The theatre of economic categories

Rediscovering *Capital* in the late 1960s

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Marx prefaces the first edition of the first volume of *Capital* with a laconic proviso. 'To avoid any possible misunderstandings', he writes, 'a word. I do not by any means depict the capitalist and the landowner in rosy colours. But individuals are dealt with here only insofar as they are the personifications of economic categories, bearers of particular class relations and interests.'[1] He could not have foreseen that a full century after it was first penned, this pithy codicil to a thousand-page work would be the source of *all* possible misunderstandings and the fulcrum around which so many unresolved questions in the interpretation of his critique of political economy would pivot, such as its relationship to the natural sciences, its conception of human freedom and its usefulness for the analysis of culture.

Most decisive in the annals of institutionalised misunderstandings of Marx in the latter half of the twentieth century is simply 'a word'. What does it mean to be the 'bearer' [*Träger*] of a class relation? In much of the French and English Marxist literature written in the wake of the publication of *Reading Capital*, the joint intellectual project that emerged out of Louis Althusser's seminar at the École normale supérieure in the spring of 1965, *Träger* often figures as the only German word in an otherwise monolingual text and serves as incontrovertible proof of the anti-humanistic point of departure in Marx's economic writings. This Teutonic stain is often called upon to lend an air of philological rigour to Marxist scholarship, but in *Reading Capital* it evidences indolence: an appeal to the authenticity of the German excuses the critic from the task of investigating the various valences that the word contains in the original language and from locating the contexts in which the word actually appears in Marx's writings. Accordingly, the legion of recent publications recommending a return to *Reading Capital*, this 'watershed in Marxist philosophy and critical theory more generally' with its 'dazzling array of concepts that can still today be said to constitute the syntax of radical philosophy', should be approached with critical trepidation.[2] Perhaps one ought to return to *Reading Capital* precisely to discover that this tremendously influential text is not a serviceable explication of Marx's work, and to realise finally that the discourse of radical philosophy is compromised by its uncritical application of those so-called 'dazzling' concepts that Structural Marxism first imported into leftist sociological common sense.

This is the return to *Reading Capital* recommended here: to determine whether this text in fact deserves a place in the pantheon of 'key interventions in twentieth-century critical theory',[3] and to reflect on how a term that would have been associated during Althusser's time exclusively with the methodological approach of a group of Marxist social theorists based in Frankfurt could today self-evidently be used as a promiscuous umbrella term under which a highly antithetical Parisian intellectual movement takes refuge. In other words, the aim here is to critically examine the mechanisms through which the Structuralist interpretation of Marx became unproblematically synonymous with critical theory, in light of the fact that the self-proclaimed Critical Theory developed by Horkheimer and his colleagues at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt in the 1930s, which reaches its apotheosis in and around the sociological writings and advanced seminars of Theodor Adorno at Goethe University in the 1960s, is fundamentally incompatible with the research programme carried out contemporaneously in Paris.

In Frankfurt, it was recognised that the antinomy of agency and structure that took shape in the French confrontation of Existentialism and Structuralism in the 1960s was merely the re-emergence of a *fin de siècle* sociological problematic that pits structure against agency.[4] Ironically, the Critical Theorists of Frankfurt recognised that it was none other than Marx himself who had pre-emptively criticised this spurious sociological antinomy, and insisted that his approach shows how it is possible to criticise the deleterious nature of an unmastered economic totality that weighs upon impotent humans without regressing to an anthropological or ontological theory of the individual as *causa sui*.

Despite the number of references and allusions to Adorno and his milieu in the canon of contemporary critical theory, the reception of the Frankfurt School's most characteristically Marxist works occurred well after the institutionalisation of Structural Marxism by Anglophone journals and universities in the late 1960s and 1970s. French Structuralism and its predominantly English commentators alike offer a trans-historical model of the relation between individuals and social structures, inspired by rationalist metaphysics, which allows the reader to apply Marx's critique of social domination to spheres beyond the specifically economic. This has been highly attractive to a readership wishing to tap Marx without wishing to engage with his economics. The drawback of this approach, however, is its neglect of the salt of Marx's writings: the analyses of the historically specific mechanisms through which individuals are constituted as economic subjects, the dynamics through which capitalist society reproduces itself and the directional logic of the capitalist mode of production on which the possibility of its transcendence is grounded. Structural Marxism and its legacy, in other words, fail to appreciate the relation of freedom and necessity that is insisted upon by Marx's work, and which is inseparable from a German philosophical tradition oriented towards the reconciliation of spirit and flesh. By contrast, this discourse of reconciliation offers *sine qua non* origins for the original and persuasive interpretation of Marx that underpins Frankfurt School Critical Theory in the 1960s, which locates the desideratum of Marx's materialism in 'the generation of a state in which the blind pressure of material relations over humans is broken, and in which the question of freedom would first be truly meaningful'.[5]

Reading *Capital* in French

The interpretation of Marx that emerged in Paris in the 1960s in the work of Althusser and his students is shaped by the attempt to creatively reinterpret Marx's economic writings so as to conform with the Structuralist paradigm that dominated French intellectual thought at the time, namely, the linguistics-inspired work of figures such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jacques Lacan, as well as the anti-evolutionary theories of science established by Gaston Bachelard and Georges Canguilhem. This retrofitting of Marx's work to the fashion of the times is cunningly presented as a new orthodoxy that is able to appreciate the scientific revolution contained in *Capital* as if for the first time. This revolution is argued to have been overlooked by a century of the twin interpretive follies of economism and historicism, which are conveniently shown to be victims of an identical methodological error: the presupposition of a 'subject', an extraordinarily flexible term that is attributed by Althusser and his students to a panoply of conceptual entities ranging from methodological individualism's rational actor, to the proletariat qua Lukácsian 'subject of history', to the Hegelian *Begriff*, to the economy as such in the eyes of dogmatic Marxist economics. An adequate understanding of Marx's writings, according to Structural Marxism, presupposes that one reject the possibility of these seemingly self-determining agents.

In *Reading Capital*, first published in French in 1965, this assimilation of Marx is carried out by way of carefully chosen references to the original German text that represent contentious interpretations at best and philological irresponsibility at worst, perhaps best illustrated by the almost ideographic presence of the italicised German word *Träger* throughout the text.[6] This word is by no means unequivocal. In German, the verb *tragen* contains a raft of connotations, including to bear, to carry, to support or to wear. It shares many of these with the French verb *porter*, although in the case of bearing the weight of a physical structure, *supporter* is more appropriate. One might schematically differentiate two senses of the agent noun: one in which the *Träger* is an entity distinguishable from the content that it bears or carries, such as the bearer of a title or the wearer of an article of clothing, and another in which the *Träger* is a fundamental ingredient of that which it carries, such as a support beam. In any case, in the 1872 French edition of *Capital*, which served as the primary reference text in the 1960s, 'bearers of particular class relations and interests', from the 'Preface to the First Edition', is translated as 'les *supports* d'interêts et de rapports de classes determines'.[7]

Marx presided over the French translation of *Capital* and claimed to be proud of its even greater organisational clarity over the painstakingly revised second German edition of 1872 after which it was modelled. However, he admitted that he was often forced to 'aplatir', or flatten, the complex German presentation, and that future translations should diligently compare the German and French editions, especially in the first chapter.[8] The French edition is highly inconsistent in its translation of the more idiosyncratic terms that decorate the opening chapters, amongst which *Träger* is one. *Träger* appears some twenty times throughout the 1872 German edition, and in the French, after the preface, it is rendered as *support* in only one of these instances. 'Bearer of value' [*Wertträger* or *Träger von Wert*] is consistently translated as *porte-valeur*; twice the term appears as *soutien*. Often, especially in the opening chapters, the word is simply omitted in the corresponding French passage.

