**'Time (x) Out of Joint': Interpreting Spectral Imagery in Media
Representations of the 1993 Timex Industrial Dispute in Scotland**

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‘Time (x) Out of Joint’: Interpreting Spectral Imagery in Media Representations of the 1993 Timex Industrial Dispute in Scotland

The prolonged, acrimonious, industrial dispute and subsequent closure of the Timex electronics plant in Dundee Scotland in 1993 is a key marker in UK manufacturing and labor relations history that was extensively covered in the media at that time. A discourse analysis of UK print-media representations of the dispute reveals both vivid accounts of the labor relations collapse and evocative imagery reaching beyond this particular event. Newspaper accounts were found to be laced with dark images including those of death and spectres from the past, symbolising the continuing expiration of much of British manufacturing and ghostly ever-presence of Thatcher-era industrial relations. This leads us to a deeper interpretation, drawing on Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* (1994), exposing the dark shadow lurking within the post-1989 neo-liberal capitalist ebullience present at the time of the strike, and presaging the present global crisis in capitalism and regret over the closure of such manufacturing plants.

KEYWORDS: Derrida, economic crises, Jameson, manufacturing, Marxism, social poetics, spectre, Timex industrial dispute, UK newspapers

INTRODUCTION

It is not surprising that in times of economic crisis, plant closures, downsizing, and what we now ubiquitously call “austerity measures”, images of death and ghosts often appear as metaphors in media and academic commentaries. We posit an interpretation of these metaphors hitherto unexplored in management studies literature. It is relevant not only for the present era of economic crisis, but also for its precursor, an ebullient time rooted in self-congratulating, post-1989, neo-liberal ideology. Yet industries then in decline were still haunted by Marxism’s spectral return after its untimely burial. Industrial restructuring and economic financialization were clear antecedents of the later economic crisis, when ideas thought to be dead and buried were again revived. We argue that such ever-lurking spectres not only signify memories of previous, oft-glorified times, but also these spectral ideas can aid understanding of our world today.

Interpreting media representations of a 1993 industrial dispute about restructuring, we then draw on Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* (1994) to show how spectral images emerge out of media interpretations of the bitter dispute at Timex’s plant in Dundee, Scotland in 1993, a pivotal moment in UK labor history (Knox & McKinlay, 2010; Miller & Woolfson, 1994). The strike highlights a time of shifting economic emphasis away from manufacturing. It is therefore particularly timely and apposite to explore the 1993 media commentaries on this dispute as a prescient landmark. As an example of disastrous labor relations, described in vivid, media headlines, it reflects wider socio-economic trends and discourses, marking the continued decline of UK manufacturing.

We take an interpretative, analytic turn to explore the media depictions of this dispute in 1993 broadsheet newspapers. Nuanced understandings emerge, revealing broader fears emanating from, but resonating beyond, this situated account. Press articles, as

important information sources, report news and mould public opinion, often through interpretative, journalistic, linguistic licence, going beyond particular events. Spectral warnings of UK manufacturing demise are discernible in the reports on this industrial crisis, even when journalistic tropes are used, and despite the presence of strident, neo-liberal voices attempting to drown out competing narratives. Press accounts show dynamic, discursive exchanges between journalists and strikers, the former playing a greater role in the turn of events than previously understood or commented upon.

We argue the need for research criticality in analysing the reporting of such events. They resonate with broad rhetoric and cannot be isolated or assigned to discrete eras. Depictions of the Timex dispute must not just be temporally situated within the UK context, as more can be learnt from it, including understanding media interpretations of other economic events. We demonstrate important discursive links underlining the far-reaching significance of this dispute. From its stance we look towards the global recession and crisis in capitalism, media protests of regret for plant closures, and calls for renewed investment. As Skidelsky states, “without a strong manufacturing base there can be no export-led recovery [out of the financial crisis]” (*Observer*, 2012).

The research fills a need for studies embracing different approaches to evaluating media rhetoric and imagery. Rather than accepting surface presentations, we respond to calls to dig below the facade to explore the articulations and evocative imagery with which we are constantly bombarded (Greenberg & Knight, 2004; Grint & Case, 1998). Our study can be located within the research genre that strives to pick apart and critically interpret media associations. We move beyond initial demarcations of the discursive components of the text, and posit an interpretation of the reporting of the 1993 Timex dispute that subsequently emerged out of the initial thematic analysis.

Despite being about a particular event, our understanding can be taken much further. Drawing then upon Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (1994), we argue that spectral images therein presage a possible return of Marxist emancipatory forces. We complement the analysis by using Jameson's (1981, 2005) "social poetics" to identify elective affinity, or uncanny parallel, between press representations that echo worker representations, and the figure of the spectre elucidated in Derrida's reading of Marx and Shakespeare.

This paper first presents an overview of the 1993 Timex dispute and media reporting. The methodology then takes a systematic, interpretative, discourse analytic approach, using a data-set of 1993 media coverage from five national newspapers. Our results are then presented with textual data evidence. The analysis develops through germane themes from Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*. Inductively theorising, we use Jameson's social poetics to identify elective affinity between death and spectres in Derrida's readings and interpret the images of death and ghosts in media representations of the dispute. Derridian arguments *apropos* an atheological messianic faith in justice in our analysis then help us to understand this better in light of the recent economic crisis.

THE 1993 TIMEX DISPUTE AND ITS MEDIA COVERAGE

Timex established its Dundee plant in 1946 to produce its mechanical wristwatches. As Knox and McKinlay (2010) show, Timex played its part, when Scotland received from 1945 to 1970 the "greatest inflow of American direct investment in the world, outside Canada" (p. 211). With available labor and a promise of economic prosperity, Dundee welcomed American multinationals like Timex and National Cash Register (NCR). Industrial expansion continued, and in the 1970s Timex had a workforce of over 6,000 in Dundee. However, decisions were taken to transfer productive capacity

to new plants in the Philippines, Taiwan, France and Portugal. This allowed Timex to profit from lower labor and site costs, reflecting wider trends of work displacement in the manufacturing sector in the UK, as in the USA, home to the parent Timex Corporation. In the late 1970s, demand for mechanical watches also fell markedly, to weaken further the Dundee plant's position. A new strategic move into electronic subcontracting signalled further workforce reduction there from 4,200 workers in 1978 to 2,300 in 1983. The 1980s electronics market saw Timex's further undoing in Dundee with changes in original equipment and contract electronic manufacturing (Taylor, 1993). Although one of the six largest UK contract electronic manufacturers, by 1990 the plant obtained its business mainly from IBM. With a new Timex president in 1991 in its Dundee operation, pressures then built up for structural changes. The situation deteriorated rapidly when, with no orders from IBM for 1993, in late 1992 radical cost-cutting measures were begun. Redundancies planned for 190 out of 500 workers resulted in industrial action, and in February 1993, 340 striking workers were sacked.

