position within internetworked social relations and work to revise or revolutionize internetworked social relations. Indeed, capital privatized and, thus, revolutionized the production of social relations so that writers could begin to emanate out of capital as capital and, as living capital, posit a host of contradictory solutions to the problem of social relations under capital. But because capital owns the means by which bodies in internetworked community produce social relationships with strangers, acquaintances, friends, lovers, family, and the materialized self, no one may take up
position within internetworked social relations and write anything that countermands one's subjection of structured relations of capitalist exploitation. Writers who emanate out of capital as capital may forge alliances with capital, orchestrate moves from the class of proletarianized writers to the capitalist class, or forge alliances with those in more completely polarized class locations. They may write in hopes of generalizing local access to the internetworked production of social relations or energizing the dialectical struggle-in-the-sign that takes place between consumers of the private-social who are transformed through contact with the social factory into commodified aspects of the private-social. But they may not write anything that is not also the positive expression of real inequalities in the distribution of productive assets that must result not only in the manifest exploitation of asset poor by asset rich writers but, also and more importantly, in the drawing of writers without alienable assets in internetworked writing into the structured relations of capitalist exploitation, which disallow the possibility of presenting private-social relations as alternative to private-social relations. Capitalist control of the assets used in the production of internetworked writing may, in other words, justify the launching of a class theory of writing. But being so justified does not mean that writing theorists are positioned to launch a class theory of writing.

The Phantom Subject and the Economic Unconscious

A contradiction of this magnitude in practice represents a contradiction in theory—or an unexplored aspect of a contradiction that contains unreleased, uncharacterized energies that might take the writing of internetworked writers in unimagined directions. Because writing theorists—in their life as capital—must meet the challenge of exploitative factory relations that contradict machinofactured writers in their every attempt to achieve positive identity through writing, class theorists of writing must meet capital's magnificent contradiction of writing practices with a theory of contradictions—that is, "to proceed dialectically," "to think in contradictions, for the sake of the contradiction once experienced in the thing, and against that contradiction" (144–45). Even more,
class theorists should consider traveling along the counterintuitive path of negative dialectics—Adorno's theoretical apparatus for ending the tradition of the "constitutive subjectivity" as the locus of criticism (xx)—because the path of dialectical theory became an option when identity capital convicted the positive production of internetworked identity of being both identified with and contradicted by capital.

Long before capital subsumed the internetworked social, Adorno engaged not with Fordist production, not with "long-term and large-scale fixed capital investments in mass-production systems," nor with "presumed stable growth in invariant consumer markets" (Harvey, Condition 142), but, instead, with the product of capital's decision to guarantee stable growth in invariant consumer markets through investments in "market research" and analysis, advertising, "customer manipulation," and the "planned obsolescence of commodities" (Mandel 229). Long before capital subsumed the internetworked social, Adorno responded to a social order that Henri Lefebvre once described as being "managed," "administered," "entirely mediated," and "mass-mediated" "in large part by multinational corporations that have colossal investments in it" and, thanks to marketing, make "projections of up to ten years" (79). Witness to capital's Society of the Spectacle, Adorno confronted capital in its decision to confront the individual with systems of commercial representation that blunt the formation of the subject through introjection; that induce the subject to give over or abandon itself to the "false needs" of "repressive satisfaction" (Marcuse 5, 7); and that visit upon the subject the "death of the subject," or a "fragmented and schizophrenic decentering and dispersion of this last" (Jameson, "Cognitive" 351). Witness to capital's Society of the Simulacra, Adorno ran circles around capital, even as capital ran circles of information around consumers, encased the private sphere of the individual within a capitalized cultural sphere, compelled the encircled consumer to operate within a "hyperrealism of simulations," and left the individual with no alternative but to experience the "satellization of the real" (Baudrillard, "Ecstasy" 128). Adorno claimed for capital that capital's "extroverted technicians" (that is, corporate planning units) had "taken over" "the moon" "behind" which "dwell" the "introverted thought architect [that is, the subject]" (3). And Adorno lamented that in capital's "administered world the
impoverishment of experience by dialectics, which outrages healthy opinion, proves appropriate to the abstract monotony of that world. Its agony is the world’s agony raised to a concept” (6); to capital accumulated “to such a degree . . . that it becomes an image” (Debord); to television advertising and programming that penetrates, cannibalizes, and represents private space in such a way that media “explodes the scene formerly preserved by the minimal separation of public and private” (Baudrillard, “Ecstasy” 130).

Adorno considered the life of identity in light of capital and claimed for dialectics the task of breaking the “compulsion to achieve identity” (157). The dialectician, wrote Adorno, needs to remember at all times that that which “is, is more than it is” (161). Awash in a society of the spectacle and hyperrealism, Adorno’s dialectician can rest assured in knowing that “objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder, that they come to contradict the traditional norm of adequacy” (5). But the dialectician must also leverage this understanding by refusing to theorize out of the identitarian concept. Instead, the dialectician must theorize out of the “means of the energy stored up in that compulsion [to achieve identity] and congealed in its objectifications” (157). The dialectical theoretician must be “suspicious of all identity” (145) and grope, in the “critique of identity,” for the “preponderance of the object” (183) and be willing to theorize “rather, out of these things” (33). For the contradiction that exists between the conceptually permeated material substrate and the materially permeated identitarian cover concept not only attempts to confine the heterogeneity in the object to the adequacy of the subject but constitutes a “contradiction in reality” that is also a hopeful “contradiction against reality” (145).

