

# Mediations

Journal of the Marxist Literary Group



Volume 25, Number 1, Fall 2010 • **Marx, Politics... and Punk**

## On Marx's Victorian Novel

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Of course we have all read, and all do read, *Capital*...But some day it is essential to read *Capital* to the letter, to read the text itself.<sup>1</sup>

In case the twentieth century had not coughed up calumny enough for Karl Marx, the twenty-first opened with new invective: his first post-Soviet biography, written by the acclaimed British intellectual Francis Wheen, triumphantly dismissed *Capital*, Marx's insuperable work of critical political economy, as "a Victorian melodrama or a gothic novel...a picaresque odyssey through the realms of higher nonsense...a shaggy-dog story."<sup>2</sup> As an attack on the truth-status of *Capital* — it is fiction and therefore false — Wheen's contempt for Marx and for Victorian novelists alike unwittingly opens the question of *Capital's* truth-procedure. If *Capital* is "best understood" as a Victorian novel, then a different register of its meaning-making must emerge from reading it that way.

To be sure, our distance from Wheen already indicates that there are multiple ways of motivating such a reading, and indeed, multiple methods of "reading." For a too-quick schema: I will address two strategies, the "contextual" and the "paratextual," before generally utilizing a third, the "textual." While a contextual strategy links the Marx of *Capital* to his discursive context in Victorian London, a paratextual strategy takes stock of those literary excesses that complicate reading *Capital*. The former tells us much about Marx the author; the latter has told us some about the heterogeneity and opacity of *Capital*; the third method I hope tells us more about how *Capital* thinks, how as a textual whole it engages its object. Reading *Capital* as a Victorian novel, I will suggest, should foremost mean reading for the ways that its insights materialize narratively, figuratively, and aesthetically, in addition to referentially or instantiatively.<sup>3</sup> It should mean posing that Dickensian question, "What connexion can there be?" between the multiple plots, multi-linked chains of

images, and multiplications of perspective that all, by virtue of their boundedness within one textual whole, engage the same underlying object.<sup>4</sup> Such a reading is therefore repelled by contemptuous analogies between *Capital* and Victorian novels, compelled by the Victorian novel's exemplary aesthetic thinking, and impelled by the essential imperative to read again what has already been read, to defamiliarize the Marxian oeuvre.

To welcome Marx the Minor Victorian, to read him among his novelist neighbors, casts new light on his unassimilable life, and may therefore honor the unassimilable in his thought. Jew among Catholics, German in exile, invalid in Algeria, philosopher in poverty, renter in arrears, the perennially dislocated Marx was unhomey at home in London for thirty-four years. Denied British naturalization late in life, he nonetheless rests for eternity in Highgate Cemetery. To throw his lot in with the Victorian novelists is to limn this unnatural fate, to highlight what must be recast in order to be reread. Reading *Capital* as a Victorian novel pursues those insights which were themselves (and perhaps remain) unassimilable within the discourse of critical political economy: insights that precisely pertain to that which remains unassimilable in capitalism, what remains resistant to accounting. Neither flippant eulogy nor idealist elegy, such a reading might rather index Marx's command of manifold strategies for thinking — historically *and* transcendently, scientifically *and* aesthetically, politically *and* poetically.

At home nowhere, at home everywhere, Marx took refuge in London in 1849. The first order of business was attaining a Reader's Ticket to the British Library Reading Room. On a daily basis thereafter, he joined Thomas Carlyle, William Thackeray, Charles Dickens, and John Ruskin, furiously at work reading, reading, reading, and writing. Having devoted his first three months to osmoting all extant back issues of *The Economist* (which began printing in 1843), he quickly absorbed the local literary talent, voraciously consuming volumes of Shakespeare, Milton, Defoe, and Dickens.<sup>5</sup> Like Dickens and Ruskin, he was also up to his elbows in Blue Books, drawing information, references, stories, and ideas from these governmental reports on everything from sanitation to factory conditions to prostitution.<sup>6</sup>

As their rapture with the bluebooks suggests, for Marx as for his companion intellectuals, the context of London constituted the core of his work. Just as there could be no Dickens without London, there could be no Marx without the advanced bustling commerce of The City. As he put it in *Capital*:

No period of modern society is so favourable for the study of capitalist accumulation as the period of the last 20 years. It is as if Fortunatus's purse had been discovered. But of all countries England again provides the classical examples, because it holds the foremost place in the world market, because capitalist production is fully developed only in England.<sup>7</sup>

Appraising their development, inhabiting their milieu, drawing upon their sources, partaking of their canon, Marx also explicitly aligned himself with Victorian novelists by identifying his work as fundamentally aesthetic, and, at that, whole: “whatever shortcomings they may have, the advantage of my writings is that they are an artistic whole, and this can only be achieved through my practice of never having things printed until I have them in front of me *in their entirety*” (emphasis original).<sup>8</sup> Along with the carbuncles and pressing debtors, these convictions about creative integrity help explain his infinite difficulty in finalizing *Capital* for publication. In point of fact, just before finally surrendering the manuscript in February 1867, Marx gave Engels a copy of Honoré de Balzac’s story “The Unknown Masterpiece.”<sup>9</sup> In the story, a painter obsessively and painstakingly reworks a single canvas for over a decade, daubing and shading and blending in pursuit of “such depth” that it fathoms reality, an “atmosphere so true that you can not distinguish it from the air that surrounds us.” In the tragic denouement, the artist proclaims his stylistic triumph: “Where is Art? Art has vanished, it is invisible!” But an outside perspective reveals the state of the canvas: “I see nothing...I can see nothing there but confused masses of color and a multitude of fantastical lines that make a dead wall of paint.”<sup>10</sup> The burning ambition for vanishing mediation, for Art so real it is invisible, melts its medium, pooling in an inscrutable, proto-Impressionistic muddle. As a preface to the “artistic whole” of *Capital*, “The Unknown Masterpiece” bespeaks Marx’s methodological predicament. While constructing a whole was imperative, cultivating an adequate aesthetic felt nigh impossible. Indeed, it was to this predicament, and remarkably *not* to ideological antagonism, that Marx appealed in explaining the negative reviews of *Capital*. “The mealy-mouthed babblers of German vulgar economics grumbled about the style of my book,” he wrote, proceeding to note that the grumbles were incomplete: “No one can feel the literary shortcomings of *Capital* more strongly than I myself.”<sup>11</sup> Conversely, Marx took great pride in the aesthetic appreciation from the London press, which celebrated his “unusual liveliness,” and found that “the presentation of the subject invests the driest economic questions with a certain peculiar charm.”