Cusick (1993) gave an in-depth analysis of the Timex dispute in the *Independent on Sunday* March 28th edition. He concluded that firing a unionised workforce to replace it with "subdued, unorganised recruits" was "a tempting option for management" that Timex managers seized with alacrity. In the same edition, devoting much further copy to the Timex dispute, McCrystal (1993) shows how animosities increased rapidly with violence escalating at the plant gates, as buses with "scab" recruits, mainly men, were forced through union picket lines of jeering, mainly women, workers. Bitter strike action reached levels not seen for years, negotiations became deadlocked and then broke down, and in June 1993 the plant was closed down. Miller and Woolfson (1994, p. 209) describe it as "one of the most important industrial disputes of the 1990s", and even "the most bitter industrial dispute since the mid-1980s". Its implications became

then evident to academics, as earlier they were to journalists, keen to bring them to public notice. Press analyses featuring leader and editorial comment, had included their influential Sunday and week-end editions. Thus, the 29th May 1993 *Guardian Weekend* edition in its color-magazine supplement, headlining “Tick-a-Tick Timex Time’s Running Out”, had a large clock face on the cover. Through prominent media coverage, the events surrounding the strike kindled public emotion, with a discourse not yet consigned to history. As the narrative’s co-producers, journalists conspired actively with strikers to evoke the past, as co-protagonists rather than mere reporters of an unfolding story. They took poetic license, embracing journalistic opportunities, and often clichés, offered by the emotional symbolism of time passing and the demise of a plant making time-pieces. They must “sell” a story, and plant-closures have long been described in emotive terms (Martin, 2004; Puette, 1992). But, journalists play a more complex role, using narratives to illustrate their stances. Media texts revealed an interaction between journalists and strikers, seeking support for their calls for justice.

The historical moment in 1993 situates the Timex dispute as an industrial relations marker, ushering in a new reality for workers in the story of UK manufacturing decline. With extensive media coverage, it was a symbolic industrial conflict, bearing residues of prior Thatcher-era conflicts such as the miners’ strike. It is now part of broader collective remembrance narratives of UK industrial conflicts. During the dispute, it captured public attention and imagination, with its hallmark signs of a “scab” workforce, a bitter strike and plant closure (Independent 1993a). It involved a highly publicised and politicised lock-out and dismissal of its local, largely female, workforce (Martin & Dowling, 1995), occurring well after the peak of Thatcherism and brutal crushing of UK trade union power. Echoing preceding decades of worker resistance and dissent, it became part of a narrative of manufacturing decline.

However, it also symbolised a new era. Thus, Timex managers were the example used by the Herald (1993) when they summed up the spirit of the age: “Costs are the altar at which all managers worship”. The “nasty nineties”, as described by Grint and Case (1998), were a “death zone of casualties” in the “war of competitive capitalism.” It saw managers “prepared to make essential cuts in costs. That often translates as mass redundancies...” (p. 561). Since then, plant closures continued. Notable in Dundee was the 2009 NCR closure. From a past as Scotland’s pre-war manufacturing city *par excellence*, Dundee can no longer claim to be a thriving center (Di Domenico, 2001).

It is prescient to note from our present vantage, the turmoil resulting from Scotland’s move away from manufacturing to financial services, with the 2008 near collapse of once-strong banking institutions and forced government rescue buy-outs. A return to the glory days of the UK’s manufacturing past is discussed in the press as a hope for a better future (Skidelsky, 2012). Within such calls, the striker’s voice can yet be heard, reminding us of “one of Scotland’s most bitter industrial disputes” (Herald, 1996). It attracts less academic attention than it deserves. The dispute cannot be treated as a fascinating labor relations event consigned to history, as we grapple with events that followed and a crisis in capitalism. This provides our data with a further layer, leading to in-depth critique and argumentation. We now set out the methods framing the data.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL METHODS

Data Collection

Print-media representations of the Timex dispute were obtained by collating reports for January to December 1993 from five newspapers, including Sunday editions. We used the terms “Timex” and “Dundee”. A search of *LexisNexis* database yielded 233

articles that, due to the event sequence, were mainly from the first half of 1993. The newspapers selected were the *Guardian*, *Times*, *Independent*, *Scotsman* and *Herald*, all with broad circulation and readership. The first three have national UK circulation, whereas the latter two have clear Scottish focus and readership. As discursive imagery and journalist constructions reflect newspaper ideology and socio-political affiliation, lamentations about Britain's industrial past and worker plight fit the *Guardian*'s left-wing rhetoric, compared to the 'middle-ground' *Independent* and conservative *Times*, and appeared more frequently in the former. Our methodology ensured rigor by selecting across the range of newspapers. Our understanding gives insight into their interpretations. It is part of our critical discourse analytic approach, necessitating extrapolative contextual links rather than treating texts as detached or singular voices.

Media Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003, 1995) is used to interpret media texts about the Timex dispute. However, the discourses represented in media texts are seen as going beyond individual texts (Chalaby, 1996). Methodologically, discourse analysis as employed here has three dimensions. The first comprises individual textual media accounts. Second are the temporal contexts to which they relate. Third are ideas the textual discourses draw on and influence in turn (Phillips & Di Domenico, 2009). Our analysis from an empirical and conceptual standpoint on the three dimensions resulted in two levels of discursive interpretation. Due to the emergent and inductive nature of the research, the first level involved discerning distinct, embedded themes during our reading of media discourses on Timex's dispute. A second level involved interpreting an overall theme, not planned for at the outset. Built on earlier analyses, the spectral motif emerged from collated evidence as a broad theme, leading to conceptual reading of this meta-discourse by using Derrida's spectropoetics and Jameson's social poetics.

