

Reanimating Factory Reports: Marx, Engels and the Disposal of Blue Books

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»Over the last 150 years«, Oz Frankel observed in 2006, »social historians and social commentators have repeatedly visited parliamentary papers. Among the first to do so, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels scanned this treasure trove for their own purposes«.¹ Indeed, Marx (1818–1883) and Engels (1820–1895) were immersive readers, critical appropriators and literary administrators of Blue Books, the periodical collections of documents of the British Parliament and Foreign Office published by the state and named for the colour of their stiff paper covers. Given the overwhelming wealth of material and diversity of testimonial voices contained in Blue Books, they became inspirational sources for Marx and Engels's study of British administrative statecraft, as well as the capitalist mode of production. They are among the evidentiary foundations of Engels's first book, **»Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England. Nach eigener Anschauung und authentischen Quellen«** (Leipzig 1845; »The Condition of the Working Class in England. From Personal Observation and Authentic Sources«; hereafter »Condition«).² While researching for »Condition«, Engels wrote to Marx in 1844, »I am up to my eyebrows in English newspapers and books upon which I am drawing for my book on the condition of the English proletarians«. Blue Books contributed to his criminal case: »I accuse the English bourgeoisie before

the entire world of murder, robbery and other crimes on a massive scale«.³

As a political journalist for the »New-York Daily Tribune«, Marx wrote to Engels in 1853, »I have at my disposal some very bulky BLUE BOOKS«.⁴ Throughout the mid-1800s, these books were vital to Marx's composition of his magnum opus, **»Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Oekonomie«**, Erster Band (Hamburg 1867; »Capital. A Critique of Political Economy«, Volume 1; hereafter »Capital«). His son-in-law Paul Lafargue recalled: »He read them from cover to cover [and considered them] as the most important and weighty documents for the study of the capitalist mode of production«.⁵ Peter Linebaugh records: »When he asked his daughters to help his research, he did not put them onto ›theoretical discourses‹ but right into the crimes of the capitalist mode of production as revealed in the Blue Books«. He even delayed the provisional completion of »Capital« to incorporate the findings of the latest (fifth) »Report of the Children's Employment Commission« (1866) and the (eighth) »Board of Health Report« (1866).⁶ Anna Kornbluh, who reads »Capital« as »Marx's Victorian novel«, appreciates his and fellow ›novelists' ›rapture with the Blue Books« as superabundant sources of »information, references, stories, and ideas«.⁷ Engels and Marx accumulated, emulated and narrativised

the granularity of Blue Books – sociological, statistical, criminological, polyphonic, scatological, etc. – in the sweeping yet still fine-grained grandeur of »Condition« and »Capital«.

In his »Preface to the Third German Edition« (1883), Engels included »a few words on Marx's art of quotation, which is so little understood. When they are pure statements of fact or descriptions, the quotations, from the English Blue Books, for example, serve of course as simple documentary proof«. ⁸ This article questions Engels's assessment by critically examining Marx's as well as his own »art of quotation«. It focuses on Marx and Engels's aesthetic disposal of Blue Books in the making of »Condition« and »Capital«. Here, »disposal of« connotes a form of aesthetic arrangement or presentation – as in an attractive disposal of hair, bones or, perhaps, reanimated corpses – and both »Condition« and »Capital« are read in terms that foreground their Gothic characteristics. For Grace Kehler, »Condition« and at least two works cited by Engels – James Phillips Kay's reform treatise »The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester« (1832) and Edwin Chadwick's best-selling Blue Book, »Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain« (1842) – exemplify »the documentary gothic«. ⁹ Also, Francis Wheen and Riccardo Bellofiore suggest that »Capital« can be read as a »Gothic novel«. ¹⁰

Drawing together studies of Blue Books and research on »Gothic Marxism«, the article links the Gothicism of Engels and Marx's most-famous books to Blue Books, whose own contents and size, individually and cumulatively, resonated with Gothic horror and sublimity. ¹¹ The examination of this link is indebted to Sheila Smith's pioneering analyses of novelistic appropriations of Blue Books in Victorian literature. First, the article considers those aspects of the Blue Books' production, circulation and reception that engendered Gothic associations for contemporary readers. Second, it addresses Marx and Engels's militant reanimation of Blue Books left for dead and their détournement of these official publications to the cause of proletarian revolution. Third, it considers Thomas Carlyle's reactionary approach to Blue Books, despite and because of Marx and Engels's praise for the anti-capitalist aspects of his disquisitions on the »Condition-

of-England Question«. ¹² Their review of his »Latter-Day Pamphlets« (Nos. I and II, 1850) credits him for »having taken the literary field against the bourgeoisie [...] in a manner which is at times even revolutionary. For example, [in »Chartism« (1839) and »Past and Present« (1843)]. But in all these writings the critique of the present is closely bound up with a strangely unhistorical apotheosis of the Middle Ages«. ¹³ In »Condition«, Engels called Carlyle »the half-German Englishmen«, due to his promiscuous reading of German literature, who »has sounded the social disorder more deeply than any other English bourgeois«. ¹⁴

Following a descent into the maelstrom with Carlyle – in his words, »the black tempestuous vortices of this world's history« ¹⁵ – the fourth section regards Engels's reanimation of Blue Books in relation to his sublime vortical metaphor for deadly bourgeois society, namely *den wilden Strudel* – »the fierce whirlpool«, in the translation he authorised – and to the Chadwick report (1842) that »alerted social activists to the sanitary atrocities which the impoverished working classes were known to be suffering from«. ¹⁶ Isaiah Berlin claimed that Marx »was the first scholar to put [Blue Books] to serious scientific use«, ¹⁷ but Marx himself had said much the same about Engels. Marx referenced »Condition« some ten times in »Capital« and gave this encomium: »How completely Engels understood the nature of the capitalist mode of production is shown by the Factory Reports, Reports on Mines, &c., that have appeared since 1845, and how wonderfully he painted the circumstances in detail is seen on the most superficial comparison of his work with the official reports of Children's Employment Commission, published 18 to 20 years later (1863–1867)«. ¹⁸ Finally, the article emphasises the revolutionary role that Marx had Blue Books play in »Capital«. Out of Olympian burial mounds of Blue Books, he extracted a modern Hades and intimated a nekylia staged with the shades of slain workers, themselves carrying Blue Books.

The Artful Horror of Blue Books

The British state's blue-covered reports of parliamentary select committees and royal commissions of inquiry were products of governmental and bureaucratic

practices and chains of procedure. However, Blue Books were effectively co-authored by people outside the administrative apparatus that commissioned and published them. Frankel highlights »the polyphony or heterogeneity that was a strong attribute of nineteenth-century social reporting. Diversity of style, evidence, and voices prevailed within and among specific documents«.¹⁹ The voices ranged the class hierarchy, from gentlemanly royal commissioners and other »dignitaries to paupers and criminals«.²⁰ In 1860, Chadwick wrote to Florence Nightingale of the »Report of the Royal Commission on the Constabulary Force« (1839): »In it you would find the history of the adventures of young thieves as recounted by themselves«.²¹ The combination of Blue Books' constitutive polyphony and parliament's »policy of selling official documents to the public« kept them from solitary administrative confinement: »Once disseminated, the state could exercise little control over the fate of its published documents«.²² Freed by official chains of government from official chains of government, Blue Books were, in principle, open to interpretative appropriation by a multitude of readers with unofficial interests and agendas. Oppositional organisations, such as trade unions, and individuals – supremely, in this regard, Marx and Engels – »regularly scanned blue books in search of evidence«.²³ The means of their production also opened Blue Books to savvy manoeuvring of evidence. Richard Oastler, an advocate of the Factory Movement, contributed to the polyphony by insisting on presenting testimony to official inquiries and read the ensuing publications to find his voice and evidence as if verified by the state. Oastler »relished the opportunity of quoting himself from the printed page of a blue book, since his utterances then had the weight of [officially sanctioned] »facts««.²⁴

In practice, only dauntless readers could aspire to plumb or surmount the Blue Books: »the terror of all lovers of light reading«.²⁵ Although they had been »designed to render the process of governing itself visible for public observation«, their »enormous size [...] inspired unease and even anxiety«.²⁶ Complaints were made across the Victorian political spectrum that »the public was inundated with excessive factual material«.²⁷ Rather than representing an aesthetic of transparency that positioned the reader with a panoptic view of a legible social panorama, Blue Books seemed »purposefully

designed« as print analogues to unfathomable pits or shrouded peaks. Obscurity and opacity prevailed: »the government was deceiving [the reader] by divulging the truth in its unreadable entirety«.²⁸ The cumulative volume of Blue Books assumed the oppressive scale of sublime natural formations and forces, such as mountains and avalanches, oceans and vortexes, threatening to obliterate their own content and wreck their very readership in a vicarious form of live burial; vivisepture being a leitmotif of Gothic literature.²⁹ William Ewart MP declared in the House of Commons in 1865: »It had rained blue-books – Pelion had been piled on Ossa, and Ossa on Olympus. It had been sarcastically remarked that if you wanted to hide a question the best plan was to bury it in a blue-book – you might then defy anybody to excavate it«.³⁰ The public could not observe governance so long as Blue Books dungeoned questions, findings and recommendations within vast textual labyrinths, which defied readers to follow the threads of governmental decision-making through time, and which, by their incitement of dread and disorientation, portended what Roger Luckhurst has termed »Corridor Gothic«, including »Kafka's nightmare mazes of passages« and other »dystopia[s] of our administered world«.³¹

If the sheer size and scale of Blue Book production appeared terrifying, the contents of specific reports were horrifying: »factual« counterparts to Gothic-horror and other fictions. By uncanny coincidence, these high, weighty state publications had namesakes »at the lower end« of the market for Gothic literature: »popular chapbooks known from their covers as »bluebooks« and sometimes nicknamed »shilling shockers««.³² Official Blue Books have been read as fictional as well as factual: besides extending Sheila Smith's studies of Victorian novelists' »imaginative re-creation of the facts« adduced by Blue Books, scholars have illuminated the fictive modalities of putatively non-fictional reports.³³ Joseph Childers, for example, demonstrates how Chadwick's report on unsanitary conditions mixed statistical fact and novelistic technique to engender the »textual poor«.³⁴ In the heyday of the Blue Books' publication and consumption, some critics lambasted their writers' resort to fictional devices, such as contrived horror effects. In 1849, the barrister J. Toulmin Smith called all commissions of inquiry »pernicious« and ascribed

a sense of ghoulishness to report writers and their readers. For Smith, Blue Books embodied debased taste and engorged that of their consumers: »The pictures of horror artfully put together in the pages of blue books are greedily devoured, and serve as food for the sentimental philanthropy of the reader«.³⁵ The period's »most widely read government publication« was the first »Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Employment of Children and Young Persons in Mines and Collieries and in the Trades and Manufactures« (1842).³⁶ This report »perfected a particularly tantalizing genre of social reporting, featuring shocking testimonies of children accompanied by sensational illustrations of half-naked women pushing trolleys in dark mineshafts«.³⁷