Althusser and his students were at least partially aware of the shortcomings of the French edition of *Capital* and followed Marx in emphasising the necessity of reading the 'German original, at least for the fundamental theoretical chapters and all the passages where Marx's key concepts come to the surface'.[9] This is one reason why *Reading Capital* is dotted with italicised German words and occasional comments on issues of translation. For example, in Étienne Balibar's contribution to *Reading Capital*, he claims that when Marx wrote about the individual, he 'systematically used the term *Träger* … which is most often rendered in French as *support*'.[10] But this is not true. And even within *Reading Capital*, this term of such seeming importance is inconsistently translated. In Althusser's contribution to *Reading Capital*, *Träger* is rendered once as *support*, twice as *porteur*.[11] In order to establish which, if either, of these terms is most adequate, it is worth examining the opening paragraph of the second chapter of *Capital*, in which the term *Träger* appears in language that bears remarkable similarity to the 'Preface to the First Edition'. Marx writes:

> As we proceed to develop our investigation, we shall find, in general, that the economic character masks of persons [*Charaktermasken der Personen*] are only the personifications of economic relations; it is as bearers [*Träger*] of the latter that they confront one another.[12]

Here, Marx compares the personification and *bearing* of economic relations with the *wearing* of masks. It is as wearers of masks that individuals confront one another on a market, which suggests that individuals are not identical with these masks.

Balibar may not have been familiar with this use of the term *Träger* in such close proximity to the concept of *Charaktermaske*, for the corresponding sentence is so warped in the French edition that any reference to a bearer of masks or economic relations is entirely omitted. However, Balibar does make reference to the original German text, locating an occurrence of *Charaktermaske* (originally translated as *le caractère économique*), and attempts to bring it into relation with the concept of *Träger* in order to make a general claim about Marx's theory of the individual. He states that, in the first volume of *Capital*

> we find all the images which Marx uses to help us grasp the mode of existence of the agents of the production process as the *supports* (*Träger*) of the structure. On the stage of reproduction … the individuals quite literally *come forward masked … they are nothing more than masks.*[13]

This passage warrants close scrutiny, for the terms that are borrowed from *Capital* are re-purposed in a manner that is at odds with Marx's consistent and systematic intentions. Marx uses the term 'mode of existence' [*Existenzweise*] in later chapters to refer to the existence of abstract categories such as value or capital in the concrete form of commodities or gold. This is entirely different from 'mode of expression' [*Ausdrucksweise*], a term prominently featured in the first chapter, which is used to emphasise the distinction between an object's socially mediated form and its concrete constitution. The commodity labour-power is thus one of capital's modes of existence insofar as it functions as a living body in the capitalistic production process, but one of the individual's modes of expression insofar as the individual appears on the labour market as the commodity labour-power. To describe a social determination as the individual's 'mode of existence' would be a category error: only social categories have modes of existence; concrete individuals simply exist, and express themselves or appear in various ways. By collapsing this crucial distinction between existence and appearance, Balibar fails to appreciate the significance of the concept of the 'character mask', which in Marx's usage indicates a non-identity between the empirical and social individual. For Balibar, by contrast, individuals are 'nothing more than masks', or entirely reducible to the theatrical role that they are destined to perform in a mode of production-qua-performance. In the following chapter of *Capital*, Marx addresses this conflation of the character mask with its concrete bearer and associates it with the positivistic and necessarily apologetic methods of vulgar political economy:

> the practical agents of capitalist production and their ideological word-spinners are as incapable of thinking of the means of production separately from the antagonistic character masks that presently adhere [*ankleben*] to them as a slave-owner is incapable of thinking of the worker himself as distinct from his character as a slave.[14]

It is worth dwelling on these shifts in which Marx's presentation of the non-identity of the living and potentially free individual with the form in which the individual necessarily appears in capitalist society is obscured, for the Structuralist cliché of the absence of the individual qua subject in *Capital* has become so commonplace that most contemporary readers of Marx have little inclination to confront the complex socialisation process that is actually presented in the opening chapters of the book. When one reads the treacherously difficult opening chapters of *Capital*, it is immediately clear that Marx distinguishes between, on the one hand, objects of labour as sensuous objects, which he describes as the object's 'homely, natural form', and on the other hand, the object's 'value form', or the form in which objects of labour appear socially.[15] This distinction holds for individuals as well, insofar as they are concrete individuals in one instance and bearers of value in another. It is, furthermore, *only* within these opening chapters that the social process through which empirical individuals and concrete objects are constituted as bearers of economic categories, or wearers of masks, is even cursorily presented; the rest of the book unfolds under the presupposition that this socialisation process takes place successfully and vanishes without a trace.

Since Althusser's intervention into Marxist scholarship, it has become increasingly common to distinguish

between, on the one hand, humanistic interpretations of *Capital* that take the opening chapters of the book as their point of departure, and on the other, a more informed and anti-humanistic mode of interpretation that ironically insists upon the conceptual inadequacy of these most carefully revised chapters of the book. In his 1969 preface to a new French edition of the first volume of *Capital*, Althusser claims that the language that Marx uses in the first part of the book should be read as 'survivals' of a Hegelian philosophical heritage 'on the way to supersession', and even demands that the reader skip these opening chapters because of their 'flagrant and extremely harmful' Hegelian influence.[16] This assertion is perhaps less informed by a conclusively established 'epistemological break' between the young and mature Marx, and more the result of Althusser's own difficulty in comprehending these opening chapters. In the summer of 1967, two years after the composition of *Reading Capital*, Althusser remarks in a letter to his wife of his attempt to 'focus all of my efforts on *Capital* and on trying to see things clearly in the questions where I don't understand anything', namely 'the very beginning'. He adds:

> If you see Étienne [Balibar], tell him that I will ask him questions about the following concepts: 1.) What is the value-*form*? 2.) What is the difference between *value* and *exchange-value*, of which Marx says it's not value, but is a form of manifestation (*Erscheinungsform*)? 3.) Is there not, in spite of everything, a relationship between the value-form and exchange value, Marx playing on the word *form*? Étienne will surely understand what I am referring to.[17]

These are not easy questions, but they are nevertheless the kinds of questions to which an interpretation of *Capital* that insists upon a careful understanding of the text's most difficult and key concepts should be able to respond.

