

Sucking, Bleeding, Breaking: On the Dialectics of Vampirism, Capital, and Time*

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In this paper we argue for a dialectical understanding of vampirism, capital, and time, which involves placing each of these elements in tension, both internally and in relation to each other. Starting from Marx's comments on the vampiric nature of capital, we draw out the importance of time in his argument. Rather than simply adding time to vampires and capital, we argue for a critical rethinking of time which, responding to Bergson, poses a 'dialectic of duration' in which time is neither simply continuous nor discontinuous. Drawing on vampire literature and film, we trace this dialectic of duration through the erratic feeding habits of vampires, of capital, and of contemporary producers and consumers. Reflecting on the meaning of time for Marx and for capital, we raise questions about resistance and the future, and conclude by outlining a temporal dialectic of capital that stresses both the reproductive risk and the political promise of the vampire.

Key words: Change; Consumption; Continuity; Desire; Discontinuity; Dracula; Duration; Hegel

MARX'S VAMPIRES

The vampire is at once an ancient figure and our perfect contemporary. A literary critic could demonstrate this by pointing out that the narrative structure of Bram Stoker's (1897/1998) *Dracula* plays out in an eternal present, in which everything takes place in the here and now.¹ As Moretti (1983: 187) notes, in Stoker's novel 'narrative time is always the present, and the narrative order—always paratactic—never establishes causal connections'. In the same way

*An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 20th Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism, Budapest, Hungary, 10–13 July 2002. We would like to thank the following people for their help and advice in developing the paper: Lynne Baxter, Fred Botting, Peter Fleming, Chris Land, Martin Parker, Peter Pelzer and André Spicer.

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¹In this paper, we draw on several different pieces of vampire literature and film to give texture to our argument. Our main source, however, is Bram Stoker's (1897/1998) *Dracula*. A cursory glance at our reference list will reveal that Stoker's work was published 30 years after *Capital*, the key reference to Marx (1867/1976) in the paper. This is not infelicitous. We are not suggesting any kind of link between the works of Marx and Stoker in terms of (direct) literary influence. Marx does not explicitly situate his vampire figure with reference to any particular literary text or piece of folklore. It is likely that he was drawing upon centuries-old Central and Eastern European folklore for his metaphor and it is not impossible that he would have been influenced by the vampire genre of writing which emerged in the 19th century. In this regard, Christopher Frayling (1991) points out that at least 33 vampire texts were written in the 19th century, of which Stoker's was the last to be published in 1897. From this literature, Frayling identifies four archetypal vampires. We might equally have chosen from these archetypes the vampire Lord Ruthven in John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) or Sir Francis Varney in James Rymer's *Varney the Vampyre* (1847) as our key protagonist. We have chosen Stoker's vampire for its widespread appeal and popularity for contemporary audiences, allowing us to offer readings of a Marxian relationship between capital and time in an accessible and popular cultural form. Of the influences on Marx's vampire we cannot then say for certain, but European folklore and the recurrent tropes of 19th century vampire literature would likely feature here.

the contemporary economy is represented without a past or a future, perfectly timeless. Economic discourse has no interest in history, which is presumably a thing of the past, and sees the future as simply a multiplication of the present (see also Jones and Böhm, 2003). As such, vampires and time seem perfect starting points for thinking critically about the contemporary economy.

An equally good point of departure would be the often-cited analogy that Marx draws between vampirism and capital. In articulating a set of arguments about the relationships between vampirism, capital, and time, we will attempt to reclaim the value of the way that Marx draws on this cultural reference and to underscore its continued usefulness as a way of critically inspecting the vicissitudes of capitalist accumulation. For one, when Marx writes that capital is ‘vampire-like’, we will argue that this is not a cheap literary embellishment. We will take it seriously as a clue to understanding the economic arguments that are outlined in his work. We will try to treat the motif of the vampire as a clue for critical analysis by going beyond the obvious reading of an analogy between capital and vampires which simply casts the capitalist as vampire.

Let us consider some of the appearances of vampires in Marx’s work. Most famously, perhaps, in *Capital*, he writes: ‘Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks’ (Marx 1867/1976: 342). The first thing to note is that this analogy is not simply an arbitrary comment. It is not the first time that Marx evokes blood in order to point to the deleterious effects of capitalist accumulation and expansion. Later in *Capital*, repositioning the history of primitive accumulation against the idyllic vision of economists, he writes: ‘Capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt’ (*ibid.*: 926). Or, describing the ‘liberation’ of the feudal peasants from their previous means of production: ‘These newly freed men became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production, and of all the guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements. And this history, the history of their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire’ (*ibid.*: 875).