Certain that prepared and objectified forms of administered, conceptually organized identity amounted to an “untruth” that contradicted the adequacy of reality (145), Adorno sought a method in dialectics for countermanding one’s need to fuse with the “facade of immediacy” and for theorizing out of that which is “concealed beneath . . . the supposed facts” (167). Today, as in Adorno’s time, the vitality of his nonidentitarian dialectical method depends for its vitality upon “the seriousness of unswerving negation,” a seriousness that “lies in its refusal to lend itself to sanctioning things as they are” (159). As such, negative dialectics
necessarily slouches toward the “indispensable substrate of any concept, including the concept of Being” (135); follows a logic of “disintegration: of a disintegration of the prepared and objectified form of the concepts which the cognitive subject faces, primarily and directly” (145); returns “the thing’s own identity against its identifications” (161); and emerges without identity but, instead, with that which is both “indissoluble in any previous thought context” and “transcends its seclusion in its own, as nonidentical” (163).

Today, the class theorist of writing turned negative dialectician needs attend more than ever to the specificity of Adorno’s appeal to the untruth in identity, or the nonidentitarian truth in the negation of untrue identity, for capital has advanced beyond confronting and encircling the subject with capital accumulated to such a degree that it becomes mass-mediated spectacle or hyperreal simulacra. Capital’s direct production process now produces the materiality of the writing subject, or capital accumulated to such a degree that it becomes the indispensable, material substrate of the cogitative, expressive subject. A living substance shaped on the forge of capital, the internetworked subject has no present alternative but to suspect the constitutive, identitarian subjectivity of untruth; to know that internetworked identity presupposes a total identification with capital in the first instance of every internetworked moment; to know that “total contradiction is nothing but the manifested truth of total identification” (6); and to grope for the preponderance of the repressed heterogeneity in the conceptually permeated, machinofactured object-as-subject that may deliver the needed, nonidentitarian contradiction against the reality of untrue internetworked identity. The nonidentitarian object of the subject must now be to seek the “surplus of nonidentity” that capital would “suppress, disparage, and discard” so that capital may persist in the machinofacture, circulation, and exploitation of writing-identified-writers, or living alienable use-values that meet and greet each other in a manner that exceeds Georg Lukács’ description of the commodity as phantom objectivity (10, 183).

Following Lukács, the first object of the subject must be to notice that the material substrate of the machinofactured self bears strong resemblance to Lukács’ phantom objectivity—that is, the product of “relations between people” that “takes on the character of a thing” and, in so doing,
"acquires" a "strictly rational," "all-embracing," "autonomy," or a "phantom objectivity," that conceals all traces of its "fundamental nature," that is, its origin as a "relation between people." Thereafter, the subject-as-machinofactured-phantom-objectivity must take for its first object the ability to recognize in its material substrate recent advances in the workings of capital—capital's capacity, for example, to circulate alienable use-values that pass for relations between people, not objects; and that acquire in the moment of consumption the appearance of socially organized, fundamentally irrational, relatively autonomous subjectivities. If the phantom objectivity that passes for a constitutive subjectivity is to fulfill its nonidentitarian objective and release the surplus of nonidentity that capital would suppress, disparage, and discard in its private production of internetworked subjectivities, the constitutive subjectivity that figures phantom objectivities within its material substrate must render the presence of a phantom where once had stood a subject: a ghostly, machinofactured figure that conceals the presence of relations between people that participate in what is now the direct production of privately owned and operated relations between people.

Today, if the living product of the social factory is to secure even one nonidentitarian release from the object of the subject, the machinofactured subject must begin to suspect:

- the concepts that issue from and organize the identity of an internetworked phantom objectivity is capital accumulated to the point of becoming an image;
- the writing which penetrates the indispensable substrate of the internetworked object/subject is capital accumulated to the point of becoming entity;
- capital-as-image and capital-as-entity interpenetrate and so constitute the internetworked-subject-as-phantom-objectivity;
- the internetworked-subject-as-phantom-objectivity, for having been penetrated and constituted by capitalized image and entity, is no longer a relatively autonomous subject of social writing but, instead,
- the total identification of the writing-identified-writing-subject with capital:
- the total contradiction of the writing-identified-writing-subject by capital:
Stanley Harrison

• the accumulation of capital to the point of becoming the identi­fied subject of a total social contradiction:
• the phantom subject.

To see in one’s internetworked self the presence of a phantom subject is a significant step but, of course, only the beginning of dialectical operations designed to expose the untruth of internetworked identity. If the phantom subject hopes to release the contradiction against reality contained in its constitution by capital as a contradiction in reality, the phantom subject must know that the identitarian impulse organized within writing-as-exploitation induces capital’s phantom subjects to repress those heterogeneous social energies that collide with and exceed the limit of contradicted identity in an entirely unfamiliar manner (Adorno 5). The identitarian impulse that has heretofore driven relatively autonomous subjects of relatively autonomous social formations to repress psychological and ideological matters in the psychological unconscious and the political unconscious now drives the phantom subject to repress matters of production in the latest instantiation of the materialized unconscious—the phantom subject’s economic unconscious.