To be sure, Structural Marxism does have an account of the social process through which concrete individuals come to take on a social function, although it is an account that remains at odds with Marx. This is Althusser's concept of 'interpellation', perhaps his most well-known contribution to contemporary social theory, which he first introduced into his writings in 1966, just a few months after the publication of *Reading Capital*, and which is modelled on a form of socialisation that he thought he had found in Marx's *Capital*.[18] Althusser

writes that 'in every social formation, the base requires *la function-support* (*Träger*) as a function to be assumed, as a place to be occupied in the technical and social division of labour'.[19] Althusser conceives of social formations on the order of an architectural blueprint, and the division of labour as a list of structural components, with all of the *Träger* – now conceived as support beams – laid out *in abstracto*, awaiting the right individual to occupy each specific structural position. 'The structure *requires Träger*', he writes, and 'ideological discourse *recruits* them for it by interpellating individuals *as subjects* to assume the function of *Träger*'.[20]

The looseness and imprecision of such formulations is foreign to the discourse of modern political economy. The latter, from Adam Smith to Marx, is concerned with the way in which individuals contribute, through seemingly self-interested economic decisions, to the reproduction of a social process that takes place behind their backs and beyond their comprehension, and the way in which this same social process consequently directs or diminishes the individual capacity to act. Althusser, convinced of the originality of Marx's inquiry, did not see these commonalities, and instead claimed to discover in *Capital* a conception of the relation between society and individual that is curiously modelled on early modern rationalist ethics – namely, Spinoza's relation between substance and mode – and a conception of the relation between consciousness and materiality that is likewise modelled on Spinozist metaphysics – namely, the parallelism of thought and extension.[21] What appears in the discourse of political economy as a tumultuous interaction between self-interested individuals is transformed in Althusser's social theory into a kind of bureaucratic police state that manipulates individuals with the assistance of 'ideology' into identifying with their own subjection, or rather, 'provid[es] them with reasons-of-a-subject … for the functions defined by the structure as functions-of-a-*Träger*'.[22]

There is obviously great attraction to thinking of social coercion as a process in which individuals are compelled – in both the sense of forced and persuaded – to take on pre-established roles and functions in a process that ultimately harms them. The elasticity of the concept of interpellation allows one to conceive of forms of social subjection independent of the relationship between, for example, capitalist and wage-labourer. Furthermore, the synonyms that Althusser employs to elaborate the interpellative process – such as 'recruitment' and 'requisition' – dramatically allegorise the imbalance of power between the interpellated and the interpellator. It is not surprising that much of the secondary literature on the concept of interpellation addresses its dramaturgical connotations.[23] Indeed, the most cited example of interpellation in Althusser's work is not a properly economic transaction at all, but that of a police officer who shouts 'Hey, you!' to the back of an unassuming individual and subsequently compels the respondent to assume the subject position of one who is being addressed. This kind of social interaction, in which individuals are called upon to identify with the aggressor by adopting the subject position that is imputed to them, is ubiquitous and quotidian, and one might convincingly conduct critical analyses of interpellative processes in carceral and educational institutions, as Foucault has done, or in sexual and kinship relations, all of which rely to varying degrees on the blueprint or script-like model that Althusser's concept of interpellation presupposes.

Marx's critique of political economy does not adopt a universally valid model of socialisation that fails to distinguish between the unique ways in which individuals are constituted as serfs here and proprietors of labour-power there, docile bodies in one instance and *homo economicus* in another. In fact, Althusser's theory of interpellation remains historically *anterior* to Marx's social theory, which demonstrates how capitalist society synthesises individuals into a social totality by way of private and apparently free transactions, thus rendering anachronistic the somewhat medieval conception of a social 'role' or 'function' that the individual is 'recruited' to assume. Moreover, by comprehending the bourgeois freedom enjoyed by the individual in a capitalist society as a 'specular' freedom offered by 'ideological discourse' – as though the concept of freedom were a sort of narcotic doled out to the masses, rather than a lived experience conditioned by legally non-coercive individual economic transactions – Structural Marxism forfeits any insight into the specific experiential process through which the individual comes to recognise that capitalism's promise and premise of freedom is constitutively withheld.

Reading Capital in English

One might imagine that the claims of Structural Marxism would not have survived the scrutiny of any intellectual culture with a deep familiarity with Marx's writings. But this is precisely what was lacking in England in the late 1960s. An adequate English translation of the first volume of *Capital* did not appear until 1976, almost 90 years after the first English translation of the book, and a good decade after serious interest in Marx's economic writings had taken shape in Western Europe. The available English edition of 1887 was a joint translation effort, undertaken by Samuel Moore, a long-time comrade of Marx, and Edward Aveling, Marx's son-in-law and best known for his writings on Charles Darwin. They worked independently of each other, with corrections made by Engels and Eleanor Marx herself. The resulting work is indicative of Engels' attempt to assimilate Marx's dialectics to a *Naturdialektik*, and thus the tension in the original German text between the concrete and its socially-mediated mode of expression is rendered almost systematically in language that obscures this tension. For example, in the 'Preface to the First Edition', individuals are now described neither as bearers nor supports, but as 'embodiments of particular class-relations and class-interests'. The commodity as a bearer of value [*Wertträger*], which was used by Marx to indicate the non-identity of the commodity's form of appearance with its so-called natural form, is now regularly rendered as a 'depository of value'.[24] The motif of the character mask is entirely omitted.

The *New Left Review* acted as a hub for the international exchange of Marx interpretations in the late 1960s, and the lack of a philologically sophisticated reading of Marx in England – or even the pretence thereof – left the country's extant Marxist traditions somewhat defenceless against foreign claims to Marxist orthodoxy. These English traditions, represented for example by E.P. Thompson's documentation of English working-class history and Raymond Williams' various extended commentaries on Marxist method from his early monographs on English literature and culture, were critical rehabilitations of a socially conservative and humanistic British romantic tradition that had fused with socialist currents in the twentieth century. They offered nuanced conceptions of the problem of the economic determination of the individual, but these were never formally systematised, and English Marxism generally lacked the obsession with methodology that characterised most continental engagements with Marx's writings at the time. It is therefore not surprising that when Nicos Poulantzas, a student of Althusser, waged a veritable sortie against the alleged conceptual impoverishment of the state of British Marxist discourse in the spring of 1967, his contribution was welcomed by the editors of the *New Left Review* as a 'searching criticism' of the work of Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn, representing 'an important advance over previous discussion', and was unequivocally lauded as 'a renewal of the internationalist traditions of the classic socialist movement', and thus a 'transcendence of national provincialism.'[25]

Poulantzas' impressive comprehension of an esoteric British Marxist discourse notwithstanding, his illumination of the latter's 'conceptual issues' takes the shape of a basic introduction to Structuralism's annihilation of the humanist subject: the admittedly simplistic reduction of history to the conscious action of individuals advocated by British Marxists is expeditiously replaced with an equally simplistic 'anti-historicist' conception of history as an entirely impersonal process. Poulantzas urged that one should understand individual consciousness as an effect of the structure of society, and introduced what would have appeared as a novel theoretical model that distinguishes between ideology, on the one hand, and 'social structures' or 'structures of production', on the other, without reducing the former to epiphenomena of the latter. 'Men' are defined as 'bearers of the social structure', and the dominant ideology is simply the "'cement" in the unity of the various levels of the social structure'.[26] Human ideas are a kind of carpenter's glue than cannot be conceived independently of the necessary link that they constitute within a complex structure.