“Peculiar charm” and “unusual liveliness” perfectly capture the product of Marx’s early career. Long before he aspired to the critique of political economy, the young Marx fluently pursued charming stylizations, conducting numerous “Early Literary Experiments,” including love poems, “Wild Songs,” and a “Book of Verse.” And indeed, rather like enacting a kind of phylogeny of that ontogenetic generic experimentation which culminates in the novel as such, his experiments ultimately amounted to *Scorpion and Felix, A Humorous Novel* (1837). Marx’s novel is a *Tristram Shandy*-ish pursuit of deferred origins, told self-reflexively in the present tense by a first-person narrator. There are three principal characters, Felix, Scorpion, and Merten, and the plot encompasses their attempts to trace their own genealogical, philological, biological, and literary origins. The novel’s bellowed fireside chat clearly ironizes the hot air of philosophy, and it seems at times to juxtapose ideas purely for the ring

of cacophonous non-sense. Yet its strategy of provocative contrast and inversion enables rather than defuses its critical philosophical themes. Here, for instance, is the reported remonstrance of the character Merten, that he, and not Scorpion, is indeed the hero of the story: “He had a sh-sh-shadow as good as anybody else’s and even better...and besides he loved the right of primogeniture and possessed a wash closet.”<sup>12</sup> What do shadows, primogeniture, and indoor plumbing have in common, and how do they amount to a hero’s qualifications? In the next chapter, the first-person narrator devotes himself to this conundrum of associations:

I sat deep in thought, laid aside Locke, Fichte, and Kant, and gave myself up to profound reflection to discover what a wash closet would have to do with the right of primogeniture, and suddenly it came to me like a flash [*Blitz*], and in a melodious succession of thought upon thought my vision [*Blick*] was illuminated [*verklärt*] and a radiant form [*Lichtsgestaltung*] appeared before my eyes. The right of primogeniture is the wash-closet of the aristocracy, for a wash-closet only exists for the purpose of washing. But washing bleaches, and thus lends [*leiht*] a pale sheen to that which is washed. So also does the right of primogeniture silver [*versilbert*] the eldest son of the house, it thus lends him a pale silvery sheen, while on the other members it stamps the pale romantic sheen of penury.<sup>13</sup>

Laying “aside Locke, Fichte, and Kant” (though not, it seems worth noting, Hegel), this text that insists on its status as something other than philosophy arrives at a historical-materialist insight into the connection between inheritance rights and indoor plumbing. The wash closet is a spring of polishing ablution; primogeniture polishes the first-born with silver, stamps the other brothers with poverty, launders the money of the aristocracy. They shadow one another; the site of sanitation provides a concrete material instance of the opaque and diffuse process of arbitrary resource distribution. Primogeniture and the wash closet are two different forms of appearance of the socio-material matrix in the shadows. As an ur-text in his oeuvre, then, *Scorpion and Felix: A Humorous Novel* reveals not how far Marx eventually came, but how consistently he pursued logico-formal connections behind the veil of the visible, how thoroughly he tracked different forms of appearance of the real within ontologically positive reality.

After finishing *Scorpion and Felix*, Marx sustained a traumatic realization that it failed the bar of his aesthetic ideals. In a letter to his father, he confided: “Suddenly, as if by a magic touch — oh, the touch was at first a shattering blow — I caught sight of the distant realm of true poetry like a distant fairy palace, and all my creations crumbled into nothing.”<sup>14</sup> Palpable here in the melodramatic excesses of the letter that preserve the creations the letter ostensibly negates, the distant realm of true poetry persists as an alluring destination.

One way to map the circuitous journey onward toward that distant realm, to excavate Marx's ruined literary ambitions, would be to enumerate those features of the late work *Capital* which demand literary reading. This is the path most taken, the way trod alike by artists (the communist lithographer Hugo Gellert produced a book-length illustration of *Capital*; the director Sergei Eisenstein planned a film version) and by critics tackling the oddity of talking commodities, the sensationalism of dripping vampires, or the density of literary allusions.<sup>15</sup> To this extant catalogue of features we might add several more. The author of *Capital* continuously crafts that surplus of detail which Roland Barthes deemed "the reality effect," for instance:

Bread adulterated with alum, soap, pearl-ash, chalk, Derbyshire stone-dust, and other similar agreeable, nourishing, and wholesome ingredients...man, unless by elective grace a capitalist, or a landlord, or the holder of a sinecure, is destined...to eat daily in his bread a certain quantity of human perspiration mixed with the discharge of abscesses, cobwebs, dead black-beetles, and putrid German yeast, without counting alum, sand, and other agreeable mineral ingredients.<sup>16</sup>

We could additionally remark a comparable ambition between the realist novel's social inclusiveness and *Capital*'s organizing principle of social difference as the *sine qua non* for exchange:

The exchange of products springs up at the points where different families, tribes, or communities come into contact; for at the dawn of civilization it is not private individuals but families, tribes, etc. that meet on an independent footing. Different communities find different means of production and different means of subsistence in their natural environment. Hence their modes of production and living, as well as their products, are different. It is this spontaneously developed difference which, when different communities come into contact, calls forth the mutual exchange of products and the consequent gradual conversion of those products into commodities. Exchange does not create the differences between spheres of production but it does bring the different spheres into a relation, thus converting them into more or less interdependent branches of the collective production of a whole society.<sup>17</sup>

Like the Victorian realist novel, *Capital* balances this social expansiveness with psychological interiority. This is a discourse of *both* history and individuality, *both* materiality and consciousness, seeking "the fundamental cause of the misery of the

people in modern times.”<sup>18</sup> For instance:

In proportion as capital accumulates, the situation of the worker... must grow worse...the law...makes an accumulation of misery a necessary condition, corresponding to the accumulation of wealth. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labor, slavery, ignorance, brutalization, and moral degradation at the opposite pole.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, we could continue to extend this list of similarities: like *Middlemarch* or *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, *Capital* subtly weaves its themes, deftly integrates its multiple plots, tightly regulates its symbols, masterfully conducts its voices, and continuously calls attention to the shifts in perspective that structure its narration. Like the Victorian melodramas with which it is derisively classed, *Capital* is animated by abyssal questions of origin. Like the triple-deckers of English realism, it endeavors to describe the world in order to change it.<sup>20</sup> For *Capital* as for the novel genre, disjunctures in perspective and a plurality of voices are constitutive. Characters are spoken of, but also speak for themselves, with clunky self-consciousness attending these shifts in speaking:

The capitalist therefore takes his stand....Suddenly, however, there arises the voice of the worker, which had previously been stifled in the sound and fury of the production process: “The commodity I have sold you differs from the ordinary crowd of commodities in that its use creates value, a greater value than it costs. That is why you bought it...you and I know on the market only one law.”<sup>21</sup>

Still yet, we could observe that the tension between particular commodity and universal equivalent that spurs capitalism is formalized in the tension between particular character and universal type that rouses realism.<sup>22</sup> All these features could be more comprehensively audited, confirming and advertising the book’s “unusual liveliness.” Yet such a catalogue remains within the argumentative horizon defined by those early reviews, at one pole, and Wheen, at the other: an anatomical survey of Marx’s strange corpus, of equal use to admirers and detractors.

Archiving authorial intent, auditing literary elements — such would be the contextual and paratextual collages of evidence for reading *Capital* novelistically. But just as strong literary criticism confronts texts in excess of their authors, it also eschews the presumed opposition between literature and critique, between fiction and truth. It ought, in other words, be possible to begin our reading elsewhere — to begin from the literary critical premise that there is such a thing as aesthetic thinking, a conceptual agency of literary form — and to attend in turn to the truth-procedure,

rather than truth-status, of a given text.<sup>23</sup> For this reading, then, an alternate analytic method is of paramount importance — a method which commences from the premise that *Capital* thinks aesthetically. *Capital* constellates its ideas rhythmically, in the tempo of the narrative, and poetically, in the circulation of tropes. The ultimate argument for reading *Capital* as a novel is neither contextual (Marx the Londoner, Marx the erstwhile novelist) nor paratextual (some taxonomy of anomaly in Marx's language and/or of political economic iteration in Victorian novels). It is textual: as a whole, some of the text's most pressing insights find their most intense formulation performatively. *Capital* means what it means not simply through denotative reference, but through the connotative, associative, artful ways the language works.

