

Friedrich Engels and Gothic Marxism: A Fairy-Tale Introduction

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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.

Friedrich Engels, November 1839¹

INTRODUCTION

Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) was committed to thinking and acting on the thought of human liberation from various forms of burial. His own head was buried, as a young Calvinist, in Biblical supernaturalism, like the unburials of the Last Judgement. Aged 19, he reflected ironically on his pietistic upbringing: 'Do you not hear the trumpet, whose sound overturns the tombstones and makes the earth shake with joy so that the graves burst open?'² By his mid-20s, as a Communist and collaborator of Karl Marx (1818-1883), he was possessed of the vision that capitalist vivisepture of the proletariat within the factory-system would impel a revolutionary surfacing: proletarian self-emancipation that breaks through that system. In-depth Bible studies had reinforced Engels's leitmotif of underground, insurrectionary knocking up against capitalism. The privileged son of a devout factory-owner, Engels was drilled in pietism and 'knew from childhood the real nature of the factory system', 'its darker side' of child-labour and deathly hypocrisy: 'no pietist would go to

hell for the ruin of one child more or less'.³

Precocious familiarity with Germany's rising manufacturers notwithstanding, Engels had still 'to find his own way through the labyrinth of contemporary religious, philosophical, political and literary trends, and in much painful soul-searching to rise above the religious convictions nurtured in him since early childhood'; thus he 'found it much harder than Marx to arrive at a progressive outlook'.⁴ An 1842 poem co-written by Engels and Edgar Bauer, parodying politico-philosophical struggles between Young Hegelians and conservative opponents of Hegelianism, caricatured Marx in terms that nevertheless intimate Engels's admiration for his transgressive grandeur. Marx, 'a marked monstrosity', cavorts like a Gothic villain: 'As if to seize and then pull down / To Earth the spacious tent of Heaven up on high, / He opens wide his arms and reaches for the sky. / He shakes his wicked fist, raves with a frantic air, / As if ten thousand devils had him by the hair'.⁵

From sources including spooky Calvinism and Hegelian idealism—'The free-willed Spirit', in Engels and Bauer's spoof, 'would burst its bonds and flee / The foul confining dungeon of captivity'—Engels would construct, with Marx, a practical materialism that involved working-class struggle for self-release from confinement in literal and symbolic subterranean spaces.⁶

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

Engels's journey to revolutionary socialism, although labyrinthine, was as rapid as Marx's, as if also driven by hair-raising devils. In the 1850s Marx privately said that Engels was 'devilish QUICK in the uptake' and publicly recorded that he 'arrived by another road (compare his *Condition of the Working-Class in England*) at the same result as I'.⁷ After fastening their friendship in 1844-45, Engels often took the lead in 'the labyrinth of the social and political problems of modern times'.⁸ In 1864 Marx wrote to Engels, 'I invariably follow in

your footsteps'.⁹ This accords with the exaggerated but fundamentally exact tribute that Stanley Edgar Hyman bestowed on Engels with regard to Marx's masterpiece—*Capital*, volume 1 (1867): 'No one familiar with *Capital* can read *The Condition of the Working Class*, which preceded it by twenty-two years, without some degree of shock. Here, the reader discovers to his amazement, is everything of *Capital* but its economics'.¹⁰ In the labyrinth of economic problems, too, Engels's emprise inspired Marx. Their 'constant exchange of ideas', Marx affirmed, dated from the 1844 publication of Engels's 'brilliant essay', "Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy" (written 1843).¹¹

In 1860 Marx extolled Engels—'whom you must consider as my *alter ego*'—in imperative terms that should have made incontrovertible Engels's significance to Marx's authorial identity and their lifelong collaboration.¹² Yet Engels's body of work has long been ideologically flayed and buried alive for allegedly distorting Marx's ideas and legacy.¹³ As Willy Maley identified in 1999, 'Engels simply isn't there in so much speculation on Marx' and so 'is one of the most awesome spectres of Marx'. Maley lampooned the travesty of Engels as 'Marx's ghostly double, the vulgar, scientific, custodian of the crypt'—'better dead than Fred'.¹⁴ Since then, an Engelsian tendency in Anglophone Marxist scholarship has surfaced to newly decrypt Engels. John Bellamy Foster's "The Return of Engels" (2017) surveys the vicissitudes of his reputation, while the rising appreciation of his oeuvre is transforming Engels into a revolutionary revenant who merits closer attention and analysis.¹⁵ Restorative investigations by Paul Blackledge and Foster himself, among others, have furthered the positive shape-shifting of Engels's afterlife by re-singularising his 'independent and important contributions' to co-writings with Marx and to 'the Marxist project'.¹⁶