Three years later, when an abridged version of Althusser's *Reading Capital* was translated into English for the first time, the term *Träger* was translated by Ben Brewster in all of its instances as 'support', including the passages where Althusser had rendered the term as *porteur*. What is more, Brewster translated Balibar's assertion that Marx's systematic use of the term *Träger* 'is most often rendered in French as *support*' by simply changing the word 'French' to 'English' and keeping the rest of

the sentence intact.[27] *Träger* had never been rendered in English-language Marxist literature as 'support' before. Brewster, however, recognised the affinities between the sister concepts of *Träger* and *Charaktermaske* to a greater degree than can be found in Balibar's text, and writes in his glossary to *Reading Capital* under the entry 'Support' that 'biological men are only *supports* or bearers of the guises (*Charaktermasken*) assigned to them by the structure of relations in the social formation'.[28] This would have been the appropriate opportunity for Brewster to acknowledge that one cannot justifiably hold the conception of individuals as structural 'supports' as well as individuals as 'bearers of guises' as compatible interpretations of one and the same ambiguous German word, but he skirts this difficulty by repeating Balibar's claim that these masks are somehow 'assigned' to individuals by 'the structure of relations', eliding the socialisation process through which individuals don these character masks and the specific market relations in which these masks are perceived as valid. It is as though the capitalist mode of production were a sort of high school theatre production in which the drama teacher arbitrarily writes students' names and their designated characters on a cast list before the first rehearsal.

Given the prominence of the term *Träger* in the glossary of the English translation of *Reading Capital*, as well as its central position in *New Left Review* articles by Poulantzas amongst others, British Marxists were compelled to take up a position with respect to this tricky concept over the course of the following decade, now translated in almost equal measure as 'bearer' and 'support', occasionally 'carrier', and sometimes 'bearer or support'.[29] The term – both the German and its English variations – figures prominently in the writings of Perry Anderson, Stuart Hall and E.P. Thompson. It was perhaps Raymond Williams, otherwise sparing in his adoption of Structuralist vocabulary in his writings, who felt most pressured by the popularity of Structuralism to modify and expand his model of economic determination, and who emerged as one of the more vocal and consistent critics of Structural Marxism in a moment when Althusser exercised a certain popularity in English journals. This is in part because he had worked more diligently than the other British Marxists, and over the course of several decades, to produce a general Marxist theory of determination that was unproblematically compatible with human freedom, but also perhaps because Williams' earliest efforts contained so many surprising similarities to those of Althusser, such as the rejection of the base-superstructure model of determination and the emphasis on the inextricable unity of being and consciousness. In both Williams and Althusser, the critique of dogmatic Marxist discourses is the point of departure. Most intriguing is that a widely anthologised letter by Engels from 1890, which Williams cites with vigour throughout his entire career to ground his theory of determination, is the same letter from which the Althusserian concept of 'determination-in-the-last-instance' is derived.[30]

These coincidences evidence an uncomfortable affinity. All of Williams' interventions into the problematic of determination are concerned with avoiding any model of causality that would isolate a particular *prima causa*, whether it be the economy or the transcendental subject, and he thus manages to reconcile the Structuralist rejection of 'expressive' and teleological causal models with a humanistic theory of social practice. In a sense, Williams opposes the Structuralist gravitation toward cold macro-

sociological analysis by foregrounding the complex web of economic, political and cultural determinants that work themselves out at ground level, through the intermediary of an individual consciousness confronted with decisions. But in Paris the existence of the conscious confrontation with decisions, motivations and norms is not rejected; it is simply relegated to the methodological ghetto of 'ideology'. In any case, the relationship between this humanistic model of determination and the ideas developed in the writings of Marx and Engels is not entirely obvious. In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams fixes on Engels' somewhat banal claim that 'we make our history ourselves, but, in the first place, under very definite assumptions and conditions', to suggest that the first part of this claim restores 'the idea of direct agency' to Marxism. He then uses this passage to construct a definition of determination as the 'setting of limits' to an otherwise free humanity.[31] It is, however, difficult to wrest a notion of agency from a letter that describes history as 'the product of a power which works as a whole *unconsciously* and without volition'.[32] As if correcting the enthusiasm for this letter that he demonstrated earlier in his career, Williams claims that if one were to follow Engels down the path indicated by some of the letter's darker sentences, one would 'fall back into a new passive and objectivist model' – this must be Structuralism's 'process without a subject' – in which 'society is the objectified (unconscious and unwilled) general process'.[33]

This irritation with the anti-humanistic attitude of Structuralism without a convincing systematic critique of its basic principles is characteristic of a certain strand of British Marxism in the wake of *Reading Capital*. By the early 1980s, the hegemony of Structural Marxism's mode of inquiry in Anglo-American cultural and social theory had successfully deprived the genuinely humanistic zeal of figures like Thompson and Williams of any shred of legitimacy. Stuart Hall, for example, argues that the French and the English approaches to social and cultural activity represent two useful Marxist methodological paradigms that one can toggle between without internal contradiction: a Structuralist paradigm, deriving from Althusser and his students, which conceives individuals as bearers or supports of structures, and a culturalist paradigm, exemplified by Williams' work, in which humans make their own history under given conditions.[34] Intent on marrying these seemingly incompatible approaches, Hall perceptively argues that they are merely

> different levels of abstraction. … At the higher levels, Marx is working more with the notion of men and women as bearers of relations, but at the lower, more concrete levels, he works more with the notion of men and women as making their own history. But this second notion does not return us to the humanist subject, for in no sense does this second notion conceive of human beings as agents who can see through to the end of their practices.[35]

This rejection of the desideratum of a legitimately free and self-legislating human subject as some kind of embarrassing idealist philosophical trope is a concession to Structuralism's rhetorical finesse, and reveals that the apparently mutually exclusive paradigms of Structural and humanist Marxism that are often invoked in the discourse of contemporary critical theory are often two sides of the same franc; both reject *tout court* that Marxist 'kingdom of freedom' in which individuals would no longer be overdetermined by the mesh of social relations in which they find themselves, but would finally be 'ends in themselves'.[36] It is only in the German interpretation of Marx, where this unmistakably Christian eschatological discourse of reconciliation and salvation is part and parcel of the nation's philosophical history, that the incongruity of a properly Marxist conception of freedom with the French and English interpretations of Marx is finally thrown into relief.