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To begin, again. Let us zero in on the striking prevalence of two tropes in *Capital*: personification, the representation of an abstraction as a person; and metalepsis, the substitution of one figure for another with which it is closely related, such as effect for cause. As we shall see, these tropes and the concert between them intone the concept of drive, a cornerstone whose singular importance to the Marxian edifice has lately been registered by Kojin Karatani and Slavoj Žižek.<sup>24</sup> Reading *Capital* novelistically — figuratively — allows us to encounter “drive” on its own circuitous and elusive terms.

In the Preface to the First Edition, Marx fastidiously calls attention to his trope of personification, instructing that awareness of this trope should govern reading of the text:

To prevent possible misunderstandings, let me say this. I do not by any means depict the capitalist and the landowner in rosy colors. But individuals are dealt with here only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, the bearers of particular class relations and interests. My standpoint, from which the development of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he remains, socially speaking, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them.<sup>25</sup>

To prevent possible misunderstandings, it must be understood that personification operates in a textual register because it operates in a social one: within the text of *Capital* individuals are dealt with as personifications because within the historical reality of capital individuals are personifications of social relations, even though they mistake personhood as their exemption from social determination. It is easy to see that misunderstandings might be quick to arise from these multifaceted personifications textual, social, and ideological. Marx's prefatory self-consciousness about these facets sounds a warning that the use of personification within the text must be carefully

scrutinized. A trope, a way of dealing with individuals, personification figuratively highlights the deals of the social world. Personification is one of the objects of analysis, but it is simultaneously a tool of analysis.

The tool is employed from the middle of the first chapter of *Capital*. Having declared from the outset the necessity to commence with the commodity form, the narrative has inductively traced the form from its “simple, isolated” status to its complex and relational status, the “relative form of value.” To illuminate the relationship at the core of the relative form, the simple isolated commodity becomes personified, summoned through a speech act (“let us take Coat and Linen.”)<sup>26</sup> Coat and Linen, brought into relation with one another, are brought into personification by the text. Commodity exchange presumes that both commodities are expressions of value, but the text takes pains to mark that these expressions are heterogeneous to each other, that “these qualitatively equated commodities do not play the same part [*spielen nicht dieselbe Rolle*].”<sup>27</sup> Playing these differing roles, the commodities begin to stand as the agents of active verbs and become self-conscious:

In the production of the coat, human labour-power, in the shape of tailoring, has in actual fact been expended. Human labour has therefore been accumulated in the coat. From this point of view the coat is a ‘bearer of value’, although this property never shows through, even when the coat is at its most threadbare. In its value-relation with the linen, the coat counts only under this aspect, counts therefore as embodied value [*verkörperter Wert*], as the body of value [*Wertkörper*]. Despite its buttoned-up [*zugeknöpften*] appearance, the linen recognizes [*erkennt*] in it a splendid kindred soul, the soul of value [*die stammverwandte schöne Wertseele*].<sup>28</sup>

In one stroke, as the result of the relation of commodities and as the result of relaying the relation of commodities, Coat and Linen have attained souls to go with their bodies. Even more striking, within that stroke, sexual innuendo animates the body and the soul. The linen [*die Leinwand*], a feminine subject in German, comports herself coquettishly, both “buttoned up” and “reserved” (literal denotation and figurative connotation of *zugeknöpften*), even as she is also buttoned into, incorporating the body of, the coat [*der Rock*], masculine subject in German. Her cognitive agency of “recognition” is carnal knowledge; and in general lustiness and promiscuity define the commodity: “a born leveler and cynic, it is always ready to exchange not only soul, but body, with each and every other commodity, be it more repulsive than Maritornes herself.”<sup>29</sup> Here, personification endows the mysterious relationship between commodities with intellectual, physical, and sexual complexity, alluding to the transformative power of valorization: when valorization is the goal of relation, transformations of body and soul, mind and matter ensue. Furthering the innuendo,

Marx names this transformation “go(ing) the way of all flesh,” a “metamorphosis” of engaging with other bodies in bodily transformation, corporeal intercourse, value incorporation.<sup>30</sup> Personification as a conspicuously brandished endowment of the commodity body with a soul here figuratively records and performs the phenomenological and corporeal transformations precipitated by exchange. When value is conjured as spiritual abstraction that authorizes exchange, the spirit transforms material bodies; personification discloses this spiritualization of the commodity body.

It is this oddity of transformation, this mystery of metamorphosis, that constitutes these persons with bodies and souls as “very strange thing(s), abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, already before the chapter on fetishism, in which commodities notoriously think for themselves (the table “evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will”),<sup>32</sup> the figure of personification has entailed that commodities speak for themselves:

We see then, that everything our analysis of the value of commodities previously told us is repeated by the linen itself, as soon as it enters into association with another commodity, the coat. Only it reveals its thoughts in a language with which it alone is familiar, the language of commodities [*in der ihr allein geläufigen Sprache, der Warensprache*].<sup>33</sup>

Wonderful to say, commodities speak their own language. And indeed, many of the most careful readers of *Capital* wonder at this oddity.<sup>34</sup> For our purposes let us simply remark that the strangeness is less *that* the commodities speak (after all, we have been prepared by the trope of personification to expect nothing less) than *what* they speak: a language with which they are alone are familiar, a language to all others unfamiliar. The strangeness of commodity language thwarts any easy mapping of the language of commodities onto language in general, just as elsewhere Marx has indicated that money must not be analogized to language in general, but to unfamiliar language, strange language:

To compare money with language is not less erroneous. Language does not transform ideas, so that the peculiarity of ideas is dissolved and their social character runs alongside them as separate entity, like prices alongside commodities. Ideas which have first to be translated out of their mother tongue into a foreign tongue in order to circulate, in order to become exchangeable, offer a somewhat better analogy; the analogy is then not with language, but with its foreignness [*fremdheit*].<sup>35</sup>

With his emphasis on estrangement, Marx demonstrates that the introduction of

a monetary economy does more than enhance or facilitate human intercourse; it works to transubstantiate goods and defamiliarize the means of that intercourse, to precipitate its becoming-foreign. The language of commodities is the name of this strange language. Within *Capital*, the trope of personification puts strange language into the mouths of strange subjects, performing that very defamiliarization of who speaks, who counts as a who, and what is spoken which is primary in capitalism. The strangeness of personified objects recapitulates the strangeness that the regime of value wreaks upon the human world.