The specific reference not just to blood, but also to vampires, is hardly surprising. Marx had stored it up carefully, noted and practised it, and references to the vampiric nature of capital span 30 years of Marx’s writings. In the *Eighteenth Brumaire*: ‘The bourgeois order . . . has become a vampire that sucks out its blood and brains and throws them into the alchemist cauldron of capital’ (Marx, 1852/1973: 242). In the *Grundrisse*:

Capital posits the permanence of value (to a certain degree) by incarnating itself in fleeting commodities and taking on their form, but at the same time changing them just as constantly; it alternates between its eternal form in money and its passing form in commodities; permanence is posited as the only thing it can be, a passing passage—process—life. But capital obtains this ability only by sucking in living labour as its soul, vampire-like. (Marx, 1857–1858/1973: 646)

In the Inaugural Address to the First International:

Through their most notorious organs of science, such as Dr. Ure, Professor Senior, and other sages of that stamp, the middle class had predicted, and their heart’s content proved, that any legal restriction of the hours of labour must sound the death knell of British industry, which, vampire-like, could but live by sucking blood, and children’s blood, too. (Marx, 1864/2000: 579)

It is important to recognise that in these texts the vampire plays a number of different roles. To begin with, there is the obvious place that it plays filling out the catalogue of evil, standing alongside the ghosts, spectres, monsters and other creatures that, as it is ritual to note today, populate Marx’s work (see Derrida, 1994). In this respect, the metaphor has an obvious appeal, indicating the devilish nature of the capitalist and the scheming and self-interested nature of capital. As such, it plays on the classic tropes of gothic literature (see Parker, 2003). In vampire literature and films, the classic representation of the vampire is one of a menacing and

mysterious figure that represents the grotesque and dangerous. The obvious analogy between vampires and capital thus reflects this 'ideological' aspect of the metaphor, playing on the classic figures of good and evil, in which the capitalist is represented as a dastardly plotter.

But the figure of the vampire also has a 'scientific' function, that is to say, it figures importantly to clarify Marx's economics. While this function is perhaps less obvious, the metaphor seems well fit as a description of capital when we consider, for example, the premise that is accepted by all economists, Marxist or not, that capital can only live by perpetually increasing in size. This basic dynamic of expansion, along with the insufficiency of capital to valorise itself without labour, offers a further parallel with vampirism. This is what is described in Stoker's *Dracula* as 'the curse of immortality', that is, the way that like capital, vampires:

. . . cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world; for all that die from the preying of the Un-Dead become themselves Un-Dead, and prey on their kind. And so the circle goes on ever widening, like as the ripples from a stone thrown in the water. (Stoker, 1897/1998: 214)

VAMPIRES AND TIME

There are, however, far less obvious ways in which capital is vampiric, specifically with respect to time. To work towards these, we might look more closely at the section of *Capital* in which Marx draws the analogy between vampires and capital. Let us cite from Chapter Ten at length, emphasising the significant appearance of the word time. Marx (1867/1976: 341–2) writes:

The capitalist has bought labour-power at its daily value. The use-value of labour-power belongs to him throughout one working day. He has thus acquired the right to make the worker work for him during one day. But what is a working day? The capitalist has his own views of this point of no return, the necessary limit of the working day. As a capitalist, he is only capital personified. His soul is that of capital. But capital has one sole driving force, the drive to valorise itself, to create surplus-value, to make its constant part, the means of production, absorb the greatest possible amount of surplus labour. Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The *time* during which the worker works is the *time* during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has bought from him. If the worker consumes his disposable *time* for himself, he robs the capitalist. (emphases added)