While that 1842 report might appear to support Smith's argument that Blue Books emulated fictional horrors, Engels and Marx argued that it matched horrific realities. Those realities intensified in the period between the publication of »Condition« and »Capital«. In the early 1840s, children aged 4 to 7 years who operated ventilation doors in mines experienced, Engels wrote, »stupefying, brutalising tedium« in a maze of grave-like confinement: »the smallest children [...] pass twelve hours daily, in the dark, alone, sitting usually in damp passages«.³⁸ By the mid-1860s, bourgeois progress was represented by having less-young children pass days and nights in the deathly dark and damp. Drawing on »Report from the Select Committee on Mines« (1866), Marx adjudged: »Children and young persons are at present worse treated, and harder worked than at any previous period«.³⁹ Lafargue recalled Marx's assiduity: »to write the twenty pages or so on English factory legislation in »Capital« he went through a whole library of »Blue Books« containing reports of commissions and factory Inspectors in England and Scotland«.⁴⁰ He viewed Blue Books as recurrently revealing living nightmares, themselves recurrent, that »surpassed« literary imaginings. The description of London printers' and tailors' workshops in »Public Health Reports« IV (1862) and VI (1864) »surpasses the most loathsome phantasies of our romance writers«.⁴¹ In 1863, John Edward White of the Children's Employment Commission investigated lucifer-match manufacture and interviewed poisoned child workers who even ate their irregular meals »in the very workrooms that are«, in Marx's digest of White's discovery, »pestilent with phosphorus. Dante would

have found the worst horrors of his Inferno surpassed in this manufacture«.⁴²

Indeed, factory reports read like fact-finding katabases into a new hell: the incessantly productive-destructive factory system. Marx alludes to the inscription on Hell's gate in Dante's »Inferno« (1320) when he leads the readers of »Capital« to »the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there stares us in the face »No admittance except on business««. The worker enters that abode timidly, »holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but – a hiding«.⁴³ In other words, a scorching: »undercurrents of the word scorch go back to the Old French *escorchier*, which means to flay or to strip the skin off a body, rendering it fatally exposed«.⁴⁴ Acknowledging »Children's Employment Commission Report« V (1866), Marx wrote: »Owing to the excessive labour of their workpeople, both adult and non-adult, certain London houses where newspapers and books are printed, have got the ill-omened name of »slaughterhouses««.⁴⁵ Having cited copious Blue Book evidence of the hideous treatment of labourers as beasts, Marx contended that under Capital's »discipline and command«, production forces workers' »detail dexterity at the expense of a world of productive capabilities and instincts; just as in the States of La Plata they butcher a whole beast for the sake of his hide or his tallow«.⁴⁶ He quoted evidence given to the Children's Employment Commission (1862) by George Aspden, a worker employed at a wallpaper factory since 1847. Aspden spoke of his 14-year-old son, who had been working at the same factory for half his life: »That boy of mine ... when he was 7 years old I used to carry him on my back to and fro through the snow, and he used to have 16 hours a day. [...] I have often knelt down to feed him as he stood by the machine, for he could not leave it or stop«.⁴⁷ For Daniel Hartley, Aspden's testimony justified Marx's *Märchen* imagery, such as silk manufacturers »spinning silk 10 hours a day out of the blood of little children«.⁴⁸ In Marx's overview of the silk manufacture, »The children were slaughtered out-and-out for the sake of their delicate fingers, as in Southern Russia the horned cattle for the sake of their hide and tallow«.⁴⁹ The living nightmares of children's fingers and lifeblood spun into silk (suffer little children) should haunt and terrorise bourgeois sleep.⁵⁰ Simultaneously analytical,

empirical, imaginative and polemical, Marx's point is that within capitalist society, »All that is solid and consumable is built on blood«.⁵¹

»Capital« merges the disabusing power of critique with the affects induced by polemic and fiction. Marx challenged, in Jason Read's words, »the prevailing consciousness [of] the entire economic and social order«.⁵² For instance, the section titled »The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof« is »the point where the concept [of commodity fetishism] intersects with polemic, where an argument confronts the world, and worldview, that is opposed to it«. Marx's polemical confrontation with »the prevailing common sense [expressed] in the reified and ahistorical acceptance of the value form« (the commodity form) is mutually reinforced by his imaginative play with the Gothic.⁵³ He »recognized that theory must become a material force, and that it does so not so much by the power of pure critique, by dispelling illusions, but by invoking desires and fears – in other words, affects. Marx's writings are populated by specters [sic], vampires, and werewolves, and these fictions invoke and sustain the passions and sentiments«.⁵⁴ As Pamela Hansford Johnson appreciated in her pioneering exploration of his style, »where it was humanly possible to be lively, lively Marx was. He can irradiate matter apart from the purely technical and scientific with the lightning of his own energy [...] not merely out of distaste, but out of anger, out of a passion of rage at the unnecessary miseries of mankind. His imagery is Gothic: blood, dirt, gold, spectres, storms, occur again and again«.⁵⁵ Here, Marx himself embodies and emanates Gothic storms and stresses – which have distinctly modern resonance when he claps together Blue Books. Whereas capitalist reification abstracts and conceals human and historical realities, his use of Gothic personae, plots and polemics reveals the historicity, humanity and corporeality of lived experience.

»Gothic«, as David Punter argues, »provides an image language for bodies and their terrors«.⁵⁶ Marx and before him Engels certainly recognised in Gothic an aesthetic fitted to the expression and exposition of the corporeal horrors and premature deaths inflicted on human life by Capital. »Condition« indicated that »the earliest generations of mill workers suffered a kind of living death, their mortality of little concern as long as capital could draw labor [sic] from the countryside's

dispossessed«.⁵⁷ Engels and Marx's representations of Capital's infernal machinations foreshadowed Achille Mbembe's theorisation of »necropolitics, or necropower«, as »creating *death-worlds*«: »new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the *living dead*«.⁵⁸ Marx wrote of bleach-works as one of Capital's legion infernal worlds. There, workers' skins sloughed off due to sustained overheating, their bodies vitiated and consumed by disease. He contrasted fantastic propaganda about ruddy-faced workers blessed with a pastoral workspace – »[Parliament's] notions as to the cool meadow-fragrance, in which bleaching in the open air was reported to take place« – with Blue Book facts about workers prolongedly exposed to enclosed, scorching and unsanitary conditions:

In this aerial bleaching, drying rooms were used at temperatures of from 90° to 100° Fahrenheit [32.2–37.8° Celsius], in which the work was done for the most part by girls. [...] »Twelve girls ironing and doing-up in a small room about 10 feet square, in the centre of which is a close stove [...] which throws out a terrific heat [...] The hours of work for these hands are unlimited. If busy, they work till 9 or 12 at night for successive nights« (Reports, &c., for 31st October, 1862). A medical man states: »[...] My experience, which is considerable, in treating the diseases of stove workers, compels me to express the opinion that their sanitary condition is by no means so high as that of the operatives in a spinning factory« (and Capital, in its memorials to Parliament, had painted them as floridly healthy, after the manner of Rubens). »The diseases most observable amongst them [...] are either directly or indirectly induced by the impure, overheated air of the apartments in which the hands are employed and the want of sufficient comfortable clothing to protect them from the cold, damp atmosphere, in winter, when going to their homes«.⁵⁹

Marx's mordant parenthetical aside accentuates the Blue Book hellscape: not a picture of rude health, *in der Manier von Rubens* (his original German), but an *écorché* of bodies abraded, reddened, inflamed and flayed by heat stress.

Blue Books are replete with bodies: working, overworked, suffering, scorched, dying, dead, living-dead bodies. These repudiate not only the sentimental, Rubenesque imagery of political ideology but also the cynical, desiccating, disembodiment discourse of political economy. Ludovico Silva has encapsulated Marx's critique of bourgeois economics. »Political economy is ghostly«, writes Silva: »it sees nothing but spectres, ghostly apparitions, fantasies, the fetishes in which society clothes itself and that constitute, strictly speaking, its ideology«.⁶⁰ The ne plus ultra symbol of that ideology doubles as a Gothic image: Adam Smith's »invisible hand«.⁶¹ To grapple with the Gothicism of political economy, Marx and Engels went through the sublime bulk and horrific contents of the Blue Books to forge a Gothic critique intended to reconstitute and mobilise »the Spectre of Communism« into a living revolutionary body.⁶²

Visions from the Valley of Dry Bones

»Condition« is the Ur-text of Gothic Marxism. Engels partly based his Industrial Gothic pictures of hellish conditions in Manchester on Dante's »Inferno« and Carlyle's »Past and Present«.⁶³ The »monsterpiece« of Gothic Marxism is »Capital«. Structurally, Marx's exposé of capitalist vampirism, lycanthropy and necromancy follows Dante's epic passage down the Circles of Hell.⁶⁴ Citationally and tonally, his parsing and presentation of undead monstrosity are suffused by his scientific-socialist dissection and artful synthesis of factory reports and other Blue Books. By likening »Capital« to a pre-industrial construction, »the old Trier basilica«, Edmund Wilson made the faux provocation that Trier-born Marx was not a modern writer.⁶⁵ As related below, Wilson acknowledged that Marx's coruscating textual practice entailed his telling and up-to-date »piling-up of factory reports«. For readers who delve through the whole artistic-architectural edifice of »Capital«, that piling-up culminates with an *apokalyptein* – a lifting of the veil – meant to dereify naturalised fetishes and ideological illusions. Wilson contended: »We feel that we have been taken for the first time through the real structure of our civilization, and that it is the ugliest that

has ever existed«.⁶⁶ That reality, Capital's monstrous civilisation, is decoded and documented by prose steeped in Gothic poetics. As Frankensteinian recyclers and resurrectors of Blue Books, Marx and Engels were ultra-modern writers.⁶⁷ They used the Gothic aesthetic to meet and critique Capital's globalising mortification of the flesh: in Massimiliano Tomba's panoramic phrasing, »the deathlike scenario of capitalist modernity«.⁶⁸

Apocalypse, or revelation, by literary »resurrectionists«, or »Resurrection Men«, raises a biblical comparison.⁶⁹ After highlighting Carlyle's »honoured place« in Charles Kingsley's novel »Yeast. A Problem« (1848), Sheila Smith stated that »it is not surprising that some Victorian novelists found inspiration in apparently unpromising material – Blue books, Government Reports, and that they, like Ezekiel's God, used these dry bones from which to create visions«.⁷⁰ Smith's allusion is relevant to the creative disposal of those dry bones by Marx and Engels, who, as participants in German philosophical debates, had to be Bible exegetes. Biblical allusions are woven throughout their oeuvre. Marx wrote in »The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte« (1852): »as the God of the Prophet Ezekiel spoke to the dry bones: »Haec dicit dominus deus ossibus suis: Ecce, ego intromittam in vos spiritum et vivetis.«⁷¹ (Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.)

