

Editors’ Note

Each of the essays in this issue is concerned with figuration, comparison, and combination — about how, by reformulating even familiar tropes, we can begin to see differently. Amanda Armstrong, for instance, returns to a familiar image, that of Marx’s dancing tables, to explain the different ways *Capital* and capital can each be understood as a “splintered text.” Marx, she reminds us, situated the figure of the dancing table historically. In 1853 Marx wrote a piece for the *New York Daily Tribune* on the Taiping Rebellion; he had hoped that the rebellion might encourage a Europe that appeared to be “standing still.” Alas, it did not and by 1867, capital seemed as intractable as ever. Armstrong suggests that the figure of the dancing table and its footnote, when situated historically, suggest that Marx’s anatomy of capital is a way of describing a system that seemed for the time being secure. Armstrong also notes, however, that “the figure of the table also indicates that Marx does not take capitalism’s apparent triumph for granted. Fourteen years later, the table still appears to rattle.” Returning to this moment in the history capital through the figure of the table, Armstrong’s immanent analysis of *Capital* highlights how we might witness Marx grappling to recast an apparent moment of triumph for capital as a moment freighted with political possibility.

In the next essay comparison once again takes center stage, this time as a concept itself to be interrogated. Shaoling Ma analyzes “what it means for comparison, as a specific application of an intellectual approach or method, to work *like* capital.” She proceeds to analyze the intellectual link between comparison and the value-form. If, in other words, comparative literary studies can appear to reproduce the logic of global capitalism, she explores a way comparison might be thought differently and produce something like a critique of capital. To compare otherwise is, for Ma, to advocate for a kind of comparison that “evaluates its own conceptual position in relation to and outside of its object.” Ultimately, Ma, like Armstrong, proposes a way of reading immanently to work against capital’s inexhaustible reach, writing “if capitalism is the ultimate comparative machine, there is no better place for comparative literature scholars to work through the relation between their own work and the capitalist logic of equivalence and exchange than from the representation of this dialectical relation in literary, cultural, and theoretical texts.”

The broad historical comparisons of the first two essays find more local footing in Tamas Nagypal’s piece on three films — *Zombi 2*, *Year of the Gun*, and *Arrivederci*

amore, ciao — each of which deal with the political turmoil in Italy in the 1970s. Nagypal returns to the late-seventies to historicize a promising political moment that ultimately ended in a disappointing political failure as the Communist Party of Italy was unable to mobilize its base toward any lasting political ends. The death of the revolution is figured by the living dead in these films over a period of three decades when neoliberal capitalism had apparently buried it. Ultimately though Nagypal hopes that these films might point the way forward to restoring the imaginative capacity of the Italian Left through what he describes as an act of mourning.

In the final two essays, Tavid Mulder and Jensen Suther tighten the analysis of capital's international dimension further to examine how particular works can produce or activate political imagination in the reader or beholder. Mulder focuses on the importance of montage in Roberto Arlt's *The Seven Madmen* (1929) and *The Flamethrowers* (1931), describing how montage functions as a conceptual map of uneven development attendant with global modernity. Suther's comparison between Theodor Adorno's and Martin Heidegger's conceptions of "truth" in the work of art, similarly interrogates the relation between the work of art and forces of production. His essay, however, is focused on the experience of "dissonance" rather than montage as the mechanism through which the contradictions of social life brought on by capitalist modes of production are realized by the beholder.

Errata: In issue 28.1, *Mediations* misattributed the authorship of an essay, "Misery and Debt: On the Logic and History of Surplus Populations and Surplus Capital," from *Endnotes*. Those citations have been corrected throughout the site. The correct citation is: Aaron Benanav and John Clegg, "Misery and Debt: On the Logic and History of Surplus Populations and Surplus Capital," *Endnotes* 2 (27 June 2012).

Davis Smith-Brecheisen, for the *Mediations* editors