The first level of analysis involved identifying media discourses through going back and forth iteratively between literature and data by close readings of press articles on Timex. More refinement followed these early iterations until discourse themes, encapsulating the case study's key facets, provided an overview of its representations, namely: *historical memory and ties to previous disputes*; *labor/capital conflict*; *managerial brutality*; and *the vigil of solidarity*. These themes, presented in the next section, give examples of how data were interpretatively analysed from our initial reading of the media texts. Textual excerpts around these themes were organized in these four discursive categories facilitated by use of Atlas.ti, a qualitative analysis software package for data management, coding and retrieval. The second analysis level explores the spectral motif and related "time out of joint" concept. These were emergent themes but were not used from the start. Thus, spectral imagery and use of Derridian insights came through identifying articulations revealed by the data in a surprising repetition of discursive imagery about the past, ghosts, murder and similar motifs. This necessitated an extension of the first analysis incorporating this second iterative stage of interpretation. We thus draw upon data excerpts to illustrate media discourses and a meta-narrative that became our conceptual interpretative critique. The analysis found reference to the spectral motif across the dataset, with at least 96 explicit, relevant references, including "spectre" and "ghosts". The inter-textual lacing of the discursive frame is further interpreted using social poetics to build amalgams of meaning about this central spectral image. The interpretive results combine Derrida's insights and Jameson's poetic approach to make sense of this spectral meta-narrative.

MEDIA DISCOURSES AND THE TIMEX DISPUTE

First we discuss with specific examples of textual evidence, the discourses identified from an initial reading of media accounts of the dispute. Our interpretations emerged iteratively during this process. Of the four discourses, the theme “historical memory and ties to previous disputes” directly and explicitly refers to the theme of time, although specifically time past. Initial text interpretations did not identify “time out of joint” and “spectres” immediately as these themes emerged on a second level of analysis from texts originally identified within the first level themes. Iteratively it emerged that these four key themes were interlaced with imagery relating to second level themes. Thus the themes “labour capital conflict” and “managerial brutality” were depicted in media representations in such violent terms as “cut”, “slashed”, “hatchet man”, or “devil” linked to “draconian and hell-bent”. This led us to a concern with the violence and hatred identified with its management that resulted in Timex’s “untimely” death, or metaphorical “murder”, before incomplete “burial”. In the spirit of Derrida’s play on Marx’s and Shakespeare’s poetic license, we can also understand the license taken by the journalists when they describe violence, death and murder in relation to Timex. Death and murder in Hamlet, Macbeth or the other tragedies, can result in the “unquiet spirits” of the murdered dead still stalking the earth, attending to the living, until they are eventually laid to rest. These “uneasy ghosts” were very much present in the first level theme media descriptions of the workers’ picket line “vigil of solidarity” with remembrance of narratives about past conflicts, strikes and plant closures. This led us to our second level critique of the overarching spectral meta-narrative, “ghosts” and “time out of joint”, interwoven into accounts. This inter-textual reading of media articles led us to Derrida’s interpretations as a conceptual aid

to make sense of the media depictions, and on to interpret the texts on spectres as a “social poetic” in Jameson terms. We thus lay the path taken in arriving at the second level interpretative analysis by first setting the scene with the four first level themes.

First Level of Interpretative Analysis: Four Main Media Discourse Themes

Historical Memory and Ties to Previous Disputes

The first theme that emerged involved historical memory and ties to previous disputes and deeper popular consciousness. This thematic undoubtedly acted as a journalistic hook for imagery of clocks ticking and time passing, to which Timex obviously gave rise. However, this symbolism did not detract from the fact that Timex’s demise was seen as a ‘final nail in Dundee’s coffin’ as a key industrial city (Di Domenico, 2001).

Writers are seduced too easily by emblems, but it was hard to resist tying the attitudes and imagery of the Timex frontline to threads of Dundee's past. (Guardian, 1993a)

The journalists’ continual play on words highlighted the conflict as a “throwback” to a more brutal, draconian era. Excerpts taken from right across the spectrum illustrate this. Thus the *Guardian* headlined: “Jobs fight turns clock back to 1980s” (1993b) and again gave the opinion that “the dispute feels like an event from another age” (1993c). The *Independent* also opined that “the pendulum may be swinging back” and “Timex turns the clock back in Scotland” (Independent, 1993b). Even the *Sunday Times* wrote that: “It is a time nobody will forget, the Jurassic Park of industrial relations” (1993).

Labor/ Capital Conflict

The next thematic of labor/capital conflict again alluded to a preceding age when industrial violence was common, such as in the brutal confrontations with UK miners:

Ugly scenes of industrial violence not seen in Britain since the 1980s were played out on the streets of Dundee...The conduct of industrial relations is a delicate art. Both capital and labour can too easily threaten the other with extinction (Times, 1993).

Timex management was depicted by the press as “conjuring up” an extreme form of American capitalism in Dundee, with the aim of closing down the plant in a vicious, even murderous manner. “It is seen to have put the boot in when the victim was on the ground” (Independent, 1993b). Indeed, the company was pictured as “a slash and burn employer... an elusive foe, able and willing to redeploy across the globe” (Guardian, 1993a), with Dundee victim to multinational capitalist vicissitudes. The result was the threat of obliteration with a destruction of opposition through plant closure, “not only smashing organised labour but dismantling Timex” (Scotland on Sunday, 1993a). The conclusion was seen as inevitable to reporters for an industrial dispute symbolised by extremes of “violence, arrests, hardship and labour martyrdom” (Independent, 1993c).

The Timex plant in Dundee, scene of Britain’s ugliest industrial dispute of recent years is likely to close by Christmas ... One national union leader said closure would be “a Pyrrhic victory but victory nevertheless” (Independent, 1993d).