Gothicism, supernatural figures and hauntological categories clearly mark secondary literature on Engels and his emergent 'return'. However, Engels's own burrowing into and borrowing from supernatural, Gothic and shock-horror literature from the

dawn of the industrial revolution to the early 1840s—the time of his first, life-changing encounters with Manchester, ‘the shock city of the industrial revolution’ (in Asa Briggs’s acclaimed phrase) and with Marx’s heaven-defying ‘monstrosity’—remain relatively shadowy subjects. To contribute to Engels’s return, this article demonstrates that his supernatural-Gothic imaginary constituted a definite mode of producing anti-capitalist critique. It implies the need for comprehensive reconstruction of how supernaturalism and Gothicism deepened, heightened and haunted Engels’s imaginative and conceptual architecture. Engels’s devilish-quick apparition helped to blaze Marx’s descent into capitalist Hell, but in most critical articulation of Gothic Marxism, ‘Engels simply isn’t there’. Recently, for instance, Gregory Marks’s otherwise perceptive observations about ‘vampire capital’ and ‘the vampires and werewolves of Marx’s imaginary’ miss any reference to Engels, who raised the stakes on capitalist vampirism before Marx.¹⁷ Here, the spectral unsaid of Engels resurfaces.

HORRIPILATION, PEDAGOGY, INCITEMENT

Marx’s ‘passion [for] the subterranean metaphor’ and his visibilisation of monsters and spectres within Capital’s endotic operations are well-documented.¹⁸ Amedeo Policante noted in 2010 that ‘the abundance of gothic metaphors in Marx’s writings have [sic] not passed unnoticed by past commentators of *Capital*. Especially after the publication of Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* [1993], there has been a growing interest on the role of the ghostly and the spectral within the general structure of Marxian thought’.¹⁹ David McNally’s *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism* (2011) is indispensable in this regard. However, as with other matters, so with spectres, monsters and denizens of the underworld: there is a dearth of sustained research into Engels’s independent spectro-poetics and its stimulus to Marx. To update Maley’s aperçu, ‘the low visibility

of Engels' in *Spectres of Marx*, despite Engels having anticipated 'the questions of spectrality and spiritualism with which Derrida was preoccupied', is replicated within Gothic Marxism.²⁰ Maley's musings on 'spectres of Engels' are important exceptions to the general neglect. Some scholars have broached rich supernatural and monstrous veins in Engels's early work. Christopher Kitson alights upon 'the "spectre" of Chartism' raised by Engels's 1844 review of Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843)—an unsung conjuration, compared with the spectacular notoriety of 'the spectre of Communism' in Marx and Engels's *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (written 1847-48; hereafter *Manifesto*).²¹ Engels and Marx were following a worthy precedent: Heinrich Heine's instrumentalisation of 'various spectral figures' for polemical and political ends.²²

Hyman recognised that Engels's debut book, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* (1845; hereafter *Condition*), anticipated 'Marx's favorite image, "the vampire property-holding class"'.²³ More recently, Policante mentioned *Capital's* quotation of Engels's "The English Ten Hours' Bill" (1850): 'the vampire [of Capital] will not lose its hold on him "so long as there is a muscle, a nerve, a drop of blood to be exploited"'.²⁴ Marx portrayed the vampire's seizure of a male labourer ('him'), whereas in Engels's original piece vampirism metaphorised 'callously brutal exploitation of children and women'.²⁵ Engels's *détournement* of vampire tales contested bourgeois fairy tales—*Condition* quotes Andrew Ure's ideological reverie wherein child factory-workers became 'lively elves'—which he exposed as bloodthirsty apologies for the 'social murder' of workers and their families.²⁶