Perhaps Blue Books are, figuratively, »imperishable documents of the humane spirit«.⁷² It is definite that they were, materially, ripe for neglect, decay and decimation. In their searches to access Blue Books and dispose of them in and for generative critique, Marx and Engels discovered that the books were disposed of in another, wasteful sense. They were gotten rid of, discarded as heaps of rubbish, supernumerary to laissez-faire parliamentary politics and political economy. Representatives of the very state that appointed commissions of inquiry, printed their reports and released them in conspicuous blue covers were leaving them to moulder in archives, unread, selling them – »many enormous tomes languished in government warehouses finally to be sold as wastepaper«⁷³ – or shooting them so that bullets rather than readers penetrated their depths. According to Lafargue, »Many members of Parliament to whom [Blue Books] are distributed use them only as shooting targets, judging

the striking power of the gun by the number of pages pierced. Others sell them by the pound, which is the most reasonable thing they can do, for this enabled Marx to buy them cheap from the old paper dealers in Long Acre». ⁷⁴

The maladministration of official records of social inquiry as waste or disposable paper appears symptomatic of what Thomas Huxley called »administrative nihilism« and »the belief in the efficacy of [Government] doing nothing«. ⁷⁵ Huxley's terminology echoed the jeremiads of Carlyle, who belaboured »Donothingism and ›Impossible‹ written on all departments of the government thereof«. ⁷⁶ Suffocating mountains of Blue Book material reflected, in Carlyle's words, »plethoric prosperity«, the wasteful overproduction of »world-wide« English manufacture and commerce, which, for workers, remade this world into »no home, but rather a dingy prison-house«. ⁷⁷ Those mountains also matched, or mirrored, the whirlpool of spoken words, the inundation of doing nothing but talk, spiralling down from parliament: »our British Parliament«, Carlyle reckoned in »Parliaments« (1850), »has not, somehow or other, the art of getting work done; but produces talk merely, not of the most instructive sort for most part, and in vortexes of talk is not unlike to submerge itself and the whole of us, if help come not!«. ⁷⁸

As against bureaucratic interment of Blue Books, their sale as wastepaper, and open firing on them, Marx and Engels resurrected their ossifying remains. Engels, only 23 years old when he conceived of »Condition«, suggested, in a passage quoted below, that Blue Books, although cursed to undead sleep – like a slumbering princess to his socialist charming prince – could be reborn into »a single readable book«. That book is, of course, »Condition«. ⁷⁹ The cultural registers of Marx and Engels's references to Blue Books encompass the biblical, the mythological, the folkloric, the fairy tale, the Gothic and, as in Marx's gesture to Rubens, the Baroque. In correspondence from February 1866, they both mention E. T. A. Hoffmann's »Klein Zaches genannt Zinnober« (1819) in the same breath as Factory Reports. ⁸⁰ As S. S. Prawer has demonstrated, Marx's aesthetic does not demand »of literature a direct and unmediated reflection of social and historical circumstance« or exclude »fantasy: he found apt symbols for human

experience in such ›fantastic‹ works as the tales of the ›Arabian Nights‹, Chamisso's ›Peter Schlemihl‹, Hoffmann's ›Little Zaches‹, and Mary Shelley's ›Frankenstein‹. ⁸¹ Marx, almost 50 when he released »Capital«, avowed that the »social statistics« arrayed and arraigned in the publications of »commissions of inquiry into economic conditions« aided his revelation of »the Medusa head« of capitalism. Blue Books enabled him to »raise the veil« not merely on monsters of the factory, the market and the state, but on Capital itself as a monster. ⁸² Capital always, every day, comes into the world, he declared, »dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt«. ⁸³ As discussed below, »dirt« can connote human waste and wasted humans.

In complimenting factory inspectors and other official inquirers, Marx, according to David MacGregor, »sounds like a herald for the English bureaucracy rather than an implacable enemy of the state«. ⁸⁴ Contrary to MacGregor, Marx and Engels ferociously critiqued the sentimentalism and state intervention promoted by reformist advocates of Blue Books. They mobilised Blue Books against the dominant vectors of bourgeois nihilism, reformism, sentimentalism and sensationalism, galvanising the books into urgent resources for insurgent politics. They went beyond standard bourgeois deployments of Blue Books by other writers in Victorian England; beyond the emotional appeal of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem »The Cry of the Children« (1843) sparked by her friend and collaborator R. H. Horne's work with the Royal Commission for the Employment of Children in Mines and Factories and by the Commission's reports; ⁸⁵ beyond the »considerable restraint« of Benjamin Disraeli's novel »Sybil; or The Two Nations« (1845), which, rather than »pander to the debased taste for realistic horrors«, realised, it has been asserted, »a compelling fictional community from a mass of Blue book evidence«; ⁸⁶ beyond the middle-class didacticism of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel »Mary Barton« (1848), aimed at »raising awareness among her bourgeois readers of the working and living conditions of the masses« ⁸⁷ and beyond the humanist sentimentalism of Charles Dickens. Raymond Williams appraised Dickens's attitude: »Public commissions, Blue Books, Parliamentary legislation – all these, in the world of ›Hard Times‹ [1854] – are Gradgrindery. His positives do not lie in social improvement, but rather in what

he sees as the elements of human nature – personal kindness, sympathy, and forbearance». ⁸⁸

Marx and Engels détourned Blue Books to unravel real, proliferating horrors produced by bourgeois systems and structures of exploitation and domination. Their détournement heralded, among other things, the class-based literary and epistemological mode since named »proletarian grotesque«. ⁸⁹ Proletarianisation of the grotesque constructs working-class consciousness from below. It debases bourgeois abstractions and fantasies by describing their shocking real-world concretisations. ⁹⁰ In »Condition« and other works before »Capital«, Engels instantiates the proletarian grotesque by describing the bourgeoisie as vampiric. His graphic bluntness challenges workers to overcome the forbearance and embourgeoisied habitus that »make them weak and resigned to their fate, obedient and faithful to the vampire property-holding class«. ⁹¹ Regarding John Garrick and Stewart Clegg's subcategory »Organizational Gothic«, Martin Parker notes that they »contrast the bright eyed utilitarianism of the knowledge managers with the seduction and coercion of the foul breathed vampire«. ⁹² This monstrous metaphor, as Parker observes, »invert[s] the ideology of capitalism by equating the putative vitality of capitalist production with the sickening consumption of the parasite«. ⁹³ The grotesque image of fanged capitalists reveals what the abstraction of the invisible hand hides: Capital's terroristic work disciplines drain and hollow proletarian bodies.

Marx and Engels's use of Blue Books to monster the bourgeoisie by baring and broadcasting the bourgeoisie's monstrosities contributed to their vision of a human necessity: the overthrow of bourgeois society, which is a valley of the shadow of unnatural death. In a newspaper article, »The English Ten Hours' Bill« (1850), Engels alluded to »Report of the Inspectors of Factories for the Half-Year Ending 31st October 1848« (1849) and commended »the interventions of the factory inspectors« against manufacturers despotising as »the complete masters of their factories«. Crucially, he asserted that »the only solution« to »infinitely callous exploitation of the working class by the factory owners [...], as to every question depending on the antagonism between capital and wage labour, lies in the *proletarian revolution*«. ⁹⁴ Likewise for Marx: regarding

that antagonism and contradicting capitalist complaints about limitations on working hours – »heart-broken cries« recounted in factory reports – he foregrounded »the constantly recurring experience that capital, so soon as it finds itself subject to legal control at one point, compensates itself all the more recklessly at other points«. ⁹⁵ Thus, Fredric Jameson outlines »a lesson Marx has for us, namely the futility of what we might today call social democracy and reformism, in this instance the heroic efforts of those very factory inspectors whose reports furnish a testimony beyond anything the realisms or naturalisms are able to convey«. ⁹⁶ Thus too, Marx and Engels adapted conventions from Gothic literature as constituents of their proletarian strategy to debase, demystify and transcend the infinitely illusory instrumentality of bourgeois realisms and naturalisms, which functioned, in Marx's words, »as a make-believe that there are no monsters«. ⁹⁷

Blue Books at Waste Latitudes

Nineteenth-century print culture loomed large as a kind of spellbinding second nature. In Dickens's »Bleak House« (1853), solicitors have »bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, injunctions, affidavits, issues, references to masters, masters' reports, mountains of costly nonsense, piled before them«. ⁹⁸ Chancery's documentary heft evokes a seemingly natural sublimity. Jonathan Foster explains: »The perceived overabundance of circulating documents thus transcends the horizon of expectation – and here the ›mountains‹ of documents takes on a sublime aspect in the Romantic tradition of the Kantian ›mathematical‹ sublime (i.e. an encounter with something overwhelmingly large). Dickens also gives us the image of the ›dead sea of the Chancery suit‹ and that of Chancery as an ›immense desert of law-hand and parchment«. ⁹⁹ Additionally, Dickens's mountains of *nonsense* anticipate that compaction of boredom and shock, stupefaction and sublimity – »stuplimity« – theorised by Sianne Ngai. ¹⁰⁰ Dickens' vantage on stuplime bureaucracy recalls Carlyle's depiction of public administration in »Downing Street« (1850) as an entangled and entangling ecology, dead yet deadly: »what blind obstructions, fatal indolences, pedantries, stupidities [...] what a world-wide jungle of redtape,

inhabited by doleful creatures, deaf or nearly so to human reason or entreaty». Yet, in Carlyle's medievalist imaginary, »the dead redtape jungle« of English bureaucracy engendered unnatural and supernatural adventures, »equal to the fabulous ones by old knights-errant against dragons and wizards in enchanted wildernesses and waste howling solitudes«.¹⁰¹

Reviewing »Downing Street« and other pamphlets by Carlyle in 1850, Marx and Engels regretted that Hegel was not the Scottish writer's greatest German influence.¹⁰² Nevertheless, the terrible impression of never-endingness conveyed by Carlyle's interminably fecund-fetid redtape enshrouding the world elicits Hegel's idea of »bad infinity« or »the spurious infinite«: simply put, »a process which involved no more than adding 1 to 1, and did not lead in its own context to a decisive qualitative leap«.¹⁰³ For Carlyle, this material development or »progress« – dense, incremental and incessant growth of »dead redtape« – would never inspire spiritual elevation. It was an additive form of death or, rather, the proliferation of the living dead *ad infinitum*.

Voluminous Blue Books were incarnations of Carlyle's »redtape Phantasms (growing very ghastly now to think of)«.¹⁰⁴ In Kingsley's »Yeast«, the character Lancelot meets, to adapt an image from »Downing Street«, »this sublime problem of balancing himself upon the vortexes, with the long loaded-pole in his hands«.¹⁰⁵ But the knightly-named (re)searcher becomes immured in paper: »Lancelot buried himself up to the eyes in the Condition-of-the-Poor question – that is, in blue books, red books, sanitary reports, mine reports, factory reports; and came to the conclusion, which is now pretty generally entertained, that something was the matter, – but what, no man knew, or, if they knew, thought proper to declare«. Exhumation from this paper burial or, from a transcendent angle, spiritual deliverance, comes as if providentially, from the venturesome Carlyle: »one day, turning over, as hopelessly as [Lancelot] was beginning to turn over everything else, a new work of Mr. Carlyle's, he fell on some such words as these: »The beginning and the end of what is the matter with us in these days is – that we have forgotten God.« Forgotten God? That was at least a defect of which blue books had taken no note«.¹⁰⁶ Kingsley himself was »deeply influenced« by Carlyle's »Chartism« and »Past and Present«, which treated, in

Timothy L. Carens's opinion, »the living conditions of the working class as prophetic signs of impending chaos«.¹⁰⁷ Except that chaos had already arrived and was spreading; as indicated above, Engels admired Carlyle's profound sounding of »the social disorder« of bourgeois society.

Carlyle's reverence for the twelfth-century monk Samson of Tottington typified his apotheosis of the Middle Ages: »The clear-beaming eyesight of Abbot Samson, steadfast, severe, all-penetrating, – it is like *Fiat lux* in that inorganic waste whirlpool; penetrates gradually to all nooks, and of the chaos makes a *kosmos* or ordered world!«¹⁰⁸ This invocation of »Genesis« demonstrates his reactive apprehension of the destruction created by the Mechanical Age. »Past and Present« recursively articulates the idea that industrial revolutionisation ruled by all-penetrating bourgeois production had led to the spiralling re-creation of waste and void, or, in the biblical Hebrew phrase »Tohu wa-bohu«. Engels summarised the thrust of this idea in his 1844 review of Carlyle's book: »work too has been dragged into the furious vortex of disorder and chaos, the principle which was to cleanse, enlighten, evolve, has succumbed to involution, confusion and obscurity«.¹⁰⁹ To Carlyle's appalled sight, »what is the matter with us in these days« was a fundamental crisis of consciousness or spirit.