Managerial Brutality

The third theme explored was the related theme of managerial brutality. Management aggression was depicted in strong terms, especially the managing director who was described as “unreasonable, draconian and hell bent” (Scotland on Sunday, 1993a), a “murderer” and “a hatchet man, out to shred the workforce and crush the union” (Guardian 1993c). Stark press images portray Timex management as “diabolical” and “satanic-like”, with the “evil of capitalism” forcing them to take brutal actions. The

Herald (1993) poetically compared the management slashing costs to culling “rank weeds” even “if some of the plant life bears an embarrassing resemblance to people.”

The Vigil of Solidarity

With the strike in full-swing, workers held lengthy pickets outside the factory, jeering the “scabs”. Media reports represented these in painful, aggressive, torturous terms:

The contorted faces of men and women screaming at the new workforce will be an abiding memory of the Timex story (Scotland on Sunday, 1993a).

At other times, the picket was described as a “vigil of solidarity”, an almost spiritual event. As Charlie Malone, a strike committee leader described its symbolism: “We did not want Timex thinking we were giving up the ghost” (quoted in the Scotsman, 1993a). However, the vigil, designed to rally workers, was infused by a sense of loss and fear of a dismal end. The mood was “sombre”, although the “brazier at the now locked factory gates continued to burn” (Scotsman, 1993b). Singing on the picket line was described, however, by the press as “raising the spirits of the jobless workers” for “when you're in the last bloody ditch, all there's left to do is sing” (Guardian, 1993d).

The picketing workers used slogans to drive home their often “grave and enigmatic” messages, and their “home-made placards carried messages of startling solemnity” (Guardian, 1993a). Along with front-page photographs of gesticulating workers in the newspapers, their placards were also featured. They often took a poetic or imaginative turn, including Shakespearean quotes such as “Uneasy Lies The Head That Wears The Crown”. This refers to lines from “King Henry IV” when “death itself awakes”.

Second Level of Interpretative Analysis: The Spectral Meta-Narrative Theme

Coincidental to the unfolding events occurring at the Timex plant in Dundee in 1993, Derrida's most sustained engagement with Marx and Marxism also occurred in 1993 at a colloquium entitled "Whither Marxism?" This post-soviet-era colloquium aimed to address Marxism's future relevance. Published as *Spectres of Marx* (1994), they were meditations on *inheriting* Marx in a climate of ebullient, seemingly hegemonic, capitalism. The media discourses, overlaying meta-narrative and repeated references to time out of joint, death and ghosts, prevalent in the popular print newspaper reports of Timex's dispute, allow a penetrative discursive reading when viewed in relation to Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*. This is now focussed upon as a second level of analysis.

The discourse identified during the interpretative readings of the media text of labor-capital conflict was found to allude to a past hostile age. However, it was also found to be often cast in spectral language, with the spectre's figure looming up in a haunting that suspends all "normalcy", mindful of Derrida's interpretation of *Spectres of Marx*. Thus a Scottish newspaper analysed the Timex dispute in the following way:

It served the purposes of those involved to portray the opposition as the living spectre of industrial relations gone mad. the spectre of irreconcilable confrontation was always there (Scotland on Sunday, 1993a).

Across the UK press, the spectral theme is apparent in all newspapers analysed, with a language of eeriness, such as: "The brazier glowed, casting an eerie light" (Guardian, 1993a), or spectrality such as: "The spectre of callous American management practice sends a shiver down the spine" (Independent, 1993b). Indeed, the *Independent*, makes just as much of ghostly metaphor and deadly discourse as the left-wing *Guardian* in

which such language was more to be expected. We can see how the media overall evoked the spectre to depict the acrimonious Timex conflict. Indeed, just as *Spectres of Marx* reveals Marx's intrigue with spectres, ghosts and necromancy, there is almost a playful analysis of spectres in the journalists' accounts of the Timex dispute.

As we saw, media depictions of the Timex conflict provided evocations of Scotland's industrial past, including spectral and haunting motifs revolving around the idea that the dispute was indicative of a "time out of joint". Indeed, newspapers emphasized this with statements such as: "The confrontation in Dundee seems out of its time" (Scotland on Sunday, 1993b). The idea of a throwback to another age may be thought to set the scene for the appearance of spectres, since the dead can be thought to have returned to haunt the present in the form of backward managerial practices and worker activism. As the *Independent* shows for this case, "the vocabulary of dispute has had to be resurrected." (1993e) However, it went beyond this case alone.

The image of a government haunted by ghosts of the industrial past is now sharply focused, not just by events in Scotland but also by the defiance of key sections in Britain's workforce (Scotland on Sunday, 1993c).

A vivid, artistically-presented photograph of striking workers' pinafores hung to dry above Timex's gates illustrates another emotive description several months later:

Dirty and torn, they are a totem to an industrial tragedy which appeared in the 1990s like a ghost from the past (Scotland on Sunday, 1993a).

Derived from our iterative analysis of media imagery of the Timex dispute, we now argue that a striking elective affinity can be seen between media representations of the dispute and closure, symbolising a dying and haunting of UK manufacturing, and the narrative of haunting elucidated by Derrida in Marx's (and Shakespeare's) texts. The Timex media images, featuring prominently death, spectres and ghosts, can be interpreted as indicating the manifestation of a deep "social poetic" (Jameson, 1981, 2005), an atheological faith in justice (Derrida, 1999) that we can now explore further.

DERRIDA'S *SPECTRE OF MARX*, JAMESON'S *SOCIAL POETICS* & TIMEX - AN EMANCIPATORY EXPRESSION OF FAITH IN SOCIAL JUSTICE

Our interpretations emerged iteratively, drawing us to germane themes in Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* and his "spectropoetic" method. This evolved in our interpretative reading of press accounts, offering a useful conceptual frame, not determined *a priori*. We identified an elective affinity between images of death and ghosts in accounts of Timex's dispute, and death and spectres in Derrida's elucidation of Marx. Elective affinity does not assume causality, but uncanny parallel between elements inviting further inquiry. Narratives of death and spectres identified by Derrida had empirical resonance in the Timex dispute's press representations. Jameson's "social poetics" establishes this link. These are loose pastiches of culturally significant metaphors, analogies and figurative myths that inform enactments and interpretations of specific events. Embedded figures of speech galvanise understandings of social action in times of crisis and upheaval, allowing us our own interpretations. Thus, "the spectre" points not to a death of social justice claims, but the opposite: the ghostly return of forms of discourse that neo-liberalism had thought dead, especially Marxist analytics.