Just as Richard C. Maxwell, Jr. argued that Gothicism functions as 'the vehicle of social commentary' and Jonathan Arac considered its 'compatibility with scientific intentions', Grace Kehler's reading of *Condition* as a 'documentary gothic' treatise addresses its 'mobilization of feelings for the purposes of public instruction and social reform', exemplifying 'highly innovative use of gothic

technologies to pedagogical ends'.²⁷ Like Kehler, Raphael Hörmann grasps the potential mobilising effect of 'gothic pathos': in a 'gothic socio-revolutionary poem' by Ferdinand Freiligrath, "Die Todten an die Lebenden" (July 1848), 'the appearance of the mutilated bodies of the dead proletarian revolutionaries is described in grim detail to incite the listeners to socio-revolutionary action'.²⁸

Dead and mutilated bodies of the socially-murdered, many individually named, bestrew the pages of *Condition*. As for 45-year-old Ann Galway—'She lay dead beside her son upon a heap of feathers which were scattered over her almost naked body, there being neither sheet nor coverlet. The feathers stuck so fast over the whole body that the physician could not examine the corpse until it was cleansed, and then found it starved and scarred from the bites of vermin.'—Engels's *tableaux morts* may seem gratuitous, even exploitative, akin to scenes of excess, frisson or grotesquerie drawn by *der Schauerroman* (the shudder novel) or *le roman-charogne* (the novel of carrion or decaying carcasses).²⁹ By laying bare real-life horrors of England's industrialisation, Engels's *frénétique* accumulation of bodies embedded an incendiary theoretico-political charge against bourgeois society. That charge exploded with *Capital*'s incandescent revelation of an industrial-Gothic nightmare made all-too-real: "The "House of Terror" for paupers of which the capitalistic soul of 1770 only dreamed, was realised a few years later in the shape of a gigantic "Workhouse" for the industrial worker himself. It is called the Factory. And the ideal this time fades before the reality'.³⁰

DANTE, CARLYLE, ENGELS

'As with Dante, so for Marx the voyage through the sufferings of hell is essential if we are to acquire genuine knowledge of our world': David McNally proposes that Marx's reverence for Dante's *Inferno* meant *Capital* finding 'common ground with Gothic literature' that appeared in the dawn-shadows of the industrial revolution

and exploring infernal spaces of inhuman ordeal inside nihilating capitalism. McNally explains:

Gothic tales owe much of their terror to their spatial settings: ‘cellars, attics, chambers long closed off’. In the confines of such enclosed spaces, horror and death announce themselves. After all, what makes these claustrophobia-inducing spaces terrifying is that they are sealed off from life—from ‘air, sunlight, human presence and care. They are repulsive in that they bespeak abandonment and unlife’. And so it is with the capitalist factory.

He concludes: ‘If there is a Marxist Gothic, then, it is one that insists, amongst other things, on journeying through the night spaces of the capitalist underworld, on visiting the secret dungeons that harbour labouring bodies in pain’.³¹ Leaving aside the Gothicism and supernaturalism teeming in Engels’s earlier writings, detailed reading of *Condition* discloses all of those appalling settings, terrors and absences (fresh air, etc.), *in extremis*, which could be constellated under the designation of Engelsian Gothic.

‘Unlife’, too, arises in *Condition*—a prolepsis of contemporary fascination with zombies. Engels stressed 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 from the countryside’s dispossessed’.³² From this eerie nexus, Engels’s account in *Anti-Dühring* (1877-78) of Marx’s handling of Hegel’s concept of ‘the negation of the negation’—in Blackledge’s gloss, ‘to make sense of the way that capitalism dehumanises people (the negation) but also of how, in rebelling against this condition, these dehumanised people create networks of solidarity that point towards a positive alternative to capitalism (the negation of the negation)’—heralds a species of living-dead rebellion against a society centred, but teeteringly, on the ‘House of Terror’.³³

The *Manifesto* and Marx's first preface to *Capital* argue, in David L. Pike's words, 'that if one could succeed in wedding the sensational appeal to truth of the descent to the underworld with a materialist analysis of the economic and social mechanisms responsible for producing those sensations, one could potentially create a revolution'.³⁴ The wedding of cataclysmic verisimilitude and materialist critique to foment revolutionary class-consciousness was proposed earlier, by Engels's Gothic pedagogy in *Condition*. Although McNally overlooks Engels, Marx's Dantean voyage was pioneered by Engels, for whom Dante was 'both the last poet of the Middle Ages and the first poet of modern times'.³⁵ Put more grandly, to recap Hyman, *Capital* can be construed, in its Gothic contents and code, as a monumental excursus on *Condition*. Engels's own sensational portrayal of capitalism's Mancunian underworld bespeaks Dante, and also Carlyle's katabasis in *Past and Present*—'Sooty Manchester, it too is built on the infinite Abysses'—which Engels reviewed in the year he began *Condition*.³⁶