The text's strongest formulation of the radically defamiliarizing agency of capitalism is its proliferation of unfamiliar agents. Personification of things within the discourse of *Capital* presents the personification of things within capitalism, that is, the fetishism of commodities. But in addition to these two registers of personification, there remain another two, to which Marx's Preface calls attention: the personification of persons, both textually and systematically. Capital personifies persons, so *Capital* personifies persons; the individuals whom bourgeois economics would take as economic agents are treated in the text as personifications of the "social relations whose creature (they) remain." First and foremost of these categories is capital itself, and thus seldom is there a reference to "the capitalist" without the qualifying clause "i.e., capital personified."<sup>36</sup>

When persons are personified, they are made in the image and likeness of the ur-person, Capital. Capital is the subject in this world; all other actors are figures, masks, faces, prosopopoeic personifications of the subject. This is the primacy of Capital already emblazoned in the title *Capital*, the place nineteenth-century novels most often reserve for the subject: Capital is the subject of *Capital*, as *David Copperfield* or *Jane Eyre* or *Daniel Deronda* are the subjects of *David Copperfield*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Daniel Deronda*. The analytic importance of this subject position, an idea advanced by the trope of personification more than by exposition, is not only that Capital is the protagonist of modernity, but that the workings of capitalism are described by this subjectification and embodiment of an abstraction. *Capital* is the story of Capital's becoming-subject, of the relentless self-constitution, the "valorization of value" that propels this mode of production.<sup>37</sup> The artifice of the trope of personification calls attention to the artifice and instability of this subject, to the fissures and crises in its course of becoming, in its adventure of *Bildung*.

The strange animation, the endowment with soul, the making of a self effected by the trope of personification, all represent within the language of analysis the maneuvers of self-making which comprise the object of analysis. Those maneuvers are charged with uncanny frisson by the corollary images of Capital as a self-making monster, a fiendish autochthon. This cluster of figures includes of course the notorious vampire images, and the climactic conclusion on primitive accumulation and illicit origins: "capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt."<sup>38</sup> The apex of this imagery is the monster-qua-autochthon, the self-generating

value which can perform its own valorization process, an “animated monster which begins to work,” Marx quotes Goethe, “as if its body were by love possessed.”<sup>39</sup> Though it is unclear what love’s got to do with it, Goethe’s poetry clarifies something else. “As if its body were by love possessed [*als hätt’ es Lieb’ im Leibe*]”: the interior transposition of vowels (*Liebe* into *Leibe*) and the double elision of vowels (“*hätte es* into *hätt’ es* and *Liebe im* into *Lieb’ im*) syllabically perform the autochthonous self-generation of monstrous subjectification.<sup>40</sup> Faustian allusions reverberate as the relentless process of becoming-subject begets self-scission, when persons beget persons bipolarly divided from themselves:

But original sin is at work everywhere. With the development of the capitalist mode of production, with the growth of accumulation and wealth, the capitalist ceases to be merely the incarnation of capital. He begins to feel a human warmth towards his own Adam, and his education gradually enables him to smile at his former enthusiasm for asceticism, as an old fashioned miser’s prejudice. While the capitalist of the classical type brands individual consumption as a sin against function, as abstinence from accumulating, the modernized capitalist is capable of viewing accumulation as ‘renunciation’ of pleasure. ‘Two souls, alas, do dwell within his breast; The one is ever parting from the other’...There develops in the breast of the capitalist a Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation and the desire for enjoyment.<sup>41</sup>

The person of Capital is here divided against himself in a devilish fashion, torn between competing imperatives of accumulation and enjoyment. Presenting these two souls in one breast uses the trope of personification to capture a dissociation that, precisely as a threat to discompose Capital, gives it its indispensable charisma. Capital’s subjectivity exceeds the subjectivity of the capitalists who personify it.

This excessive dimension of the subject of capital is called “drive,” a notion introduced as the culmination of personification: “As a capitalist, he is only capital personified. His soul is the soul of capital. But capital has one sole driving force, the drive to valorize itself.”<sup>42</sup> The innermost soul of Capital is drive, the force of self-infnitizing, subjectifying, repetitive motion. The imagery of personification is repeatedly conjoined to the image of drive, and through this imagery *Capital* represents the core of capital even as it does not present this core in linear analysis. This centrality is not instantiated by a referential presentation of its importance; it is rather performed by the imagistic and representational importance of personification.

Such is a fitting effect for the dynamic of drive: the text grazes it, glances it, grasps it in its very elusiveness. Drive’s eruptive recurrence enacts the propulsive structure it names. The “soul” of the person, the “animation” of Capital, the most elemental structure of the subject, drive figures the momentum of capital, its autotelic

“circulation [that] is an end in itself, for the valorization of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The movement of capital is therefore limitless.”<sup>43</sup> Half a century later, Freud’s psychoanalysis would come to theorize drive as a universal circuitous motion ultimately external to the object-loss around which the particular subject circulates; here already, Marx’s image of drive points to the same topos, the objective “end in itself” that is “limitless” “constantly renewed movement.” “Drive” is woven into the text of *Capital*, threaded through important compound nouns like *Triebwerk* (engine) or *Betrieb* (operation). And when it appears as an uncompounded noun, when it stands simply as *Trieb*, it is always accompanied by distinctive attributes: it is absolute (*absolute*), blind (*blinden*), immanent (*immanente*), and measureless (*maßlos*). Again and again these adjectives recur, their very repetition underscoring the repetitive, immutable, immeasurable propulsion of Capital’s drive. Drive in its blindness, in its immanence, in its absoluteness, in its infinity, bespeaks a force terrifyingly indifferent to the subjects it animates.

Drive is the inner nature of those who are themselves personifications, the soulless soul of the automaton, the essential structure of the artificial person. Without grasping drive, the text has failed, for “a scientific analysis...is possible only if we can grasp the inner nature [*innere Natur*] of capital, just as the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies are intelligible only to someone who is acquainted with their real motions, which are not perceptible to the senses [*wirkliche, aber sinnlich nicht wahrnehmbare Bewegung*].”<sup>44</sup> Through the trope of personification we grasp this “real motion” of “inner nature,” where a discourse without such tropes could only present “apparent motions.” Imperceptible to the naked eye, unrepresentable in instantiative language, the essential matter can be registered only figuratively.

The essential import of “drive” is indexed by the fact that it is precisely apropos “drive” that the vexed concept of “accumulation” first appears in the text. Accumulation, this entwining hints, is unthinkable without the paradoxes of drive. “Drive” names the eerie consanguinity between the advanced capitalist and his primitive antagonist, the miser. The sentence reads: “the hoarding drive is boundless in nature [*Der Trieb der Schatzbildung ist von Natur maßlos*],” and it comes in the first subsection of the chapter on money, itself entitled “Hoarding [*Schatzbildung*].”<sup>45</sup> Now, this is a strange word, not at all the most obvious signifier of “hoarding” (i.e. *horten*, *häufen*, or *anhäufen*). It does not appear in the Grimms’ *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Marx’s contemporary dictionary. As a compound noun, it evidently signifies “the development and creation of treasure,” but as an obscure compound it calls attention to the union of *Schatz* and *Bildung*, of treasure and growth, education, maturation — and further, to the substantification of *Bildung* from *Bild*, images, figures. We are dealing with here no unified process of accumulation, but a strangely changeable, affectively charged, loving of imaging — of treasuring development, creation, shaping, and, indeed, aestheticization. Engaging an obscure compound to figure the love of figuration, Marx doubly codes his concept of drive with aesthetic consequence. His image performatively condenses