We argue that the “social poetics” of murder, death and ghosts informed reporter-worker dynamics in the Timex case. This meta-narrative and evident elective affinity to how Derrida theorises haunting in Marx, however, does not require positing a straight relationship. Managerial brutality is cast as the murderer and the draconian management inherently conjures its seemingly dead and buried victim, the exploited, suffering worker, and its redemptive corollary, the solution of a radical social justice to put right the wrongs committed against the oppressed. This “brutal-manager/worker-justice” couplet appears more ghostly in an era when labor/capital antagonism was deemed positively antediluvian. Why was this ghostly image so pervasive in the print-media representations of the Timex dispute? We argue that in light of Derrida’s meditation on Marx, it seems reasonable to suggest a reason why the death, murder, spectre, thematic is so important is the historical context in which the dispute occurred. In 1993, many considered the worst excesses in the UK of an extremely antagonistic industrial relations era to be over. Thatcher’s notorious new-right assault on the British trade union movement in the 1980s, including the miners’ strikes and public sector disputes, as well as the dissolution of the soviet-bloc, were thought to herald “frictionless capitalism”. Employment relations were expected to reflect this emergent phase of unprecedented consensus given the overcoming of outdated industrial disagreements. Moreover, it is certain that the prolonged and extremely visible Timex dispute provoked nostalgic sentiments (Gabriel, 1993; Hay, 1996; Strangleman, 1999, 2007), as angry workers bearing placards with Marxist slogans revived images of a past not yet successfully buried (Crow, 2005).

In this historical context, we propose that the spectre Derrida found in his reading of Marx is indicative of what Jameson (1981, 2005) calls “social poetics” or “poetics of social forms”. As powerful poetic narratives, sedimented in our unconscious, they

allow us to “work through” major symbolic events like the Timex dispute. Such social poetics consist of textual structures that in time coagulate in montages and admixtures of various popular, literary and ideological fables. Jameson draws attention to literary allegories in interpretative social action, textual accounts and self-reflections that define particular events. His analysis of social poetics links text, social action and its interpretation, by demonstrating how events are dramatised and imbued with meaning and poignancy from seemingly remote sources (Buchanan, 2007; White, 1987). The concept is especially helpful for understanding how social agents give and draw meaning from social conflicts since such poetics become more concentrated in times of trauma. In the context of class struggle, an array of colorful textual devices is primed to narrate conflict, struggle and visible resistance. Thus, the press depictions of heroic resistance by an underdog tap into long-established or forgotten parables in popular discourse (e.g., David and Goliath), provoking sympathies, or calls for justice and solidarity. Another example is the structure of nostalgia during times of upheaval. In the context of industrial disputes, this maps onto a story of a golden past marked by solidarity, community and fraternity (Davis, 2002; Strangleman, 1999, 2007).

Derrida suggests that the “spectre” is salient as revealing a “time out of joint”, a world going bad and a redemptive call for justice. Derrida’s spectral lens and concept of *hauntology* helps us to unpack the spectre’s significance. Derrida invented this word as a play on ontology and haunting. The neologism maps the spectre as a tenuous trace between “absence” and “presence” bringing Derrida’s mediation on ghosts to central concern as it unsettles the ingrained ontology of presence (and being) that dominated Western philosophy (Derrida, 1982). The ontological present is shot with an absence simultaneously there and not there. Derrida argues in *Spectres of Marx* that the spectre’s visitation is “conjured” through this *aporia*. The word “conjure” in

French means both *conspire* to fight a greater power and an *incantation* to evoke and make present that which is dead. Thus he evokes the “spectre of communism” as a sign of a new world ironically seeded by capitalism. His argument is that post-1989 triumphalism expounded by both neo-liberal conservatives and progressives, is hexed by Marx’s ghost(s). The social costs of accumulation and continual contradictions in capitalism necessitate incessant work to repress the ever-present threat of its spectral counterpart. Marx haunts capitalism with a ghostly other; socialism; free workers; and justice. Marx’s fascination with ghosts, when he describes capitalism’s mesmerising sway is reflected in Marxism’s ghost now prowling the corridors of accumulation. It forms an absence-presence calling for justice. Thus the celebratory announcement of Marxism’s death was premature. Its spirit yet attends to unfinished business to oppose capitalism’s renewed strength. In a “time out of joint”, Derrida (1994) underlines its message to redeem the injunctions of social justice *apropos* the New World Order.

The timing of Derrida’s intervention is significant. In the post-1989 West, a jubilant “orgy” (Sprinker, 1999) of self-congratulation took place. For neo-conservatives, capitalist states under the rubric of liberal-democracy had “won the day”. Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) proposed that communism’s dissolution underlined the powerful plausibility of capitalist democracies. Derrida (1994) finds this text fascinating in its neo-Christian eschatological subtext of the “good news” that a perfect system had arrived. “Instead of singing the advent of the ideal of liberal democracy and of the capitalist market in the euphoria of the end of history...” (p. 85), we must be aware of its ideological blindness to the systemic brutality underpinning capitalism’s free-market approach. Derrida (1994) exhorts us not to “neglect this obvious macroscopic fact, made up of innumerable singular sites of suffering” (p. 85). Neo-conservative triumphalism opens a new space for a visitation from Marxism and

its spectres. Its most striking evocation starts *The Communist Manifesto*: “a spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of communism. All the powers of old Europe have joined into a holy hunt against this spectre” (Marx and Engels, 1847-48/1978, p. 469).