As though 'to uncover those spirits who knocked under the hard crust of the earth for release', Engels undertook a profound divining of modernity's newest depths—mass industry. England's industrial movement seemed sorcerous, 'causing giant cities [. . .] to spring up as if by a magic touch'.³⁷ Delving into Manchester, which materialised many 'a gothic nightmare' and which he 'learned to read [. . .] with his senses', Engels encountered the proletariat bound in a cave-like system linking home, workhouse and factory.³⁸ To explore Manchester, 'to wander outside of his class', Engels, as a German capitalist, depended on his Irish-immigrant proletarian lover, Mary Burns, with her intimate knowledge of the city's working-class environs and denizens.³⁹ Only with Burns 'as his surrogate Virgil (or maybe his Beatrice?)' could he crisscross this 'Dantesque underworld'.⁴⁰ Manchester's industrial heartland had noxious, volcanic bowels, as the French journalist Léon Faucher found in 1843: 'Amid the fogs which exhale from this marshy district, and the clouds of smoke

vomited forth from the numberless chimneys, Labour presents a mysterious activity, somewhat akin to the subterranean action of a volcano'.⁴¹ Similarly, Engels adopted Adolphe Blanqui's 1837 coinage *la révolution industrielle*—'While the French Revolution tried out its great experiments on a volcano', Blanqui claimed, 'England tried out hers on the plains of industry'—and rendered England's industrial sorcery as earthshaking as deadly natural phenomena.⁴² Industrialism appeared as a 'fierce whirlpool', a reified force, an unstoppable second nature. In Engels's reckoning, however, chaotic bourgeois hegemony would ultimately loosen 'the avalanche' of open class warfare and proletarian revolt.⁴³ Decades before Nietzsche exhorted decadent-bourgeois Europe 'to live dangerously! Build your cities under Vesuvius!' Engels, like Carlyle, inveighed against the gay abandon with which bourgeois society always-already constructs its conurbations upon metaphysical abysses and industrial infernos—precarity, like mortality, of no concern. The remarkable volume of 'factual information' arrayed and analysed by Engels substantiated 'his picture of a city balanced precariously over disaster'.⁴⁴

Engels's 1844 reviews of Carlyle's *Past and Present* and Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842–43) galvanised *Condition's* mash-up of eldritch, monstrous and nightmarish tropes and episodes. Of all the books published in 1843 for England's 'educated society' (a readership with bourgeois basis and bias), Engels asserted, *Past and Present* 'is the only one which is worth reading' and 'strikes a human chord'.⁴⁵ Carlyle crafted a Gothic assemblage of the factual and the fantastic that he called 'real-phantasmagory'.⁴⁶ His Picturesque Tourist persona observed men at Manchester sitting 'in front of their Bastille'—a workhouse—'in a kind of torpor, especially in a silence'. They embodied a dehumanised quiescence or acedia more menacing than Chartist insurgency: 'There was something that reminded me of Dante's Hell in the look of all this; and I rode swiftly away'. Carlyle lamented, 'So many hundred thousands sit in workhouses'; Engels elaborated: 'In 1842 England and Wales counted 1,430,000

paupers, of whom 222,000 were incarcerated in workhouses—Poor-law Bastilles the common people call them'.⁴⁷

The Picturesque Tourist's flight from 'their Bastille' as precipitously delivered him to another circle of Hell. The 1841 case at Stockport of parents who poisoned three of their children in the family's cellar-dwelling, because they were all starving, summoned up the Pisan prison-house of Count Ugolino and his children from *Inferno*, Canto 33: 'Yes, in the Ugolino Hunger-tower stern things happen'. Carlyle predicted that 'we here, in modern England', already inhabiting Dantean Abysses, are steaming towards a 'blacker gulf of wretchedness'.⁴⁸ *Condition* reported on starvation, demoralisation, murder, and emulated *Past and Present* in many other regards. 'For page after page, Engels [ventured] deeper into the abyss, vividly evoking the horror' of his descent 'into the ruined basements of the damned', and so Andy Merrifield summed up *Condition*: 'It's a story straight out of Dante, whose *Inferno* was well known to Engels'.⁴⁹