measureless motion and the motion of measurelessness, motion without end and the movement of exceeding measure, of growing, becoming, taking on new forms. With this condensation, the measurelessness of drive is compounded by its proliferation of images. What attracts the image lover to money is money's aesthetic capacity, twice over: "that it is the universal representative [*allgemeiner Repräsentant*]" and that it is "made out of gold and silver [*von Gold und Silberwaren*]." <sup>46</sup> Each of these two capacities ignites different dimensions of the love of imaging; the first case Marx calls "the unmediated form of treasure [*unmittelbaren Form des Schatzes*]" and the second case "the aesthetic form [*ästhetische Form*]." <sup>47</sup> Here, between the general, unmediated, potential imaging and the aesthetic, mediated, actual imaging, we find again the "two souls in one breast," the tension that galvanizes Capital: "this contradiction between the quantitative limitation and the qualitative lack of limitation of money keeps driving (*triebt*) the hoarder back to his Sisyphean task: accumulation." <sup>48</sup> Accumulation is the object of drive, which must be distinguished from its aim: the object around which drive circulates is distinct from the circulation itself that is drive's aim. <sup>49</sup> Aim is irreducible to object; circulation is irreducible to accumulation, just as, in another register, capital is irreducible to capitalists. The drive of capital is the drive to accumulate, but as drive it is finally indifferent to accumulation. It is, rather, maximally affixed to circulation. Drive has no object, no telos; it has only its own momentum, blind, immanent, absolute, infinite.

▪

Just as the notion of drive consummates the succession of images generated by personification, the dynamism of this imagery finds its narrative analogue in the rhythmic shifts of the narrative that perform metalepsis, the suspension of one figure by another, the succession of figurative substitutions. *Capital* effects this metaleptic rhythm in its narrative through its succession of paradoxes and what it calls "double results" and dual forms of appearance, and through its perpetual motion of lifting the veil, starting anew the analysis from a different point of view. <sup>50</sup> It is, in other words, in the texture of the textual movement that we find a stunning engagement with the text's subject, a galvanized model of the metaleptic movement of capital itself.

In commencing his analysis with the commodity form, Marx takes as his point of departure the world of appearances, and approaches with a precisely levied gaze: his interest is in form, and in the elemental formal unit. Within the first two sentences, therefore, he has affected a movement from general to particular, from appearance to form of appearance. But his story does not proceed in a strictly particularizing, miniaturizing, or interiorizing way, and it is the pattern by which this motion is arrested to which we should attend. Rather than illuminating everything, the investigative perspective engenders new mysteries: at the end of section 1, the commodity is revealed to have a dual character as use-value and exchange value; at the end of section 2, labor is revealed to have a dual character, as concrete and abstract;

at the beginning of section 3, having identified these dualities, the perspective shifts back to the form of appearance, wherein the dualities “lay hidden.”<sup>51</sup> Within this form lays hidden the vertigo of equivalence, the way in which the act of making an equivalence sublates opposites, at once uniting across difference and preserving their differences: “use value becomes the form of appearance of its opposite, value” and likewise “concrete human labor becomes the form of manifestation of its opposite, abstract human labor.”<sup>52</sup> The narrative momentum of advances and retreats, assertions and digressions, itself performs this fishtailing reversibility of equivalence.

Thinking equivalence commands such a performance of oscillation because equivalence is logically non-grounded. Marx encounters this “real impossibility” of exchange by introducing another voice, that of Aristotle, the “first” analyst of the “value form.”<sup>53</sup> “There can be no exchange,” Marx quotes Book 1 of the *Ethics*, “without equality, and no equality without commensurability.” Commensurability “is, however, in reality, impossible” (Aristotle), “foreign to the true nature of things” (Marx), but this does not gainsay its becoming “a makeshift for practical purposes.” The “intercourse” that is the essence of human existence can performatively overcome the lack of rational ground for exchange, leaping into the realm of the practical by acting as if exchange were not ungrounded. Though Aristotle discovers real impossibility and therefore implicitly discovers the necessary disavowal of it, he falls short of discovering that the fetishism which overcomes this impossibility is proper to aesthetics — aesthetic form itself sublimates this impossibility; the value that is relationality is purely formal. Marx offers a very specific cause for this oversight: Aristotle’s social context made the analysis of form unrealizable: because of legitimized slave labor, Greek society remained in the realm of explicit “inequality” — whereas “only in a society...where the concept of human equality had acquired permanence” — where the notion of abstract equality had become hegemonic — could it become possible for the “form of value” to appear.<sup>54</sup> This means not only that capitalism is for Marx absolutely inextricable from the theoretical equality espoused in democracy, but also that the critique of political economy is a theory of the contingency of “the conditions of sensuous perception,” i.e., aesthetics.

And yet, no sooner has this incisive determination of historical specificity been asserted than it is retracted: in the very next sentence, Marx recurs — “This [hegemonic equality] however becomes possible only in society where the commodity form is the universal form of the product of labor.”<sup>55</sup> We have therefore a loop, an end that is its own beginning: the abstract equality of the commodity arrives only with the equality of humanity, which arrives only with abstract equality of the commodity. Undecidable formulations of retroactivity like this are the signature figure of the text, paradoxes that propel the narrative’s continuous leaps over the contradictions (real impossibilities) that are its object.<sup>56</sup> In this way, the narrative texture itself becomes the site of the critique’s engagement with the problem of the “makeshift for practical purposes.” The text comes to know its object not linearly but formally.

One arc of formal knowledge occurs in the reversing gesture of isolating the commodity as an elemental form only to discover that there is nothing elemental about it. The reversal is not coincidentally one of the most oft-quoted lines in the book: "a commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties."<sup>57</sup> In the sway of this vertiginous passage from the elemental to the metaphysical, the narrative compulsively pursues the even more obscure region of theology: "we must take flight into the misty realm of religion [*müssen wir in die Nebelregion der religiösen Welt flüchten*]."<sup>58</sup> Tackling the commodities on their own terms, in the language with which they alone are familiar, on their own turf, in their own world, becomes still yet more marvelous and contradictory, and the only way to land this flight into religion, to conclude this foray into fetishism, is with the flourish of the most inscrutable literary allusion in the text. Arriving at "the peculiar circumstance that the use value of a thing is realized without exchange... while inversely value is realized within exchange," the narrative throws up its hands: "who would not call to mind at this point the advice given by the good Dogberry to the night-watchman Seacoal?"<sup>59</sup> With that rhetorical question highlighting its invocation, the text exits with a quote: "to be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but reading and writing comes by nature." In what possible sense does this amount to "advice" so indispensable that it is spontaneously called to mind? Shakespeare's speaker is plagued by terminal malapropism, and the purity of heart behind his errors of tongue functions as a kind of foil for the varieties of deception explored in the play: deceit as a means can yield good or bad ends. Dogberry, dogged by grandiloquence, speaks this befuddling apposition, erroneously naturalizing written language. Marx's elusive allusion to this chaos in the guise of solving the double result of value within and without exchange effects metalepsis at multiple levels: for double result, he substitutes confounded language; for contradiction he substitutes chaos; for innate value he substitutes innate writing; for misty realm of religion he substitutes the ironic realm of literature.

