



The Drive of Capital: Of Monsters, Vampires and Zombies

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The death drive is but repetition, just like Eros, but it touches upon effects which, from the point of view of Eros, of Kapital, can only be grasped as death, dissolution. It is in connivance with multiplicity. It isn't another drive, another energy. It is the same energy as an unsettling-unsettling.

Jean-François Lyotard, 1973 (1978: 48)¹

I.

Shortly after the Parisian May 1968, in one of his seminars, Jacques Lacan noted that it was Marx who “discovered [...] what actually happens at the level of surplus value” (1991: 20). Of course, as Lacan adds, Marx did not invent the term, but he was the first to understand the peculiar economy of surplus. Paralleling surplus value and the libidinal economy of a death-driven “surplus enjoyment” (*surplus jouissance*)—an excess of enjoyment beyond the enjoyment of a particular object of desire—Lacan discovers a stunning homology. Value and enjoyment are both inconsistent, they do not have a stable substance but express a trajectory, a movement, tendency towards “more.” In this sense, they both present a peculiar paradox of standard, taxonomy and logical time: How can “something” be a surplus of “something” that has no stable ontological consistency or ground and whose existence solely relies on becoming more than what it “was” (or, rather, “more” than what it will have been). As we shall see, economic value and psychic enjoyment cannot be measured externally; rather, they carry their own internal standard of economization within them as inconsistent becoming, movement, trajectory, or direction. The strange fact that one can “pay” with *jouissance* leads Lacan to the insight that surplus *jouissance* and economic surplus value share a certain logic of surplus.

¹ Trans. modified, S.K.

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Giving us a first clue of this homology, Lacan turns to the primal scene of capitalism: “Something changed in the master’s discourse at a certain point in history,” which is not related to some original place, person, or discourse. Capitalism did not come into being because of “Luther, or Calvin, or some unknown traffic of ships around Genoa, or in the Mediterranean Sea, or anywhere else, for the important point is that on a certain day surplus *jouissance* became calculable, could be counted, totalized. This is where what is called the accumulation of capital begins” (1991: 177). Without going into the intricacies of Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory of surplus *jouissance*, we cannot miss the fact that Lacan is echoing Marx’s own language when introducing surplus value. Samo Tomšič rightly reminds us that Marx already detected a “libidinal component of social exploitation” (Tomšič 2019: 20). Indeed, in *Capital*, vol. 1, Marx on many occasions talks about a capitalist drive, a *Trieb*. At first sight, the capitalist appears as a miser: “This boundless drive for enrichment [Bereicherungstrieb], this passionate [leidenschaftliche] chase after value, is common to the capitalist and the miser; but while the miser is merely a capitalist gone mad, the capitalist is a rational miser” (Marx 1990: 254).² The rationality at the core of this *Trieb*, drive, takes on many passionate shapes and characters. Marx specifies the capitalist as “capital personified” whose soul is the “soul of capital”; and capital “has one sole driving force, the drive to valorize itself, to create surplus-value, to make its constant part, the means of production, absorb the greatest possible amount of surplus labour” (342). The drive of capital thus translates into “the drive towards the extension of the working day, and the werewolf-like hunger for surplus labour,” (436f.) and “[c]apital therefore has an immanent drive, and a constant tendency, towards increasing the productivity of labour, in order to cheapen commodities and, by cheapening commodities, to cheapen the worker himself” (342). As a result, the drive of the individual capitalist comes into conflict with the drive of capital: while the individual capitalist as entrepreneur or investor wants to consume, enjoy, to spend her wealth, the drive of capital as impersonal force, historical trajectory, and constant tendency calls for more capital accumulation and, therefore, demands the capitalist’s frugality and restraint. As a result, “there develops in the breast of the capitalist a Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation [Akkumulationstrieb] and the desire for enjoyment [Genußtrieb]” (Marx 1990: 741).³ This brief survey of Marx’s language can be substantiated on many levels while reading *Capital*, vol. 1.⁴ The split nature of the drive of capital/capitalist drive redoubles itself on the level of class antagonism, labor and capital, which becomes reintegrated into a specifically capitalist mode of discursive enjoyment (critical, affirmative or otherwise).⁵

² Cf. Marx 1962: 168.