Structuralism in Frankfurt

The post-war Marxist intellectual cultures of England and West Germany remained largely oblivious of each other's activities, but because of the monopoly that Anglophone journals exercised on the international dissemination of various Marxist intellectual currents in the 1960s and 70s, this mutual ignorance often appears as provincialism on the part of Germany in contrast to English internationalism. Perry Anderson buttresses this impression in *Considerations on Western Marxism* when he claims that 'within the entire corpus of Western Marxism there is not one single serious appraisal or sustained critique of the work of one major theorist by another, revealing close textual knowledge or minimal analytic care in its treatment'.[37] But this evidences a surprising ignorance of the work of Alfred Schmidt, the research assistant of Adorno and Horkheimer during the 1960s who ultimately occu-

pied Horkheimer's chair at Goethe University for over 25 years. Schmidt had translated various major works of Henri Lefebvre, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty into German throughout the 1960s, and published a monograph-length critique of Structural Marxism in 1971.[38] Schmidt was indeed a 'major theorist'. His 1960 dissertation on *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, which was translated by Ben Fowkes in 1971 for *New Left Books*, and which has since been translated into sixteen other languages, had a considerable influence on the West German student movements of the late 1960s and is the source of much of the sophisticated commentary on Marx that one finds in Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*.[39]

Anderson's limited familiarity with the intellectual culture of Frankfurt during the years in which he produced his influential tracts on Western Marxism and historical materialism compels his interpretation of Adorno's Marxism to limit itself to what is contained in the notoriously dense pages of *Negative Dialectics*. Several superficial similarities with Structuralism, such as Adorno's critique of nostalgic uses of the concept of reification and his preference for the later Marx over the younger, allow Anderson to hastily subsume Adorno under the Structuralist paradigm, and *Negative Dialectics* is said to 'reproduce' and 'echo' certain formulations found in the work that Althusser composed during same period.[40] Furthermore, Anderson claims that Adorno's Marxism, 'formed in another epoch', was strictly a university philosophy, and that by the 1960s Adorno's distance from political engagement had become 'well-nigh absolute' – a stereotype that lives on in the widespread yet poorly substantiated caricature of Adorno as the curmudgeonly enemy of the West German student movements of the late 1960s.[41] It is forgotten that in addition to his activities as the heterodox chair of the German Sociological Association, who had earnestly attempted to construct a mainstream empirical sociological research paradigm that takes the critique of political economy as its point of departure, Adorno was also one of the most prominent public intellectuals in post-war West Germany, with a gift for communicating sociologically complex ideas on television and radio in a remarkably lucid and accessible manner.[42]

There is at least some legitimacy to the comparison between Frankfurter and Structural Marxism, and Schmidt concedes that Structuralism's 'indisputable merit consists in the fact that after a period of spuriously subjective, naively anthropological interpretations of Marx, the critique of political economy returned to centre stage and was considered with conceptual rigour.'[43] Shortly after Adorno's death in 1969, Schmidt published a commemorative essay in which he even claimed, half-jokingly, that Adorno would perhaps have ironically described himself as an anti-humanist, in light of the barbarism of which the ideology of 'the human' is capable.[44] But these are distracting similarities, for the essence of Adorno's sociological theory in the 1960s lies in its unflagging methodological distinction between the concrete and the socially necessary semblance or forms of appearance through which the concrete is compelled to express itself.[45] One sees this most vividly in Adorno's deep antipathy toward the concept of 'role' that had become increasingly popular in American sociological discourse of the 1960s, particularly in the work of Talcott Parsons, which according to Adorno hypostatises the wrong state of affairs in which individuals 'act and dissimulate as something other than what they are', without comprehending the historically specific economic foundation that grounds this act of dissimulation.[46] Unsurprisingly, Adorno felt that Marx's concept of *Charaktermaske* effectively grounds this sociological dissimulation in a historically specific mode of production.[47] Adorno had no patience for sociological theories that attempted to 'derive the ontology of reality immediately from the theatre', and dedicated much of his late sociological writings to thinking the possibility of an unrestricted human freedom, which the transfiguration of everyday life into a stage performance invariably precludes.[48]

Adorno's advanced sociology seminar in the summer semester of 1969, titled 'Problems of Structuralism', only met once at its scheduled time and location. An hour before its second meeting, Adorno's lecture hall was occupied by upwards of 500 dissident students, and the seminar broke down into independent study-groups for the rest of the semester.[49] Virtually nothing of these meetings is known, but speculation need not travel very far, for many of Adorno's colleagues were deeply familiar with the work of Althusser, and by the time of Adorno's death, Althusser had already made a considerable impression in the intellectual culture of Goethe University.[50] The introduction of Althusser's ideas into Frankfurt occurred in much the same manner that his ideas found an

English readership: just a few months after his critique of British Marxism appeared in *New Left Review*, Poulantzas travelled to Goethe University in the spring of 1967 to present a paper at a conference organised by the Institute for Political Science in collaboration with the *Europäische Verlaganstalt*, which featured contributions by Alfred Schmidt, Oskar Negt, Ernest Mandel, Roman Rosdolsky *in absentia*, among many others.[51] Poulantzas had been invited as an ambassador of Althusserianism, and his paper offers a rudimentary lesson in the Structuralist interpretation of Marx's work, reaching its climax in the claim that

> the absence of a central subject in Marx indicates a break with economic anthropology, that is to say with the ideology of labour and needs, with such ideological concepts as alienation, reification, etc., with concepts that necessarily underwrite an essence, be it of the Hegelian or Feuerbachian type, and that have no scientific place in Marxism. … 'Humans' are present in production only as *Träger* of structures, that is to say of relations of production, of structures that allocate to them their positions and functions, which are called social classes.[52]

Unlike in England, where such ideas were met with either the fascination of a young Marxist intelligentsia that thirsted for this level of methodological sophistication, or by the repulsion of an older generation that sensed the stoic and politically resigned implications of Structural Marxism, the mostly German audience agreed with the methodological prioritisation accorded to impersonal and self-regulating structures in the Althusserian position, but refused to accept this as a trans-historically valid state of affairs. Structural Marxism appeared to hypostatise – and thence affirm – that which is identified by Marx as the wrong life, and thus to sap *Capital* of its unmistakably critical tenor. 'That structures degrade humans to their mere "*Träger*" constitutes the scientific norm for you', Schmidt retorts to Poulantzas during the discussion of the latter's paper, 'whereas for Marx this was an object of criticism. I think that we are speaking of the same thing, only from two different sides.'[53]

The humanistic dimension of Schmidt's immediate response should not be seen as a recapitulation of a Marxist humanism akin to the French Existentialist Marxism of the 1950s – although Poulantzas, who bristled at every mention of individuals or humans, interpreted Schmidt's response in this way – but rather an interpretation of Marx that recognises the inextricability of the penetrating consciousness of the individual's unfreedom from the normative conception of the self-legislating individual as critique's desideratum. Furthermore, Schmidt emphasises that one can recognise *Capital*'s indebtedness to a Hegelian conception of world history without subscribing to Hegel's essentially affirmative conception of the overall historical process. Schmidt notes the unmistakably Hegelian character of Marx's conception of value as a 'self-moving' and 'automatic subject', derived immediately from the formula of M-C-M', or the law that value inexorably begets more value through its necessary metamorphoses; this lends capitalist society a certain autotelic, subject-like character.[54] Hegel's teleological philosophy is thus adequate to the analysis of capitalist society when its concepts are secularised, and it is shown to depict 'bourgeois society comprehended as ontology'; *Capital* represents a kind of parodic recapitulation of a Hegelian theodicy of world-spirit.[55]

