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On: 12 July 2015, At: 03:41

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London, SW1P 1WG



Socialism and Democracy

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/csad20>

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Published online: 09 Jul 2015.



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To cite this article: Claire Reddleman (2015) Vampires, Foetuses and Ventriloquism: Metaphor as a Representational Strategy in Capital Volume 1 , *Socialism and Democracy*, 29:2, 25-40, DOI: [10.1080/08854300.2015.1037604](https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300.2015.1037604)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08854300.2015.1037604>

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Vampires, Foetuses and Ventriloquism: Metaphor as a Representational Strategy in Capital Volume 1

Claire Reddeman

In this article I offer a preliminary account of the role of metaphor as a representational strategy in *Capital Volume One* by Karl Marx. While extensive consideration and debate has been concerned with Marx's writing on politics, philosophy, economics and literary theory, relatively little attention has been given to *Capital* as a work of literature.¹ I offer a preliminary analysis of metaphor in *Capital 1*, reading three groupings of metaphors that occur throughout the text. Marx builds up an imagistic, metaphorical level of description that is sufficiently varied, rich and consistent to constitute an important feature of his project to represent capital² in this text.

I suggest below some types or groupings that help to draw out the themes and concerns that these references highlight. Capital and capitalist production is frequently anthropomorphised, attributed characteristics of persons in order to contribute to the polemical force of key arguments; a number of references are concerned with *speaking for* either a real author or a character or type; a notable group of examples deals with blood and bodies; and another key cluster of references allude to plays,³ characters in plays, acting and performance. A number of persons and personified non-persons speak directly in this text, such that it becomes "polyvocal". Marx's use of allusion and metaphor in this way builds up a set of vivid images that reinforce his characterisation of capital as a form and a relation that operates by means of perverse transformations, reversals and distortions, and violations of the integrity of persons and natural processes, including death. I examine the selected examples with some attention to

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1. Key texts in this area are Prawer 1978 and Shell 1993.
 2. I allude here to Jameson 2011.
 3. See Pepperell 2010: 73.

variations across English translations by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (1887), Ben Fowkes (1990) and Hans Ehrbar (2012).⁴

Anthropomorphisation, animorphism and personification as metaphorical strategy

The first approach I want to discuss is the anthropomorphisation of capital and capitalist production. The figure of “the capitalist” is itself an analytical construct, an abstraction, a type that allows us to better discuss capital’s functioning, as Marx emphasises in his preface to the first edition:

To prevent possible misunderstandings, let me say this. I do not by any means depict the capitalist and the landowner in rosy colours. But individuals are dealt with here only in so far as they are the personifications [*Personifikation*] of economic categories, the bearers [*Träger*] of particular class-relations and interests. (1990: 92)

The decision to discuss the capitalist in abstracted terms, as the personification of an economic category, is a distinctive feature of Marx’s prose. The same applies to the typified landowner, as Marx observes, and the typified worker. Marx’s rendering of the category “capitalist” as the *figure* of the capitalist asks for flexible thinking from the reader, as we hold in mind the idea of the capitalist category, standing in antagonistic relation to the class of workers, the type “worker”, and the idea of a person who owns money, throws capital into circulation, employs workers and runs a business. In the midst of this flexible thinking we might retain an impression of this moment of figuration in which Marx establishes the category-as-figure.

A suggestive use of personification simultaneously with animorphism is the penultimate image of chapter five, “Contradictions in the General Formula”. Two English translations of this passage handle the moment of personification differently:

Our friend, *Moneybags* [*Geldbesitzer*], who as yet is only an *embryo capitalist* [*Kapitalistenraupe*], must buy his commodities at their value, must sell them at their value, and yet at the end of the process must withdraw more value from circulation than he threw into it at starting. His *development into a*

4. I draw on three English translations of *Capital 1*: Moore and Aveling’s 1887 translation from the 1st German edition of 1867, Ben Fowkes’s 1976 translation, and Hans Ehrbar’s 2002-ongoing translation from the 4th German edition of 1890. Page references, unless otherwise noted, are to the 1990 Penguin Classics edition of the Fowkes translation.

full-grown capitalist [*Schmetterlingsentfaltung*] must take place, both within the sphere of circulation and without it. (Marx 1887: 114, emphasis added)

The *money-owner* [*Geldbesitzer*], who is as yet only a *capitalist in larval form* [*Kapitalistenraupe*], must buy his commodities at their value, sell them at their value, and yet at the end of the process withdraw more value from circulation than he threw into it at the beginning. His *emergence as a butterfly* [*Schmetterlingsentfaltung*] must, and yet must not, take place in the sphere of circulation. (Marx 1990: 269, emphasis added)

In the Moore and Aveling translation (1887), we see the figure described as “our friend” and immediately named, in the manner of a proper name, “Moneybags”. In Moore and Aveling, “Moneybags” and “Mr Moneybags” occur four times.⁵ The Penguin translation by Ben Fowkes favours the less vivid “money-owner” for *Geldbesitzer*, although being an owner of something is also characteristic of a person.