The »enchanted wildernesses and waste howling solitudes« of »Downing Street« reiterated his revelation of an unreasoned, Godless modernity on the first page of »Past and Present«: »behold, some baleful fiat as of Enchantment has gone forth«.¹¹⁰ He revealed and reviled the Gothic morbidities of England's »waste latitudes«, from its social heights to depths, »where the men go about as if by galvanism«.¹¹¹ Engels rendered the latter phrase as »like galvanised corpses« in his review of Carlyle.¹¹² Industrialised somnambulants wander »with meaningless glaring eyes, and have no soul, but only a beaver-faculty and stomach! The haggard despair of Cotton-factory, Coal-mine operatives«, Carlyle opined, »is painful to behold«.¹¹³ He addressed the industrial worker: »Brother, thou art a Man, I think; thou are not a mere building Beaver, or two-legged Cotton-Spider; thou hast verily a Soul in thee [...] Sooty Manchester, – it too is built on the infinite Abysses«.¹¹⁴ Zombielike operatives have been enchained and drained by work, overwork and the machinic compulsion of cash

payment for survival, but Carlyle, a thunderous sage in these latitudes, would incant them out of their living nightmare and into prelapsarian sentience. »Awake ye noble Workers«, he declaims, »It is you who are already half-alive, whom I will welcome into life, whom I will conjure in God's name to shake off your enchanted sleep, and live wholly!«¹¹⁵

Engels took tropes of waste-laying, whirling and reawakening from »Past and Present«, but turned them »against Carlyle's argument that the source of all the horrors of the age is the loss of religious feeling«.¹¹⁶ Engels wrote of communists battling the bourgeoisie's dehumanising hegemony: »we too are concerned with combating the lack of principle, the inner emptiness, the spiritual deadness, the untruthfulness of the age; we are waging a war to the death against all these things [by] giving back to man the substance he has lost through religion; not as divine but as human substance«.¹¹⁷ Carlyle was wrong to censure »the wild rage of the workers against the higher classes. This rage«, Engels countered, »is rather the proof that the workers feel the inhumanity of their position, that they refuse to be degraded to the level of brutes«¹¹⁸ – building Beavers, Cotton-Spiders or disposable livestock for producing surplus value. They refused to be treated as ruling-class representatives sometimes treated Blue Books – as refuse.

Blue Books in a Shitstorm

For the first edition of »Condition«, otherwise written in German, Engels wrote a dedicatory address in English, »To the Working-Classes of Great-Britain« (15 March 1845). This dedication evoked Blue Books decomposing in the Home Office and his recomposition of those abandoned publications into his own book:

[...] the middle-classes intend in reality nothing else but to enrich themselves by your labour while they can sell its produce, and to abandon you to starvation as soon as they cannot make a profit by this indirect trade in human flesh. What have they done to prove their professed good-will towards you? Have they ever paid any serious attention to your grievances? Have they done more than paying

*the expenses of half-a-dozen commissions of inquiry, whose voluminous reports are damned to ever-lasting slumber among heaps of waste paper on the shelves of the Home Office? Have they even done as much as to compile from those rotting blue-books a single readable book from which everybody might easily get some information on the condition of the great majority of »free-born Britons«? Not they indeed, those are things they do not like to speak of – they have left it to a foreigner to inform the civilised world of the degrading situation you have to live in.*¹¹⁹

In figuring the Home Office as a charnel house for official records of the lives, deaths and living deaths of most of England's population, Engels prefigured aspects of the aforementioned subcategories »Corridor Gothic« and »Organisational Gothic«. Regarding the latter, Parker contends that »it is not really until the early twentieth century that organisations in themselves begin to become represented as sites of darkness. Echoing the older image of the haunted house, we begin to see images of organisations as labyrinths with endless corridors and locked doors hiding evil secrets«.¹²⁰

Engels qualified his identity as »a foreigner«: »A foreigner to *them*, not to *you*, I hope. Though my English may not be pure, yet, I hope, you will find it *plain English*«.¹²¹ If »Condition« is richly informed and informative, due not least to his incorporation of Blue Book information, Engels did not render the passage above in purely plain or unmarked English. Instead, he conjures do-nothing but self-enrich rulers, workers left to starve, human-flesh trade, damnation to endless sleep, rotting volumes, scandalous degradation and an impure-speaking ›foreign‹ informer, who has taken sides in a civil war and speaks temerarily of the insides of the Home Office. Altogether these colourful topoi indicate Engels's awareness of *Märchen* and *der Schauerroman*, the Newgate Calendar and City Mystery novels, among other literary forms, and signify his use of generic markers and graphic images therefrom to enliven reader reception of Blue Books and »Condition« itself. His monograph might be read as a mash-up of a Gothic fairy tale and an urban-industrial crime story: the first-person narrator, a detective named Engels, assembles clues »from personal observation and authentic sources« (his subtitle) to make the case that

the bourgeoisie, despite its professions of philanthropy towards the proletariat, is a vampire that commissions, commits and benefits from wholesale »social murder«.¹²²

Engels quoted, paraphrased and summarised seas of papers, including but not limited to »Report from the Select Committee on the ›Bill to Regulate the Labour of Children in the Mills and Factories of the United Kingdom‹« (1831–1832), »Extracts from the Information received by His Majesty's Commissioners, as to the Administration and Operation of the Poor-Laws« (1833), »Factories Inquiry Commission. First Report of the Central Board of His Majesty's Commissioners appointed to collect Information in the Manufacturing Districts, as to the Employment of Children in Factories« (June 1833; Second Report, July 1833), »The Manufacturing Population of England, its Moral, Social, and Physical Conditions« (1833), »Report of the Manchester Statistical Society on the Condition of the Working Classes in an extensive Manufacturing District in 1834, 1835 and 1836« (1838), »Report from Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers' Commissioners« (1839), »Report of an Inquiry into the Condition of the Working Classes of the City of Bristol« (1839), »Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Employment of Children and Young Persons in Mines and Collieries and in the Trades and Manufactures« (First Report, 1842; Second, 1843), »On the Condition of the Working Classes in the Inner Ward of St. George's Parish, Hanover Square« (1843), »Pauperism and Poor-Rates in the Parochial Year 1842. Abstracted from the Ninth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners« (1843), »First Report of the Commissioners for Inquiring into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts« (1844) and »Reports of the Inspectors of Factories to Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Half-Year ending 31st December 1843« (1844). This dizzying short list of publications (some titles are abridged here) indicates the sheer depth and density of the deluge of printed matter plumbed by Engels to produce »Condition«. This deluge was itself a response to a generalised condition of pauperism and precarity existing amidst prosperity and plenty, which Engels figured by the aforementioned metaphor: »the fierce whirlpool«.

Engels's metaphor recalls the »vortexes« of Carlyle's works and the enchanted weltering waters, or *Wasserströme*, from Goethe's »Der Zauberlehrling«

(»The Sorcerer's Apprentice«, 1797), but spins their symbols towards revolutionary socialist politics. He portrayed the worker hurled into the fierce whirlpool, »in which it is hard and often impossible to keep his head above water. He knows that, though he may have the means of living today, it is very uncertain whether he shall tomorrow«.¹²³ This modern whirlpool invokes the ancient monster Charybdis. Engels effectively updated by industrialising Charybdis to allegorise the globalising gyre of Capital's uncontrolled *ilinx* (Greek for »whirlpool«). The capitalist Charybdis of commodity production and circulation is insatiable, its sucking maw all-consuming: »Into this universal whirl of activity everything was drawn«.¹²⁴ Carlyle's and Goethe's terrible waters, upsurges from the spectre of Charybdis, resurface in the »Manifesto of the Communist Party«. After an unattributed reference to Carlyle's phrase »cash payment«, a single sentence alludes to (Carlyle's own) middle-class idealisation of the Middle Ages, infinitely callous exploitation of the proletariat, and the freezing effects of alienation and reification in a society awhirl with the circulation of Capital: »The bourgeoisie«, Marx and Engels wrote, »has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation«.¹²⁵ The bourgeoisie, however, cannot master this engorging water: »Modern bourgeois society« – here Marx and Engels substitute Goethe's *Zauberlehrling* for the *Hexenmeister* himself – »is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells«.¹²⁶

Engels could have emblazoned the warning of the old sea-charts »Here Be Monsters« on his narrative account of the icy waters of Manchester and the English industrial world. These he explored in person and charted in detailed cityscapes. He summed up Manchester: »Everything which here arouses horror and indignation is of recent origin, belongs to the *industrial epoch*«.¹²⁷ »Everything« encompassed something that Mike Davis argues is »the primordial urban contradiction« shown by Engels's graphic catalogue of unsanitary conditions: »Excremental surplus«.¹²⁸ The whirlpool witnessed by Engels and the documentary deluge he swam amidst were inextricably mixed with human and other animal waste. The excremental vortexes he explored and the

scatological burden of Blue Books on public health are traced by »Engels's insistence on refuse, residue, offal, excrement, on the shit of industrialism«.¹²⁹

By the 1840s, »advanced middle-class consciousness was abruptly disturbed by the realization that millions of English men, women and children were virtually living in shit. The immediate question seems to have been whether they weren't drowning in it«.¹³⁰ During that decade, there appeared »a veritable flood of articles, pamphlets, and books on working-class living conditions [that] shocked and titillated middle-class readers, few of whom had ever thought about, let alone visited, the people and neighborhoods involved«.¹³¹ Bourgeois opinion was most influenced by Chadwick's »Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain«. Some thirty thousand copies of Chadwick were bought, »more than many popular novels and far more than any previous government publication«. Although »Condition« was »the most insightful work in this genre«, it had negligible effect in England, having been published in Germany and only in German.¹³² Also, Engels's plan to have his dedicatory address, in his words, »printed separately and sent to English party leaders, men of letters and members of Parliament« did not eventuate.¹³³

Nevertheless, »Condition« presented a significant step towards a political ontology of the proletariat. In Steven Marcus's reading of Engels, »generations of human beings, out of whose lives the wealth of England was produced, were compelled to live in wealth's symbolic, negative counterpart. And that substance which suffused their lives was also a virtual objectification of their social condition, their place in society that was what they were«.¹³⁴ In other words, Engels's profuse remarking of the shit at his shoes emblematised the mass expenditure of human life enacted by Capital, blood and filth pouring from its every pore. The ontology elaborated in »Capital« is greatly grounded in the Blue Book evidence, personal observations and theoretical insights persuasively disposed of by Engels from the shitstorm of the 1840s. For Marx, as Slavoj Žižek explains, »the emergence of working-class subjectivity is strictly co-dependent on the fact that the worker is compelled to sell the very substance of his being (his creative power) as a commodity on the market«. To make a living, the worker

is forced into self-abnegation, reducing »the precious core of his being, to an object that can be bought for money: there is no subjectivity without the reduction of the subject's positive-substantial being to a disposable »piece of shit««.¹³⁵

Engels's dedicatory address to proletarians – people virtually living in shit and actually treated as shit by their exploiters – pointed to a unity of opposites within bourgeois hegemony. Although the bourgeoisie was highfalutin about humaneness, in grotesque reality it got rich by indirect trade in human flesh. It represented both surplus talk and deficient action. In Carlylean terms, the long pole it balanced over the coal-fired abyss of forgetting God was loaded with plethoric crises, including redtape overproduction, on one end and administrative Donothingism on the other. The bourgeois parliament and bureaucracy released a flood of Blue Books but let these rot into a valley of dry bones. Engels breathed life into these bones, compiling them into a book that was integral to his communist reclamation and reanimation of the human substance alienated, desiccated and disposed of by the vampiric bourgeoisie.