This re-evaluation of Hegel had developed in Adorno's advanced seminars throughout the 1960s, and the significance accorded to Hegel's philosophy – particularly the *Logic* – in the analysis of Marx's work is a hallmark of the work of Adorno's students Helmut Reichelt and Hans-Georg Backhaus, the founding figures of what has come to be known as the *Neue Marx-Lektüre*.[56] In this interpretive tradition, it is methodologically appropriate to take the standpoint of conceptual realism, so long as the Hegelian *Begriff* is conceived as a 'conceptuality which holds sway in reality itself', or what is sometimes called an 'existing abstraction' [*daseinede Abstraktion*], grounded in the forms of commensurability carried out via the exchange of commodities.[57] But this 'second nature' of capitalist lawfulness does not constitute a normative totality or a kind of *Sittlichkeit* in which the individual finds himself at home in the social institutions that he has authorised, but is described by Adorno, in an ironic affirmation of Leibniz's *Monadology* – from which Althusser's conception of 'expressive totality' is ultimately derived – as a 'pre-established disharmony'.[58] If one is to read *Capital* as a teleological narrative, it is not as the predestined succession of various modes of production leading inevitably towards communism, but rather as a 'phenomenology of anti-spirit' [*Phänomenologie des Widergeistes*], in which reconciliation between the individual and the universal takes place at the expense of the individual.

The bad 'universal' is conceived by the Frankfurt School, in accordance with Marx, as the form of value in a capitalist society. Individuals buckle under the weight of the universal in their endeavour to make themselves economically attractive to others and to make their activity conform to society's economic demands. This is the experiential impetus of the Frankfurt School's critique of modern society. This universality of being-for-another and the blinding appearance of equivalence that it casts over all things is what Adorno describes as 'ideology' or 'socially necessary semblance'. Althusser, by contrast, comprehends ideology as a 'system of representations', in accordance with the linguistic conception of a symbolic order that mediates the field of individual experience, rather than an economically constituted (mis-)recognition of concrete reality as an expression of the universal category of value, and so it is assumed that 'ideology is as such an organic part of every social totality', and that the primacy of structures over individuals is a trans-historical constant.[59] This is quite far from Marx, however, who argues that after a 'long and tormented historical development', when the social production process is finally rationally organised, the social life process 'casts off its mystical veil of fog' [*streift … ihren mystischen Nebelschleier ab*].[60]

There is a tremendous difference between the conception of society as a kind of symbolic order and the conception of society as a self-moving totality of economic value, and Marx is clearly concerned with the latter. The progressive reconstitution of a social formation in value's image offers the semblance of something existing in-and-for-itself, in however parasitic and abstract a form, and grounds the generative materialist longing for the transubstantiation of this subject-*like* substance out of the abstract domain of value and into concrete human flesh. In other words, Marx's presentation of the social totality as an autotelic totality of value, as the self-reproduction of the abstract, is the enabling condition for Adorno's cherished and oft-repeated apothegm that 'life does not live', and allows him to speculatively anticipate the realisation of a world in which life *would* live, in which substance, or human flesh, would finally become subject, and not be subsumed under the heteronomous logic of the bad universal. Adorno's late work is thus marked by periodic references to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh, in which he notices ironic parallels with Marx's materialism, for in both he sees the longing for the realisation of the flesh as subject, or 'the emancipation of spirit from the primacy of material needs in the state of their fulfillment'.[61]

But until that flesh is risen, individuals in a capitalist society stand before one another as mutilated figures, conforming spontaneously under the pressure of a social mechanism that 'tames them to pure self-preservation while denying them the preservation of their selves'.[62] Critical Theory, as it developed in Germany as a reaction to positivistic and essentially affirmative tendencies in the social sciences, is animated by the refusal to allow this unbearable state of affairs have the last word. If this refusal is to substantiate itself, it cannot adopt a theoretical position that transfigures the radical stereotypicality of everyday life into yet another act in a trans-historical theatrical production, but must recognise the continued existence of the capitalist mode of production, 150 years after Marx's diagnosis, as a kind of grotesque second childishness. It must transform the grim sociological consciousness of what it means to bear a character mask in an economic drama into the implacable longing for the unrealised individuality that such economic categories both logically presuppose and materially refuse.

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Notes

1. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1976), 92. Translation amended.
2. Nick Nesbitt, 'Rereading *Reading Capital*', in *The Concept in Crisis: Reading Capital Today*, ed. Nick Nesbitt (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 2. For other recent positive re-evaluations of *Reading Capital*, see Knox Peden, *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); Warren Montag, *Althusser and his Contemporaries: Philosophy's Perpetual War* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2013); and the dossier of essays on Althusser published in *Viewpoint Magazine* in 2016, particularly Alex Demirović, 'Why Should We Read Althusser (Again?)', https://www.viewpointmag.com/2016/07/18/why-should-we-read-althusser-again/
3. Nesbitt, Rereading *Reading Capital*, 2.
4. Adorno compares Structuralism with Durkheimian sociology in passing in his only written comment on the movement published during his lifetime, although he probably had Lévi-Strauss in mind: see 'Einleitung zu Émile Durkheim, "Soziologie

und Philosophie"'(1967), in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* [*GS*], ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 20 volumes (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), vol. 8, 245. Alfred Schmidt for his part compares Althusser with the structural-functionalism of Talcott Parsons. See Alfred Schmidt, 'Die Strukturalistische Angriff auf die Geschichte' [The Structuralist Attack on History] in *Beiträge zur marxistischen Erkenntnistheorie*, ed. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969), 209.

5. Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie: Band II* [Philosophical Terminology: Volume 2] (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 197.

6. Commentary on *Reading Capital* in this article is limited to the contributions of Althusser and Balibar, owing to the fact that the contributions of Jacques Rancière, Roger Establet and Pierre Macherey were not included in the popular abridged edition of *Lire le capital* in 1969, nor in any English edition of *Reading Capital* until 2015, and therefore played a marginal role in the construction of Anglophone conceptions of a Marxist critical theory.

7. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Gesamtausgabe: Zweite Abteilung* (MEGA²) II.7: *Le Capital (1872-1875)* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1979), 14. Italics added.

8. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx-Engels-Werke* (MEW) Vol. 34 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 2000), 358. The opening chapter of the second German edition is considerably different from that of the first edition. A list of changes included in the second edition can be found in Marx, *MEGA²* II.6, 1–54.

9. Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewser (London: New Left Books, 1970), 13–14.

10. Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 283. Translation amended.

11. Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Lire le Capital: I* (Paris: Maspero, 1969), 45, 140; *Lire le Capital: II* (Paris: Maspero, 1969), 53.