The vampire is not just sucking blood, then, but is also sucking *time*. This is not to say that capital is not interested in blood, but rather that the metaphor of vampirism that Marx uses equally draws attention to the extraction of labour time. While recognising the realities of the bloody character of capital and the significance of the ideological power of the figure of the vampire, we would like to draw attention to another aspect of the metaphor that has too long remained undisclosed. This is the specifically *temporal* aspects of the metaphor of vampirism. We can see the plausibility of such a focus if we consider the point in the flow of *Capital* where this comment occurs. It appears near the beginning of Chapter Ten, which is simply titled 'The Working Day'. At this precise stage in his book Marx is concerned with outlining theoretical preliminaries about the extraction of absolute surplus value, that is, with value that is extracted from labour through extension of the number of hours worked. In this context Marx presents a struggle between capital, which seeks to extend the length of the working day, and labour, that seeks to restrict it. This is, then, the first sense in which the metaphor of vampirism implies questions of time. As we know, vampires only work at night, and may well die should they see the light of day. Hence the classic *dénouement* of vampire literature and films, in which the vampire, who has been doing its evil work by night, finally confronts the harsh light of day, which is so horrific that it is the cause of its death, with the screams of suffering that compensate its victims and a dissolution that mirrors the life that the vampire sucked in its pride.

Strangely, questions of time have eluded critics who have been concerned with the meaning of Marx's metaphor of vampirism. For example, Moretti (1983) casts the vampire as monopoly capitalist, identifying the ideological function of Stoker's *Dracula* and noting the way that even the eventual defeat of Count Dracula reinforces petty bourgeois moral prejudices about the reinstitution of normality. Baldick (1987) interprets Marx's gothic metaphors in terms of a shift from feudalism to capitalism and how, in the process, the capitalist has become Frankenstein-like, a perverse monster with an uncontrollable vampiric thirst. In his recent work Latham (2002) draws attention to the consumption of the vampire, and once again the cultural significance of the figure, but fails to address questions of time in any detail. These critics, while identifying something important about the mythology of vampires and making connections to the way that these can be illustrative of capital and capitalist ideology have largely remained silent on questions of time. Against this silence, we propose to take Marx's vampirism metaphors further, addressing the issue of time seriously, and in doing so seeking out what can be learned from the metaphor of vampirism and capital. In the next section we consider various philosophical contributions to an understanding of time and then return to the relation of vampirism to capital through a broadened conception of time.

DIALECTICS OF DURATION

We do not propose to give a comprehensive treatment of the concept of time or of the way that it has been articulated in philosophy, social theory, and the study of organization (with regard to the latter, see Hassard, 1999; *Organization Studies*, 2002; Whipp, *et al.*, 2002).² In this paper we have the far more limited goal of introducing a set of themes from the philosophy of time and then drawing the consequences of this in the remainder of the paper. In particular we will work with questions relating to the continuity and discontinuity of time. In this respect we open with a discussion of time as duration and as lived experience in Henri Bergson, and consider a set of responses to Bergson that are offered by Gaston Bachelard.

Bergson's point of departure is the failure of the concept of time assumed in the physical sciences to measure up to the lived experience of time. According to Bergson the physical sciences have treated time as if it were metaphorically reducible to space, as if space were the model on which time could be conceived. In the way that space can, at least conceptually, be broken up into aliquot parts, the physical sciences have tended to treat time in a similar way, as little more than a succession of 'instants'. But Bergson (1999: 36) objects that as we experience time, 'duration is thick; real time has no instants. But we naturally form the idea of an instant, as well of simultaneous instants, as soon as we acquire the habit of converting time into space'.

Bergson argues that this habit of converting time into space is mistaken. Hence he draws a distinction between time as it is conceived by the physical sciences, what Bergson calls 'spatialised time', and the time of lived experience, time as flow or as *duration*. This distinction between time as it is understood by science and time as it is experienced is one

²Although we will not discuss these literatures in detail, we might say the following. The editors of a recent themed issue of *Organization Studies* ask the question: 'How can time be incorporated into organization studies (OS)?' (Antonacopoulou and Tsoukas, 2002: 859). For us, such a question offers an excessively narrow way of approaching the question of time and organization studies. By emphasising the *incorporation* of time into organization studies as it presently exists, this homogenises the concept of time, and treats time undialectically as a mere addition to a pre-existing and stable 'organization studies'. By contrast, we suggest that time has the ability not only to be incorporated, but equally to *disincorporate* the stability of organization and organization studies.

of Bergson's enduring contributions to our understanding of time.³ It offers a way of unsettling the idea of the objectivity of time, but more so brings to light the importance of discursive and institutional practices in the generation and maintenance of the obviousness of various concepts of time. These practices have been analysed in detail by, amongst others, E.P. Thompson (1967) (see also Hassard, 1999, 2002).