Continuing this passage, Moneybags the money-owner is next characterised further, as an “embryo capitalist” and a “capitalist in larval form” respectively. *Kapitalistenraupe* also has the more humorous sense of “capitalist caterpillar”, perhaps the more humorous in translation as this introduces an alliteration. Moore and Aveling’s “embryo”, captures the sense of “larval”, but links more specifically to an image of human development, as opposed to that of the insect. The “caterpillar” of the German vividly prompts images of caterpillars more so than images of larva or embryos. “Embryo” can be connected to other instances of things being in embryonic form in the text, and particularly to a vivid reference to an Act of Parliament as an “abortion” (408).

The third characterisation of the capitalist is “development into a full-grown capitalist” and “emergence as a butterfly” respectively. *Schmetterlings* does give the specific sense of “butterfly”, with the Fowkes translation continuing the animorphism of the original German. The Moore and Aveling translation prefers to emphasise the progression of the figure of the capitalist from the form “money-owner” to the less abstract form “capitalist”, discussed further below. Marx proposes this progression as a development of his abstract figuration of the process of analysis of capital that he carries out in *Volume One*. “Money-owner” is a simplified form that Marx deploys to make clear the relations between those who own money and those who have nothing to sell but their labour-power.

5. See also “our friend, Moneybags” (1887: 117, 120), and “Accompanied by Mr. Moneybags” (1887: 121).

Marx discusses the capitalist and worker specifically in these terms at the end of part two, “The Transformation of Money into Capital”, where:

... we can perceive a change in the physiognomy of our *dramatis personae*. He, who before was the *money-owner*, now strides in front as *capitalist*; the *possessor of labour-power* follows as his *labourer*. The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business; the other, timid and holding back, like *one [jemand]* who is bringing his own *hide [Haut]* to market and has nothing to expect but – a *hiding [Gerberei]*. (Marx 1887: 121, emphasis added)

... a certain change takes place, or so it appears, in the physiognomy of our *dramatis personae*. He who was previously the *money-owner* now strides out in front as a *capitalist*; the *possessor of labour-power* follows as his worker. The one smirks self-importantly and is intent on business; the other is timid and holds back, like *someone [jemand]* who has brought his own *hide [Haut]* to market and now has nothing else to expect but – a *tanning*. (Marx 1990: 280, emphasis added)

Hans Ehrbar offers a slightly different translation of the last part of this passage:

like a *sheep [jemand]* bringing his own *wool [Haut]* to market which now has nothing else to expect but – a good *fleecing*. (Ehrbar 2002: 1184, emphasis added)

Ehrbar notes that he “substituted the sheep metaphor for Marx’s tanning metaphor: ‘like someone who has brought his own hide to market and now has nothing else to expect but – a tanning’. ‘Tanning’ nowadays means getting a sun-tanned skin” (ibid.). For me the use of “tanning” does not offer any ambiguity, so although the Ehrbar translation offers a more definite animorphism I would favour retaining “tanning”.

Ehrbar’s “fleecing” also lacks the force of the implied death of the hide-bearing animal that we find in Moore and Aveling’s “hiding” and Fowkes’ “tanning” – the animals are slaughtered before all three of these processes are carried out, but to be fleeced colloquially is to be conned. “Hiding” and “tanning” both colloquially mean beating, using imagery of physical violence rather than the less violent “conning”.

In this passage, then, the progression of the money-owner into the capitalist, and the owner of labour-power into the worker, is accompanied by imagery of the worker walking to the slaughter as livestock. Marx here makes clear that the apparent parity of the positions of money-owner and owner of labour-power was a distortion of the real relations, and a new stage of figuration in the argument is

being opened in part three, "The Production of Absolute Surplus-Value". The presence of this imagery of the worker as both animal and pre-skinned body underscores the imagery of progression, and adds to the metaphoric register in the text a further level on which the violence to the worker – and the worker's death as perhaps something that is required by this relation – is rendered metaphorically.