Blue Books to Build a Gothic Pile

Writing to his father in 1837, Marx recalled a negative first impression: »I had read fragments of Hegel's philosophy, the grotesque craggy melody of which did not appeal to me«.¹³⁶ Now, however, Hegel's »grotesque and rocky melody« – Keston Sutherland's alternative translation of Marx's *groteske Felsenmelodie* – »was beginning to exercise an unshakeable grip on Marx's mind«, even being »conspicuous in the style and substance« of his filial letter.¹³⁷ Years later, in the »Afterword to the Second German Edition« (1873) of »Capital«, Marx claimed that he had »here and there coquetted with the modes of expression peculiar to [Hegel]«.¹³⁸ This suggestion of a merely casual textual relationship with Hegel was itself coquettish: »Hegel's style, the dissonantly wrought »melody« [and] rocky approximations to poetry«, had become part of the bedrock of Marx's communist literature.¹³⁹ Especially in »Capital«, his writing against the brute reality of Capital is characterised by its craggy sublimity, »internal generic disintegration« and »difficult collage of the poetic«.¹⁴⁰

Blue Books, informationally and formally, were central sources for the cragginess, collage and other compositional procedures of »Capital«, which Wilson called »an immense structure, dark and strong like the old Trier basilica«.¹⁴¹ In a long, conjunctive sentence, reminiscent of Marx's gruelling, unrelenting accounting from Blue Book evidence of Capital's bad infinity, one crime added to another crime to another, Wilson described some chapters in »Capital«:

*[...] with their piling-up of factory reports, their prosaic descriptions of misery and filth, their remorseless enumeration of the abnormal conditions to which the men and women and children of the working class have had to try to adjust themselves, their chronicle of the sordid expedients by which the employers had almost invariably won back, minute by minute and penny by penny, the profits that legislation, itself always inadequate and belated, had tried to shave down a little, and with their specimens of the complacent appeals to morality, religion and reason by which the employers and their economist apologists had had the hypocrisy to justify their practice – these at last become intolerable.*¹⁴²

Page after page, »Capital« documents how the despotism of Capital exploits and tortures the proletariat. However, »people and bodies«, Jameson notes, »are not summoned forth by Marx's own language; they appear only through lengthy quotations from the factory inspectors, they are mediated by the voices of others«.¹⁴³ For Hartley, »vast passages« of »Capital« prove that Marx is »one of the finest *collators*«: a radical pioneer of »a citational ›documentary poetics‹ [who] cuts, arranges, and pastes strategically chosen excerpts from factory reports and works of political economy – an artistically organized polyphony of workers, reformists, and capitalists whose words he arranges into a devastating indictment of capital«. Thus, »the very *form* of ›Capital‹ is designed to stage the self-critique of the real through a vast cast of opposing voices«.¹⁴⁴

The polyphonic dimension of »Capital« refracted the polyphony and heterogeneity of Blue Books. The polyphony of the state publications, however, was not essentially positive. »The official report signified asymmetrical power relations. Polyphony,« Frankel

adds, »may also be construed as a screen erected to occlude rather than to dialogue with others – to replace or speak for others. There was a hierarchy among the various speakers in the social report«.¹⁴⁵ Leonard Horner, a factory inspector honoured by Marx, complained that in their absolutist resistance to factory legislation, mill owners resorted to linguistic involution, confusion and obscurity: »They spoke with the confident tone of superior knowledge and experience; used technical terms, unintelligible, and, therefore, having a somewhat mystical import to those they were addressing«.¹⁴⁶ As Frankel pinpoints, »Language could function as a hidden place for proprietors«.¹⁴⁷ To expose and demystify capitalist voices, devices like the proletarian grotesque and ferocious contempt – Silva refers to Marx's »polemical spirit« and »spirit of mockery« – were useful and principled.¹⁴⁸ »Marx's expressions of anger and the sarcasm he allows himself while critiquing the excesses of capital, resonate perfectly well with the righteous indignation and tinges of irony that often burst to the surface of otherwise dull official reports«.¹⁴⁹

Except that Marx vented outrage and invective in critiquing Capital *per se*, its so-called excesses being functions of its infra-ordinary compulsion to accumulation and expanded self-reproduction. Its sins are inherent to its first commandment, biting ventriloquised by Marx: »Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!«¹⁵⁰ For Capital's prophets and political economists, routine transgressions such as over-working workers to death were not sins, but signs of faith and duty fulfilled. Repurposing a Leveller pamphlet, *Killing No Murder* (1657), which had called for Cromwell's assassination, Marx ironised in the third volume of »Capital«: »It was a matter of proving that KILLING was NO MURDER when it occurred for the sake of profit«.¹⁵¹

Engels had tested certain tonal, citational and contextual means to bring to light the hidden values and symbolic violence of words uttered by the bourgeoisie. For example, he wrote that the Liberal faction of »the possessing class« tried to argue away working-class distress and deprivation. His critical response was to »present proof from *Liberal* sources in order to defeat the liberal bourgeoisie by casting their own words in their teeth«.¹⁵² To Engels's throwing of ideologemes

back into the vampires' mouths, Marx added acerbic Shakespearean asides. In »Capital«, particularly »The Working Day« chapter, »where the greasy *raisonnement* of factory owners is swilled and spat out in frequent ejaculations of disgust and incredulity, the necessity of a hearty and violent repugnance for actually existing logic and its intrinsic pliancy in the service of capital is all but explicitly asserted as a principle of critique«. ¹⁵³ In Sutherland's gloss of a single page, »the aghast reader is subjected to one after another example of the good logical grounds advanced by capitalists for the most crushing possible exploitation of child labour, with exclamations by Marx in parentheses to follow, like acid for mouthwash: »(What cynical naïveté!)\", »(What mealy-mouthed phraseology!)\", »(how wrong-headed these people are!)\", etc.«. ¹⁵⁴

Capitalists' logical grounds not only covered their avoidances and abysmal excuses for the terrifying destruction of workers' lives but also, in themselves, represented the abysses and voids constitutive of Capital's real civilisational structure: not just »the ugliest that has ever existed«, to reprise Wilson's words, but the hollowest. For Marx, Capital's vampirism follows from its general form and function as an *Auspumper*: »literally a pumper-out«, as Sutherland puts it, »that performs the *Aussaugung* of the worker, literally the sucking out, or sucking hollow, of a »stunted, short-lived and rapidly replaced human being««. ¹⁵⁵ Capital's exploitation of humans and extraction of natural resources is »a hideous dredging into vacuousness«. ¹⁵⁶ Marx saw Capital waste human waste by not recycling sewage as a fertiliser. ¹⁵⁷ »Capitalist production«, he argued,

disturbs the circulation of matter between man and the soil, i.e., prevents the return to the soil of its elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; it therefore violates the conditions necessary to lasting fertility of the soil. [...] In agriculture as in manufacture, the transformation of production under the sway of capital, means, at the same time, the martyrdom of the producer [...] the increased productiveness and quantity of the labour set in motion are bought at the cost of laying waste and consuming by disease labour power itself. Moreover, all progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress

in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil [and] ruining the lasting sources of [its] fertility. ¹⁵⁸

Capital's peeling and out-pumping of people and planet alike – the tanning and emptying of skins and vitals, the eroding and hollowing of sky and soil – are dialectical processes and daily catastrophes. Their climax is, according to Jonathan Crary, »scorched earth capitalism«. ¹⁵⁹ In Crary's analysis, »capitalism in its terminal, scorched earth phase« generalises »a state of barrenness«: »a parched earth deprived of water, its rivers and aquifers poisoned, air polluted and soils afflicted by drought and chemical agriculture«. ¹⁶⁰ As Marx scorched his scorching, desiccating subjects, Capital and political economy, so his critique of capitalism's destructive tendencies proved enlightening and predictive. Arnold Ruge's 1869 description of »Capital« still holds: »It is an *epoch-making work* and throws a shining and often scorching light on the development of the social periods, with the declines, the birth-pains, and the frightful days of agony«. ¹⁶¹ The hardness, hollows and volatility of its very writing evoke the *Aussaugung* of Earth into utter alienation and uninhabitability. In Johnson's stunning visualisation, »Marx's prose is like a lunar landscape, vast, craggy, hard as iron, from the craters of which belch forth unexpected fires«. ¹⁶²

As Marx carried Hegel's grotesque and rocky melody through the formal collation, collage and documentary poetics of »Capital«, so the crags and chasms of Hegel's dissonant heuristic shaped the contents of the scientific theory, artistic narrative and storytelling by which Marx revealed the abysses of capitalist reality. For Alexander Kluge, stories foreground »the subject matter of both theory and narrative, namely, the real – in other words, reality – and its abysses«. Thus, »once you begin to tell stories, you begin to notice that reality has catacombs, wells, and abysses«. ¹⁶³ Marx retells scores of stories and testimonies from Blue Books and simultaneously narrates and theoretically maps the abyssal structures and systems of Capital. His spatial form, in Jameson's exposition, »consists in the patient exploration of spaces, of the search for this ultimate reality of the unrepresentable, a search which more and more minute moves from statistics and regions to towns,

streets, houses, rooms, and finally that last glimpse of the nothingness in the back room, blinding, unbearable, from which we must avert our eyes«. ¹⁶⁴ In some stories, even a single room is a social abyss: an overcrowded workplace, a space for sleeping and eating, a place of death and a crime scene, all at once.

Using Blue Books to explore Capital's underworld of overwork, Marx invokes the *nekyia* of the »Odyssey« (Book XI). He invites his readers to share his lived experience of being touched by the shades of workers worked to death: »the motley crowd of labourers of all callings, ages, sexes, that press on us more busily than the souls of the slain on Ulysses, on whom – without referring to the Blue Books under their arms – we see at a glance the mark of overwork«. ¹⁶⁵ He asks us to consider the deaths of people such as Mary Anne Walkley, a 20-year-old milliner, »employed in a highly-respectable dressmaking establishment, [who] had worked without intermission for 26½ hours, with 60 other girls, 30 in one room, that only afforded ¼ of the cubic feet of air required for them. At night, they slept in pairs in one of the stifling holes into which the bedroom was divided by partitions of board«. ¹⁶⁶ Official statistics, *Vampyrduurst* and a toothless Parliament whirl around those 26½ hours worked by Walkley. Marx writes: »the official working day means for each worker usually 12 hours by night or day. But the overwork beyond this amount is in many cases, to use the words of the English official report, »truly fearful«. ¹⁶⁷ One room seems to bind the limited public memory of Walkley's short working life and the phenomenologically interminable 26½ hours of her death spiral. Nevertheless, Marx's labyrinthine spatial form works in reverse too, to intricately map the clandestinity of her killing for profit back out to houses, streets, towns, the industrial world and, fundamentally, Capital's *Aussaugung*. ¹⁶⁸ The cramped, suffocating room where this apocalypse befell is yet another chamber of bourgeois society's nether world, overcrowded with clamorous proletarian ghosts to whom we should lend our ears and tongues to hear and retell their stories.

Blue Books provided evidence that so-called »reformed« Parliament – apropos children condemned »to 72 hours of work per week in the Factory Hell« – »administered freedom drop by drop«. ¹⁶⁹ All the while, Marx sees, Capital is insatiable: »The prolongation of the working day beyond the limits of the natural day, into

the night, only acts as a palliative. It quenches only in a slight degree the vampire thirst for the living blood of labour. To appropriate labour during all the 24 hours of the day is, therefore, the inherent tendency of capitalist production«. ¹⁷⁰ Quoting from Engels's »The English Ten Hours' Bill«, Marx declared: »the vampire will not lose its hold on [the worker] »so long as there is a muscle, a nerve, a drop of blood to be exploited«. ¹⁷¹ Besides employees suffering from vampiric exploitation, Marx regarded the existential and economic precarity of unemployed workers, »an industrial reserve army, kept in misery in order to be always at the disposal of capital«. ¹⁷² Blue Books helped him to prove that workers, employed and unemployed alike, were as disposable as Blue Books.