SUBTERRANEAN PLOTS, TOTTERING SUPERSTRUCTURES

'Elements announcing the birth of a literature of the depths can be found at the end of the eighteenth century in the Gothic novel and in Sade', says Pierre Macherey in his study of 'figures of the man from below', notably 'the new figure of subterranean man'.⁵⁰ By the early 1840s a best-seller was born, namely *Les Mystères de Paris*. Sue's 'well-known novel', Engels witnessed, 'has made a deep impression upon the public mind, especially in Germany; the forcible manner in which this book depicts the misery and demoralisation falling to the share of the "lower orders" in great cities, could not fail to direct public attention to the state of the poor in general'.⁵¹ For Macherey, 'Sue invented the poetic technique of the social supernatural [but] Marx failed to understand it'.⁵² Macherey ignores Engels, whose review indicates that he was deeply aware of the public appeal of Sue's technique and the political potential of situating and instru-

mentalising the supernatural in contemporary urban settings. Marx admired Engels's sensational relation of Manchester's 'lower orders', which morphed Sue's social supernaturalism as well as Carlyle's real-phantasmagory towards Communism. Regarding what Macherey calls 'the development of visionary theories about the man from below', Heine's precedent, again, requires acknowledgement.⁵³ In 1842 Heine unearthed a 'powerful academy' that teaches 'revolution and overthrow' but 'as yet preserves [its] terrible incognito', living 'like a poor pretender in that ground-floor or cellar of official society': 'Communism is the name of the terrible antagonist [subverting] the *bourgeois régime*'. After the revolutions of 1848, Heine rightly underlined: 'Many a time and oft did I depict the demons who lurked in the lower depths of society, and who would come bursting up out of their darkness when the destined day should come'.⁵⁴ Unsurprisingly, then, the textuality of Marx and Engels's *Manifesto* bears birth-marks of such literature of the depths, especially the socially-supernatural 'irruption of subterranean man'.⁵⁵

From Engels's teenage fantasy of retelling the modern world's birth from below, and his education in Gothic, Young Hegelian, Chartist, Communist and other 'academies', through *Condition's* landmark politicisation of the vampire, the *Manifesto's* spectro-poetics and Marx's appropriation of his bourgeoisification of vampirism in *Capital*, to his 1887 prophecy of a global *Totentanz*—'a world war', 'the last dance of war'—Engels suffused his life's work with Gothic dreams and nightmares repurposed to advance uncanny symbols, concepts and arguments for proletarian revolution and classless society.⁵⁶ Despite his creativity, critical commentary on the *Manifesto*, whether published before or after Derrida's 1993 intervention, tends to acknowledge Engels only perfunctorily as its co-author, hardly tarrying with its collaborative genesis—virtually as if Marx wrote it without his 'alter ego'. Indeed, Engels's co-authorship sometimes vanishes. 'Marx, in the *Manifesto*, implicitly rewrites the text of the celebrated Goethian ballad *Der Zauberlehrling* (The Sorcerer's

Apprentice)': Policante implicitly assumes that Engels had no role in determining this 'variation introduced by Marx'.⁵⁷ Conversely, *Condition's* 'fierce whirlpool' contains shades of the Apprentice's terrifying 'Wasserströme'. Leaving aside Engels's encyclopaedic knowledge of German folklore, poetry and other literature, his horripilating pictures of industrial capitalism's out-of-control magic and trauma, which historicise *Past and Present's* exposés of shocking modernity (Carlyle shudders with England's 'enchantment', 'phantasmagory' and Poor-Law Bastilles), signal his penchant to air novel writing techniques with Marx amidst their *constant exchange of ideas*.

Engelsian lines, or labyrinths, of inquiry regarding Gothic Marxism plausibly spring from discourse analysis of the *Manifesto*. For example, Jonathan Arac has illuminated the suture between the *Manifesto* and Gothicism with reference to the Marquis de Sade's renowned 1799 reflections on Matthew Lewis and Ann Radcliffe's Gothic fictions: 'these new novels in which sorcery and phantasmagoria constitute practically the entire merit [were] the inevitable result of the revolutionary shocks which all Europe has suffered'. Sade inhabits Arac's insights into the symbolic architectonics and social intersections of 'the Gothic fiction that was so popular in the years following the fall of the Bastille' in 1789: 'these same years saw political writings filled with images of the tottering house of state. A Gothic code thus links several adjacent practices of discourse. To recall the pervasive power in the nineteenth century of Gothicism as an idiom of historical representation, think of the "spectre" that haunts Europe at the opening of *The Communist Manifesto*'. Arac's conclusion convinces: 'The use of such language by Marx and Engels suggests its availability for the most serious purposes and its compatibility with scientific intentions, a commitment to the truth, as best one understands it, about the historical depth of a given social situation'.⁵⁸