For all we know that mitigates against our faith in the immanence of identity, we who are phantom subjects do not know that the site of our unconscious repressions is now not merely psychological and political but, also, economic. Identity, which we “relish … as adequacy to the thing it suppresses” (Adorno 148), is no longer something we may decenter through customary appeals to the psychological and the political unconscious. We, of course, know that individuals may never destroy the instinctual drives that the super-ego experiences as being deplorable and represses into the unconscious mind. We recall that Sigmund Freud’s contribution to nonidentitarian discourse was to theorize the psychological unconscious and, in so doing, to expose the subject as being inadequate to the self by classifying the subject as the active site of drives, ongoing repression, and the inescapable return of the repressed, which discomforts, disorients, and decenters the pained, inadequate subject. We also know that individuals may never destroy the trauma of Otherness that politically organized social beings repress through ideology, or the symbolically organized concretization of the political unconscious. Individuals, who are indivisible from the politically organized social forma-
tions from which they issue, experience ideology in its most "primal form" as "the primacy of identity" (148) and as the politically, historically antagonistic Other who is characterized as both progeny and embodiment of pre-reflective states of nature. And we recall that Frederic Jameson's contribution to nonidentitarian discourse was to theorize the political unconscious and, in so doing, to expose the inadequacy of the subject as revealed through encounters with literature and other symbolic forms that simultaneously encode a culture's repressed responses to unresolved conflict and deliver a return of the repressed upon the culturally indivisible mass of individuals who are invited to experience and cope with their otherwise invisible crimes against poleis. But, for all we know of the unconscious, we have not reconciled ourselves to the existence of a third site of repression that mitigates against faith in the immanence of identity: the economic unconscious.

Because writing is now an exploitative relation:

- Writing-as-exploitation follows from capital's real economic ownership of the forces of production used in the direct, rationalized production of the writing-identified-writer;
- The privately owned forces of production that produce the writing-identified-writer have congealed in the form of an automated, internetworked system of writing machines that operates as a factory directly upon the raw material of relatively autonomous, socially organized writing subjects and converts these raw materials into the commodity form of socially organized subjects of writing;
- The relatively autonomous, socially organized writing subject, in each tautological moment of exchange, must purchase and become identified with the commodity form of the privately produced, cogitative, expressive subject if the relatively autonomous, socially organized writing subject would become the commodity form of the cogitative, expressive subject: the phantom subject;
- The phantom subject—in becoming a living commodity—is penetrated by capital accumulated to the point of becoming the phantom's entity (body) and image (discourse) and, in a privately produced moment of internetworked social reciprocitv with other phantoms, becomes both the material substrate and commodity form of capital accumulated to the point
of becoming internetworked social concourse and congress, or the concentrated presentation of the general conditions of the internetworked processes of social production in the form of the social commodity;

- The social commodity—or commodified field of internetworked sociolinguistic possibility to which machinofactured writers must connect themselves one point at a time—"subsumes the entire set" of phantom subjects who must "latch themselves onto the fully objectified econosocial formation because the internetworked system of writing machines is, if nothing else, a vast social formation that brings the production of social relations within an informational field that is itself coterminous with social relations of production, the mode of production, the economic" (Harrison 562);

- "The social character" of the social commodity, inclusive of all subsumed phantom subjects, like all "socially useful" commodities in relational exchange with the equivalent form of the "ultimate money form of the world of commodities . . . actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between the individual producers" (Marx, *Capital* ch01.htm);

- The absent presence of social relations that are always already materialized in the substrate of all forms of the social commodity are no longer merely concealed in relational exchange with the equivalent-form of the ultimate money-form of the world of commodities but, instead, are repressed—for they are that surplus of experience that is present in the material substrate of the congress of internetworked phantom subjects that cannot be present if phantom subjects are to "rejoice" and "bask" in the "primal form of ideology," that being "identity" (Adorno 148);

- The absent presence of social relations that collide with the limit of internetworked identity and threaten to exceed it are repressed, or become the concealed absence of a present absence, not through psychological or ideological repression but through economic repression brought on by relational exchange with the equivalent-form of the ultimate money-form of the world of commodities, or the conceptually permeated functioning of the real conditions of economic existence;

- The constitution of internetworked identities through ongoing exchange, consumption, production, and distribution represses into the economic unconscious the present absence of pres-
ently absented social relations of production that, on the one hand, imbue the machinofactured substrate of internetworked congress that circulates as the relative form of the commodity that seeks its equivalent in money, and that, on the other hand, threaten to deliver a return of the economic repressed against the self-identified, capital-identified contradiction in reality that is the phantom subject;

- Phantom subjects, like all other commodities, may experience a powerful return of the economic repressed when and if dialectical analysis “strips off” the phantom’s “mystical veil,” revealing it to be in a moment of dialectical reversal a “production by freely associated” producers, “consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan” (Marx, Capital ch01.htm).

The question really isn’t whether I am correct in presuming the existence of an economic unconscious. Nor is it whether we should be antagonistic to the identitarian impulse that satisfies itself only through repression of the structured relations of capitalist exploitation into the economic unconscious. As I see it, the question of the moment must be: what methods may the class theorist of writing use to deliver a return of the repressed upon the phantom subject of writing-as-exploitation and, in so doing, posit a negative negation of the identitarian impulse that is always already totally contradicted in its total identification with capital’s ongoing repression of the nonidentitarian heterogeneity that may yet exceed the limits of capital’s economic unconscious?

A Return of the Third Repressed

The good news is that the class theorist of writing turned negative dialectician will find ready-at-hand a Marxist methodology for returning the inner structure, or economic unconscious, of phantom subjects. The bad news is that this methodology will demand that writing theorists adopt a entirely counterintuitive way of writing about the constitution of writing subjectivities.