The reference to abortion, mentioned above, comes in chapter ten, "The Working Day", part six "The Struggle for a Normal Working Day. Laws for the Compulsory Limitation of Working Hours. The English Factory Legislation of 1833–64." In this section, Marx charts the struggle by workers to attain better working conditions, and shows the relations of interest among capitalists and legislators. The section opens with Marx laying out the worsening situation of the struggle for a normal working day, whereby recent trends are figured as a culmination of previous negative developments. Then, the "birth" of large-scale industry and the factory system brought "an avalanche of violent and unmeasured encroachments. Every boundary set by morality and nature, age and sex, day and night, was broken down" (Marx 1990: 390).

Metaphorical violence as representational strategy

This depiction of violent upheaval at the opening of the section leads into Marx's discussion of the legislative developments between 1833 and 1864 relating to the length of the working day, and is answered at the end of the chapter, following a crescendo of violent imagery, with the somewhat deflated entry of the "modest Magna Carta of the legally limited working day, which at least makes clear 'when the time which the worker sells is ended, and when his own begins'" (416). I think it is worth reading the progression of violent imagery at this point as a narrative device that supports the text's implicit claim to coherence and persuasiveness. Marx's rhetoric here also supports his implication that legislation cannot meet the violation and suffering that are capital's products just as much as is surplus value.

First in this progression of imagery is the "avalanche of violent and unmeasured encroachments". At this development, capital "celebrated its orgies" (390) before, in a moment of qualified respite, the House of Commons "refused to throw children of 13 under the Juggernaut wheels of capital for more than 8 hours a day" (392). The capitalist, later, "risked nothing but the skin of his workers" (398), bringing up again the image of the potential skinned worker. Capital then speaks

as Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice*, “craving the law”, bringing up the violent excision of flesh, and subsequent death, which is in prospect throughout this scene, and he speaks again less than a page later. The footnote on this page brings up more bloody imagery in Marx’s account of the Roman patricians’ dismemberment of plebeian debtors, including reference to a suggestion that early Christians practiced cannibalism (400). Later, capital drags the worker into the factory, “hounding him hither and thither” (403), and young girls are driven to the brothels by the relay system. Free traders drip “with the milk of human kindness” (404) in an unacknowledged reference to Lady Macbeth’s accusation of Macbeth’s cowardliness, referencing the string of murders in the play *Macbeth*. Further, silk is spun “out of the blood of little children,” who were “quite simply slaughtered for the sake of their delicate fingers” (406).

Marx characterises the Printworks Act of 1845 as “a parliamentary abortion” – something that had been promising but was thwarted by the inclusion of “means provided by the wording of this Act for its own violation” (408). If Parliament is here figured – personified – as a mother, then, and an Act of Parliament as its foetus, we can read capital, by implication, as the abortionist: “the unwillingness with which capital accepted this new ‘extravagance’ speaks through every line of the Act” (408). This is perhaps an instance of Marx under-using a metaphor, or perhaps over-stating matters via his metaphor, as the Act was “born” (i.e. passed) rather than killed or prevented. It is perhaps the good qualities of the Act that have been foreclosed – its life “aborted” – while it continues to exist in diminished form (as an aborted foetus).

One final, vivid image completes the string of violent images that lead up to the entry of the legally limited working day. The capitalist or capital itself is here figured as a “vampire [that] will not let go ‘while there remains a single muscle, sinew or drop of blood to be exploited’” (416). Here, capital as a vampire is the enemy that is met by the thoroughly inadequate responses of the government. Marx sarcastically rails against the inadequacy of legislative solutions which do nothing to stop the vampire from sucking the worker’s last drop of blood (although Marx does not use the word *Vampyr* here he clearly describes a creature that sucks and will not stop, and the use of muscle, sinew and blood is directly from the German).

Marx contrasts the British situation with that of the United States in the preceding pages, diagnosing a much healthier situation: “a new life immediately arose from the death of slavery” (414). The “modest Magna Carta of the legally limited working day” is unfavourably

contrasted with the aspiration of the working class of the US to achieve a maximum eight-hour working day. In this way, Marx implies that strong organisation of the working class is a necessary factor in a more successful struggle for better working conditions, and that this change cannot be brought about by legislative means alone. This dimension of the argument is made via the metaphoric register of the text, which is built cumulatively through this and other uses of imagery.