From the throes of this propulsive figurative machine, it is not surprising that again "we must take flight." And so we begin again: after the concluding Shakespearean allusion, the second chapter commences by redirecting the line of inquiry. "Commodities cannot themselves go to market and perform exchanges in their own right. We must, therefore, have recourse to their guardians, who are the possessors of the commodities."<sup>60</sup> Having spent so much time in the commodity world, this recursive transition back to the world of guardians is belabored and confounded by imagery recollecting the vicissitudes of personification: "Commodities are things, and therefore lack the power to resist man. If they are unwilling, he can use force, in other words, he can take possession of them."<sup>61</sup> Within these two sentences, the movement back and forth between commodities-qua-things and commodities-qua-persons ("unwilling") complicates and undermines the recourse to the world of the

guardians. Indeed, no sooner have guardians been established as forceful and agential possessors than we find that their world, too, is contrived by personification: “Here the persons exist for one another merely as representatives...of commodities...in general, the characters who appear on the economic stage are merely personifications of economic relations; it is as the bearers of these economic relations that they come into contact with each other.”<sup>62</sup> The priority of the person over the commodity is asserted, but almost instantly the commodity’s personhood resurfaces, and with it the thinghood of the person who is only a “representative” or “bearer,” who exists “merely” (repeated twice) as personification.

The movement from the elementary form to the metaphysical form, from the commodity to the guardian (and back again), cannot rest with the elementary form of the guardian, but must rather take as its point of departure the arena of relations, the forum of exchange. Thus proceeds the next propulsive gesture: “Let us now accompany the owner of some commodity, say our old friend the linen weaver, to the scene of action, the market.”<sup>63</sup> In the market, the arena arrived at by the metaleptic movement of the search for value within its varying forms of appearance, it becomes possible to observe the strange offspring of the commodity’s promiscuous exchanging of body and soul: the exchange of bodies changes the body; the commodity affects a “metamorphosis.” This “troublesome” “transubstantiation,” as it is elsewhere repeatedly called, is not a passive process undergone by the commodity, but an active one, requiring “the leap” “from the body of the commodity into the body of the gold.”<sup>64</sup> Marx is at pains to mark this leap sufficiently, to name it adequately: now it is “metamorphosis,” now it is “transubstantiation,” now it is the “*salto mortale*.” Implementing this image, he cannot help but remind his reader that it has been so named elsewhere: “*salto mortale*, as I have called it elsewhere” (it is used in the same context in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*). The very proliferation of names for this process performs the metaleptic momentum it delineates, the suspension of one figure by another, the substitution of one figure (commodity, figure of value) for another (gold, figure of commodity, hence figure of abstract value).

Thus when the mystery of the commodity form is found to inhere in a leap, for which the text uses the striking image of “*salto mortale*,” the finding is most effectively disclosed by the recurrence of the same leap within the narrative structure itself. The *salto mortale* happens twice, on the part of the commodity, and on the part of the narrative: “Capital must have its origin both in circulation and not in circulation. We therefore have a double result. These are the conditions of the problem: *hic rhodus, hic salta!*”<sup>65</sup> A challenge to leap in the here and now, Marx’s evocation of Aesop recalls Hegel’s prescription for philosophy in the here and now.<sup>66</sup> Thus concludes the chapter on “Contradictions in the General Formula for Capital” — but these contradictions have not been solved so much as displaced; and so the next chapter commences on the other side of the abyss cleared in the leap. The duplicitous origin of value both within and without circulation is ostensibly addressed after the leap by the discovery of a

reiterated duplicity, “a commodity whose use-value possesses the peculiar property of being a source of value.”<sup>67</sup> Labor is that commodity whose use-value is its embodiment in concrete ontological form of the otherwise ontologically inconsistent value. This ontological oscillation animates labor — *it is more than it has*. Its value is in it more than it, its use-value is this valorizing capacity of its value. It is this excessive potentiality of labor — this fact that labor is in excess of itself — that complicates any grounding of value in labor. And so, indeed, no sooner has labor been introduced as a figure for the “makeshift” grounding of exchange than it is supplanted by a metonymically linked notion: labor-time. Labor as such cannot ground value (ultimately there is no ground for the ungrounded); and so a related figure replaces it, “labor-time,” the abstract, universal, putatively comparable unit of expenditure of labor. But even then, labor-time is itself supplanted by the figure of “social labor-time” (as opposed to “abstract labor time”), for it is only *after* labor-time has been subject to “quantitative determination” and *after* it has been sold that it can precipitate the value it is purported to ground. This retroactive grounding means, as Karatani astutely underscores, that nothing is guaranteed:

A commodity cannot express its value — no matter how much labor time is expended to produce it — if it is not sold. Seen *ex post facto* the value of a commodity could be considered as existing in social labor time, while in *ex ante facto*, there is no such guarantee.<sup>68</sup>

Value without guarantees. Value after the fact, but not before. This is the instability of the capitalist metaphysic, the retroactive traction of an abstraction. After the fact of selling it can be said that labor, nay labor-time, nay social labor-time, grounds value, but this ground can only be achieved by the leap — the leap of the sale, the leap of the commodity, the leap across the chasm of ungroundedness. In order to represent this leap, the text of *Capital* takes its own leap, *hic Rhodus, hic salta!* The narrative momentum of *Capital* is described by these propulsive leaps: the movement from labor to labor time to social labor time to the leap — a movement I have been calling *metalepsis* — here enfolds within the text of *Capital* a rhythmic performance of its own concept. With each contradiction, each double result, each fathoming of abyssal ungroundedness, the narrative leaps.

Across the books of *Capital* this leap rebounds, the text becoming, like *Scorpion and Felix* before it, an echo of *Tristram Shandy*'s frenetic digressive energy. The propulsion of the leap reverberates in numerous correlative images of throwing, flinging, and hurling (*werfen, einwerfen, schleudern*), the “incessant” but “alternating rhythm” of spurts and jumps, wages and waste, banishment and abandon.<sup>69</sup> It is by this motion of leaps that Marx depicts “the enormous power” of capitalist “expansion,” its “elasticity, a capacity for sudden extension by leaps.”<sup>70</sup> Active and passive, compulsive and controlled, these verbs effect the jerking (*stossweise*), unstable disequilibrium of the

leap, formalizing the automatic repetitive tick of drive.

No wonder then that the only conclusion possible for such a book is the union of the leap and of drive:

But the accumulation of capital presupposes surplus-value; surplus-value presupposes the availability of considerable masses of capital and labor-power in the hands of commodity producers. The whole movement, therefore, seems to turn around in a glitching circuit [*fehlerhaften Kreislauf*], which we can only get out of by assuming a primitive accumulation which precedes capitalist accumulation; an accumulation which is not the result of the capitalist mode of production but its point of departure.<sup>71</sup>

The glitching circuit distills the topos of drive as a lurching, incomplete circulation propelled forth by its own failure to approach its object. We arrive at the end of a lengthy journey only to find ourselves back at the beginning. Later Marxist reformulations of primitive accumulation as a constant feature of capitalism, rather than a stage, make explicit what unfurls implicitly in this image of the glitching circuit.<sup>72</sup> The looping motion of the narrative whose end is its own beginning, that can only find its beginning at the end, mimes the metaphysic of capital, its positing its own preconditions:

Just as the heavenly bodies always repeat a certain movement, once they have been flung into it, so also does social production, once it has been flung into this movement of alternate expansion and contraction. Effects become causes in their turn, and...the whole process...always reproduces its own conditions.<sup>73</sup>

All the metaleptic movement of the narrative strives at representing this worldly metalepsis, capital's own substitution of effect for cause.<sup>74</sup> If this ungroundedness is the key to Marx's grasp of capital's dynamism, it has been most dexterously formulated by the dynamic motion of the figurative texture of *Capital* itself.