³ Cf. Marx 1962: 620.

⁴ An excellent explication of this argument has been made in Tomšič 2019.

⁵ Following Marx’s dialectical mode of presentation in the first chapter of *Capital*, vol. 1, (cf. 1990: 125-77), the split-nature of basic abstract categories redoubles itself as mediated (and, therefore, more concrete) dialectical pairs. From the first split or dual-character of capitalism’s basic element, the commodity and its



The fact that Marx uses the word *Trieb* should not be underestimated. The drive of accumulation and the drive of enjoyment reproduce the same “Faustian conflict” as the death drive and the sexual drive in Freud. But rather than seeing here a conflict between two opposing tendencies one should follow Lacan’s suggestion that what is at stake is a split within one and the same drive. This ultimately allowed Lacan to recognise in surplus value the specifically capitalist form of discursive enjoyment. (Tomšič 2019: 20f.)

Indeed, in contrast to Lacan, in certain schools of Freudian psychoanalysis and later in so-called Freudo-Marxism, the “Faustian conflict” that Marx localized between the capitalist’s drive for enjoyment and the drive of capital’s enjoyment has been discussed as an opposition between independent forces. The two drives that Freud introduced in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), death drive and life drive(s), could in fact be read as a stable opposition in the sense of an eternal conflict between *Eros* and *Thanatos*. However, in the Lacanian reading of Freud, as indicated by Tomšič, this duality is internal to the split nature of the sexual drive itself. In Marx’s case, the internal nature of the Faustian conflict (a conflict within Faust, “*Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust*”⁶) is obvious: the conflict of the drive for enjoyment (and be it the enjoyment of hoarding money) and capital’s drive for accumulation is internal to capital itself; the miser might be a *verrückter* (mad) capitalist, yet “interest bearing capital is anyway the mother of all *verrückten* forms.”⁷

II.

Before returning to Freud and Lacan, let us remind ourselves how Marx introduced surplus value within his value-form analysis. In *Capital*, vol. 1, we find a theory about the originary displacement, asymmetry, and antagonism of the conflictual economy of capitalist enjoyment. Surplus value comes into being through a differential relation

split between use value and exchange value, we arrive at the duality of concrete and abstract labor. From here we move on to value and money and, ultimately, surplus value and capital. The unfolding of the concrete reality of capitalism shows that surplus value can only be produced by the production and reproduction of the commodity of labor power and its application in the production process, which, in turn, produces capital (money in its function as money, in contrast to money in its function of mediator of simple commodity exchange). In the next chapters and subchapters Marx shows how this redoubling takes on the empirical bodies of workers (embodiment of labor-power) and capitalists (capital personified). These empirical embodiments and social characters are redoubled by the historical trajectory of labor and capital: while labor has the tendency to decrease its wage costs by increasing its value-bound efficiency per time-unit (i.e. increase of relative surplus-value), capital drives itself to ever more stages of accumulation. In this way, Marx arrives at “The General Formula for Capital” (1990: 247-57, ch. 4): Money – Commodity – More-Money (M – C – M’). Concerning Marx’s method of the critique of political economy and its mode of presentation ascending from the abstract to the concrete see Marx 1993: 100-08. I have commented on this passage in Khatib 2020: 69-92 (section II).

⁶ In the same passage, Goethe’s Faust speaks of *Trieb*, drive: “You only know one driving force, and may you never seek to know the other! Two souls, alas! reside within my breast” (Goethe 1984: 30, line 1110-1113). These two drives are not separated but form actually one heart.