The stifling airspace in which Mary Anne Walkley drudged and died prompted Marx to quote a Dr. Letheby, Consulting Physician of the Board of Health: »The minimum of air for each adult ought to be in a sleeping room 300, and in a dwelling room 500 cubic feet«. ¹⁷³ Marx's critique of political economy entailed an intensive study of Capital's despoliation and expropriation of *Luftraum*, »breathing space«, for bare existence. His forensic exploration of workplaces and workers' dwellings revealed the coming obsolescence, if not extinction, of healthy space to live and breathe – an unearthly kind of reverse terraforming into »a lunar landscape«, to adapt Johnson – should Capital's drive toward expanded self-valorisation continue unchecked. Remember that Capital is a Rubenesque make-up artist, painting stove operatives as rubicund and bleach-works as pastoral paradises, and thus painting over workers diseased by alternating exposure to skin-burning and bone-chilling atmospheres. Marx quoted a factory inspector's 1865 documentation of workers in potteries, »breathing through protracted days and often nights of labour, a mephitic atmosphere [...] which rendered an otherwise comparatively innocuous occupation, pregnant with disease and death«. ¹⁷⁴ He summarised multiple government reports: »It has been stated over and over again that the English doctors are unanimous in declaring that where the work is continuous, 500 cubic feet is the very least space that should be allowed for each person«. But Capital possesses neither humanism nor a heart of its own: »The sanitary officers, the industrial inquiry commissioners, the factory inspectors, all harp,

over and over again, upon the necessity for those 500 cubic feet, and upon the impossibility of wringing them out of capital. They thus, in fact, declare that consumption and other lung diseases among the workpeople are necessary conditions to the existence of capital¹⁷⁵. Over and over, again and again: the processes of adding one ineffectual reform statement to another, one sentimental hand wringing to another, were epiphenomena of Capital's bad infinity. Whether reformist or sentimentalist in approach, pleading with Capital could not lead to a decisive qualitative break, escape or leap from its monstrosity.

Meanwhile, Capital tended to make breathing space infinitesimal, one cubic centimetre by one cubic centimetre, so bourgeois society, not one occupation alone, was engorged with respiratory disease and death. Yet the bourgeois state was self-deficient in staff to inspect the suffocating abysses. »Diminutive staffs«, such as »between ten and twenty officials to inspect the nation's multifarious workhouses«,¹⁷⁶ were more incentive than not to Capital the *Auspumper*, thirsty to suck and driven to desiccate. In these terroristic latitudes, Marx and Engels's shared approach to the dry bones of Blue Books, akin to Ezekiel's God's words, »Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live«, was an open-air revolutionary *conspiracy* – from the Latin *conspirare*: to breath together.

Conclusion: Resurrectionists as Insurrectionists

In 1865, Marx told Engels that »the advantage of my writings is that they are an artistic whole«.¹⁷⁷ This suggests his desire and struggle to ensure that the first volume of »Capital« formed a well-disposed whole and not »a medley of smatterings« (*einem Mischmasch von Kenntnissen*), as later, in 1873, he would call the ugly, uncritical garbling of German professors of political economy.¹⁷⁸ In his »Preface to the First German Edition« (1867) of »Capital«, he commended official compilations of »social statistics« for helping to »raise the veil [...] to let us catch a glimpse of the Medusa head«. He contrasted Perseus, wearing »a magic cap that the monsters he hunted down might not see him«, with his contemporaries, drawing »the magic cap down

over eyes and ears as a make-believe that there are no monsters«.¹⁷⁹ Throughout »Capital«, he handled Blue Books as instruments to reveal and weapons to critique Capital's systemic monstrosity. Strangely, then, Engels wrote in 1883: »When they are pure statements of fact or descriptions, the quotations, from the English Blue Books, for example, serve of course as simple documentary proof«.¹⁸⁰ This article has questioned Engels's views of Marx's »art of quotation« and his own so-called »plain English«. Given Marx's *apokalyptein*, quotations of statistics and factual statements from Blue Books served more than as simple documentary proof. Reanimated and administered into »Capital«, Blue Books were consummately disposed into Marx's artistic whole, like the old Trier basilica: not a pure, simple or homogeneous construction; rather, an artistically organised polyphony, a Gothic novel, a Victorian novel, a modernist *Inferno*; and ultimately, *sui generis*.

The very page on which Engels expressed his hope that readers would find his English »plain« is adorned by his fairy-tale allusion to official reports »damned to ever-lasting slumber«. By recuperating »rotting blue-books« into the rich tissues and integuments of »Condition«, Engels began to fulfil an aspiration that he had voiced in 1839: »What I want to do is to reveal in a ›fairy story‹ or something like that those foreshadowings of the modern world that showed themselves in the Middle Ages; I want to uncover those spirits who knocked under the hard crust of the earth for release, buried beneath the foundations of churches and dungeons«.¹⁸¹ By reading and reanimating damned Blue Books, Engels was possessed of sublime documentary access to the infernal foundations and developments of the modern industrial-capitalist world. His vision of a revelatory ›fairy story‹ was realised in many ways by his and Marx's co-authorship of the »Communist Manifesto«.¹⁸² His ›resurrectionist‹ approach to Blue Books was put to insurrectionist work in »Condition«, in the struggle to restore »human substance«, but to a higher social realm, for and by way of proletarian revolution. Similarly, his supervision of Samuel Moore's English translation of the »Manifesto«, published in 1888, told of »spirits« rising up against their live burial in bourgeois society. Engels authorised Moore's »framing the ›Manifesto‹ as a *Märchen*: communism as the raising of a ghost army«.¹⁸³

Carlyle was transfixed by a painful vision. Under Capital's ascendancy, social and spiritual spaces had become waste latitudes wandered by the living dead. Redtape could not hide or enshroud the abysmal forgetting of God, nor Blue Books salve the English condition of defection from Him to Mammon. He, Carlyle, transfixed his discovery in Frankensteinian semantic assemblages. Marx and Engels admired his style in their 1850 review: »Carlyle treated the English language as though it were completely raw material which he had to cast utterly afresh. Obsolete expressions and words were sought out again and new ones invented [...] The new style was often in bad taste and hugely pretentious, but frequently brilliant and always original«. ¹⁸⁴ As though, in other words, Carlyle resurrected forgotten epithets from linguistic graves, delivered unheralded prodigies, and stitched them together, to monster England's accursed capitalist somnambulism. Likewise, but incomparably, Marx and Engels brilliantly reanimated Blue Books and originally disposed of them within their Gothic communist writing against the sorcery and monstrosity of Capital.

Marx's »Eighteenth Brumaire« famously begins: »Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce«. ¹⁸⁵ Facts that appeared in Blue Books have become world-historic by dint of their disposal in world-changing publications: »Condition« and »Capital«. Those facts' first occurrences were often in farcical scenarios: constructed in earnest but entered into Blue Books that were left to rot in warehouses or offices, sold to and by paper dealers, or shot for amateur ballistics tests. Their recurrence, second lives, or resurrection, in Engels and Marx's books, helped to reveal the tragic duality of the capitalist mode of production, that it is simultaneously, structurally and inexorably a mode of destruction. Thereby hangs a great irony. Although Blue Books were »designed to render the process of governing itself visible for public observation«, ¹⁸⁶ their voluminosity tended to hide social facts, forces and formations from popular scrutiny and critical analysis. It was Engels and Marx, scouring Blue Books to discover underlying historical-material structures and tendencies, who visibilised the rule of Capital as monstrous. Using government publications

to lift the veil, they fulfilled British administrative culture's professed commitment to transparency and the illumination of reality, but for the cause of abolishing the maladministration of human life by Capital.

- 1 Oz Frankel: *States of Inquiry. Social Investigations and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the United States*, Baltimore 2006, p. 10.
- 2 I quote from English translations authorised and edited by Engels: »Condition«, translated by Florence Kelley-Wischniewetzky (New York 1887) and »Capital«, translated from the third German edition (1883) by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (London 1887). These translations are in Karl Marx / Frederick Engels: *Collected Works*, 50 vols., London 1975–2004 (hereafter MECW). Quotation of other works by Marx and Engels is from MECW too.
- 3 MECW vol. 38, p. 10 (Letter 19. 11. 1844).
- 4 MECW vol. 39, p. 404 (Letter 14. 12. 1853).
- 5 Paul Lafargue: *Reminiscences of Marx* (1890), online: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lafargue/1890/xx/marx.htm> (28. 5. 2022).
- 6 Peter Linebaugh: *Stop, Thief! The Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance*, Oakland 2014, p. 70. Re. the capitalist state's criminogenic agencies and structures, with reference to factory inspections, see W. G. Carson: *The Conventionalization of Early Factory Crime* [1979], Commentary by Steve Tombs, in: *Policy and Practice in Health and Safety* 3/sup1 (2005), pp. 103–125. Valeria Vegh Weis notes Marx's productive but problematic reliance on certain Blue Books. Valeria Vegh Weis: *Marxism and Criminology. A History of Criminal Selectivity*, Leiden 2017, pp. 179–180.
- 7 Anna Kornbluh: *Realizing Capital. Financial and Psychic Economies in Victorian Form*, New York 2014, pp. 115, 185 n. 3.
- 8 MECW vol. 35, p. 29. Cf. Oz Frankel: *States of Inquiry*, ch. 5 »Facts speak for themselves«.
- 9 Grace Kehler: *Gothic Pedagogy and Victorian Reform Treatises*, in: *Victorian Studies* 50/3 (2008), pp. 437–456, at p. 439. Chadwick was more compiler than author of the report usually attributed solely to him. Its three volumes were, as Engels noted, »assembled and arranged from medical reports by Edwin Chadwick, Secretary of the Poor-Law Commissioners«. MECW vol. 4, p. 339.
- 10 Francis Wheen: *The Poet of Dialectics*, in: *The Guardian*, 8. 7. 2006, online: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/jul/08/politics> (5. 5. 2022). Riccardo Bellofiore: *The Untimely Marx. Marx's Critique of Political Economy and the Political Dimension of Critical Economics*, in: Sankar Ray / Shaibal Gupta (eds.): *Probings and Re-Probings. Essays in Marxian Reawakening*, Abingdon 2022, pp. 189–217, at p. 199.
- 11 Key works of »Gothic Marxism« include Chris Baldick: *In Frankenstein's Shadow. Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing*, Oxford 1987, ch. 6, and David McNally: *Monsters of the Market. Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism*, Leiden 2011. Examples of other Gothic Marxist works are cited in Jayson Althofer: *Friedrich Engels and Gothic Marxism. A Fairy-Tale Introduction*, in: *Critical Imprints* 5 (2020), pp. 77–94.
- 12 Thomas Carlyle: *Chartism*, New York 1885 [1839], ch. 1.
- 13 MECW vol. 10, p. 301. The editors of MECW vol. 10 note that »the review of Carlyle's book was probably by Engels, who had discussed this author's writings previously. Since this cannot be established with absolute certainty, however, all the reviews in this volume are published as the joint works of Marx and Engels«. MECW vol. 10, p. 669, n. 182.
- 14 MECW vol. 4, p. 578.
- 15 Carlyle: *Chartism*, p. 32.
- 16 Norbert Lennartz: *Charles Dickens, »Bleak House« (1853)*, in: Martin Middeke / Monika Pietrzak-Franger (eds.): *Handbook of the English Novel, 1830–1900*, Berlin 2020, pp. 305–320, at p. 311.
- 17 Isaiah Berlin: *Karl Marx*, ed. by Henry Hardy, Princeton 2013 [1939], p. 170. Before Berlin, Lafargue wrote in »Reminiscences of Marx«: »Professor Beesley [sic – Edward Beesly] said that Marx was the man who made the greatest use of English official inquiries and brought them to the knowledge of the world. He did not know that before 1845 Engels took numerous documents from the »Blue Books« in writing [»Condition«].
- 18 MECW vol. 35, p. 248.
- 19 Frankel: *States of Inquiry*, p. 173.
- 20 Oz Frankel: *Blue Books and the Victorian Reader*, in: *Victorian Studies* 46/2 (2004), pp. 308–318, at p. 316.
- 21 Frankel: *Blue Books*, p. 314.
- 22 Frankel: *Blue Books*, pp. 310, 309.
- 23 Frankel: *Blue Books*, p. 309.
- 24 Frankel: *Blue Books*, p. 309.
- 25 John Barton quoted in T. W. Hutchinson: *Review of G. Sotiroff: John Barton (1789–1852), Economic Writings*, in: *The Economic Journal* 75/298 (June 1965), pp. 424–426, at p. 425.
- 26 Frankel: *Blue Books*, p. 316.
- 27 Frankel: *Blue Books*, p. 308.
- 28 Frankel: *Blue Books*, p. 317.
- 29 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, London 1986. This article does not address the Gothic splits and struggles within the (self-)murderous bourgeoisie, indicated by Fredric Jameson's allusion to Robert Louis Stevenson's »Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde« (1886): »the strange case of the Blue Books and of bourgeois factory inspections remains to be evaluated (Marx himself suggests that they were used by the land-owning faction against their industrial adversaries in parliament)«. Jameson: *Representing »Capital«. A Commentary on Volume One*, London 2011, p. 141. To give one example, copious use of Blue Books against the industrial bourgeoisie is made in Charles Wing: *Evils of the Factory System Demonstrated by Parliamentary Evidence*, London 1837. For brief discussion of Jameson's observation, see Daniel Hartley: *The Voices of »Capital«. Poetics of Critique beyond Sentiment and Cynicism*, in: Mark Steven (ed.): *Understanding Marx, Understanding Modernism*, New York 2021, pp. 74–85, at p. 79.
- 30 Ewart (24. 3. 1865) quoted in Frankel: *Blue Books*, p. 308.
- 31 Roger Luckhurst: *Corridors. Passages of Modernity*, London 2019, pp. 261, 264, 284.
- 32 Chris Baldick: *Introduction*, in: Chris Baldick (ed.): *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, Oxford 1992, pp. xi–xxiii, at p. xvii.
- 33 Sheila M. Smith: *Willenhall and Wodgate. Disraeli's Use of Blue Book Evidence*, in: *The Review of English Studies* 13/52 (1962), pp. 368–384, at p. 384.
- 34 Joseph Childers: *Novel Possibilities. Fiction and the Formation of Early Victorian Culture*, Philadelphia 1995, chs. 4 and 5.
- 35 J. Toulmin Smith: *Government by Commissions Illegal and Pernicious. The Nature and Effects of all Commissions of Inquiry and other Crown-Appointed Commissions*, London 1849, p. 172.
- 36 Frankel: *Blue Books*, p. 312.
- 37 Frankel: *Blue Books*, p. 312.
- 38 MECW vol. 4, p. 533.
- 39 MECW vol. 35, p. 498.
- 40 Paul Lafargue: *Reminiscences of Marx*.
- 41 MECW vol. 35, p. 468.
- 42 MECW vol. 35, p. 254.
- 43 MECW vol. 35, p. 186.
- 44 Jonathan Crary: *Scorched Earth. Beyond the Digital Age to a Post-Capitalist World*, London 2022, p. 36 EPUB.
- 45 MECW vol. 35, p. 466.
- 46 MECW vol. 35, p. 365. Except for quotations, I capitalise »Capital« to accentuate the trope of personification in »Capital«. Marx