Animal imagery, metamorphosis and transformation

As well as transformations of capital into persons, we have seen some of the use Marx makes of imagery of animals, particularly in implying the condition of living as livestock, and death in the interest of capital. Capital itself, commodities and persons are figured in animal forms a number of times in *Volume One*. A brief, selective summary shows us an image of a product having changed its skin [*bereits gehäutet*] (204); commodities pupating [*verpuppen*] (224); commodities entering the chrysalis state (207); a weaver is compared to a spider, and an architect to a bee (284); capital has the eyes of a lynx (399); humans are characterised as chattel (377); infants are wizened like monkeys (522) and capital sheds its skin and is reborn (780).

This imagery of animals and insects is used to underscore Marx's larger arguments in two ways. First, the imagery reinforces Marx's conception of the labour process as "a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He confronts the materials of nature as a force of nature" (283). Persons are represented here as both part of nature and in confrontation and interaction with it.

A second, related concept that the animal imagery supports is that of transformation – constant metamorphosis – as capital's mode of operation. Marx sees the circulation of commodities as fundamentally a process of value taking up and sloughing off successive forms:

... the two metamorphoses which constitute the commodity's circular path are at the same time two inverse partial metamorphoses of two other commodities. One and the same commodity (the linen) opens the series of its own metamorphoses, and completes the metamorphosis of another (the wheat). In its first transformation, the sale, the linen plays these two parts in its own person. ... Hence the circuit made by one commodity in the course of its metamorphoses is inextricably entwined with the circuits of other commodities. This whole process constitutes the circulation of commodities. (207)

Capital and its things or properties (capitalists, commodities, value) take up these forms and characteristics of creatures as a way of showing that capital is not, in fact, a creature – is not organic (as we might use this term now). Capital is not an entity that is capable of having any emotional or personal content. Many of the metaphorical, creaturely forms that capital takes embody or suggest violence, unnaturalness, the supernatural, and distorted forms of speech. Capital misleadingly personifies itself, such that we relate to it as to a person when we need to apprehend it as a relation. Marx, in depicting capital in this way, is trying to use capital's own strategy to spotlight the violence and perversion that is going on but that is so normalised that we don't see it.

Death, resurrection and the undead

Closely connected to the imagery of transformation in the natural world, and to perverse imagery of transformation across natural boundaries, is a group of references to death, resurrection and the undead. These references also carry out personification in their attribution of life to non-living entities. For example, we hear that "living labour must seize on these things [raw materials that can suffer physical deterioration], awaken them from the dead" and that as a result of this "awakening" in the labour process, these materials will be "infused with vital energy" (289). In this reference metaphor shades into literal meaning, as Marx puts forward a materialist conception of the process of labour, seen as the transfer and then embodying of labour's energy into its product. So when objects are awakened from the dead, we have metaphor, but when those objects are infused with life, this description is very close to a literal, non-metaphorical description. We see a similar usage when labour "raises the means of production from the dead [*Toten*]" (308) in order to infuse them with life.

The figure of the vampire appears twice in this text, with a third appearance in the Fowkes translation where Marx describes something that will not stop sucking on the worker as long as the worker still has blood. The mythical figure of the vampire is first used to characterise capital as dead labour which "vampire-like [*vampyrmafsig*], lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks" (342). This passage moves into an extended speech by the abstract category of the worker ("there arises the voice of the worker" [342]), which builds to an accusation by the worker to the capitalist:

You may be a model citizen, perhaps a member of the R.S.P.C.A., and you may be in the odour of sanctity as well; but the thing you represent when you come

face to face with me has no heart in its breast. What seems [*scheint*] to throb there is my own heartbeat [*mein eigener Herzschlag*]. (343)

This is a powerful moment in Marx's rhetoric. We have already seen that the typified figure of the capitalist is one who embodies capital, and here, when this happens, capital effectively removes or renders invisible the capitalist-person's own heart. What seems to be there, what *appears* [*scheint*] there, is in fact the worker-category's own heartbeat. This is a dramatic and unsettling image, and seems to me closer to the sort of imagery we might associate with dream rather than visual representation. On a strictly visual level it may be difficult to understand the idea of the speaking worker-category knowing that it is their own heartbeat that they apprehend in the figure of the capitalist, but this is the sort of knowledge that is commonplace in dreams. The worker-category identifies the appearance, in vivid terms, of the radical displacement of one of its own most vital organs, its means of living. And the heart, of course, has strong symbolic associations beyond the physical – it is bound up with ideas of the soul and of being the location of love. This is a moment, then, of the staging of the radical displacement of the workers' collective life force into the person of the capitalist, into capital itself.