12. Translation amended. The original reads: '*Wir werden überhaupt im Fortgang der Entwicklung finden, daß die ökonomischen Charaktermasken der Personen nur die Personifikationen der ökonomischen Verhältnisse sind, als deren Träger sie sich gegenübertreten.' MEW* Vol. 23, 100. The genitive *als deren Träger*, roughly 'as the bearers of which', referring ambiguously to both the character masks and the economic relations, is awkward to render outside of German, and it is probably for this reason that the final clause of the passage is usually either omitted or distorted in translation. The original French translation reads: '*Nous verrons d'ailleurs dans le cours du développement que les masques divers dont elles s'affublent suivant les circonstances, ne sont que les personnifications des rapports économiques qu'elles maintiennent les unes vis-à-vis des autres.' MEGA²* II.7, 64. The original English translation is closer to the French than to the German: 'The characters who appear on the economic stage are but the personifications of the economic relations that exist between them.' *MEGA²* II.9, 74. Ben Fowkes' 1976 edition reads: 'As we proceed to develop our investigation, we shall find, in general, that the characters who appear on the economic stage are merely the personifications of economic relations; it is as the bearers [*Träger*] of these economic relations that they come into contact with each other.' *Capital, Volume 1*, 179. Fowkes includes a footnote explaining the concept of *Träger*, but it is unclear why he decided to replace 'character masks' with 'characters who appear on the economic stage', which obscures the dual significance of *Träger* as the bearer of a relation and the wearer of a mask. The four other instances of *Charaktermaske* in the original German text of volume 1 of *Capital* are translated by Fowkes as 'role', '*dramatis personae*', 'economic character' and 'social mask' (170, 249, 711, 757), giving the impression that Marx played rather loosely with theatrical metaphors.

13. *Reading Capital*, 300. All italics in original.

14. Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, 757. Translation amended. *Ankleben* is also the verb that Marx uses to illustrate the relationship between the commodity and the fetish-character that clings to it.

15. Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, 138.

16. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 94–95.

17. Louis Althusser, *Lettres à Hélène: 1947–1980*, ed. Olivier Corpet (Paris: Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 2011), 507. Italics in original. It is worth noting that *Erscheinungsform* was rendered as both *la forme phénoménale* and *la forme de manifestation* in the 1872 French translation.

18. Louis Althusser, 'Three Notes on the Theory of Discourses', in *The Humanist Controversy and other Writings*, ed. François Matheron, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2003), 33–84. Warren Montag notes that this is the first use of the term 'interpellation' in Althusser's writings, and offers an excellent account of how Althusser's development of this concept derives from his relationship with Lacanian psychoanalysis, but Montag does not address how Althusser's text is strongly characterised by obsessive and strange use of a German word that he had borrowed from Marx. See Montag, *Althusser and his Contemporaries*, 118–140.

19. Althusser, 'Three Notes', 51.

20. Ibid., 55.

21. The 'Three Notes' are the basis of a never-completed joint work that was intended to be, as Althusser describes it to Balibar, 'a true work of philosophy that can stand as our *Ethics*'. This interest in Spinoza inspires certain redundant and vague formulations in the text that mimic Spinoza's treatment of mind and body in the second book of his *Ethics.* An example is: 'Recruiting ideological subjects, ideological discourse establishes them as ideological subjects at the same time that it recruits them. Thus, in one and the same act, it produces the subjects that it recruits as subjects, establishing them as subjects'. See Althusser, 'Three Notes', 33; 54.

22. Ibid., 52.

23. One of the more important interpretations of this kind can be found in Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 106–131.

24. *MEGA² II.9*, 17, 30, 40, 44, 74.

25. New Left Review Editors, 'Introduction to Nicos Poulantzas', *New Left Review* I/43, (May/June 1967), 55–56. Italics in original.

26. Nicos Poulantzas, 'Marxist Political Theory in Britain' *New Left Review* I/43 (May/June 1967), 66. Two years later, Poulantzas introduced the German word *Träger* into the journal

in his 'The Problem of the Capitalist State', *New Left Review* I/58 (November/December 1969), 67–78.
27. Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 283. This sentence has been redacted from the 2015 edition of *Reading Capital*, and all instances of 'support' have been changed to 'bearer'. Generally speaking, since the 1976 Fowkes translation of *Capital*, 'bearer' has been the standard translation of *Träger*.
28. Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 358. Italics and parenthesis in original.
29. The most conspicuous appearance of the term *Träger* is E.P. Thompson's 1978 *The Poverty of Theory*, where it is the only German term to appear in the entire 200 page critique of Althusser, and appears in more instances than in all of *Capital* and *Reading Capital* combined, often mistakenly in lowercase, as though it were the German word for 'sluggish'. Significantly, Pierre Bourdieu frequently identifies the term *Träger*, as it appeared in Structuralist writing as *support*, as the foil against which he developed the concept of *habitus*. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 41; *The Rules of Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 179.
30. See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 285–6; *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 85–86; Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: Verso, 2006), 117–118.
31. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 85.
32. Friedrich Engels to Joseph Bloch, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton & Co., 1978), 761. Italics in original.
33. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 86.
34. Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms', in *Essential Essays*, vol. 1, ed. David Morley (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 47–70.
35. Stuart Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 103.
36. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 3*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Pelican Books, 1981), 959.
37. Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: New Left Books, 1976), 69.
38. See Henri Lefebvre, *Probleme des Marxismus, heute* [Problems of Marxism Today], trans. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965); Sartre et al., *Existentialismus und Marxismus: Eine Kontroverse zwischen Sartre, Garaudy, Hyppolite, Vigier und Orcel* [Existentialism and Marxism: A Controversy between Sartre, Garaudy, Hyppolite, Vigier and Orcel], trans. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Abenteuer der Dialektik* [Adventures of the Dialectic], trans. Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968); Alfred Schmidt, *History and Structure: An Essay on Hegelian-Marxist and Structuralist Theories of History* [1971], trans. Jeffrey Herf (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981). Although Jürgen Habermas is synonymous with the 'second generation' of Frankfurt School Critical Theory, this periodisation obscures the fact that, whereas Habermas made his rejection of the essence of Adorno's and Horkheimer's respective versions of critical theory readily apparent, Schmidt effectively carried the torch of Adorno and Horkheimer in Frankfurt throughout the final quarter of the twentieth century, and occupied himself in those years with the constellation of materialist concerns that occupy what he calls Adorno's '*Spätwerk*'.
39. Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Verso, 2014), 12–13. Schmidt's monograph, for example, is the only secondary literature on Marx that is cited in *Negative Dialectics*, and with three citations, Schmidt is cited as frequently as all of Adorno's other living colleagues combined. Adorno references or recommends Schmidt's work to his students in many of his posthumously published lectures given in the 1960s.
40. Anderson, *Considerations*, 72–3.
41. Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London: Verso, 1983), 58. Around the time of Adorno's death, it was rather Habermas who was widely recognised as the chief enemy of the student movement in Frankfurt.
42. It is estimated that Adorno spoke on the radio for a general audience on nearly 300 occasions throughout the 50s and 60s. See Michael Schwarz, 'Er redet leicht, schreibt schwer: Theodor W. Adorno am Mikrophon' [He speaks straightforwardly, writes heavily: Theodor W. Adorno at the microphone], *Studies in Contemporary History* 8 (2011), 454–465.
43. Alfred Schmidt, 'Statt eines Vorworts: Geschichte als verändernde Praxis' [In lieu of a foreword: History as transformative praxis], in Alfred Schmidt and Herbert Marcuse, *Existenzialistische Marx-Interpretation* [The Existentialist Interpretation of Marx] (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlaganstalt, 1973), 9.
44. It should be noted that Schmidt's essay is titled 'Adorno – A Philosopher of Real Humanism', and that the contradiction between the essay's title and the affirmation of anti-humanism is intended to demonstrate the possibility of a Marxist humanism that does not take any extant humanisms as its point of departure. Alfred Schmidt, 'Adorno – ein Philosoph des realen Humanismus', in *Kritische Theorie, Humanismus, Aufklärung* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), 27.
45. Adorno's writings are shot through with a nomenclature filled with references to veils and the nexus of blindness [*Verblendungszusammenhang*], which emphasises the illusory and mystificatory character of everyday life. The most recurrent of these terms is Adorno's standard definition of ideology as 'socially necessary semblance', which he derives from Marx's description of commodity fetishism as the 'objective semblance of the social determination of labour' in the first chapter of *Capital*.
46. Adorno, *Philosophische Elemente einer Theorie der Gesellschaft* [Philosophical Elements of a Theory of Society], eds. Tobias ten Brick and Marc Philip Nogueira (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2008), 150. For a longer reflection on Talcott Parsons in which Adorno claims that he finds 'the normative use of the concept of role revolting', see Theodor Adorno and Helmut Becker, 'Education for Maturity and Responsibility', trans. Robert French et al., *History of the Human Sciences* 12:3 (1999), 27. References to the concept of 'character mask' can be found in most of Adorno's published lectures from the 1960s.
47. Adorno, 'Society', trans. Fredric Jameson, in *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 148. Translation amended.
48. Adorno, *Philosophische Elemente einer Theorie der Gesellschaft*,