⁷ Cf. “*zinstragende Kapital überhaupt die Mutter aller verrückten Formen*” (Marx 1964: 483), my trans. The German adjective *verrückt* might also be translated as distorted, dislocated, twisted.



without static relata. Surplus value expresses the ever-changing difference or mismatch of the value of labor power and the value generated through the application of labor power in the production process. The value of the commodity of labor power, as Marx famously defined it, finds its standard in the costs of its reproduction and, hence, also in unpaid reproductive labor (1990: 655). What appears as a surplus on the side of the capitalist who employs labor power appears as a loss on the side of the owner and seller of labor power, historically the wage laborer. Surplus value implies the extraction of surplus labor time. Yet, while being equated, time and value are not equal. Moreover, loss and surplus are not symmetrical either; loss and surplus do not express symmetrical relations. As we shall see, surplus value acquires a life of its own as capital, which represses the dimension of loss and exploitation of surplus labor in a specific way. Mapping time onto value is only possible by way of redoubling the commodity as commodity and money. Without the money form, surplus value could never come in to being and be measured. As many Marx scholars have argued⁸, money is not merely an instrumental or secondary mediator of commodity exchange (like in the fantasy of barter or simple commodity exchange); rather, in capitalism money constitutes the *measurement, mediator/means and method* of commodity exchange without which there would not be any value, surplus value or capital.⁹ In actual capitalism, there is no such thing as simple commodity exchange where money only functions as an external mediator of exchange. As soon as we are in a society in which “the capitalist mode of production prevails” (Marx 1990: 123), money functions as capital too. That is to say, the method of money consists in treating ‘money as money’ in its pure (and fetishistic) self-relation, and in treating commodities as the fleeting, transitory materializations and embodiments of value.

And in reverse, value only exists, if surplus value *will have been produced and realized* in commodity exchange. Commodity production and exchange must produce surplus value; without surplus value there is no value either. Contrary to linear logic, surplus value is not the result of an addition of determined quantities but originary: logically it is prior to the value relation against which it is measured. By (mis)mapping equi-temporality (concrete labor time) onto equi-valence (value), capital constantly reproduces a retroactive loophole in its own ontology.¹⁰ Put differently, for Marx’s critique of political economy surplus (or loss, depending on perspective, capitalist or worker) comes first: it is original on a categorical level. Value is being produced only if surplus value will have been produced.

This mismatch, asymmetry, and ontological inconsistency is immanent to the drive of capital and, in theory, can be presented in terms of a logical retroaction within the

⁸ Think of Michael Heinrich (1999) or Frank Engster (2014) for example.

⁹ For a detailed explication of this reading of Marx’s money-form see Engster 2014.

¹⁰ I have discussed the “temporal-logical loop, constitutive for any value relation” in Khatib 2017: 58.



temporal sequence of capital accumulation. This unresolved onto-chronic conflict takes on the uncanny shape of a monstrous entity.

By turning his money into commodities which serve as the building materials for a new product, and as factors in the labour process, by incorporating living labour into their lifeless objectivity, the capitalist simultaneously transforms value, i.e. past labour in its objectified and lifeless form, into capital, value which can perform its own valorization process, an animated monster [beseeltes Ungeheuer] which begins to “work,” as if “its body were by love possessed” [als hätt’ es Lieb’ im Leibe]. (Marx 1990: 302)¹¹

This animated monster, as mentioned earlier, is driven by a “werewolf-like hunger for surplus labour” (Marx 1990: 353)—it lives on by devouring living labor and turning it into dead labor without ever dying. In this way, surplus labor survives its own death by becoming surplus value, capital. Capital is an animated monster, for surplus value pertains to an undead temporality: it lives on beyond life and turns itself into the manifold “monsters of the market” (McNally 2011) And this monster keeps on driving itself as “if its body were by love possessed [als hätt’ es Lieb’ im Leibe].” Apparently, this monster is “eating” something that keeps on animating it—and transforms it into something else internal to its own undead temporality. Marx’s repeated invocation of Goethe’s *Faust* is indicative here. Let us consider the entire scene in Goethe’s famous play. At Auerbach’s wine-cellar, Brander, a guy who is part of a “lively drinking-party,” is beginning to sing a strange song:

A rat in a cellar had built him a nest
and daily grew fatter and smoother;
he lined his paunch with butter and lard,
was as portly as Doctor Luther.
The cook, she set some poison out;
and then he felt as helpless as if –
as if he’d fallen in love [Als hätte sie Lieb im Leibe.]
(CHORUS (with gusto). As if he’d fallen in love!)
He ran around, and in and out,
and drank at every puddle,
he gnawed and scratched, tore up the house,

¹¹ Cf. Marx 1962: 209.



but still was in a fuddle;
he leaped and leaped in frantic pain,
but soon he knew it was in vain –
as if he'd fallen in love.
(CHORUS (with gusto). As if he'd fallen in love!