For Engels and Marx, Gothicism was also available to confront

supernatural figments propagated by Communism's enemies. As Engels mobilised vampires and *vignettes frénétiques* to reveal monstrous dimensions within Ure's distortion of child labourers into 'lively elves', so he and Marx deployed Gothicism's transnational currency to 'openly, in the face of the whole world [. . .] meet this nursery tale of the Spectre of Communism'.⁵⁹ The *Manifesto*, if not a 'fairy story', is certainly 'something like that', as James Martin's outline of its generic characters and contours indicates:

From specters and witchhunts to sorcerers and workers 'enslaved by the machine' who then become capitalism's gravediggers, the *Manifesto* displays an array of Gothic images and spectral figures in order to display the tantalizingly 'hidden civil war' between the classes. Moreover, some things magically change into other things: in the transition to capitalism, feudal society 'goes up in smoke' [...] means of production transform into 'fetters' [...] bourgeois property relations become 'too narrow' for the forces they unleash, and workers metamorphose from commodities in a market to enemies of older classes, and then into a coalition against the bourgeoisie, a class and, finally, a party. In their explosiveness and destructiveness, these transformations are more unpredictably alchemical than intelligible sequences in a predetermined causal chain.⁶⁰

Since yearning in 1839 to 'uncover those spirits who knocked under the hard crust of the earth for release', Engels had discovered the proletariat in the depths of modern society and, with Marx, divulged its volcanic valency. The *Manifesto* declares: 'The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air'.⁶¹ In only eight years, Engels fulfilled and exceeded his wish 'to reveal in a "fairy story" or something like that those foreshadowings of the modern world that showed themselves

in the Middle Ages'. For the *Manifesto* poeticises in social-spectral nomenclature the emergence of bourgeois society—'the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society'—and then also foretells the social sorcery by which a new subterranean class's revolutionary irruptions could consummate the cause of classless society.⁶² Like *Condition*, the *Manifesto* adapted Gothic horripilation for pedagogical and polemical purposes, to incite the living dead to unbury themselves collectively by revolution from below. The buried masses shatter this bourgeois world's hard, inhuman crust—in *Capital*, 'This [capitalist] integument is burst asunder'—and another world becomes possible.⁶³

CODA: 'GROTTO GOTHIC'

Capital's first volume, Edmund Wilson surmised, represents a Gothic edifice whose 'crevices' admit 'the mists and the septentrional lights of German metaphysics and mysticism'; Francis Wheen proposed that it 'can be read as a vast Gothic novel'; and William Clare Roberts has proved that it is modelled on Dante's *Inferno*.⁶⁴ Given Marx and Engels's sustained critical dwelling on subterranean imagery, their work can be further explored and understood through the sub-genre of 'grotto gothic'. That is one of the evocative sub-categories formulated by Frederick S. Frank to parse Gothicism's manifold architectural foci and fetishes, some of which are named above by McNally and Arac.⁶⁵ Deborah McLeod, however, construes Frank's neologism as both too restrictive and too expansive: 'a "grotto gothic" is, according to Frank, "a Gothic novel which restricts most of its action to a single cavernous or natural, subterranean environment."' He then notes that many novels have titles which designate caves, grottos, or interior enclosures. This is, of course, true, but so few (if any) authors encave their protagonists for the bulk of three, four or five volumes that the category is virtually useless'.⁶⁶