marked Capital as the eponymous character and »the ur-person« of »Capital«. »According this subject position to Capital«, Kornbluh argues, »enthrones Capital as the protagonist of modernity«. *Realizing Capital*, p. 125

47 MECW vol. 35, p. 255; the unbracketed first ellipsis is Marx's.

48 Hartley: *The Voices of »Capital«*, p. 79.

49 MECW vol. 35, pp. 297–298.

50 See Pamela Hansford Johnson: *The Literary Achievement of Marx*, in: *The Modern Quarterly* 2/3 (1947), pp. 239–244, at p. 241; and Peter Riley: *Before the »Manifesto«*. Märchen and the Impulse to Exorcism, in: Mark Steven (ed.): *Understanding Marx, Understanding Modernism*, New York 2021, pp. 30–39.

51 Sayak Valencia: *Capitalismo gore*, Barcelona 2010, pp. 87–88: »todo lo sólido y consumible se edifica sobre sangre«. This rewrites Marx's famous formula, »All that is solid melts into air«; MECW vol. 6, p. 487 (»Communist Manifesto«, trans. Samuel Moore). However, Valencia falsely asserts that »las prácticas gore« disrupt »le modelo marxista de producción-consumo«, p. 49. Marx analysed gory practices in gross detail and placed them at the »heart« of production and consumption, arguing that capitalism possesses a heartbeat only by the perpetual expropriation and exploitation of proletarian lifeblood. He imagined a worker telling a capitalist: »the thing that you represent face to face with me has no heart in its breast. That which seems to throb there is my own heart-beating«; MECW vol. 35, p. 242. For Marx, the non-stop gore of Capital's *Aussaugung* (discussed below) involves vampirism and the cannibalism of commodity consumption, and determines market-based colonialism and globalisation: »It was in fact by the cheapness of the human sweat and the human blood, which were converted into commodities, that the markets were constantly being extended, and continue daily to be extended; more especially was this the case with England's colonial markets«; MECW vol. 35, p. 474. See Keston Sutherland: *Marx in Jargon*, in: *world picture* 1 (2008), pp. 1–25.

52 Jason Read: *The Double Shift*. Spinoza and Marx on the Politics of Work, London 2024, p. 126 EPUB.

53 Read: *Double Shift*, p. 126 EPUB.

54 Read: *Double Shift*, p. 169 EPUB.

55 Johnson: *Literary Achievement of Marx*, pp. 239–240.

56 David Punter: *Gothic Pathologies*. The Text, the Body and the Law, Basingstoke 1998, p. 14.

57 Michael McIntyre / Heidi J. Nast: *Bio(necro)polis*. Marx, Surplus Populations, and the Spatial Dialectics of Reproduction and »Race«, in: *Antipode* 43/5 (2011), pp. 1465–1488, at p. 1469.

58 Achille Mbembe: *Necropolitics*, trans. Steven Corcoran, Durham 2019, p. 92 (original emphases).

59 MECW vol. 35, p. 301

60 Ludovico Silva: *Marx's Literary Style*, trans. Paco Brito Núñez, London 2023 [1971], p. 95.

61 See Stefan Andriopoulos: *The Invisible Hand*. Supernatural Agency in Political Economy and the Gothic, in: *ELH* 66/3 (1999), pp. 739–758; Eleanor Courtemanche: *The »Invisible Hand« and British Fiction, 1818–1860*. Adam Smith, Political Economy, and the Genre of Realism, Basingstoke 2011; John Scales Avery: *Adam Smith's Invisible Hand is at Our Throats*, in: *Eqbal Ahmad Centre for Public Education website*, 14. 12. 2020, online: <https://eacpe.org> (22. 02. 2023).

62 Jayson Althofer: *All that Solid Flesh Melts into Air*. »The Communist Manifesto« as Proletarian Ghost Story, in: Henry Bartholomew, Jen Baker and Joan Passey (eds.): *New Directions in the Ghost Story*, vol. 1 of 2 vols, Cham [forthcoming].

63 Althofer: *Friedrich Engels and Gothic Marxism*, pp. 82–86. For »Industrial Gothic«, see Bridget M. Marshall: *Industrial Gothic*. Workers, Exploitation and Urbanization in Transatlantic Nineteenth-Century Literature, Cardiff 2021.

64 William Clare Roberts: *Marx's Inferno*. The Political Theory of »Capital«, Princeton 2018.

65 Edmund Wilson: *To the Finland Station*. A Study in the Writing and Acting of History, New York 1940, p. 289.

66 Wilson: *To the Finland Station*, p. 293. Wilson's observation relates to Kathleen Blake's: »So sinister has Benthamite insistence on oversight come to seem via Foucault that we might forget the value of information-gathering through parliamentary commissions, blue books, statistical surveys, and the census initiated by parliaments brought in after the 1832 suffrage reform. Marx appreciated the social statistics available in England but not in Germany [...] Panoptical knowledge provided opportunity for criticism and for »Capital«. Blake: »Bleak House«, *Political Economy, Victorian Studies*, in: *Victorian Literature and Culture* 25/1 (1997), pp. 1–21, at p. 4. See Frankel: *States of Inquiry*, p. 140.

67 For Marx and Engels apropos Mary Shelley's »Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus« (1818), see McNally: *Monsters of the Market*, ch. 1.

68 Massimiliano Tomba: *Marx's Temporalities*, trans. Peter D. Thomas / Sara R. Farris, Leiden 2013, p. 47.

69 »Grave robbers were known as Resurrection Men, and Victor Frankenstein's monster, as a composite of risen bodies, is an apt walking embodiment of that collective«. Marie Mulvey-Roberts: *Monstrous Dissections and Surgery as Performance*. Gender, Race and the Bride of Frankenstein, in: Carol Margaret Davison / Marie Mulvey-Roberts (eds.): *Global Frankenstein*, Cham 2018, pp. 53–71, at p. 57.

70 Sheila M. Smith: *Blue Books and Victorian Novelists*, in: *The Review of English Studies* 21/81 (1970), pp. 23–40, at p. 40.

71 Ezekiel 37:5 quoted in MECW vol. 11, p. 193.

72 Steven Marcus: *The Other Victorians*. A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England, London 2017 [1964], p. 107. Cf. Gwyneth Tyson Roberts: *The Language of the Blue Books*. The Perfect Instrument of Empire, Cardiff 1998.

73 Frankel: *Blue Books*, p. 308.

74 Lafargue: *Reminiscences of Marx*.

75 Thomas Huxley: *Administrative Nihilism* [1871], in: *Collected Essays*, Vol. 1. Results and Methods, London 1894, pp. 251–289, at p. 267.

76 Thomas Carlyle: *Past and Present*, Boston 1843, p. 164.

77 Carlyle: *Chartism*, p. 29.

78 Thomas Carlyle: *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, London 1850, p. 191.

79 MECW vol. 4, p. 298.

80 MECW, vol. 42, pp. 230, 232.

81 S. S. Prawer: *Karl Marx and World Literature*, Oxford 1976, pp. 373, 410–411.

82 MECW vol. 35, p. 9.

83 MECW vol. 35, pp. 9, 748.

84 David MacGregor: *Hegel, Marx, and the English State*, Toronto 1996, p. 60. For Marx's critique of sentiment and largely successful avoidance of its affects, see Hartley: *The Voices of »Capital«*.

85 Elizabeth Barrett Browning: *Selected Poems*, ed. by Marjorie Stone / Beverly Taylor, Peterborough ONT. 2009, p. 148.

86 Smith: *Willenhall and Wodgate*, p. 384.

87 Ellen Grünkemeier: *Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, »Mary Barton« (1848)*, in: Martin Middeke / Monika Pietrzak-Franger (eds.): *Handbook of the English Novel, 1830–1900*, Berlin 2020, pp. 273–287, at p. 279.