In terror then and broad daylight
he ran into the kitchen,
flopped on the hearth and, sad to say,
lay gasping, moaning, twitching.
The poisoner now only laughed:
that sounds to me like a last gasp –
as if he'd fallen in love.

(CHORUS (with gusto). As if he'd fallen in love!). (Goethe 1984: 54, line 2125-2149)

What are we to make of Marx's strange reference to this song, sung at Auerbach's wine-cellar just before Faust and Mephistopheles are entering the scene? We learn that this poisoned fat rat is behaving madly, frantically, like it has fallen in love, as if its body, *Leib*, is possessed by something called *Liebe*, love and desire. In the case of capital, we know that capital as the self-valorization of value lives off living labor, devouring living labor as dead labor by turning itself into an undead monster. With regard to Goethe, the rather cruel image of a dying rat, obsessed and animated by a strong force, gives us a clue of the inconsistent ontological status of capital as surplus value. The rat, while "gasping, moaning, twitching," is still alive and cannot die; it presents an uncanny aliveness. The rat must have swallowed a very special poison, a transformative poison, that, with regard to Marx, could be linked to abstract labor, produced by the expenditure of labor power in the production process.

Marx's theory of the dual character of labor and the value form of the commodity is crucial here. Put to work, labor power produces its result as concrete labor in "real time," measured by chronometric labor time (hours, days, weeks). The value of labor power, in return, is determined by the value of its reproduction costs (living costs, education etc.). However, as value-things the results of any individual expenditure of labor power are always already measured against the total relation of all expenditures of labor power, objectified in the products of concrete labor. This total relation is produced "at the same time" as concrete labor produces concrete commodities. As a value-thing,



every commodity embodies a differential relation of this total relation. And, as Marx states, the “body of the commodity [...] always figures as the embodiment of abstract human labour” (1990: 150). Put differently, the total relation of all expenditures of labor power “congeal” in the individual commodity as abstract labor. It is the latter that Marx defined as the “value-forming substance” (1990: 129).

So, what is then the “substance” that the pitiful rat of Goethe’s play swallowed in Marx’ *Capital*? In the case of Goethe’s *Faust*, after having swallowed and digested the products of concrete labor (butter, lard and poison), the rat is not yet dead and still more alive than life. With Marx we can add that this rat is undergoing the transubstantiation from the reproduction and expenditure of regular “rat” labor power (“lining his paunch with butter and lard”) into abstract labor (“He ran around, and in and out, and drank at every puddle, he gnawed and scratched, tore up the house, but still was in a fuddle; he leaped and leaped in frantic pain) and finally into the animated monster of capital (alive as if “he’d fallen in love,” as if its “body were by love possessed”). Abstract labor, if we recall Marx’s words in *Capital*, is this jelly-like spectral, *gespenstige*, objectivity, a gelatinous mass of homogeneous human labor, “Gallerte unterschiedsloser menschlicher Arbeit” (Marx 1962: 52).¹² The drive of capital, which turned the rat into a “love possessed” body, thrives on this jelly-like substance, that is, abstract labor.¹³ Reading Marx’s *Capital* with Goethe’s *Faust* we might conclude that by adding the poison to the rat’s diet the cook turned the rat into a wage laborer, possessed and, ultimately, killed by abstract labor. As for the afterlife of Goethe’s rat in Marx, however, we cannot miss the fact that Marx changed the pronoun of the subject who acts if *it* were by love possessed. While in Goethe’s *Faust* the rat (“sie” in German, “he” in English) is the subject that becomes the object of an uncanny love/desire to which it falls victim, in Marx’s *Capital* the rat is already capital (“es”) and capital is possessed by own love/desire – capital *is* the “automatic subject” (1990: 255) to which it becomes object in purely fetishistic self-relation.

III.