Here, revelations of a subterranean class, confined, chained, enslaved and exploited in capitalism's enclosed underworld, and

of that class's potential irruption—the proletariat self-emancipating from Capital's caves—suggest that 'grotto gothic' is a useful category to probe the coruscating significance of environments *sou terrain* in Marx and Engels's Communist vision. Given more symbolic evidence, such as Percy Shelley's inspiration to Marx and Engels, not least Shelley's poetic politicisation of seismic imagery and his Prometheus's chthonic associations, as well as more literal speleology, namely their environmental, sociological and soteriological concern for generations of working-class families 'encaved' as denizens of baleful abodes—from *Condition*: 'Cellar dwellings are general' in Greater Manchester, with 'a very considerable portion of the population' un-living in 'subterranean dens'; and from Marx's 1844 *Manuscripts*: 'man is regressing to the *cave dwelling* [...] in an estranged, malignant form [...] the cellar dwelling of the poor man is a hostile element [...] a place from which, if he does not pay, he can be thrown out any day. For this mortuary he has to *pay*. A dwelling in the *light*, which Prometheus in Aeschylus designated as one of the greatest boons, by means of which he made the savage into a human being, ceases to exist for the worker'—given such evidence, 'grotto gothic' might form a vital supplement to Gothic Marxism's strategies to uncover and critique the infra-ordinary caves, industrial and residential 'black sites' and ethical voids that pervade capitalist society.⁶⁷

Marx and Engels's literary chiaroscuro showed workers, their families and class buried alive in infernal factories and basements of the damned. A grotto-gothic sensibility could throw into clearer relief their terrific understanding of how capitalism encaved the proletariat and how that encaved class embodies an irruptive, revolutionary potential, across the bulk of *Capital's* three ground-breaking volumes—the first completed by the devilish Marx, the second and third drafted by him and finished by the quick and undead Engels.

NOTES

- 1 Citations of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are from their *Collected Works*, 50 volumes ([N.p.]: Lawrence and Wishart, 2010), using the established acronym *MECW*, followed by the volume and page number(s), as per the reference for this epigraph: *MECW2*, 481-82.
- 2 *MECW2*, 70.
- 3 Gustav Mayer, *Friedrich Engels: A Biography* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1936), 15.
- 4 Lev Golman and Vladimir Sazonov in *MECW2*, xiii.
- 5 *MECW2*, 336.
- 6 *MECW2*, 324.
- 7 *MECW41*, 215; and *MECW29*, 264.
- 8 General Introduction in *MECW1*, xvii.
- 9 *MECW41*, 546.
- 10 Stanley Edgar Hyman, "A Neglected Masterpiece," *The Centennial Review* 6, no. 1 (1962): 52.
- 11 *MECW41*, 546.
- 12 *MECW41*, 215.
- 13 See Paul Blackledge, *Friedrich Engels and Modern Social and Political Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019), 1-20.
- 14 Willy Maley, "Spectres of Engels," in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psycho-analysis, History*, ed. Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (London: Macmillan, 1999), 23-25.
- 15 John Bellamy Foster, "The Return of Engels," *Monthly Review* 68, no. 10 (2017) <https://monthlyreview.org/2017/03/01/the-return-of-engels/>.
- 16 Blackledge, Engels, 18-20. Also see John Bellamy Foster, *The Return of Nature: Socialism and Ecology* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020).
- 17 Gregory Marks, "Metabolic Monstrosities: Vampire Capital in the Anthropocene," *The Wasted World* (blog), December 14, 2019, <https://thewastedworld.wordpress.com/2019/12/14/metabolic-monstrosities/>.
- 18 Rosalind Williams, *Notes on the Underground: An Essay on Technology, Society and the Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008 [1990]), 47-48.
- 19 Amedeo Policante, "Vampires of Capital: Gothic Reflections between Horror and Hope," *Cultural Logic: An Electronic Journal of Marxist Theory and Practice* (2010): 2, <http://clogic.eserver.org/2010/Policante.pdf>.
- 20 Maley, "Spectres," 23; and Willy Maley, "Communing with the Church: Revelation and Revolution in Engels' 'On the History of Early Christianity' (1894-95)," in *Writing the Bodies of Christ: The Church from Carlyle to Derrida*, ed. John Schad (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001), 13.
- 21 *MECW3*, 447; *MECW6*, 481; and Christopher Kitson, *Legacies of the Sublime: Literature, Aesthetics, and Freedom from Kant to Joyce* (Albany: State University of New York, 2019), 27-28.

- 22 Jörg Kreienbrock, "Popular Ghosts: Heinrich Heine on German *Geistesgeschichte* as Gothic Novel," in *Popular Revenants: The German Gothic and its International Reception, 1800-2000*, ed. Andrew Cusack and Barry Murnane (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), 123.
- 23 Hyman, "Neglected Masterpiece," 52, quoting Engels.
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