Personification and metalepsis are but two of the many tropes that structure *Capital*, just as structuring tropes are but one of the many features *Capital* shares with the Victorian novel. Figurative reading, what I called the "textual" strategy for approaching *Capital* novelistically, accesses the conceptual agency of literary form, opening onto the many ways in which *Capital* realizes its insights not argumentatively but aesthetically. Reading Marx's Victorian novel is only one way to encounter his text, but it magnifies the verve of his critique — that we may more spiritedly, more materially, advance it.

## Notes

1. Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: Verso, 1997) 13.
2. Francis Wheen, *Karl Marx: A Life* (New York: Norton, 2001) 304.
3. My reading is limited to the first volume of *Capital*, as that is the only volume Marx saw to completion.
4. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Household Words, 1853) Chapter 16: "What connection can there be between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabouts of Jo, the outlaw with the broom, who had the distant ray of light upon him when he swept the churchyard-step? What connection can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together!" In emphasizing the way in which the Dickensian narrator's question prompts synthesis of plots, settings, and characters as all of one "curious" whole, I mean in part to underscore that *Capital* is read here as a specifically Victorian novel, one which asserts its own wholeness.
5. Asa Briggs and John Callow, *Marx in London* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982) 53.
6. Quotes from such reports fill the pages of *Capital*. On their role for the fellow novelists, see Sheila Smith, "Blue Books and Victorian Novelists." *Review of English Studies* 21: 81 (Feb. 1970): 23-40.
7. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I* trans. Ben Fowkes (London: New Left Review, 1976) 802. Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue went one step further: "only in England could Marx become what he has become...in such an economically undeveloped country as Germany was until the middle of this century, Marx could not have arrived at his critique of bourgeois economy and at a knowledge of capitalist production any more than this economically undeveloped Germany could have had the political institutions of economically developed England." Paul Lafargue and Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Extracts from the Reminiscences of Karl Marx* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1942) 42.
8. Letter to Engels, 31 July 1865. In Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works Volume 42* (New York: International, 1975). See also fn 3.
9. Lafargue reported that the story left "a deep impression" on Marx. Lafargue and Liebknecht, 16.
10. Honoré de Balzac, *The Unknown Masterpiece and Other Works* (Maryland: Wildside Press, 2008) 44. "Il y a tant de profondeur sur cette toile, l'air y est si vrai, que vous ne pouvez plus le distinguer de l'air qui nous environne. Où est l'art? Perdu, disparu!...Rien...Jen e vois là que des couleurs confusément amassées et contenues par une multitude de lignes bizarres qui forment une muraille de peinture." Honoré de Balzac, *Oeuvres Complètes de Honoré de Balzac*, Vol 14 (Paris: Bethune and Plon, 1845) 304 .
11. Afterword to the Second German Edition, 1873: "The mealy-mouthed babblers of German vulgar economy grumbled about the style of my book. No one can feel the literary shortcomings in *Das Kapital* more strongly than I myself. Yet I will quote in this connection one English and one Russian notice, for the benefit and the enjoyment of these gentlemen and their public. The Saturday Review, an entirely hostile journal, said in its notice of the first edition: The presentation of the subject invests the driest economic questions with a certain peculiar charm." The *St. Petersburg Journal* (*Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*), in its issue of 20 April 1872, says: "The presentation of the subject, with the exception of one or two exceptionally special parts, is distinguished by its comprehensibility to the general reader, its clearness, and, in spite of the high scientific level of the questions discussed, by an unusual liveliness. In this respect the author in no way resembles...the majority of German scholars, who...write their books in a language so dry and obscure that the heads of ordinary mortals are cracked by it." Reprinted in *Capital*,

99 (ellipses original).

12. *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 1, trans. Richard Dixon et al (New York: International, 1975) 624.
13. *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 1, 624.
14. Letter to his father, 10 November 1837. *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, 10.
15. Hugo Gellert, *Karl Marx' Capital in Lithographs* (New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, 1934); Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947). On talking commodities, see Werner Hamacher's excellent "Lingua Amissa: The Messianism of Commodity-Language and Derrida's *Specters of Marx*" in Michael Sprinker, ed., *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Derrida's Specters of Marx*. (London: Verso, 1999). On sensationalism, see Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992). On literary allusions, see Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Tangled Bank: Darwin, Marx, Frazer and Freud as Imaginative Writers* (New York: Atheneum, 1962). A passing reference likens *Capital* to a *bildungsroman* in Kurt Heinzelman, *The Economics of the Imagination* (Amherst: U Massachusetts P, 1980) 182.
16. *Capital* 278, 359. Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect." *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) 141-48. See also the stupendous list of specialized works involved in making a watch: "formerly the individual work of a Nuremberg artificer, the watch has been transformed into the social product of an immense number of detail labourers, such as mainspring makers, dial makers, spiral spring makers, jewelled hole makers, ruby lever makers, hand makers, case makers, screw makers, gilders, with numerous subdivisions, such as wheel makers (brass and steel separate), pin makers, movement makers, acheveur de pignon (fixes the wheels on the axles, polishes the facets, &c.), pivot makers, planteur de finissage (puts the wheels and springs in the works), finisseur de barillet (cuts teeth in the wheels, makes the holes of the right size, &c.), escapement makers, cylinder makers for cylinder escapements, escapement wheel makers, balance wheel makers, raquette makers (apparatus for regulating the watch), the planteur d'échappement (escapement maker proper); then the repasseur de barillet (finishes the box for the spring, &c.), steel polishers, wheel polishers, screw polishers, figure painters, dial enamellers (melt the enamel on the copper), fabricant de pendants (makes the ring by which the case is hung), finisseur de charnière (puts the brass hinge in the cover, &c.), faiseur de secret (puts in the springs that open the case), graveur, ciseleur, polisseur de boîte, &c., &c., and last of all the repasseur, who fits together the whole watch and hands it over in a going state. Only a few parts of the watch pass through several hands; and all these membra disjecta come together for the first time in the hand that binds them into one mechanical whole" (462).
17. *Capital* 471-472.
18. *Capital* 921.
19. *Capital* 799.
20. Such a perspective was of course openly advocated by Dickens, Eliot, and others, and is a critical commonplace, as in, for example, Caroline Levine's concise remark that "Nineteenth-century writers sought to represent reality accurately not simply for the sake of mimetic perfection, but because a secure knowledge of the real *mattered*. Realists wanted their readers to know the way the world worked so that they would understand how to act in that world." *The Serious Pleasures of Suspense* (Charlottesville: U Virginia P, 2003) 138. For an admirable book-length study shining bold new light on this question, see Mario Ortiz Robles, *The Novel as Event* (Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 2010).