- 88 Raymond Williams: *Culture and Society 1780–1950*, New York 1960 [1958], p. 102.
- 89 Tim Libretti: What a Dirty Way to Get Clean. The Grotesque in the Modern American Novel, in: Michael J. Meyer (ed.), *Literature and the Grotesque*, Atlanta 1995, pp. 171–190.
- 90 This exemplifies »the ›concrete spirit‹ of Marx's literary and intellectual style«. Silva: *Marx's Literary Style*, p. 72.
- 91 MECW vol. 4, p. 526.
- 92 Martin Parker: *Organisational Gothic*, Newcastle-under-Lyme [2005], online: https://www.academia.edu/2720058/Organisational_gothic, p. 15 (22.02.2023). See John Garrick and Stewart Clegg: *Organizational Gothic. Transfusing Vitality and Transforming the Corporate Body through Work-based Learning*, in: Colin Symes and John McIntyre (eds.): *Working Knowledge. The New Vocationalism and Higher Education*, Buckingham 2000, pp. 153–171.
- 93 Parker: *Organisational Gothic*, p. 6.
- 94 MECW vol. 10, pp. 288–300 (original emphasis).
- 95 MECW vol. 35, p. 493.
- 96 Jameson: *Representing »Capital«*, p. 119.
- 97 MECW vol. 35, p. 9.
- 98 Charles Dickens: *Bleak House*, New York 1895 [1853], p. 2.
- 99 Jonathan Foster: *Bureaucratic Sensibility. »Bleak House« as a Layperson's Guidebook to Officialdom*. *Dickens Quarterly* 39/1 (March 2022), pp. 24–41, at p. 35.
- 100 Sianne Ngai. *Ugly Feelings*, Cambridge MASS. 2005, ch. 6. For Kant, Ngai and the »bureaucratic sublime«, see Emmanuel Grimaud / Anthony Stavrianakis: *Le sublime bureaucratique*, in: *Terrain*, special issue (June 2021), online: https://www.academia.edu/115359148/Le_sublime_bureaucratique (13. 11. 2022), par. 7.
- 101 Carlyle: *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, p. 74. Cf. Carlyle's contemporary Anthony Trollope, who showed »how public servants may rise to the sublime theological virtues of faith, hope and charity« and celebrated »sublime bureaucrats, as experts in ethics and artists in administration«. Ceri Sullivan: *Literature in the Public Service. Sublime Bureaucracy*, Houndmills 2013, pp. 12, 157. For related discussion of »celestial« and »terrestrial« bureaucracies, see Grimaud and Stavrianakis: *Le sublime bureaucratique*, par. 8.
- 102 MECW vol. 10, p. 302.
- 103 Rudolf Bahro: *Socialism and Survival. Articles, Essays, and Talks 1979–1982*, London 1982, p. 157.
- 104 Carlyle: *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, p. 101.
- 105 Carlyle: *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, p. 84.
- 106 Charles Kingsley: *Yeast. A Problem*, Leipzig 1851 [1848], pp. 118–119.
- 107 Timothy L. Carens: Charles Kingsley, »Yeast: A Problem« (1851), in: Martin Middeke / Monika Pietrzak-Franger (eds.): *Handbook of the English Novel, 1830–1900*, Berlin 2020, pp. 289–303, at p. 290.
- 108 Carlyle: *Past and Present*, p. 90.
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- 110 Carlyle: *Past and Present*, p. 1.
- 111 Carlyle: *Past and Present*, p. 187.
- 112 MECW vol. 3, p. 454.
- 113 Carlyle: *Past and Present*, p. 187.
- 114 Carlyle: *Past and Present*, p. 227.
- 115 Carlyle: *Past and Present*, p. 272.
- 116 Roland Boer: *Criticism of Earth. On Marx, Engels and Theology*, Leiden 2012, p. 279.
- 117 MECW vol. 3, p. 463.
- 118 MECW vol. 4, p. 414.
- 119 MECW vol. 4, p. 298.
- 120 Parker: *Organisational Gothic*, p. 9.
- 121 MECW vol. 4, p. 298.
- 122 See Jayson Althofer: *Living-Dead Liminality in Friedrich Engels's Gothic Marxism*, in: Aoileann Ní Éigeartaigh (ed.): *The Graveyard in Literature. Liminality and Social Critique*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2022, pp. 34–51, at pp. 39–40.
- 123 MECW vol. 4, p. 331.
- 124 MECW vol. 4, p. 318.
- 125 MECW vol. 6, p. 487.
- 126 MECW vol. 6, p. 489.
- 127 MECW vol. 4, p. 355.
- 128 Mike Davis: *Planet of Slums*, London 2006, p. 137.
- 129 Peter Brooks: *Realist Vision*, New Haven 2005, p. 43.
- 130 Steven Marcus: *Engels, Manchester, and the Working Class*, New York 1974, p. 184.
- 131 Ian Angus: *Cesspools, Sewage, and Social Murder. Environmental Crisis and Metabolic Rift in Nineteenth-Century London*, in: *Monthly Review* 70/3 (2018), online: <https://monthlyreview.org/2018/07/01/cesspools-sewage-and-social-murder/> (21. 12. 2019).
- 132 Ian Angus: *Cesspools, Sewage, and Social Murder*.
- 133 MECW vol. 38, pp. 10–11 (Letter 19. 11. 1844).
- 134 Marcus: *Engels*, p. 185.
- 135 Slavoj Žižek: *The Ticklish Subject. The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, London 1999, p. 157.
- 136 MECW vol. 1, p. 18 (Letter 10–11. 11. 1837).
- 137 Keston Sutherland: *Marx's Defence of Poetry*, in: *world picture* 19 (2015), pp. 1–15, at pp. 1–2 (original emphasis).
- 138 MECW vol. 35, p. 19.
- 139 Sutherland: *Marx's Defence of Poetry*, p. 2 (original emphasis).
- 140 Sutherland: *Marx in Jargon*, p. 6. The outstanding precursor of the collage of »Capital« is the »collage subversif« of the »Communist Manifesto«; Marc Angenot / Darko Suvin: *L'implicite du manifeste. Métaphores et imagerie de la démystification dans le »Manifeste communiste«*, in: *Études françaises* 16/3–4 (1980), pp. 43–67, at p. 48. Also see Peter Osborne: *How to Read Marx*, London 2005, pp. 85–86.
- 141 Wilson: *To the Finland Station*, p. 289.
- 142 Wilson: *To the Finland Station*, p. 293.
- 143 Fredric Jameson: *Representing »Capital«*, p. 114.
- 144 Hartley: *The Voices of »Capital«*, pp. 78–79 (original emphases). Hartley, p. 79, notes that Marx's documentary poetics prefigured modernist masterworks such as Ezra Pound's »Cantos«. For Pound's citational echoes of Marx's Gothicism, especially in relation to factory crimes and factory inspectors, see Mark Steven: *Reading Capital, Writing History*. Pound's Marx, in: *Modernism/modernity* 24/4 (2017), pp. 771–790. On Marx's remarkable assemblage, alternation and contrast of styles, also see David Harvey: *A Companion to Marx's »Capital«*, London 2010, p. 38; and Steven: *Reading Capital, Writing History*, p. 775.
- 145 Frankel: *States of Inquiry*, p. 191.
- 146 Leonard Horner: *On the Employment of Children, in Factories and Other Works in the United Kingdom, and in some Foreign Countries*, London 1840, p. 2. Marx wrote of Horner: »He rendered undying service to the English working class. He carried on a life-long contest, not only with the embittered manufacturers, but also with the Cabinet, to whom the number of votes given by the masters in the Lower House, was a matter of far greater importance than the number of hours worked by the ›hands‹ in the mills«. MECW vol. 35, p. 234.
- 147 Frankel: *States of Inquiry*, p. 160.
- 148 Silva: *Marx's Literary Style*, pp. 74–79. On polemic and invective as privileged modes in »Capital« and »Condition«, see, e.g.: Stanley Edgar Hyman: »Capital« as Literature, in: *The Kenyon Review* 23/4

- (1961), pp. 590–610, at pp. 595–596; Charles Barbour: *The Marx-Machine. Politics, Polemics, Ideology*, Lanham MD 2012, ch. 2; and Jordan Kinder: Engels, in: Jeff Diamanti / Andrew Pendakis / Imre Szeman (eds.): *The Bloomsbury Companion to Marx*, London 2019, pp. 163–172, at p. 164.
- 149 Oz Frankel: Vulnerable Populations, Social Investigations, and Epistemic Justice in Early Victorian Britain, in: *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* 7/2 (2017), pp. 261–276, at p. 263.
- 150 MECW vol. 35, p. 591.
- 151 MECW vol. 37, p. 93 (original emphasis).
- 152 MECW vol. 4, p. 304.
- 153 Keston Sutherland: Free Dissociation/Logic, in: Ruth Jennison / Julian Murphet (eds.): *Communism and Poetry. Writing Against Capital*, Cham 2019, pp. 231–262, at p. 244.
- 154 Sutherland: Free Dissociation/Logic, p. 244.
- 155 Keston Sutherland: The Poetics of »Capital«, in: Peter Osborne / Éric Alliez / Eric-John Russell (eds.): *Capitalism. Concept, Idea, Image – Aspects of Marx's »Capital« Today*, London 2019, pp. 203–218, at p. 205, quoting Marx, MECW, vol. 35, p. 275.
- 156 Sutherland: The Poetics of »Capital«, p. 205.
- 157 Angus: Cesspools, Sewage, and Social Murder.
- 158 MECW vol. 35, pp. 506–507.
- 159 Crary: *Scorched Earth*, p. 36 EPUB.
- 160 Crary: *Scorched Earth*, p. 36 EPUB.
- 161 MECW vol. 43, p. 542 (Letter 25. 1. 1869) (original emphasis).
- 162 Johnson: *Literary Achievement of Marx*, p. 244.
- 163 Alexander Kluge: *Theory of Storytelling. Lecture One* [2012], trans. by Nathan Wagner, in: Richard Langston (ed.): *Difference and Orientation. An Alexander Kluge Reader*, Ithaca 2019, pp. 100–110, at pp. 100, 103. Comparable to Kluge's abysses in »reality«, Eduardo Grüner discusses voids in »the ›text‹ of bourgeois political economy: »Marx produces his own theory, his own *critical interpretation* of capitalism [...] by constructing upon those ›voids‹ of classical economy«. Grüner quoted in George García-Quesada: *Karl Marx, Historian of Social Times and Spaces*, Leiden 2022, p. 102 (original emphasis).
- 164 Jameson: *Representing »Capital«*, p. 126. For Engels's approach/aversion to the unrepresentable, see Althofer: *Living-Dead Liminality*, p. 45.
- 165 MECW vol. 35, p. 261.
- 166 MECW vol. 35, p. 261.
- 167 MECW vol. 35, p. 265.
- 168 This sentence and the next mix an earlier quotation from Jameson's »Representing »Capital« with his reflections on Peter Weiss making »the portrait of the room [into] a virtual genre« and thereby yielding, perceptually, »a strange new ontological enhancement [from] the asphyxia of existential experience« in a closed room. Fredric Jameson: Foreword. *A Monument to Radical Instants*, in: Peter Weiss: *The Aesthetics of Resistance. Volume 1*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel, Durham 2005 [1975], pp. vii–xlix, at pp. xxix–xxxi.
- 169 MECW vol. 35, p. 306.
- 170 MECW vol. 35, p. 263.
- 171 MECW vol. 35, p. 306.
- 172 MECW vol. 35, p. 490.
- 173 MECW vol. 35, p. 261.
- 174 MECW vol. 35, p. 484.
- 175 MECW vol. 35, pp. 484–485.
- 176 Lauren M. E. Goodlad: *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State. Character and Governance in a Liberal Society*, Baltimore 2003, p. 5.
- 177 MECW vol. 42, p. 173 (Letter 31. 7. 1865).
- 178 MECW vol. 35, p. 14.
- 179 MECW vol. 35, p. 9.
- 180 MECW vol. 35, p. 29.
- 181 MECW vol. 2, p. 481 (Letter 13–20. 11. 1839).
- 182 See Althofer: *Friedrich Engels and Gothic Marxism*.
- 183 Riley: *Before the »Manifesto«*, p. 31.
- 184 MECW vol. 10, p. 302.
- 185 MECW vol. 11, p. 103.
- 186 Frankel: *Blue Books*, p. 316.

Abstract

Blue Books, collections of documents of the British Parliament and Foreign Office, provided evidentiary foundations and aesthetic dimensions for Friedrich Engels's »The Condition of the Working Class in England« (1845) and Karl Marx's »Capital« (volume 1, 1867). Yet these key sources had required reanimation: although official publications, representatives of the state readily disposed of them. With reference to contemporaneous works by Thomas Carlyle, Edwin Chadwick and Charles Dickens, and a focus on documentary Gothic poetics, this article unfolds Marx and Engels's »art of quotation« (Engels 1883). In their hands, disposed-of Blue Books helped to prove that, to Capital, workers were also disposable.

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