With this warning in mind, the class theorist of writing can start organizing a return of the third repressed—a return from the economic,
as opposed to the psychological or political, unconscious—by recalling with David Harvey that all commodities (even living commodities) begin as the “material embodiment of use-value” (the commodity’s qualitative aspect); “exchange-value” (the commodity’s quantitative aspect); and “value” (the interchangeable units of abstract, invisible human labor power that workers, drawn by capital into the structured relations of capitalist exploitation, crystallize within the materialized form of alienable use-values) (*Limits* 1). Class theorists advance still further by attending to Harvey where he explains that the three “values” must never be regarded as “fixed, known, or even knowable building blocks” (2). Instead, Harvey continues, one must approach the three “values” as sets of interlocking pairs, or three two-dimensional value-windows that provide flat perspectives onto the “inner structure” of capitalist exploitation (2). Use-value? exchange-value; exchange-value? value; and value? use-value—that is, the three value-windows onto and out of the phantom subject’s economic unconscious—provide the negative dialectician with a “relational,” non-linear, agglomerative “way of proceeding” that requires the nonidentitarian theorist to move in ceaseless fashion from one to “another window” so as to see “things that were formerly hidden from view” (2). Use-value || exchange-value; exchange-value || value; and value || use-value—they provide the class theorist of writing with the means of gazing into and theorizing out of the phantom subject’s infinitely complex, irreducibly heterogeneous, hopelessly explosive inner constitution.

When applied to the phantom subject, the immediate results of Harvey’s relational, dialectical way of proceeding are as interesting as they are arresting.

When we look into and theorize out of the use-value || exchange-value window onto the phantom’s economic unconscious, we understand that when the internetworked “I” writes, “I” writes what Terry Eagleton calls the alienable use-value’s “esoteric self-reference” (29) and, also, the evacuation from self-referential use-value “by exchange-value to mere abstraction” (30). When I contracts with capital to write I, capital composes the alienable use-value I that, like all commodities, “merely seeks out in its partner that essence in which it can find itself securely mirrored” (29). At the point of exchange, when I purchases I, I commodity
makes an "intimate ad hominem address" to each serialized consumer of I (26). I "sees in everyone the buyer in whose hand and house it wants to nestle" (27). And so I "tarts" itself up "in dandyish production," "promises permanent possession to everyone in the market without abandoning its secretive isolation," "disports itself with all comers without its halo slipping" (26, 27). As a result, the world around I appeals to I who exchanges the money form of the commodity for I, and, in so doing, inflates the skin of I to "garish proportions," making I seem like the most important purchase one can make on the planet. At the same time, "this very excess of materiality comes to signify nothing but itself, collapsing the object back upon itself as a monstrous tautology" (30). As such, the sale of I to I delivers the first return of the repressed, for in the sale of I to I, I metes out upon I an infantile fantasy of becoming I at the cost of becoming I. I is the commodification of the use of the identitarian impulse to become I, which, at first, is nothing more than I mirroring an infant's drive to participate through purchase of the material substrate of identity in the primal form of ideology, that being the "imaginary object" of identity, or that which "bolsters the subject in an illusory self-identity by ceaselessly reflecting back to it an image that is at once itself and another" (37).

At the same time, the exchange of the money form of the commodity for the right to consume the use-value of both the material substrate and imaginary object of I does not merely machinofacture a socially organized identity that under more familiar circumstances would reproduce the drama of I and Other that politically organized social beings repress in the political unconscious through ideology. Instead, the use-value exchange-value window on the phantom's economic unconscious returns upon the I the economic fact that the consumption of I is, as I have already noted, "evacuated by exchange-value to mere abstraction" (30). The substance of this observation necessarily follows when one takes into consideration Marx's comments in Chapter 1 of Capital on the operation of exchange value on use-value. In light of Capital, we would know that I is abstracted from use-value because I may exchange for I under the aspect of (1) the universal form of value, (2) the general form of value, (3) the expanded form of value, and (4) the accidental or elementary form of value (ch01.htm). That is to say, we
know that free agents may come to market for the purpose of receiving a quantity of I in exchange for money, or that commodity that gets produced within advanced systems of commodity exchange for the sole purpose of regulating exchange, which it does by providing the universe of commodities with a single equivalent that is money because money may not exchange against the universal equivalent (read: itself) and may not exchange for other commodities because all commodities express their relative values in the equivalent form of money (universal form of value) (ch01.htm). Free agents might as easily come to market for the purpose of receiving a quantity of I in exchange for an equal amount of one special commodity, like cattle in the old West, that becomes, through force of habit, the generally recognized local standard against which and within which a local system of commodities can exchange and become regulated with a strong degree of certainty (general form of value) (ch01.htm). Less likely, but just as plausibly, free agents might come to market for the purpose of receiving a quantity of I in exchange for an equal amount of any other commodity that exists within the haphazard universe of freely exchanging commodities that, as a system of exchange, predates, is embedded within, and underpins both the general and universal forms of value (expanded form of value) (ch01.htm). In other words, free agents may come to market for the purpose of receiving a quantity of I in exchange for an equal amount of a single commodity they happen to have in their possession, like Ex-Lax (accidental or elementary form of value) (ch01.htm). All of which means to say that anyone’s exchange of the money form of the commodity for I conceals the economic fact that I finds its metonymic equivalent in every other commodity that circulates within the entire capitalist system of identically interchangeable exchanges. That is, when I enters the world of exchange and, in so doing, exchanges a quantify of X commodity for a quantify of X commodity, I becomes implicated in the “smoothly continuous,” infinitely interrupted, different instantiation of an identical repetition (exchange value) (Eagleton 29). I becomes caught in a metonymic chain that does not yield I but, instead, I-as-Ex-Lax-as-Ipecac-as-YooHoo or, just as arbitrarily, I-as-Swanson-TV-Dinner-as-Dixie-Cup-as-Tupperware. As such, the sale of I to I delivers the second return of the repressed. In the sale of I to I, I ceases to become the equivalent of the I meted out through psychological and
ideological repressions but, instead, signifies that I is no more glorious or discreet than sewage removal. For, after all, anyone may come to market and exchange quantities of sewage removal for I.