21. *Capital* 342.
22. Georg Lukács, "Critical Realism and Socialist Realism." *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*, trans. John Mander and Necke Mander (New York: Harper, 1971) 93-135. See also the exemplary, though not economically focused, discussion of typicality in Catherine Gallagher's "George Eliot: Immanent Victorian." *Representations* 90 (Spring 2005): 61-74.
23. I take the phrase "conceptual agency" from Susan Wolfson's discussion of literary form, though by it she intends "the way form shapes perceptions and critical thinking," while I am after the way form thinks. See "Reading for Form" *MLQ* 61 (March 2000): 16. In this endeavor I am indebted to Julia Reinhard Lupton's formidable models of "thinking with" literature, especially as developed in her forthcoming *Thinking with Shakespeare* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 2011).
24. Kojin Karatani, "Capital's Drive," in *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2005) 200; and Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2006) 60-65. Žižek's work often refers to drive in discussing capitalism, but rarely explores the idea. It seems nonetheless possible to glean from his work that a properly thorough exploration of drive will be the final and urgent ground of psychoanalytic Marxism. For indications in this direction, see Kiarina Kordela, "Marx, Condensed and Displaced," Catherine Liu, ed. *The Dreams of Interpretation: A Century Down the Royal Road* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007) 306-308. Also salient here is Adrian Johnston's remarkable elucidation of a materialist account of drive, though this is only momentarily developed with respect to Marx. *Time-Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive* (Chicago: Northwestern UP, 2005) 329-30.
25. *Capital* 92. "Zur Vermeidung möglicher Missverständnisse ein Wort. Die Gestalten von Kapitalist and Grundeigentümer zeichne ich keineswegs in rosigem Licht. Aber es handelt sich hier um die Personen nur, soweit sie die Personifikation ökonomischer Kategorien sind, Träger von bestimmten Klassenverhältnissen und Interessen." *Marx Engels Werke*, Volume 23, 16 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1962).
26. *Capital* 132.
27. *Capital* 141; *Werke*, Volume 23, 64.
28. *Capital* 143; *Werke*, Volume 23, 66.
29. *Capital* 179. Maritornes being a whorish servant girl in *Don Quixote*.
30. *Capital* 207.
31. *Capital* 163.
32. *Capital* 163-4
33. *Capital* 143; *Werke*, Volume 23, 66.
34. See Hamacher. Also noteworthy: J. Hillis Miller, "Promises, Promises: Speech Act Theory, Literary Theory, and Politico-Economic Theory in Marx and de Man." *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 33:1 (Winter 2002):1-20. And the formidable "How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?" in Slavoj Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989).
35. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Penguin, 1993) 162. Notebook 1, October 1857, "The Chapter on Money," Part 2: "To compare money with language is not less erroneous. Language does not transform ideas, so that the peculiarity of ideas is dissolved and their social character runs alongside them as separate entity, like prices alongside commodities. Ideas do not exist separately from language. Ideas which have first to be translated out of their mother tongue into a foreign tongue in order to circulate, in order to become exchangeable, offer a somewhat better analogy; but the analogy is

then not with language, but with its foreignness.” *Das Geld mit der Sprache zu vergleichen ist nicht minder falsch...bieten schon mehr Analogie; die Analogie liegt dann aber nicht in der Sprache, sondern in ihrer Fremdheit.* *Werke*, Volume 42. Prominent contemporary brokers of this analogy, not always with sufficient attention to Marx’s correction: Jacques Derrida, *Given-Time* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1994) and *Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990) and *The Coiners of Language* (Norman: U Oklahoma P, 1994); Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993); and Kojin Karatani, *Architecture as Metaphor: Language, Number, Money* (Cambridge: MIT P, 1994).

36. *Capital* 254, 265, 342, 423, 424, 739, 765, 991, 1003, 1015, 1020, 1025, and passim.
37. *Capital* 252, 254, 255, 259, 320, and passim. Eventually, about half-way through the text, the self-reflexivity of this expression, “the valorization of value” precipitates the substitute expression “self-valorization,” furthering the personifications (449, 486, 557, 644, 669, 756, and passim).
38. *Capital* 926.
39. *Capital* 302.
40. Ben Fowkes gives the German in his footnote to the quotation: Goethe, *Faust*, Part 1, Auerbach’s Cellar in Leipzig, line 2141 (‘als hätt’es Lieb’im Leibe’). 302.
41. *Capital* 740-41.
42. *Capital* 342.
43. *Capital* 253.
44. *Capital* 433. “Wissenschaftliche Analyse der Konkurrenz ist nur möglich, sobald die innere Natur des Kapitals begriffen ist, ganz wie die scheinbare Bewegung der Himmelskörper nur dem verständlich, der ihre wirkliche, aber sinnlich nicht wahrnehmbare Bewegung kennt.” *Werke*, Volume 23, 335.
45. *Capital* 230; *Werke*, Volume 23, 147.
46. *Capital* 230-31; *Werke*, Volume 23, 147.
47. *Capital* 230-31; *Werke*, Volume 23, 147.
48. *Capital* 231. “Dieser Widerspruch zwischen der quantitativen Schranke und der qualitativen Schrankenlosigkeit des Geldes treibt den Schatzbildner stets zurück zur Sisyphusarbeit der Akkumulation.” *Werke*, Volume 23, 147.
49. On this distinction in psychoanalysis, see Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1998) 168. See also Johnston, 191.
50. David Harvey’s recent companion constructs a graphic chart of these dualities, mapping the dual value of the commodity, the dual forms of exchange value, the dual positions in the market, and the dual function of money. *A Companion to Marx’s Capital*. (London: Verso, 2010) 109.
51. *Capital* 139.
52. *Capital* 150.
53. *Capital* 151.
54. *Capital* 152.
55. *Capital* 152.
56. On diverse logics of contradiction in capitalism, see Kiarina Kordela, “Political Metaphysics: God in Global Capitalism,” *Political Theory* 27 (1999): 769-88.
57. *Capital* 163
58. *Capital* 165; *Werke*, Volume 23, 86.

59. *Capital* 177.
60. *Capital* 178. "Wir müssen uns also nach ihren Hütern umsehen, den Warenbesitzern." *Werke*, Volume 23, 99.
61. *Capital* 178.
62. *Capital* 179.
63. *Capital* 199.
64. *Capital* 200.
65. *Capital* 269.
66. See Ben Fowkes's footnote, page 269.
67. *Capital* 270.
68. *Transcritique* 217.
69. The text of *Capital* is saturated with images of throwing: 208, 216, 223, 231, 249, 251, 262, 267, 299, 301, 445, 567, 617, 709, 723, 754, 936, and *passim*. "Alternating rhythm" 723.
70. *Capital* 579-580. "...ürhaupt die der grossen Industrie entsprechenden allgemeinen Produktionsbedingungen hergestellt sind, erwirbt diese Betriebsweise eine Elastizität, eine plötzliche sprungweise Ausdehnungsfähigkeit...Die ungeheure, stossweise Ausdehnbarkeit..." *Werke*, Volume 23, 476.
71. *Capital* 873. "Diese ganze Bewegung scheint sich also in einem fehlerhaften Kreislauf herumzudrehn, aus demn wir nur hinauskommen, in dem wir eine der kapitalistischen Akkumulation vorausgehende "ursprüngliche" Akkumulation ("previous accumulation" bei Adam Smith) unterstellen, eine Akkumulation, welche nicht das Resultat der kapitalistischen Produktionsweise ist, sondern ihr Ausgangspunkt." *Werke*, Volume 23, 741.
72. On primitive accumulation as a constant rather than a phase, see David Harvey's discussion of what he calls "accumulation by dispossession" in *The New Imperialism* (New York: Oxford UP, 2003) 137-83.
73. *Capital* 786.
74. Here, too, we might remark the Hegelianism of Marx's procedure: figural relations in the text are relations in the world itself.