We do not want to go into too much detail regarding Bergson, or to enter into the minutiae of his critique of physical science or his conception of duration. Others have done this as well as we might, and indeed there has been considerable enthusiasm in recent years for the value of Bergson in the understanding of organization (see Linstead, 2002; Chia, 2002). We can probably more effectively extend discussions of Bergson by considering a set of critical responses to his work. We will look at one particular challenge to Bergson that seeks to trouble the continuity of the concept of duration that he substitutes for spatialised time.

While not rejecting Bergson's critique of time as it is conceived in physical science, Bachelard, in his *Dialectic of Duration*, offers a resounding critique of Bergson's concept of duration. Bachelard focuses specifically on the thematics of flow and continuity in Bergson's work. Certainly, time may not be a simple succession of instants, but from this does it necessarily follow that it is instead a dynamic of continuous flow? Here Bachelard (2000: 23) locates the persistence of motifs of completeness and fullness in Bergson, arguing that 'Bergson's philosophy is a philosophy of fullness and his psychology is a psychology of plenitude'. Against this, Bachelard stresses the other side of this metaphysics of presence, noting that as much as time is a matter of continuity and presence it is also a matter of discontinuity and absence. Hence the 'dialectic of duration', which recalls everything that breaks with Bergson's privileging of presence and continuity. Bachelard's (2000: 28–9) critique of Bergson is direct:

Of Bergsonism we accept everything but continuity. Indeed, to be even more precise, let us say that from our point of view also continuity—or continuities—can be presented as characteristics of the psyche, characteristics that cannot however be regarded as complete, solid, or constant. They have to be constructed. They have to be maintained. Consequently, we do not in the end see the continuity of duration as an immediate datum but as a problem. We wish therefore to develop a discontinuous Bergsonism.

Such a critique of Bergson may overstate the dominance of a metaphysics of presence in his work, but even if issues are more complex than Bachelard suggests, there is still much to be taken from Bachelard's radicalisation of duration. In particular, what is valuable is the way that Bachelard (2000: 54) insists that 'duration is metaphysically complex and the decisive centres of time are its discontinuities'. This indicates the importance of discontinuity to seeing something as time.

[T]here is no date without a dialectic, without differences. Duration is a complex of multiple ordering actions which support each other. If we say that we are living in a single, homogeneous domain we shall see that time can no longer move on. At the very most, it just hops about. In fact, duration always needs alterity for it to appear continuous. (Bachelard, 2000: 65)

If we are here contesting motifs of unity and continuity, we should stress that we do not want to argue against all concepts of continuity and linearity. We would not want to endorse the simplicity of a 'discontinuous' version of time as a replacement for a continuous version of time. We are therefore not able to endorse the dismissal of continuity and linearity that we find, for example, in Burrell's (1997: *passim*) warning that 'linearity kills'. The point being

³Calling into question the way that time is treated by the physical sciences, Bergson does not suggest that the physical sciences are of no value. Rather, his argument is that we face here a matter of quite different ways of knowing things (see Bergson, 1912: 21), and is valuable not in its dismissal of science but in the way that it indicates the limits of the way that time is often conceived in the physical sciences.

that Burrell's simple dismissal of linearity is one-sided and undialectical. It emphasises only one side of a dialectical phenomenon. Against this, we would, following Bachelard, argue for a dialectical concept of time, that emphasises both continuity and discontinuity.

FEEDING ERRATICALLY

Vampires seem to be knowledgeable about this dialectic of duration, being aware that, even if for one day, they were to lose track of the time, they will surely perish at sunrise. As Van Helsing notes about Count Dracula, 'he fear time' (Stoker, 1897/1998: 307). But Dracula is not afraid of time *per se*, but of the way that discontinuous time might affect him. Vampires do not fear continuous time, but the difference that time can bring. This discontinuity of feeding is captured in a speech delivered by Willem Dafoe's vampire in Merhige's *The Shadow of the Vampire* (2001). When offered a bottle of blood on which to dine, he says:

Dinner? You set a very mean table. No rats? There was a time when I fed from golden chalices . . . [But] in my old age I feed the way old men pee. Sometimes all at once, sometimes drop by drop. *I feed erratically.*

Vampires also experience time in terms of a supply problem. They need to find sources of blood, but rarely do they have a continuous stream of healthy young virgins. But this is not necessarily a problem. Vampires seem to *enjoy* the discontinuity of their feeding habits, and in this respect, are masters of self control. In Stoker's novel, for example, Count Dracula keeps Jonathan Harker in his castle for weeks, resisting the temptation to feed, relishing the blood that will one day be his, but is put off until later.