If the dialectical reversal afforded thus far by the return of the third repressed is not sufficient to disintegrate the identitarian impulse that thrives because it represses its equivalence in compost, the class theorist of writing must move on and gaze through a second value-window onto the economic unconscious of the phantom subject—perhaps but not necessarily the exchange-value $\|$ value window. When seeking the preponderance of the object in the phantom subject, we may look into and theorize out of exchange-value $\|$ value and, in so doing, note that I-as-Levi’s-as-Volkswagen-as-Donovan is not only the presence of exchange-value abstracted from use-value but that the “phenomenal form” I that seeks its equivalent in Money is “the mode of expression... of something contained in it, yet distinguishable from it” (Marx, *Capital* ch01.htm). In the moment when I exchanges for I, and I becomes the metonymic equivalent of Chiclets or money, I does not become equivalent to a specific quantity of Chiclets or money because either I or Chiclets or money possess inherent value. Each time I or Chiclets or money factors in the identical repetition of commodity exchange, I or Chiclets or money are rendered exchangeable within the structured relations of capitalist exploitation because they are the “expressions or embodiments of one identical social substance, viz., human labour” (ch01.htm). Each commodity is exchangeable with all other commodities because all commodities contain “crystals” of and may be reduced to a “social substance, common to them all”—that is, “human labour in the abstract” (ch01.htm). Each phantom I is rendered exchangeable within the structured relations of capitalist exploitation because I is a value, or the absent presence of an “unsubstantial reality” common to all commodities, the “congelation of homogeneous human labour; of labour power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure” (ch01.htm).

As such, the sale of I to I delivers a third return of the third repressed, for in the sale of I to I ($I/I$), $I/I$ ceases to be merely the evacuation of tautological use-value to mere abstraction in the form of metonymic equivalence with all of other alienable use-values ($I/I$-as-X-as-X-as-X). $I/I$-as-X becomes an evacuation from all manifest forms of equivalence—
that is, an evacuation from I/I-as-Plutonium-Pellets-as-Mosler-Safe. I/I-as-X now becomes the inscrutable presence of an unexpected “history, in the sense of content, but not in the sense of a set of occurrences that have befallen it” (Benjamin, Origin 47). I/I-as-X, which as a commodity contains units of homogeneous labor power abstracted from human labor-power, becomes the indissoluble point of connection between I/I-as-X and the “total labour power of society, which is embodied in the sum total of the values of all commodities produced by that society,” and which “counts here as one homogeneous mass of human labour power, composed though it be of innumerable individual units” (Marx, Capital ch01.htm). I/I-as-X, in the moment of its production, is put under the influence of the absent history of the production of every unit of value and surplus value, or V, that circulates in the capitalist world economic system at any given time. And, suddenly, that which began as an infantile fantasy of becoming I at the cost of becoming I becomes a nonidentitarian instance wherein the impossibility of immanence comes under the influence of an irreducibly heterogeneous, decidedly historical, unquestionably material, fundamentally explosive essence: the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of both value and surplus value that imbues the phantom subject with an absent history and expands the formula for the consumption of internetworked subjectivity to I/I-as-X/V.

Once upon a time, Jean Baudrillard characterized the enclosure of the subject by the mass-mediated social as “The Implosion of the Social In the Media,” or that state in which the subject becomes shackled within a world of simulations and incapable of knowing the real because the subject has been given an “excess of information” (“New” 580). Today, in history, incessant devolution of phantom subjects into the lived experience of identical repetitions of a metonymic tautology becomes imbued with abstracted value—I/I-as-X/V—and is disintegrated from within by shocks and tremors delivered up by the return of the third repressed. The appearance of the individual has been put in direct contact with the total value structure of the capitalist world economic system. More importantly, the phantom has come under the influence of every specific, concrete social process of production that bears a relation to globally dispersed structured relations of capitalist exploitation.
In the end, the class theorist of writing may reveal the absent presence of the concrete processes of social production in the world system by advancing upon, looking into, and theorizing out of the value || use-value window onto the economic unconscious of the phantom subject. The class theorist of writing who describes the relationship of value production to the direct production of the rapidly disintegrating I/I-as-X/V is the theorist who promises to put capital and phantom subjects in intimate albeit disarticulated contact with the vital substance that gets repressed during direct production of the constitutive internetworked subjectivity. But, for this to happen, we need to remember a little something that Marx forwarded in the first chapter of the *Grundrisse*: every abstraction (including his labor theory of value) that one might use to reproduce “the concrete by way of thought,” is an abstraction that derives from our engagement with the concrete, defined as “the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse” (ch01.htm). Ernest Mandel added that for Marx “the concrete was both the ‘real starting point’ and final goal of knowledge” (*Late* 14). Today, it would appear that concrete phantom subjects (alienable use-values) are imbued with the material traces of the 6,602,138,208 concrete human beings, projected to 06/17/07 at 04:53 GMT (U.S. Census Bureau), who have all been taken up within what Immanuel Wallerstein identified as the world capitalist system’s single division of labor. Today, phantom subjects are imbued with labor-power abstracted by capital from human workers who are responsible for the production of the total aggregate of value that circulates in the world system that bears systemic relation to the production of each life form that appears within the structured relations of writing-as-exploitation. Today, phantom subjects are imbued with the real struggles of concrete human beings who stand in direct relation to any process in the entire world system by which capital abstracts labor-power into value.