Derrida’s usage of the image of the spectre reflects long-standing use of spectral imagery to critique developments in early proto-capitalism even before Marx. Lizardo (2009) for instance demonstrates the prevalence of such imagery by exploring the rise of merchant capitalism where the prominence of the figure of the “devil as spectre” is echoed in Timex accounts. Thus, whilst recent Marxist critiques deploy the imagery of the zombie (Ritzer, 2003; Shaviro, 2003), associative imagery of “devil-like”, “deathly” and “foreboding spectral figures” are still conjured up as powerful, flexible, and reflecting the stark, sometimes unforgiving power of capital. Within this broad spectral tradition, Derrida notes the influential, striking importance of these images in Marx’s work. In a daring homological move, Derrida draws analogies to what was happening in the world with Hamlet’s haunting by his murdered father. Marx avidly read Shakespeare, as evidenced by repeated allusions in *Capital* (1867/1972) and elsewhere (De Boer, 2002). Derrida highlights Hamlet’s father’s ghostly return to reveal injustices. The opening exordium in *Spectres of Marx* is redolent of many themes Derrida therein unpacks: “Some, you or me, comes forward and says: I would like to learn to live finally” (1994, p. xvi). Hamlet laments that “time is out of joint”, both because the dead have returned and the injustice revealed renders a world rotten and broken. Hamlet can only live once he has “made it right”. According to Derrida, Marx’s “smiling” spirit (see Negri, 1999) also continues to return to point to the nefarious injustices underlying contemporary capitalism. It is present at acrimonious disputes, such as Timex. It is also now present in protests about “solutions” being

enacted by governments in response to the present recession following the financial crisis. As “heirs” of Marx, we are left with the task of sifting through the legacies and possible consequences of continuing to resurrect his spirit (Tinker, 2002, p. 261). To learn to live, Derrida suggests, we must speak with such ghosts, remembering the past, and responding to Marx’s injunction in the hope of a time co-present with itself.

For Derrida, “the time is out of joint” as it is time broken down, a world upside-down and an age dishonoured. This easily takes us “from disadjusted to unjust” (1994, p. 22). Derrida argues that haunting directly links to a call for justice. Like Hamlet, we must put things right in a time broken, disarrayed by major injustice:

... do justice, to put things back in order, to put history, the world, the age, the time upright ... to put dislocated time back on its hinges... a destiny to do justice for a fault, a fault of time and of the times... (Derrida, 1994, p. 23).

This passage connects to a major theme in Derrida’s writings, the relationship between responsibility and justice (see “The Force of Law”, Derrida, 1992; Keenan, 1997). We can be responsible even for “a time” over which we have no individual authorship. Justice involves a response flowing from the ways we *inherit* the spectres of our past. How do we learn to live with ghosts, both when times are going well, but especially when things are going badly? For a more “just” future to emerge, we must “lay to rest” their injunctions, which for Marx are the plagues of capitalism that Derrida enumerates in Chapter 3, “Wears and Tears (Tableau of an Ageless World)”. They include poverty, crippling world debt, war and environmental destruction. Derrida’s critique shows how Marx’s spectres haunt the New World Order’s gleaming facade. This disjointed time of contemporary capitalism, at present undergoing one of

its frequent upheavals, is one where its “other” is supposedly dead and buried. But, it opens up a space of visitation and a mandatory response, because the absent-present of an almost forgotten past is *feared* as a possible coming future – “The future [the *a-venir*] can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger” (Derrida, 1974, p. 5). This fear of ghosts has an important logic in that Marx’s spectres hold promise of a different, perhaps even *just* world (Jameson, 2005) when these fears are resolved.

Turning to Berman (1982), Faust’s pact with Mephistopheles, the Goethe poem Marx enjoyed so much (McLellan, 2006) may be a significant source for the spectral poetics deployed by Marx. However, in a response to the reception of his analysis of Marx, Derrida (1999) presents another explanation for why the spectre speaks so forcefully to us in the context of a gleeful or ruthless capitalism. The zero-point for the spectral image, an (atheological) messianicism, is ultimately an injunction to put things right. The spectre is “messianic” since it represents the *future to come*, the promise, hope, open expectation of an *arrivant* to mend time. Derrida expounds his thesis by positing a quasi-transcendental *messianic* structure as a base phenomenological principle elucidating the future’s openness. Derrida’s conception of the spectre is as presenting a “quasi-messianic” figure (Abbinnett, 2008). Thus: “the spectre is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenon and carnal form of the spirit... neither soul nor body, and both one and the other” (Derrida, 1994, p. 5). As Montag (1999) also emphasises, the spectre should not be reduced to a spirit since it resides in-between the material and spiritual: “One does not know if it is living or if it is dead” (Derrida, 1994, p. 5). Jameson (1999) captures “spectrality” more generally:

Spectrality is not difficult to circumscribe, as what makes the present waver... [it] does not involve the conviction that ghosts exist or that the past (and maybe even the

future they offer to prophesy) is still much alive and at work, within the living present: all it says, if it can be thought to speak, is that the living present is scarcely self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us (pp. 38-39).

The importance of spectres and the *messianic* theme for understanding the Timex scenes and scripts therefore involves a complex confluence of cultural and historical poetic narratives, maybe even grafted onto a base-line faith. But this is faith in what? Perhaps a faith in *why* the ghost still returns, in what it demands of us so it can be laid to rest. To “make the world right” and begin to live – faith in the possibility of a future time of justice that is indeed co-present with itself. The spectre in this sense is literally the ghost of a world that is *still to come* (*a-venir*), conjured by us, the haunted, through our ultimate faith in social justice (see Laclau, 1996). This future orientation is dangerously open, according to Derrida, and is anything but utopianism: “messianicity mandates that we interrupt the ordinary course of things, time and history *here-now*: it is inseparable from an affirmation of otherness and justice” (Derrida, 1999, p. 249 emphasis in original). This leads to the relevance of the Timex analysis for other events and crises of the future as well the past. We turn to this next.

THE VALUE OF A ‘SPECTROPOETIC’ INTERPRETATION OF THE TIMEX DISPUTE TO THE ANALYSIS OF OTHER DISPUTES AND CRISES

Derrida’s spectral warnings were seen in the 1993 Timex dispute and its discursive media representations. They became more prescient with the passing of time and the current global recession. These suppressed voices were before victim to the ebullience of the 1990s capitalist boom, continuing well into the next decade. The time was “out-

of-join't" with the ghostly forewarnings out-of-step with the mood of the time. Now, during the crisis of capitalism, the time may be right to heed such spectral warning. If the time is no longer "out of joint", Timex, alongside other labor disputes and closures of recent decades can be reappraised in the light of Derrida's analysis of the *Spectre of Marx*. The Timex dispute can be understood as part of wider labor relations trends that may be geographically removed or temporally distinct from the events of 1993, but nonetheless part of a broader narrative of neo-liberal capitalist manifestations.