One can imagine the kind of response that modern medical science would make on facing up to a patient diagnosed with vampirism. Assuming that driving a stake through the heart is not considered an appropriate medical treatment, one might envisage the perfectly rational solution to the ailment—from the store of blood donors, a small, carefully measured daily allowance will be made, and a drip installed in the vampire's arm. A continuous feed, a constant injection of blood in real time, will cure the bloodthirsty desires of the vampire and hence save the city of London. On the face of it, this would be the perfect solution, and one that would, at a minor expense, save many lives and (providing that some foolish assistant didn't open the curtains one morning) would assure everlasting life for the vampire. But on the other hand, would this constant drip assure everlasting life, or would it signal the exact opposite? By taking away the erratic nature of feeding, by eliminating the thrill of the hunt for ever new sources of blood, this would seem to be a punishment worse than death, a life condemned to an eternity of innocuous but banal subsistence.

If vampires need to feed erratically, the same is the case with capital. It is nothing short of a pleasantry to remind ourselves that capital cannot exist on constancy. That is, it must always search out new markets and sources of productive capacity:

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. (Marx and Engels, 1848/1998: 38)

To be clear, this erratic character of capital is not restricted to relations of production. Equally, capital seeks out ever new markets, ever new sources of blood, in the same way as the vampire. 'In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes' (*ibid.*: 39). This desire for new blood implies the global reach of capital:

The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image. (*ibid.*: 39–40)

In much the same way, the vampire is ever expanding, ever sourcing out new minions, ever new places to suck blood. On the contemporary scene, nation after nation has been set free from its previous barbarous ways by the action of bodies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organisation. But as we know from our vampire stories, the vampire cannot live unless the conditions are right. In Stoker's novel, Dracula has 50 coffins filled with perverted soil shipped to England and, in order to do this work of preparation, he employs the services of a range of helpful intermediaries. And just as with the global restructuring of capital, this dirty work all takes place behind the scenes.

DESIRE AND DISCONTINUITY

These developments at the level of the global economic system would not take place without the involvement of fleshy human beings. In addressing the relationship between systemic changes in the operation of global capital, and the position of human subjects, the themes of vampirism, capital and time are once again instructive. We can address this inter-relationship through the concept of *desire*, a common theme in vampire myth (see Gelder, 1994; Brown, 1997) and a central concept in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1983) who draw attention to the role of what they call 'desiring-production'. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that societies are not held together simply by processes of production, distribution and consumption but by a vast and complex assemblage of *desiring-production* that holds each of these in place. Hence Deleuze and Guattari speak of the production of production, the production of distribution and the production of consumption, and in so doing seek to transcend facile distinctions between production and consumption. The organisation of capital is spurred by the systemic production of ever new sources of desire. This does not mean, however, that this continuous production of desire forces itself upon us as individual human agents as if it were some sort of *fait accompli*. We are normally not repressed or forced to do things; more often than not, we *want* to do them. In other words, we are invested with the desire to do them, a situation whose conditions of possibility lie at least partly in the wider operations of capital, and which work through us as embodied, sensuous, desiring, consuming subjects.

It has often been noted that vampires are figures that are full of desire. They want blood. We can see this in a critical moment in Stoker's story, in which Jonathan Harker cuts himself with a knife, exposing the shallow façade that the Count had been concealing until then. The Count had been a model of decorum, sharing the most polite and banal conversation, but when blood appears on the knife he leaps up and cannot resist licking it. At this moment, the Count's motives are laid bare and it is clear that Harker is not in for an easy ride.