The vampire is used a second time to characterise the prolonging of the working day into the hours of darkness, a move which “only slightly quenches the vampire thirst [*Vampyrduerst*] for the living blood of labour” (367). Rather than the vampire figure appearing directly, here the “desire” of the capitalist is characterised as being like the unquenchable thirst of a vampire. This also forcefully pictures Marx's point that what we might see as desire in the capitalist is in fact not desire if we take that to indicate autonomy or agency – the capitalist's “thirst” is produced by the coercive law of competition, and is not something that individual capitalists control. The image of the vampire emphasises this point with great drama – the vampire is itself not driven by what we would think of as personal desire or choice, but by its need to consume blood. It is driven by its nature rather than by its choice, as the capitalist is driven by capital and its requirements rather than by “free” choices.

We have already noted the third appearance of the vampire, which comes into the English text in translation. We have also noted the potential resurrection of an existing, and deceased author, Dr Aikin (742), and finally a further instance of labour-power “vivifying” [*belebenden*] (773) the means of production. I suggest a reading of these references to death, resurrection, the undead and human life

force displaced into the figure of the capitalist as figuring, by means of metaphor, Marx's broader claim that within capitalist production, within the society of capital, human capacities are fully subordinated to the needs of capital, a thing, a system, a mode of production and a relation that is fully other to the human persons who reproduce it.

Playing roles: theatre, plays, playwrights and ventriloquism

A second broad group of references is to the theatre, plays, playwrights, characters and ventriloquism. Some references are to persons and entities as "*dramatis personae*"; others characterise situations as plays or using theatrical terms; and others take the form of often unacknowledged quotations and paraphrases from playwrights. Further references use lines from plays without acknowledgement, in a mode of address familiar to the reader, as when Marx uses Goethe to insult Proudhon (161), or to characterise the capitalist's dilemma between spending and accumulating:

While the capitalist of the classical type brands individual consumption as a sin against his 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". (740-741)

The point is reaffirmed only a paragraph later, and this imagery of the Faustian conflict within the capitalist comes ahead of Marx's use of the work of Dr Aikin (*Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles round Manchester*, 1795) to argue for a worsening progression in the attitude and capacities of the capitalist over time. Here the capitalist begins as "abstinent" and ends having reconceived accumulation as abstinence (from pleasure), and Marx uses this discussion rhetorically to make the claim that Manchester is in a much worse state in the "present". It is particularly notable that Marx figures the author, Aikin, as rising from the grave in order to witness the contemporaneous state of the city.

The narrative of the shifting character of the capitalist's avarice is augmented here by the image of a person rising from the grave – a suggestion of immortality – and the reference to Faust's own quest for immortality.⁶ In the same mode of familiar reference to a play, characters from *Much Ado about Nothing* also give advice to chemists (177);

6. See in particular the chapter "Language and Property: The Economics of Translation in Goethe's *Faust*" in Shell 1993.

Faust is used again to insult a landowner (868); and the aristocracy are characterised as Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice* to convey their hypocrisy (840).

Connecting to the theme of personification, in beginning to discuss the process of exchange in chapter two, Marx considers how the persons who are engaged in exchange relate to one another:

Here the persons exist for one another merely as representatives and hence owners, of commodities. As we proceed to develop our investigation, we shall find, in general, that the characters [*ökonomischen Charaktermasken der Personen*] who appear on the economic stage are merely personifications [*Personifikationen*] of economic relations; it is as the bearers [*Träger*] of these economic relations that they come into contact with each other. (Marx 1990: 178-179)

As we proceed to develop our investigation, we shall find, in general, that the persons' economic character masks [*ökonomischen Charaktermasken der Personen*] are mere personifications [*Personifikationen*] of the economic relations as whose carriers [*Träger*] they confront each other. (Ehrbar 2002: 172)

Referring to Ehrbar's translation and the original German, we find that the metaphor of the stage has been introduced in translation. Here persons wear "economic character masks" and these masks are "personifications" of their economic relations. However, the English term "character" does align with Marx's reference to character in this phrase, and this feels clearer in prose than "the persons" economic character masks. Both phrases give the sense of a "real" person existing beneath either a mask or a role, and the idea of the mask here is to convey the sense of real persons being layered over with, being bearers [*Träger*] of, relations, roles or identities. In both images the emphasis is on real persons being positioned beneath factors which mediate those persons, and in this way Marx's imagery reinforces or reinscribes his larger conception of how persons exist within capital.