The alienable aspect of I/I is, in other words, summarily exploded from within by the figures of Itsekeri women from the Ugborodo and Arutan villages in Escravos, Nigeria, who live not only in the oil rich Niger Delta under the shadow of Chevron Nigeria’s $400 million dollar Escravos Gas Plant but who struggle to survive without benefit of jobs, roads, water service, electricity, houses, schools, clinics, and a local
fishing economy that succumbed to Chevron oil spills. The economic unconscious of phantom subjects contains the figures of 2000 unarmed Itsekeri women, immiserated members of capital’s surplus labor army, who invaded and laid siege to Chevron’s Escravos Gas Plant Nigeria, inflicting a daily loss of revenue in the amount of $7.8 millions dollars. The economic unconscious not only contains the moment when Itsekeri women succeeded in bringing Chevron Nigeria to the bargaining table and, there, exacted verbal promises but no promises in writing from Chevron Nigeria for specific reforms, reparations, and restitution. It also contains the moment when victorious Itsekeri women went home to their villages and waited in vain for Chevron Nigeria to fulfill its wholly inadequate list of promised reforms, reparations, and restitutions (G8, Galiana, “Kudos!” “Nigeria: Ten Years On,” “Nigeria: Women Protesters,” “Nigerian Women,” “Oil Company,” “Women Occupy,” “Women Storm”).

The alienable aspect of I/I is just as possibly and arbitrarily exploded from within by the bytes and PCs of Quyen Tong, a 51 year-old, Vietnamese immigrant; his 10-year-old son; and 18-year-old daughter who spend “long nights” in Silicon Valley, “assembling tiny transistors onto printed circuit boards,” at pay of one “penny per component,” with “each transistor” “bent” and “then carefully inserted into tiny holes in the circuit board following a complex chart” (“Immigrant”). Because capital now abstracts into value both the direction production of commodities wherever it occurs and the consumption of the private-social wherever it occurs, capital deposits value relations within the consumption of the alienable private-social form of I/I and, for this, produces conditions in writing that explode the I/I from within—but without leaving traces to the origins of each explosion of I/I, or supporting reconstruction of the origin of I/I through, for example, the tracing of commodity chains, “the whole range of activities involved in the design, production, and marketing of a product” (Gereffi 1). Instead, shocks from the site of the third repressed that delivered up the Quyen Tong family and Itsekeri women from the economic unconscious deliver their dialectical reversal upon the identitarian impulse of phantom subjects because capital converts cognitive, expressive subjects through machinofacture into alienable use-values that through exchange puts phantom subjects in contact with
value, or the complex issue of a capitalist world system that abstracts both labor power and consumer goods from the specificity of labor and consumption, and intermingles both within a system of arbitrary exchange. The cost to capital of advancing production to the point that even the living subject becomes a product of capital’s direct production process is that all phantom subjects become an identical repetition of that which bespeaks their common nonidentitarian impulse to express and wrangle over the instants and trajectories, the synchrony and diachrony, the life and the history of the repressed-elsewhere that is always immanent in the ongoing falsification of identity through the internetworked writer’s insistence on being the self identification of an esoteric self-reference that ponies up money in order to become the leveraged objectivity that capital composes in the phantom subject of writing-as-exploitation.

Toward a Negative, Allegorical Rhetoric

The return of the third repressed as visited upon the phantom subject provides a force sufficient to decenter the consciousness of serialized phantom subjects and, in so doing, to disintegrate, however temporarily, the serialized identitarian impulse to mirror the self in the imaginary object and indispensable material substrate of the machinofactured entity in writing. Such a return is valuable in itself because it demonstrates that Adorno was always correct to believe that one could, under the right circumstances, “use the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity” (xx). But my purpose has never been so much to break through a fallacy as to leverage the repressed strength in the indispensable substrate of the expressive, cogitative phantom subject and, in so doing, to launch a class theory of nonidentitarian-rhetorics-in-writing. My hope, all along, has been to advance an object-oriented theory of technologically mediated rhetorical production—a class theory of writing—that both issues from and delivers a contradiction upon the contradiction of writing by capital’s writing. The possibility of delivering a negative negation of the phantom subject’s identitarian impulse has suggested to me that the writing theorist, turned negative
dialectician, turned negative rhetorician may respond to capital's evacuation of internetworked writers from subject position with a negative, nonidentitarian, rhetoric that advances the class interests of internetworked writers, if not the adequacy of their evacuated identities. Even though capital has used its real economic ownership of the forces of production used in the direct, rationalized production of the writing-identified-writer to draw technologically mediated rhetoricians into the structured relations of capitalist exploitation, the writing theorist, turned negative dialectician, turned negative rhetorician might presage the arrival of nonidentitarian rhetorics that are always elsewhere but always material in the object of writing capital and, as such, constitute the presence of an absent contradiction against the contradiction in reality that is capital accumulated to the point of becoming writing-as-exploitation. In brief, the newly minted negative rhetorician may at long last participate in what Adorno once characterized as the "critical rescue of the rhetorical element" (56).