With the vampire, desire is for blood, but the question remains as to where this blood is going to come from. It is in the assemblage of desiring-production, Deleuze and Guattari's desiring machine of capital, that provides an answer to whom will be the victim of the vampire. This is the fantasy-structure that organises desire:

To put it in somewhat simplified terms: fantasy does not mean that when I desire a strawberry cake and cannot get it in reality, I fantasise about eating it; the problem is, rather: *how do I know that I desire a strawberry cake in the first place?* This is what fantasy tells me. (Zizek, 1997: 7, emphasis in original)

In addition, we should stress the importance of discontinuity in desire. It is not that we always want the same thing, but that we want different things that maintains consumption. Hence the desiring-production of consumption is able to constantly fill in this fantasy by suggesting that it is strawberry cake on Monday and chocolate muffins on Tuesday. So, against the idea that time and desire are constant and prospective sources of plenitude, we argue that they are continuous *and* discontinuous.

This continuous yet discontinuous character of desire resonates with the description of desire that we find outlined in the work of Jacques Lacan. Lacan suggests that it is wrong to think of desire in terms of a need for an absent object. Once we have the object of our desire we always want another one. Hence, desire is always *desire for desire*. It is in the space between the object of desire and the subject who desires it that desire resides. This means that desire can never be satisfied in any final sense, although it can be displaced or ‘sublimated’ from one object to another. We can see this constantly shifting and discontinuous activity in vampires as much as in contemporary consumers.

Count Dracula does not strike immediately. He waits. He has seen the beautiful blood but is able to resist. He does not want to upset the contract that he is to sign with Jonathan Harker, which will give him property in London and secure an even greater supply of fresh blood. So like a perfect miserly investor, he restrains his desire and holds back, promising himself an even greater reward at a later date. As consuming subjects then, our conditions of possibility would seem to lie in the desirous productions of the organising machinery of capital. In relation to time, the point is that desire is not continuous, but works at an angle. Over-egging his pudding, Baudrillard (1979: 106) claims that: ‘Seduction is never linear’. While such a claim is undialectic, and hence only partial, this is one of the lessons that we learn from psychoanalysis and from recent theoretical work on desire. It is also a lesson that we can learn from vampires.

MARX AND TIME

At this point we might want to ask ourselves what, exactly, was Marx’s concept of time? We have discussed the way that the question of time was opened up by Bergson and the way that, despite his opening, Bergson tends to treat time as fullness and continuity. But how does Marx treat time? The last thing that we want to do is to make assumptions about time and to simply read these criticisms of Bergson back onto Marx. So before we go any further we should probably clarify the concept of time in Marx’s writing.

As a way of approaching this rather large question we could do worse than considering the arguments made by Louis Althusser (1968) in *Reading Capital*, in a particular chapter with the title ‘The Errors of Classical Economics: An Outline for a Concept of Historical Time’. Here, Althusser argues that one of the things that distinguishes Marx from classical political economists is his insistence on history. Marx charges the political economists of his day with treating existing economic relations as eternal, rather than a result of a specific set of social relations that have their own history. ‘The fundamental criticism Marx makes of the whole of Classical Economics in texts from *The Poverty of Philosophy* to *Capital* is that it had an ahistorical, eternal, fixed and abstract conception of the economic categories of capitalism’ (Althusser, 1968: 91–2).

The obvious solution to the deficiency with classical political economy would therefore be to historicise these relations, to place them in time and hence to bring their transitivity to light. But to state things as simply as this still begs the question of *which* concept of time needs to be added to an understanding of the economic. Hence Althusser (1968: 92) argues that Marx does not simply add time to economics, which would simply mean that Marx’s

whole achievement was that he ‘Hegelianized Ricardo’. Rather, ‘To claim that classical economics had not a historical, but an eternalist conception of its economic categories . . . is to propose *the concept of history*, or rather *one particular* concept of history which exists in the ordinary imagination, but without taking care to ask questions about it’ (*ibid.*: 93, emphases in original).

Althusser therefore asks what concept of time Marx introduces to economics. Although he hesitates to find in Marx one specific concept of time, Althusser very productively, for our purposes, shows how Marx’s concept of time is *not* the concept of time that we find in Hegel. Perhaps Hegel’s major contribution to philosophy is his introduction of history into philosophy. Despite this Althusser (1968: 94–6) argues that for Hegel, time is still conceived as continuous and as contemporaneous. This is to say, Hegel conceives of time in much the same way that we identified time in Bergson. For both, time is flow and movement, but is homogeneous and continuous. Althusser’s argument is that Marx breaks with classical political economy in two ways. First, by introducing historical time to economics, but second, by rejecting a model of time based on continuity and homogeneity. In its place, Althusser (1968: 99) argues, Marx emphasises the discontinuities in time. Further than this, Marx is clear that the levels of a social formation do not follow regularised and continuous laws, but rather, as the saying goes: ‘Time is out of joint’ (Shakespeare, 1947; see also Derrida, 1994; Laclau, 1996).