Both elsewhere in the UK and in other Western nations, not least the United States as the 'home' of the Timex corporate parent, there has been since the 1970s major closures of manufacturing plants and large scale transfer of productive capacity to new plants overseas typically due to cheaper labor and production costs. This clearly situates the Timex dispute within a broader socio-historical and political appreciation of its wider placing and relevance, reflecting a larger global trend within the capitalist schema of the displacement of work. Indeed, one can extrapolate and relate the experiences of Timex to the closure of thousands of US and UK plants, such as in the former industrial stronghold of America's 'rustbelt' in the Northeast and Midwestern states (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982; Phillips, 1998; Rothstein, 1986). This can be attributed to, on the one hand, the migration of industrial employment away from the more heavily unionized regions to more southern regions where organized labor was typically weaker (Sallaz, 2004). On the other hand, it was also due to the shift in manufacturing capital to locations including the Far East and to less developed countries (Sassen, 1998). This is highlighted by more recent attention on the effects of deindustrialization, which has been paid to the fate of workers and closure of factories even in the south of the United States (Minchin, 2009). Analysis of representations of

the Timex dispute also shows how it symbolises the equally continuing decline in UK manufacturing and the trend among multinational corporations based in the UK to move their subsidiary plants to less economically advanced nations, including those of Eastern Europe and Asia, where labor is markedly cheaper. These changes, although strongly opposed by UK workers, have continued unabated until now, even increasing over the years. For example, the case of the 2010 takeover of the British chocolate manufacturer *Cadbury* by the American food company *Kraft*, and the subsequent closure and relocation of the UK Bristol factory to Poland, despite prior contrary assurances, reflects similar media outrage as in the Timex closure and critical press commentary on labor cost savings strategies (Lucas, 2011). Such examples highlight how the broader collapse of the manufacturing industries in the US and the UK, which has been taking place for several decades, has played out in the press, further pointing to the broader crisis which is taking place in the Western capitalist condition.

The symbolism of Timex, as well as other such factory closures and disputes reported in the press of the day, can be interpreted as presaging not only the decline of manufacturing in the West in the years to come, along with its move to Asia, but also the present crisis in capitalism, the global economic downturn and instability of financial markets. Our interpretations of the representation and symbolism of the Timex dispute, as reported in the UK press, can also be extrapolated to this wider context. This is evidenced not only by media articles but also by more scholarly books and academic papers which similarly deploy spectral, demonic, and other imagery and metaphors of death and violence to represent their targets, especially bankers and financiers, in terms of their roles in the present global financial crisis. However, although there is no shortage of scholarly literature in general on the economic crisis

(e.g. Helleiner, Pagliari & Zimmermann, 2010; Lounsbury & Hirsch, 2010), in some fields it is still emerging. There has been criticism of its lack of coverage in organization and management studies journals as cause for concern (see Morgan, Froud, Quack & Schneiberg, 2011; Munir, 2011). Published critiques in the broader social scientific field, however, have evoked deathly imagery through the use of rhetorics around hauntings, painting pictures of the ‘ghost’ and the ‘living dead’ in an attempt to make sense of the strife caused by the economic crisis in the USA and Europe. For example, Gamble’s (2009) book bears the very title “The spectre at the feast” exploring the historical roots of previous and recent economic hardships by way of the crisis in capitalism and politics of recession. Also according to Crouch (2011), the most striking aspect of neo-liberalism is its ‘strange non-death’ as an otherwise moribund economic paradigm. Evoking zombies and other spectral forces, Quiggin (2010) makes a similar argument in his *Zombie Economics*, (2010) which explores how dead ideas still walk among us (see also Cederstrom and Fleming, 2012). As opposed to malevolent visitations, another reading of the ghost metaphor has been a nostalgic hearkening back to a pre-crisis era of (perceived) harmony. For example, in Strangleman’s (1999, 2007) study of railway workers following privatization, the palpable presence of a dead past imbues workers’ present, more rationalized, combative, austere and competitive work environment.

Media and newspaper articles covering the present economic conditions and, in particular the global financial crisis, are replete with such imagery. Just a few of the many examples illustrate this pervasive linguistic license, such as that published in ‘Le Monde’ in December 2011 in which it is argued that the prolonged crisis of financial markets and capitalism in the West reawakened once more “the spectre of

Marx”, regarded by the newspaper as absent since the fall of the Berlin Wall (Le Monde, 2011). Similarly, the *Economist* characterises it as a “spectre that haunts Europe” (Economist, 2010). The *Independent* uses similar imagery in its depiction of the former chief executive of the Royal Bank of Scotland, Fred Goodwin, in charge when it collapsed and had to be rescued by a government bailout, as “Fred the Shred”, evoking images of a ruthless banker with murderous intent (Independent, 2012). From our own analysis, we can see that the spectre had not completely disappeared in the euphoric 1990s but was indeed always present, although lurking and scarcely visible, especially in times of industrial conflict such as the Timex dispute.

Our approach to studying the Timex dispute through its media representations in the way we have done is a useful tool to help us critique the changing organizational and industrial relations that are taking place not only in the UK and US but also beyond (Weitzner, 2007). It contributes the dimensions of culture, drama, poetry and text to the study of industrial conflict and economic crises, especially in capitalist economies, where it is visibly lacking. The notion of “social poetics” lets us understand how narratives, such as “the spectre at Timex”, reflect deeper structures of feeling, a rich socio-textual seam that taps into enduring cultural concerns. The evocation of spectres and haunting appear to have had an active, although evocative, influence on the Timex standoff. The print media of the time can be treated as symptomatic of broader cultural narratives deemed important for understanding the persistence of this spectral motif in other times of dispute. Thus, in relation to the question of performativity raised above, further research could identify how journalism and “social poetics” interpenetrate in reporting protocols *apropos* death, spectrality and other dark images in diverse economic, political and social crises and conflicts.