For Adorno, rhetoric was finally communication "on the side of content," or the release of heterogeneous, nonidentitarian energies in the conceptually permeated object of the subject. Rhetoric that consistently inclined toward and returned a nonidentitarian release of the repressed heterogeneity in the conceptually permeated object of the subject enacted Adorno's critical rescue of the rhetorical element: the "mutual approximation of thing and expression, to the point where the difference fades" (56). In today's market for and of writing, this would mean that rhetoric that aspires to the condition of negative rhetoric must celebrate its failure to participate in the primal form of ideology under the cover of capital's general evacuation of writers from subject position. An object-oriented rhetoric would, as it were, incline not toward the concept of identity but from rhetoric's indissoluble articulation with nonidentitarian, fundamentally heterogeneous materials that may be repressed but may never go into "their concepts without leaving a remainder" (5). The organized release of repressed rhetorics in language—where language is capital—allows language, "literally... the organon of thought" (56), to foretell the arrival of that which preponderates in the object of the evacuated subject: the repressed heterogeneity of life under cover of capital that may imbue the embodied voice with the "seriousness of unswerving negation," a seri-
ousness that "lies in its refusal to lend itself to sanctioning things as they are" (159). This arrival in practice of negative, irreducibly heterogeneous rhetoric in language capital would secure the rescue of rhetoric from capital because it would disembbody any residual hope that rhetoricians might have of addressing the problem of writing-as-exploitation through reconstitution of the individual identity, the constitutive subjectivity. Then, too, negative rhetoric, or rhetoric rescued from subjection to the concept of identity under capital, would make concrete the real possibilities for delivering contradictions in writing against globally internetworked capital, capital's composition of nonbeing in life, capital's composition of identity as both infantile wish fulfillment and structured evacuation of identity from the dream of life into the structured relations of capitalist exploitation.

In the selfsame moment when negative dialectics delivered blasts, shocks, and tremors from out the phantom subject's economic unconscious, negative rhetoric became for us a real possibility. When the inner structure of identity under capital expanded to the point of disintegrating the phantom subject, internetworked writers evacuated by capital from subject position were gifted with an opportunity to consume the consumption of the commodified aspect of writing-as-exploitation—that is, to live in the only way possible, to live by "consuming the standpoint" (30). Internetworked writers were afforded an opportunity to see that when rhetoric under the sign of exchange passes from capital into the machinofactured writer, rhetoric commodity expands from being rhetoric—a two-sided activity between structurally overdetermined, socially contingent, relatively autonomous language users—to being the constitution of I/\textit{I}-as-rhetoric-as-\textit{X}/\textit{V}: the identical repetition in the life of a dynamic commodity that, for being a commodity, always makes extrinsic, allegorical reference to something other than interindividual communication—the deflected expression of rhetoric commodity's relative value in the universal equivalent, money, and the aggregate mass of interchangeable locations of commodity production and consumption that through agglomeration constitutes the absent presence in negative rhetoric of the abstraction of life into value that touches all parts of the capitalist world economic system. When the capitalist direct production process succeeded in composing the object of the evacuated subject, the
object of the subject-as-capital was given a mind to discover that the I/I-as-$X/V$—or the provisional, allegorical subject in writing-as-exploitation—may never address its situation in writing until it accepts that rhetoric commodity, like all commodities, contains an “irreducible surplus of signification that” not only “deflects the sign from its truly representational role” but requires the evacuated subject to cease from “feeling through words” and begin “feeling for words” (Eagleton 4). Use through consumption of the commodified aspect of writing-as-exploitation delivers up, as it were, a chance to address the inalienable fact that alienable two-sided, internetworked rhetoric puts provisional moments of being-under-the-sign-of-exchange in allegorical relation, first, with the aggregate mass of abstract value that circulates throughout the capitalist world system and, second, with every moment in this world that bears relation to that mode of production for profit that never allows national boundaries to shape its aspirations; that includes but a single division of labor, or grid of interdependent socio-economic relations, wherein members of even the most remote communities assume that their futures depend upon “exchange” with other parts of the world-system; that recruits and compensates wage-laborers, slaves, coerced cash-crop producers, share-croppers, and tenant farmers—the many faces of labor in the whole world-economy—for the purpose of appropriating surplus-value; and that, for all this, draws core, peripheral, and semi-peripheral areas of capitalist production (frequently but errantly classified as coexisting stages of capitalist, pre-capitalist, and semi-capitalist production) into a unified web of highly differentiated capitalist relations of production (Wallerstein).

Because the inner structure of the congress of serialized phantom subjects always makes repressed, potentially explosive reference to the circulation of value throughout the capitalist world economic system, phantom concourse through the private-social at the level of discourse demands of internetworked writers that they produce something other than positive identitarian reversal of capital’s contradiction of individual identity—namely, the resurrection through negative, suddenly allegorical rhetoric of a “significance” that “is always elsewhere, in the social relations of production whose traces” the identitarian word as commodity “has obliterated” (Eagleton 29).
Easier written than done, the I/I that communicates with other phantom subjects also participates in what Angus Fletcher once called “the whole point of allegory,” the fact that it need not be “read exegetically” because “it often has a literal level that makes good enough sense all by itself” (7). As we have come to understand, capital’s goal for organizing production within the social factory has been to present the phantom subject with something that closely approximates without replicating the processes by which socially organized social bodies take possession of relatively autonomous, constitutive subjectivity. Under capital, would-be consumers of writing-as-exploitation assent to becoming machinofactured phantom subjects because they are drawn to that in writing-as-exploitation which is both absolutely provisional but obviously “good enough”: the suddenly falsified story of relatively autonomous individuals who come in contact with what Mikhail Bakhtin once described as the “zone of contact with the inconclusive present (and consequently with the future)” that creates the necessity not only of the “incongruity” of person with self but of the associated challenge to being “either greater” than one’s “fate, or less” than one’s “condition” as a human being (35, 37).