Changing the perspective from capital to labor, we can detect the emergence of another monstrosity. Abstract labor can only be produced by concrete labor in its ever-shifting total relation. “The quantity of labour, however, is measured by its duration, and labour time in its turn finds its standard in weeks, days, and hours” (Marx 1990: 129).

¹² Cf. Marx 1990: 128.

¹³ Strangely or not, in the third season of the Netflix series *Stranger Things* (D: Duffer Brothers, 2019) there is a scene in the first episode where rats, in almost Faustian manner, congregate in the basement of an old steel mill or defunct warehouse. While “gasping, moaning, twitching” these rats explode into an amorphous mass and undergo a peculiar transubstantiation: the jelly-like substance of each exploded or “popped up” rat unite to a single monster belonging to a world neither fully sensuous nor supra-sensuous.



Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that the prolongation of the working day is internal to the drive of capital.

The prolongation of the working day beyond the limits of the natural day, into the night, only acts as a palliative. It only slightly quenches the vampire thirst for the living blood of labour. Capitalist production therefore drives, by its inherent nature, towards the appropriation of labour throughout the whole of the 24 hours in the day. (Marx 1990: 255)

Whereas the 24 hours of the working day present an absolute limit for the production of absolute surplus value, the production of relative surplus value can rely on the temporal and spatial intensification of value per given time-unit. Capital's "vampire thirst for the living blood of labour" transcends the boundaries of the normal working day and chronometric measurement. The vampire-like temporality of surplus-value indicates the transition from the *substance* of value, that is abstract labor-time, to the *subject* of self-temporalization beyond any chronometric measurement of simple average labor. Swallowing and digesting living labor, capital's temporality pushes the limits of the working day beyond chronometric measurement. Vampires, as we know, cannot die by themselves, they live without aging, yet they rely on the lives of the living for constant rejuvenation. Of course, *capitalists* cannot live like vampires, they die; it is only *capital* as this inconsistent "thing" that lives on.

The fact that vampires and other "living dead" are usually referred to as "things" has to be rendered with its full Kantian meaning: a vampire is a Thing which looks and acts like us, yet it is not one of us. In short, the difference between the vampire and the living person is the difference between indefinite and negative judgment: a dead person loses the predicates of a living being, yet he or she remains the same person; an undead, on the contrary, retains all the predicates of a living being without being one. (Žižek 1993: 113)

Capital is a Thing, *ein Ding*, a real materiality without sensuous matter. As a historically specific social *relation* it pertains to an undead temporality precisely because its ontological substance is inconsistent: capital is a relation of non-relation, that is to say, it contains the temporal and social asymmetry of the relation of capital and labor, that is class antagonism. Another way to express this ontological inconsistency has been mentioned before in terms of enjoyment: Value and its substance, abstract labor, cannot be objectified and measured from outside of the drive and moving trajectory of capital. It "enjoys" living labor without becoming itself a living creature, a mortal being. As we read in Marx, capital is accumulated and valorized dead labor which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labor, and the more it sucks, the more it needs/enjoys.

Within the endless cycles of capital accumulation, dead labor (value) survives its own death. Marx aptly grasped the accelerating dynamic of value as surplus-value by



referring to it as a “dominant [übergreifendes],” “over-gripping” subject of a process “in which it alternately assumes and loses the form of money and the form of commodities, but preserves and expands itself through all these changes” (1990: 255).¹⁴ This subject reaches beyond itself, *greift über sich*, it’s neither here nor there, restless. Undead.

Beyond physical death the bearers of labor power are subjected to the undead temporality of capital’s time-sucking vampirism. While the drive of capital acts like a vampire, the proletariat is forced to sell a commodity—labor power—that lends its activity a zombie-like quality. The proletariat is composed of the “masses of men who have nothing to sell but their labour-power”—and, conversely, those who have “nothing to sell except their own skins” become the mere embodiment of labor power, which is the only source of surplus value (Marx 1990: 899, 873). Unlike the workers themselves, value-producing labor (abstract labor) cannot die a natural death and is forced to return beyond the worker’s death. As popular culture has it, the zombie is the undead figure that was denied its proper burial and is forced to compulsively return. In capitalism, however, the “Night of the Living Dead”¹⁵ is exposed to the glaring daylight of endless work—the spinning wheel of undead labor. The 24/7 expenditure of living labor has no outside; it is immediately subjected to the vampirism of capital-time. Capitalism becomes, as Walter Benjamin succinctly put it, a “cult religion” that proceeds in “permanent duration,” *sans trêve et sans merci* (1996: 288). “There is no day that is not a feast day, in the terrible sense that all its sacred pomp is unfolded before us; each day commands the utter fealty of each worshiper” (1996: 288). And indeed, as Werner Hamacher comments:

Capitalism’s ever-lasting Sunday is the perennial workday of surplus value and surplus labor. The time of capital, thus characterized, extends the end of history into the dead eternity of surplus time. In the time of capital, there is no “now” that might not be simultaneous with any other “now”; there is no “now” that would not be intent upon its return in another, none that would not itself stand under the law of returns and appear as the mere revenant of another “now.” This means, however, that the time of capital is the time of the dead “now” as its own second coming as revenue and surplus, as re-now and over-now. (Hamacher 2002: 89)

Of course, the dead eternity of surplus time and permanent production does not pronounce a determinate negation of life. Rather, it slides into the inconsistent realm of indeterminate judgment: while the determinate negation of life is certainly death, the indeterminate negation of death is un-deadness. Neither dead nor alive, neither mortal nor eternal, capitalism’s ever-lasting Sunday conjoins two antagonistic “Things” and their incompatible modes of un-deadness. As much as we have to avoid “the confusion of zombies with vampires” (Sigurdson 2013: 369), we need to distinguish between the

¹⁴ Cf. Marx 1962: 169.

¹⁵ See the genre-defining eponymous zombie film from 1968, D: George A. Romero. For further readings see McFarland (2015: 27-36) and Latham (2002).



vampire-like temporality of capital and the zombie-like temporality of labor power. The *valorization* of living labor as *dead* labor (abstract labor as the substance of value) hinges upon the *self-valorization* of value as capital and *undead* labor. As said before, the drive of capital produces its own results as its very precondition. This retroactive loophole in the ontology of capital *disseminates* and *represses* the negativity of class antagonism, that is, the exploitation of labor power performed in the process of capital accumulation. Therefore, capital's "vampire thirst for the living blood of labour" (Marx 1990: 367) never succeeds in fully repressing and sucking out the "blood" of zombie-like labor power. Stressing the zombie-like temporality of labor power is just another way of pointing at the proletariat as that persisting negativity that fails to die at the hands of capital while being reproduced by it.¹⁶

In this sense, we could say that zombie labor power is both the real (yet repressed) subject and uncanny doppelganger of vampire capital: living labor is the subject of dead labor; labor is the source of value; the laborer's concrete labor is redoubled by abstract labor; abstract labor assumes a life of its own as value and surplus value—and eventually zombies are redoubled and repressed by vampires. This uncanny class struggle in the realm of un-deadness is addressed by what Marx calls the fetishism of capital: (vampire) capital becomes its own "automatic subject" (1990: 255), repeating and self-affirming itself in an empty time, a "dead eternity of surplus time" (Hamacher 2002: 89), while repressing the originary subject of (zombie) labor power.

The question, however, is how this uncanny class struggle can be enjoyed? As mentioned before, capitalist surplus value shares its logic with what Lacan called the death-driven trajectory of surplus *jouissance* in the psychoanalytic sense. On the one hand, psychic enjoyment can be produced, economized, and "spent" in various ways: Just as the capitalist refrains from consuming the profits of his investment directly in order to increase the sum total of his profits, so the person supposed to enjoy can postpone her enjoyment in order to add anticipation, *Vorfreude*, to her expected pleasure. On the other hand, however, this economization of enjoyment cannot count on a calculable amount of enjoyment for surplus enjoyment is not a consistent thing, number or material. Not unlike surplus value in the economic sense, the unquantifiable enjoyment beyond and over enjoyment carries its own standard within itself and springs from surplus; it is not added on top of an existing enjoyment. This retroactive loophole in the