Dramatis personae

Another group of references to the theatre characterises economic proceedings as a play by referring to the key participants as "*dramatis personae*". Marx uses this phrase twice in the text, and a further use is introduced in the Moore and Aveling translation which is repeated by Fowkes. The first instance contributes to a metaphor of the commodity's metamorphosis as itself a play: "the complete metamorphosis of a commodity, in its simplest form, implies four *denouements* and three *dramatis personae*" (206). In the second instance, already noted above, the money-owner transforms into the capitalist and the owner

of labour-power is transformed into the worker (280). These transforming figures are referred to as “*dramatis personae*”.

The instance of this phrase introduced in translation again uses the more theatrical metaphor where Marx uses “economic character masks”:

In each phase the same material elements confront each other, namely a commodity and money, and the same economic *dramatis personae*, a buyer and a seller. (248–249)

In each phase the same material elements confront each other, namely a commodity and money, and the same economic character masks, a buyer and a seller. (Ehrbar 2002: 358)

The phrases “the same economic *dramatis personae*” and “the same economic character masks”, respectively, both render the German phrase “*zwei Personen in denselben ökonomischen Charaktermasken*”. This indicates two persons wearing their masks, which is a small but significant difference. Fowkes’s “*dramatis personae*” emphasises the sense of pretense involved, while in Ehrbar’s masks the persons who wear them have been removed altogether.

Without wishing a small translation question to bear too much weight of argument, I would like to read this as a suggestive moment in the text. Marx specifies the presence of persons beneath the masks, and in this is consistent in using imagery that describes persons as bearers or carriers [*Träger*] of relations, of positions, roles, and obligations. In the metaphoric register of the argument, inanimate things tend to take on the attributes of persons, but persons tend not to take on the attributes of anything other than animals and insects. In this they remain characterised as living creatures.

In Marx’s theory of reification, we see in the commodity an antithesis “between the conversion of things into persons [*Personifizierung*] and the conversion of persons into things” (209). The tendency of inanimate things to take on the attributes of persons in Marx’s account shows the lack of life itself in those inanimate things. In the imagery discussed, Marx draws out capital’s tendency of personification more than that of reification. Capital operates by taking on appearances and particularly the appearances of life, and this is part of what Marx suggests we must engage with in analysing and critiquing capital.

Ventriloquising

The third and final grouping of references that I want to attend to is a group that sees one thing or entity speaking for or as another, or that

“ventriloquises” another entity. I see this as a more forceful manifestation of Marx’s tendency to refer to other authors, characters or phrases in a very familiar way in the text, often voicing them directly rather than quoting. This direct voicing at times becomes stronger, and Marx attributes reported speech directly to a non-human speaker on a few notable occasions. I discuss these occasions out of text order because Marx’s arguments and images that constitute the aesthetic level in his argument do not always function linearly, but often cumulatively.

The first occasion of ventriloquism, then, sees Marx suggest speech for the classical economist Nassau William Senior:

His answer could simply have been this: “Gentlemen! If you work your mills for 10 hours ...” (334)

Then:

... in that case, he should have continued his analysis as follows: “According to your figures, the workman produces his wages in the last hour but one ...” (335)

Marx continues the “analysis” that Senior “should have” continued himself, inhabiting Senior’s voice in this way for a full two pages, before closing and resuming in his own voice:

Whenever your “last hour” strikes in earnest, think of the Oxford professor. And now, gentlemen, farewell, and may we meet again in a better world, but not before. ... The battle-cry of the “last hour”, invented by Senior in 1836, was raised once again ... (338)

In this passage we see Marx speak on behalf of a really existing (although deceased) person. In a second example he speaks on behalf of, or *as*, the fictional character Bill Sikes from Charles Dickens’ novel *Oliver Twist*:

This is exactly the reasoning of Bill Sikes, the celebrated cut-throat. “Gentlemen of the jury, no doubt the throat of this commercial traveller has been cut. But that is not my fault, it is the fault of the knife. Must we, for such a temporary inconvenience, abolish the use of the knife? Only consider!” (569)

Reference is made to a fictional character here to argue against those who think the only alternative to the capitalist use of machinery is to use no machinery at all. Marx aims to show that their reasoning is faulty by likening their argument to one that is characteristic of a “cut-throat”.