Yet, for its being “good enough,” the provisional story of textual concourse through and congress within capital’s social factory still contains a divided tendency and, as such, an opportunity for internetworked writers to meet the demands put upon them by the material conditions of internetworked rhetorical production. Internetworked writers may cease to concentrate on socializing, or revising, the social relations within text, word, letter, sign, space, and the many other stuffs of capital’s internetworked, allegorical composition: “the Internet.” Instead, they may begin to posit the absent presence in identity of an “other” set of actions that gets repressed into the economic unconscious when capital’s social factory causes capital-as-image and capital-as-entity to accumulate in the composition of the phantom subject. Internetworked writers may discover in “the” provisional “Internet” a platform in writing for delivering, on the one hand, proof of capital’s systemic contradiction of such conceptions as the inconclusive present, the incongruity of person with self, and the challenge of being either greater than one’s fate, or less than one’s condition as a human being, and for releasing, on the other
hand, repressed, nonidentitarian, unevenly developed rhetorics that deliver what Lenin might have called social democratic contradictions against the reality of capital's contradiction of writing in reality.

For those who believe that class theorists of writing may forge deflected engagements with capital's vast social allegory and continue to persist in the habit, following Volosinov, of leveraging the "inner dialectic quality of the sign" in hopes of either intensifying the emancipatory potential in the dialectically charged sign, or stopping signs criss-crossed with ideological accents from becoming univocal and "degenerating into allegory" (23), I/I-as-X/V would forward the following observation. Because capital has subsumed the production of both the sight of semiotic production and the consumption of social signs through the direct production of internetworked private-social being, internetworked writers who grasp the significance of capital's subsumption of the general processes of social production under capital must try to cultivate a refined taste for allegory. No one may stop an allegorical sign from degenerating into allegory; no one may leverage the inner dialectical quality of allegorical capital-as-signs by leveraging the inner dialectical quality of the ideological aspect of allegorical capital-as-signs; and no one may start to leverage the inner dialectical quality of allegorical signs until struggle in the sign is displaced by struggle for the object of the sign. Only when this happens will internetworked writers begin to discover the ways and means for articulating with and delivering contradictions against capital's contradiction of writing by writing. Only when this happens will internetworked writers begin to struggle over that which is indissoluble from but extrinsic to the provisional, interindividual sign: omnipresent conditions of nonbeing in the sign which may be proved but never traced through dialectical analysis, which may be enunciated but never made contingent through rhetoric.

A Gordian knot awaits anyone who attempts to take up rhetorical position within the machinofactured production of social relations. To purchase a share of alienable identity-in-writing from capital is to receive an invitation to capital's identitarian ball, but it is also to be overmatched in the writer's dance with a conundrum-in-capital that trips anyone who hopes to take up position within capital and, thereafter, establish a positive relationship with one's own machinofactured, private-social
identity. The already revolutionized private-social relations of capitalist production contradict writerly attempts at self-possession where writers circulate at the internetworked core of the unevenly developed capitalist world economic system. Indeed, the capitalized production of social relations contradicts anyone who looks past internetworked rhetoric's foundation in capital in order to leverage the situated power of rhetoric in the fabulous construction of the constitutive subjectivity.

But, for all this, the subsumption of writing under capital presents nonidentitarian rhetoricians with the obligation to do what the I/I must in order to exist-in-struggle—that is, to consume capital’s general evacuation of writers from subject position—but, also, to go deeper into the materials of nonidentity than capital would have the I/I go.

It is well within the reach of I/I to participate in a congress of serialized phantom subjects dedicated to the object-oriented, nonidentitarian possibilities in internetworked writing. A congress of I/I-as-XIV might easily deflect the composition of internetworked rhetoric from the provisional site of interindividual, ideological creativity into the repressed inner structure of allegorical capital; into the values that abstract us away from the world of lived experience; into the posited memory of social relations that values suspend, that capital represses, and that each serialized member of the class of exploited writers must take for an essential personal history that has “never befallen it” (Benjamin, Origin 47). A congress of I/I-as-XIV, congealed into the nonidentitarian class of exploited writers against capital, may bespeak a collective desire for that which is nonidentical in internetworked identity: both the absenting of being from capital’s system of global exploitation, and the absenting of being into the “that which is not” (Adorno 57). Indeed, a congress of I/I-as-XIV might even become Legion, in the sense that diffuse concentrations of nonidentitarian I/I-as-XIV may become allegorical prisms possessed of the inextinguishable colors of nonbeing under capital (57)—from Silicon Valley, to Escravos, to the transnationally internetworked core of the unevenly developed capitalist world economic system, prisms that make glamorous “every second of time” that is “the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter” (Benjamin, “On” 264). And, too, a congress of I/I-as-XIV might even become Legion, in the sense that diffuse concentrations of nonidentitarian I/I-as-XIV may
become allegorical prisms possessed of the terrifying clamor that meets with and then exceeds the limit of nonidentity under the cover of identity, that achieves no identity through rhetoric but disintegrates into the billions of eyes and mouths that break through from the repressed core of the economic unconscious and write the collective end of exploitation.

In the unholy congress of I/I-as-X/V, nOoNE bereft of identity may communicate nonbeing possessed of the cold fury that writes the absent presence of hell’s minions in the nonidentical repetition of that which has been written: My Name is Legion: for we are many.

University of Massachusetts
Dartmouth, Massachusetts

Notes

1. The symbol || is meant to signify at least three things. First, it tells theorists that they must compose relational pairs out of use-value, exchange-value, and value. It locks my “values” into relational pairs and, in so doing, stops theorists from regarding the three “values” as “fixed, known, or even knowable building blocks” (Harvey 2). Second, it lends iconographic force to the claim that Marxist analysis allows one to look into and theorize out of the inner structure of commodities. Each combination of | and || is appropriately suggestive because each constructs an interior space that yields to readers who read into and out of the inner structure of||. Third, it recalls for us Marx’s claim that “our investigation must . . . begin with the analysis of a commodity.” Because || stands in for a commodity in each of my relational value-pairings, it proposes over and again that a commodity be our first object of analysis.

Works Cited