Another implication of the method of analysis and conceptual framework used pertains to the broader problem of studying industrial conflict in neo-liberal capitalist societies. How does one make sense of industrial conflict in a supposedly post-political era, when trade unionism is regarded by many as seemingly out-of-date, and the difference between the left and right strangely muddled? This is where Derrida's meditation on Marx as a ghostly *arrivant* raises significant insights into how claims for justice in work organizations today are framed. Recourse to Marx must not be seen as nostalgic reverie, but a measure of how capitalism works to repress its absent-presence, its ghostly opposite in the form of socialist justice claims. In the celebratory era of neo-liberal victory that involved fantasies of "frictionless accumulation" set within corresponding political myths, such as the one in the UK under New Labour about the "abolition of boom and bust" economies, industrial action signified a visitation that continued to inspire fear. Derrida suggests that in order to live in a time when "things are going badly", we must engage with these ghosts of the political "other" that haunt us even when seemingly "things are going well". They entreat redemptive acts of open justice. To achieve social justice, we should therefore live by:

learning not how to make conversation with the ghost but how to talk with him, with her, how to let them speak or how to give them back speech, even if it is in oneself, in the other, in the other in oneself: they are always there, spectres, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet (Derrida, 1994, p. 221).

Derrida's insights are just as relevant today as they were in 1993. As pointed out earlier, the year *Spectres of Marx* appeared (in French) coincided with the Timex dispute. Does Derrida's meditation merely reflect the historical moment of mourning among the left, an act now obsolete given the different geo-political climate with its

nominal “clash of civilizations”? The authors doubt that Derrida would disagree with this historical contextualisation of his text. However, despite the post-2008 banking and debt crises, capitalism is very much alive and well, interwoven with religious fundamentalism and war. However, capitalism is still being challenged constantly from almost every angle, and the social, economic and political structures of accumulation, consumerism, and their organizational forms, undeniably remain contested terrain. The various political “others” of capitalism continue to rally a ghostly injunction, given what many to the Left regard as the system’s inherently unsustainable nature and its possible future decline - a stance perhaps inviting dystopian more than utopian thoughts and images. As we have shown, such spectral imagery continually recurs. It is part of the rhetoric in the long history of critics of capitalism. It permeates discourses predating, during and postdating the Timex dispute in 1993, and brings us to a present-day critique of contemporary capitalism.

CONCLUSION

This paper has posited a discursively-oriented interpretation of representations evident in the print-media during the 1993 Timex dispute in Dundee, Scotland. We discerned an “elective affinity” between the spectre (and its cultural significance) in these media representations of the dispute and the texts identified by Derrida in *Spectres of Marx*. With the further help of Jameson’s “social poetics”, the textual image of the spectre is linked to the print-media quotations about the events that took place around the dispute. In addition, sources of the spectral social poetic are unearthed by the analysis. It is argued that this has allowed us a rich insight not only into the historical media readings of this particular dispute, but also into the associated economic and political moods of that period of time and afterwards. This can be seen against a backdrop of

the economically and politically motivated closing of many manufacturing plants, while allowing the poorly regulated expansion of the financial and banking service industries in the UK in both London and Edinburgh, as elsewhere in the West.

This research shows intriguingly that, interwoven into key themes relating to the dispute, used to interpret the print-media representations which were the subject of our analysis, discourses of not only murder and death but also of spectres and ghosts, were also found to be prominent. Our inductive methodological approach to the discursive media critique, then led us to evoke Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (1994), and Jameson's social poetical analysis (1981, 2005) in order to make sense of this striking spectral imagery. Echoing Marx's own preoccupation with ghosts, Derrida suggests that a seemingly "dead and buried" Marxism haunts the accumulation process and its organizational forms. Like Hamlet's visitation by his murdered father, still our "time is out of joint" and demands to be made right - that is why the spectre continues to lurk, pointing to the symbolism of the dark image. Through the analysis of our large set of print-media articles, Derrida's ideas led us to propose that these representations reflect a deeper symbolism, being inspired by a call for a social justice not present at that time. In these terms, the imagery of the dispute and the workers' "last stand" signalled a turning point. *Prima facie*, such imagery is unsurprising given the media's penchant for playing with words while sensationalising controversial events. However, it is our contention that a discursive reading of these print-media accounts provides a window into the profound changes taking place not just in employment practices and labor relations in the UK at that time, but also into deep-seated, haunting fears discernible within the flood of post-1989 neo-liberal triumphalism. On this basis, something more profound occurred here than just some journalists' creative

flourishes through which it is too easy to dismiss the meaning of the newspaper accounts and headlines. It is argued that these dark images reflected the shades of what went before, were being threatened by dominant currents of that time, but still can be interpreted to presage a future era when the tide would turn.

It is our contention that the Timex case exemplifies the way in which vivid spectral imagery haunt capitalism. In this case they are conjured by journalists depicting and interpreting the deep-seated hostility between workers and management resulting in the plant's closure. From our Derridian analysis of the imagery, we argue that the value of such theorizing, allowing us to go beneath the surface of the discourses, is in our ability to question the recurrent power of such ghostly symbolism. We also urge a critical, dialectic awareness of the ghost of the other, to look beyond the immediacy of events and avoid clouding judgment when caught up in the euphoria or misery of the moment. Timex, not fitting into the dominant mood of the time, harkened back to a bygone era, a heyday of Western manufacturing. However, the media (and academics) still explore events and their discursive symbolism that may reveal an eerie presence of the unwanted other which may not fit with the prevailing mood of the times. We argue that social poetics is one such way of teasing out such underlying presences. The ideological blindness theorised by Derrida, and witnessed during the immediate post-1989 neo-liberal capitalist ebullience, has lent weight to our arguments that, despite their presence in social poetics, in 1993 Timex workers' voices, and the echoing media, were out of step with the prevailing political and economic mood of the time. The time therefore may now be right to pay more heed to such ghostly narratives of recent past decades so that similar stories to that of the Timex dispute may not be forgotten, and not only retold and reinterpreted, but also reflected upon.

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