While Althusser’s reading of time in Marx is highly suggestive, the potential danger is that it overemphasises the extent to which Marx breaks with a continuous sense of time. While Marx clearly emphasises discontinuity at certain points, one of which is the theory of crisis outlined in Volume Three of *Capital*, by contrast, the reproduction schemas of the circuits of capital in Volume Two of *Capital* emphasize the continuity of accumulation. Perhaps this strange interweaving of continuity and discontinuity in Marx can be seen in some of his paradoxical phrasings such as the ‘constant revolutionizing’ of the means of production. It might therefore be instructive to draw on Bachelard again and recommend a *dialectic* of continuity and discontinuity in Marx’s conception of time, or in regard to questions of the relation between capital and time. Perhaps Marx is not able to explicitly theorise this himself but it might be a useful way of re-working what Marx might tell us about the question of capital and time. Such a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity would seek to privilege neither of these terms but would look at their continuous interplay.

BLEEDING GOLD

This brings us to one of the central aspects of Marx’s understanding of capital. That is to say that the point of his analysis is not merely to interpret capital but to emphasise at least the possibility that it might be interrupted or changed. In much the same way as a reading of vampires that stressed continuity might present the vampire as irresistible and omnipotent, we could also stress discontinuity. It is always possible to strike back. There are always garlic, crosses and stakes, if we know how to use them. Although vampire stories are clearly ‘horror stories’ filled with pain and terror, this imagery of horror is always set against the backdrop of a heroic resistance. These notions of a struggle between good and evil, light and dark, are central to the narrative structure of vampire stories and its *dénouement* in which good wins out over evil.

This is not to suggest that victory is in any way easy or inevitable. Here again we see clear analogies between vampires and capital. Recall the scene in Stoker’s *Dracula* when the vampire hunters finally come face to face with Count Dracula. In the struggle that ensues, Jonathan Harker slashes out at Dracula with a knife:

The blow was a powerful one; only the diabolical quickness of the Count's leap back saved him. A second less and the trenchant had shorn through his heart. As it was, the point just cut the cloth of his coat, making a wide gap whence a bundle of bank-notes and a stream of gold fell out. (Stoker, 1897/1998: 306)

The Count bleeds gold and bank-notes. The first thing we could comment on in relation to this is that Stoker, in what might appear to be an unwitting appropriation from Chapter Ten of Volume One of *Capital*, has his vampire clearly implicated in the accumulation of wealth. The Count has ready currency in his pockets, but further than this we might note that he carries the currencies of different times. He hides both gold, an ancient means of payment, and cash, the paper payment of modern time. This is another sense in which the vampire is both an ancient figure and our perfect contemporary. For him, time, as the currency he carries, is 'out of joint'. As the attack which promises the future strikes out at our feudal/modern danger, once more, the vampire bleeds finance capital and a peculiar relationship to time. As we noted earlier, the vampire is afraid of time, or as we might say now, a certain type of time.

Here we might remind ourselves of the articulation of questions of time in the work of Levinas, one of the important philosophical figures of the 20th century to recall the place of alterity and difference. In relation to time, Levinas (1987) offers a reminder that the possibility of a future rests on the chances of a time that is fundamentally different from the present. Without difference, without the possibility of a different world, there would be a continuity of the present, but no future, and hence no time (see also Fournier, 2002). As Levinas (1987: 76) puts it, 'The future is what is in no way grasped. The exteriority of the future is totally different from spatial exteriority precisely through the fact that the future is absolutely surprising'. This interrelation of futurity and difference brings prescience to change and difference. Following Levinas, Derrida writes (1976: 5), 'The future can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger. It is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only be proclaimed, *presented*, as a sort of monstrosity' (emphasis in original). Time implies discontinuity and difference; it involves alterity and the relation to something radically different. Without this we would have nothing but an eternal present, or at best a continuous return to the same. For there to be time, in the radical sense, there must be alterity and difference.

DIALECTICS OF VAMPIRISM, OR, WHAT IS A HEGELIAN VAMPIRE?