In a third example, Marx suggests speech for commodities as a whole category, and then makes them speak through the “mouth” of another typified character, “the economist”:

If commodities could speak, they would say this: our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value. Our own intercourse as commodities proves it. We relate to each other merely as exchange-values. Now listen how those commodities speak through the mouth of the economist:

“Value [i.e. exchange-value] is a property of things, riches [i.e. use-value] of man. Value, in this sense, necessarily implies exchanges, riches do not.”
(176–177, emphasis added)

Here Marx stages the distortion of the truth that he argues the “economists” make in their interpretation of the commodity form. In this passage he allows the dramatised speech to do more work in making his argument than usual. Marx argues that what belongs to commodities is their value, rather than exchange-value – because this is a relation between things rather than something that inheres in them. When Marx himself suggests what the commodities would say, this speech is presented as true, as the description that Marx “himself” would endorse. When the commodities speak through the mouth of the typified figure that Marx satirises here, the economist, their sense is reversed and distorted.

We have seen three of the particularly noteworthy occasions on which Marx speaks as or for another entity: he suggests speech for the really existing (but deceased) economist Nassau William Senior; he suggests speech for a character from Charles Dickens’ novel *Oliver Twist*, Bill Sikes; and he suggests speech for the commodity, then speaks directly *as* the commodity, and finally has the commodity speak “through the mouth” of a typified figure. I read these instances of writerly ventriloquism as forming part of the metaphoric register of Marx’s argument, in which imagery is used to both describe and argue for the production of appearances as one of capital’s central modes of operation.

Marx builds a characterisation of capital as an entity that functions by means of constant transformation, disruption, violence, and absence of concern about its effects on persons and their lives. It contributes to the production of a social world in which appearances become very problematic to us as we perceive them. Marx repeatedly and consistently gives images of boundaries and natural laws being transgressed, reversals, non-human entities taking on human capacities, and great violence being done to persons and understandings. He describes a state of general, violent disorder in the world as it is formed through capital. Marx uses this metaphoric register throughout *Volume One*, whereby imagery and allusion convey the “behaviour” of capital, such that metaphor forms a further dimension of his strategy to represent capital.

Conclusion: towards a theory of metaphor as representational strategy

This article may be seen as an initial contribution towards further research on the use of metaphor in *Capital*, particularly in terms of debates concerning theoretical and practical attempts to represent capital as a (necessary) step in its overcoming. In identifying metaphor as part of *Capital's* representational strategy, I proposed two groupings under which to investigate instances of metaphor. Under the rubric of "anthropomorphisation, animorphism and personification" I discussed a range of significant moments at which the rhetoric of the text is elaborated by metaphors of figuration, in the figure of the capitalist, named "Mr Moneybags", transformation into animals and insects, notably in the example of the "capitalist caterpillar", and death and resurrection including the mythical figure of the vampire. I argued for reading the vampire metaphor as representing Marx's broader rhetorical and political claim that within capitalist production human capacities are fully subordinated to the needs of capital. I also argued for reading themes of transformation and growth in examples of animorphism, representing capital's processes as fostering continual, and often traumatic, change, as well as the violation of natural boundaries and processes.

Under the rubric of "playing roles" I turned to Marx's metaphoric use of references to theatre, plays, playwrights, characters and ventriloquism, suggesting that capital is represented here as operating by means of taking on appearances and particularly the appearances of organic life and living creatures. The metaphoric register that is in evidence throughout *Volume One* constitutes an important aspect of Marx's strategy to represent capital.

While the categories used here to discuss the metaphoric register in *Capital* are not exhaustive, they are not arbitrary either. Further study of the role of metaphor throughout Marx's *oeuvre* may be relevant to current debates as to the possibility, and potential political efficacy, of "representing" capital in visual and textual forms. In this vein, Marx has offered a rich field of approaches to visualising and conceptualising how capital functions. It may be reasonable to see Marx as having been insufficiently self-reflexive on this question; further analysis of this problem is therefore needed. Such analysis could more firmly elaborate the relationships between Marx's metaphors, the subjects who "bear" them and whose being is mediated through them, and possibilities for new and productive understandings of metaphor as a site of agency and intervention.

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