151.
49. This is the famous '*Busenattentat*', or breast attack, which was part of a wave of occupations and interruptions of Adorno's seminars towards the end of his life that led to a severe depression that likely contributed to his untimely death.
50. It is also worth noting that Adorno's student and mastermind of the Frankfurt SDS, Hans-Jürgen Krahl, favourably cites Rancière's contribution to the original edition of *Lire le capital* in a paper presented in Adorno's philosophy seminar already in the winter semester of 1966/7. See Hans-Jürgen Krahl, *Konstitution und Klassenkampf* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag neuer Kritik, 1971), 31–83. None of the recent scholarship on Althusser acknowledges the Frankfurt engagement with Structuralism. Knox Peden, for example, claims that 'Adorno had nary an interest in Althusser's project'. See *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology*, 142. The opposite allegation is more convincingly proven.
51. Althusser had originally been scheduled to present a paper, and was replaced by Poulantzas at the last minute. This replacement in conjunction with Poulantzas' self-avowed limited facility with German is responsible for a weak defence of Structuralism that lags far behind the level of argumentative sophistication demonstrated by Poulantzas in his other writings published in the late 1960s. For a description of the Frankfurt Colloquium by its organiser, see Kevin Anderson, 'On Marx, Hegel, and Critical Theory in Postwar Germany: A Conversation with Iring Fetscher', *Studies in East European Thought* 50 (1998), 1–27. A rather biased presentation of the event that emphasises the anti-Althusserianism in the air is present in Ernest Mandel's correspondence with Roman Rosdolsky, cited at length in Jan Stutje, *Ernest Mandel: A Rebel's Dream Deferred*, trans. Christopher Beck and Peter Drucker (London: Verso, 2009), 129–131.
52. Nicos Poulantzas, 'Theorie und Geschichte: Kurze Bemerkungen über den Gegenstand des "Kapitals"' [Theory and History: Brief Remarks on the Object of *Capital*], in *Kritik der politischen Ökonomie heute. 100 Jahre 'Kapital'* [The Critique of Political Economy Today: 100 Years of *Capital*], eds. Walter Euchner and Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlaganstalt), 67. Poulantzas' essay was originally written in French, and translated into German by Schmidt for the conference. *Träger* is the only word originally written in German.
53. Discussion of Nicos Poulantzas' paper, in *100 Jahre 'Kapital'*, 73.
54. Marx, *Capital*, *Volume 1*, 255. It should be noted that the metamorphoses of M-C-M' take place only within the capitalist mode of production, and insofar as Schmidt sees a meaningful recapitulation of Hegelian themes in Marx, it is in the essentially conceptual nature of *capitalist* society, its reconfiguration of all human activity as an expression of social labour, and the self-moving character of its reproduction on an expanded scale. This should be differentiated from Marx's notion of the inevitability of crisis brought about by the law of the tendency of the profit rate to fall, which does not occupy a significant place in the Frankfurt interpretation of Marx.
55. Discussion of Alfred Schmidt's paper in *Kritik der politischen Ökonomie heute*, 27. The reconfiguration of Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a kind of self-development of hell was already a hallmark of Adorno's interpretation of Hegel in the 1950s. Adorno writes, 'Satanically, the world as grasped by the Hegelian system has only now, a hundred and fifty years later, proved itself to be a system in the literal sense, namely that of a radically societalized [*vergesellschaftete*] society'. Theodor Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', in *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 27.
56. The *Neue Marx-Lektüre* would be unthinkable without the influence that Adorno's idiosyncratic understanding of Hegel exercised on his students, and recent texts emerging from this interpretative tradition, such as the work of Riccardo Bellofiore, Frank Engster and Werner Bonefeld, have showed a renewed interest in Adorno's philosophical and sociological writings from the 1960s. However, the *NML* is chiefly interested in Adorno's methodological holism, his conception of impersonal forms of economic domination, and the way in which he grounds semblance in social relations, subjectivity in objectivity. Adorno's complex treatment of the longing for freedom that is grounded in the consciousness of unfreedom – which distinguishes him most strongly from Althusser – is of less interest to the *NML*, and Adorno's reflections on culture and on intellectual and aesthetic experience are not accorded any significance by this tradition. For a careful treatment of Adorno's relation to the emergence of the *NML*, as well the most comprehensive account of the effect of French structuralism on the Frankfurt interpretation of Marx, see Ingo Elbe, *Marx im Westen* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010), 47–73.
57. Adorno, 'Sociology and Empirical Research', in Adorno et al., *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, trans. G. Adey and D. Frisby (London: Deinmann, 1976), 35. The term *daseinde Abstraktion* is most closely associated with Hans-Jürgen Krahl, but can also be found in Schmidt's work. It bears many similarities with Alfred Sohn-Rethel's concept of 'real abstraction', and it is worth noting that when Sohn-Rethel was attempting to finally introduce his ideas to an advanced Marxist readership in 1969, he first and foremost wanted Schmidt's critical feedback. See Theodor W. Adorno and Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Briefwechsel 1936-1969*, ed. Christoph Gödde (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1991), 155, 160ff.
58. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 14.
59. Althusser, *For Marx*, 232.
60. Marx, *Capital*, *Volume 1*, 173. Translation amended.
61. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 207. Translation amended.
62. Adorno, 'Society', 147–148. Translation amended.