We have ventured a number of arguments here, and many could be taken further. But we should not conclude without returning to our figure of the vampire, and asking about the temporal dynamics of vampirism and posing the question of whether the very figure of the vampire assumes continuity or discontinuity. To put it simply, is the idea of the vampire a radical or a reassuring idea? Given what we have said about the dialectics of continuity and discontinuity in time and in capital, could we advance a conclusion by asking about the extent to which even the idea of the vampire is, or is not, capable of introducing a rupture? Obviously, the vampire sucks blood and victims bleed. But does this image introduce anything radically dangerous, or might it not rest on a comforting imaginary that could reinforce what we already know about capital and time?

Maud Ellmann (1996: xxviii) outlines a Lacanian reading of *Dracula*, in which the Count is presented as a floating signifier that can be filled in with wildly different contents.

Dracula has been interpreted as a figure for perversion, menstruation, venereal disease, female sexuality, male homosexuality, feudal aristocracy, monopoly capitalism, the proletariat, the Jew, the primal father, the Antichrist, and the typewriter. But *Dracula* is all of these things, and more; he stands for the return of the repressed, the contents of which are forever shifting.

Clearly, by bringing the vampire in relation with capital and time, we have focused selectively on a particular aspect of the vampire myth. We would not want to argue that this is the only possible reading of the relation between vampires and capital, although we should stress that time has generally not appeared in discussions of their inter-relationships. There are questions here about whether we are introducing anything radically different by drawing together these relations between vampirism, capital and time. We suggest that the answer to this can be found in the way that we have not simply introduced time in general, but a specific concept of time. We could, then, perhaps pose the question of the radicality of the vampire by contrasting two distinct concepts of time.

According to a continuous conception of time, the vampire myth might repeat images of conservation and continuity. That is to say, the vampire can be an image that reinforces rather than challenges the existing social order. One of the ways that this can happen is when the vampire is a figure against which we can assert the morality and goodness of the status quo. Hence the vampire tries to break with normality, but the conclusion of the story is one of the reinstatement of normality. The vampire has put things out of joint, but by the end of the story all things will be back in order. In the showdown with the vampire, we are reminded of the goodness of the present and of the righteousness of our morality. In this way, one of the possible consequences of the vampire myth is to reinforce petty bourgeois Victorian moral prejudices. In this way, the story can provide a reminder of how good things were before the arrival of the monster. The discontinuity introduced by the vampire is marked with a Bad sign, and the arrival of The Good spells the eradication of that discontinuity and the return to the Same.⁴

But it is also possible to read the vampire in almost exactly the opposite way. On an alternative reading, the vampire can radically disrupt all of these moralities. On this reading the vampire is not backward looking, but looks to the future. On this reading, those that oppose the vampire do not promise a return to the past but promise the future, a future that is not a reinstatement of the past but is an opening to difference. On this reading, the vampire stands as a barrier to the possibility of the future and must therefore be destroyed so that the future can become possible. Against the eternal present that is implied by the first reading, this second reading takes the vampiric nature of the present as a chance to historicise and politicise the present. On seeing the vampire, we are not shocked by its unique monstrosity. Rather, the monster alerts us to how monstrous the things that we continue to do to each other are. Here, the vampire offers us an invitation to difference.

Who is to say that one or the other of these readings is more or less accurate? For us, it is not the case that we might somehow find grounds on which such a decision could be made. We would prefer to keep these readings in productive tension. That is to say, rather than arguing for the victory, however provisional, of one reading over the other, we would suggest that the productivity of the dialectic of vampirism is to remain forever open. When we speak of a 'dialectic', we are not thinking of a resolution that comes in between or after the opposition between these two readings. In the same way that we can describe a dialectics of capital and a dialectics of duration, we could speak also of a dialectics of vampirism (see also Moretti, 1983). For us that dialectics would remain forever open and contestable. Which is to say that the vampire, as capital and time, *can* be something that encloses us and returns us to the same, within an already established trajectory of accumulation and a continuous stability of time. But on the other hand, the vampire could be something that invites us towards a radical break, one that offers the promise of that which is, for now, unimaginable.

⁴Given the possibility of this first reading, we should note that Parker's (2003) reading of the vampire is disappointingly undialectical. By focusing only on the potentially radical nature of organizational gothic figures such as the vampire, Parker fails to admit that the vampire myth can *also* operate as a conservative and reassuring figure.

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