¹⁶ The association of the bearers of labor power with zombies and the proletariat points to the colonial roots of the cultural import and appropriation of the zombie into Western consumer culture. "In this fairly common interpretation of the zombie as capitalist icon, the monstrous figure of global capitalism is fed on the labors of the impoverished, 'third world' labor force. The zombie has thus transitioned from a representation of the laboring, enslaved colonial body, to a dual image of capitalist enslavement: the zombie now represents the new slave, the capitalist worker, but also the consumer, trapped within the ideological construct that assures the survival of the system. [...] Despite the Haitian zombi's roots as imperial slave, the Hollywood zombie of today does not produce anything except more zombies." (Lauro and Embry 2008: 99).



ontology of enjoyment derails the object-driven enjoyment (an enjoyment of a consumable something) and makes it inconsistent. This inconsistency can be addressed in terms of death-drivenness. For death drive, as Slavoj Žižek sums up Lacan and Freud, “is *the very opposite of dying*, it is a name for the ‘undead’ eternal life itself, for the horrible fate of being caught in the endless repetitive cycle of wandering around in guilt and pain” (Žižek 1999: 292). Indeed, as he goes on, “in the death drive, the concept ‘dead’ functions in exactly the same way as ‘heimlich’ in the Freudian *unheimlich*, as coinciding with its negation: the ‘death drive’ designates the dimension of what horror fiction calls the ‘undead’, a strange, immortal, indestructible life that persists beyond death” (1999: 292). In this way, we can detect an undead temporality in the libidinal thrust of enjoyment, *jouissance*, which pertains to an automatic, non-humanist kernel of human sexual drives. If death drive designates the uncanny dimension of the persistence of the drive beyond desirable goals of pleasure, the drive of capital follows a similar death-driven movement of fetishistic self-affirmation: money becomes surplus money and surplus-surplus money.

Marx’s critique of political economy is thus not a contribution to the field of political economy and its models of libidinal economization (ascetic discipline, “Protestant” austerity, utilitarian postponement of current enjoyment to the future etc.) but a radical critique of the entire epistemic field of economization. In this aspect, Marx intersects with the discourse of Freud. The internal split within the drive of capital—the capitalist’s drive for enjoyment and the drive of capital’s enjoyment—can be economized; this economization, however, does not serve a living being, it is death-driven. As Tomšič points out in Freud’s case, the “life of the drive (*Triebleben*) is in the last instance radically indifferent to the life of the subject, and, simply put, it was because of this negative vitalism of the drive that Freud ended up speaking of the death drive” (2019: 59). While the drive of capital ultimately points towards an indifference to the Faustian conflict (i.e. towards an indifference to the mismatch between the capitalist’s consumptive drive for enjoyment and the productive drive of capital’s enjoyment), in Freud’s metapsychological writings the “drive points toward the ‘opposition’ of life against life beyond the opposition of life against death, hence beyond the pleasure principle, insofar as the pleasure principle still moves within the opposition of pleasure and unpleasure” (Tomšič 2019: 205). In this sense, the drive of capital in its uncanny monstrosity and undead temporality also reaches beyond the opposition of production and consumption. The production for production’s sake ‘enjoys’ itself and becomes the “source of pleasure for the sake of pleasure (surplus enjoyment)” (Tomšič 2019: 205). Strangely, the political economy of capital, while mobilizing all sorts of libidinal economies, reaches beyond economization: it even economizes the dead end of its own economization, the mortality and finitude of its personifications, capitalists and laborers. This uncanny site of metaeconomy is the realm of vampires, zombies, and undead returns—the site of repressed and displaced negativity. Any exit from this site



necessitates a different mode of enjoyment—an enjoyment that does not avoid death. This other enjoyment needs, like Hegel's *Geist*, the power of “looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it” (Hegel 1977: 19). Strangely, only by lingering over death this other enjoyment can deactivate capitalism's deadly economization of death. Ultimately, such different enjoyment necessitates a different, post-capitalist social relation. In zones where the zombie-humanism of capital loses its exploitative grip on the immeasurable monstrosity of life, vampires begin to age and zombies become comrades.

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