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Monstrous Times Call for Monstrous Methods. David McNally. *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires, and Global Capitalism*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. 296 pp. ISBN 9781608462339. \$28 pbk.

David McNally's *Monsters of the Market* responds to the current rage for zombie and vampire stories—and the continuing current rage over the 2008 economic meltdown—with an imaginative, ambitious critique of how and why these rages are related. McNally undertakes an extraordinarily vivid and cogent analysis of how zombie and vampire stories "articulate the monstrous forms of everyday-life in a capitalist world-system" (2), using an interdisciplinary approach that combines history, literary and cultural studies, and political economy to "track several genres of monster-stories to explore what they tell us about key symbolic registers in which the experience of capitalist commodification is felt, experienced and resisted" (2). By analyzing "the persistent body-panics that run across the history of global capitalism," McNally's project is a scholarly exercise of Brecht's alienation effect: he aims to restore to the reader a visceral sense of just how monstrous and unnatural life under capitalism is, against the grain of its hegemonic normalization and naturalization, "its elusive everydayness" (2).

And in this project, McNally succeeds to astonishing effect. *Monsters of the Market* is a hugely important book—and a gripping read (not the kind of description a research monograph often merits). In this reader's estimation, the book ranks with seminal works like Stallybrass and White's *Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986) and Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993) as an indispensable text for demystifying everyday life under late capital. *Monsters of the Market* unfolds in three sizeable and subdivided chapters. The first, "Dissecting the labouring body," recounts the early modern institutionalization of anatomical dissection and the bourgeois property annexations of the first enclosures movement, to demonstrate the emergence and ascendance of capitalist everyday life in Europe as a monstrous social transformation. Dissection and enclosures thus provide contexts for an extensive reading of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* as the major cultural statement on everyday life under nascent industrial capital. Here McNally retreads some ground already well covered in prior works, such as Tim Marshall's *Murdering to Dissect* (1995), and he makes the occasional error: "Mary Shelley's working-class readers," he writes, "would immediately have grasped 'the horrors' alluded to by Victor Frankenstein as he describes his 'secret toils' dabbling

'among the unhallowed damp of the grave" (97). The subjunctive in this passage signals the error here: *Frankenstein* had no meaningful working-class audience in the period (as William St Clair shows in *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*), except for stage versions of the novel—which pointedly avoided the novel's radical details like grave-robbing. But McNally demonstrates an otherwise historically rich and textually attentive reading of *Frankenstein* that is crucial to framing the subsequent story he tells: partly for symbolically connecting the early modern emergence of European capitalism to its critique by Marx and to its later imposition on Africa; and partly for recognizing *Frankenstein's* significance as a composite figure of both zombie and vampire, as both an abject assemblage of exploited proletarian mob and an imperious, ruthless hunter of humans.

In the second chapter, "Marx's monsters," McNally reads the first volume of *Capital* in a way that is highly original in its insistent focus on the aesthetic aspects of Marx's major work and its documentary "narratives of the 'monstrous outrages' of capital" (114) that detail the horrors of industrial working life. McNally argues that "Marx's persistent shifts in register and idiom, from complex theoretical mappings of the commodity to metaphorically charged descriptions of the crippling effects of capitalist production on workers' bodies, reflect deeply held views about his object of study, the capitalist mode of production, and about the adequate theoretical protocols for tracking and demystifying it" (116). On this premise, McNally reviews Marx's central concepts - the commodity, value, alienated labour—with reference to Marx's monstrous theorization of them, as in Marx's famous image of capital as "dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour" (qtd. in McNally 140). In the process, this chapter serves as an excellent explanatory introduction to Marx's *Capital*, the kind of introduction that could interest students in a wider range of areas beyond political economy to read *Capital* for the interest of its artistic effects—not to mention its contemporary relevance: chapter two closes by extending Marx's theory to the postwar "financialization" of capital and the global economic crises that have followed it since the turn of the millennium. In this discussion, Enron provides a case study in late capitalism's "occult economy" of "wild money" (163)—an exemplary catastrophe of casino capital.

The extension of Marx to contemporary global capital thus provides a segue to the book's third, fascinating chapter, "African vampires in the age of globalisation." Influenced by Michael Taussig's 1980 study *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (which argues how the introduction of capitalism to non-capitalist societies consistently precipitates representations of devilry and evil), McNally demonstrates how recent incursions of capitalist expansion and neoliberal economic policy into sub-Saharan African states have led cultural production and knowledge traditions in this region to represent global capital through fantastic and diabolical figures of vampirism, zombism, and "new witchcraft" (186). Carefully qualifying his discussions of what witchcraft, fetishism, and monstrosity mean in a subcontinent historically oppressed by European empires and now exploited by neo-imperial supra-state institutions (corporations, the IMF), McNally musters a startling variety of evidence—news articles, Nollywood films, pop music, scholarship, the oeuvre of Ben Okri—to show how consistently the cultural forms and practices of the region understand global capital as monstrous, and how effectively they demystify and expose its monstrosity. Especially teachable points here are McNally's account of the region's postcolonial

modulation of (rather than liberation from) colonial oppressions, and his anatomy of neoliberalism as the driving ideological agenda of economic globalization today: an agenda of privatization and trade liberalization that corrupts state and business leaders, and results in mass impoverishment and dispossession (219).

McNally's work is as productive for the "monstrous transdisciplinarity" of the method it models (x), as for the complex analysis he makes with it. By mixing approaches drawn from history, literary and cultural studies, as well as political economy, into a practice of "surrealist Marxism" (7) for juxtaposing and linking diverse points of the capitalist world system, McNally brings to critical research itself something of the imaginative scope and defamiliarizing charge he reads in the "fantastic genres" of his subject matter: "in seizing upon fabulous images of occult capitalism, critical theory ought to read them the way psychoanalysis interprets dreams—as necessarily coded forms of subversive knowledge whose decoding promises radical insights and transformative energies ... critical theory needs to construct shock-effects" (7). In constructing such shock effects to read interrelated images of global capital, McNally's study succeeds admirably in the breadth of material it integrates as well as the interdisciplinary methodology it models. One minor criticism I would venture about McNally's style of critical writing is that it compulsively adds hyphens where they aren't needed. Consider this sentence: "During the period between the World-Wars, police-recruits in Kampala, for example, often believed that their highly regimented, hierarchical and supervised work-processes disguised a régime of bloodsucking" (200). The surplus of hyphens isn't theorized as part of his methodology's construction of "shock effects," so it is maybe a stylistic quirk, but it is persistently distracting and suggests an opportunity for closer editing.

Turning from a point of style to one of substance, I would also note that, given McNally's imaginative expansion of the vocabulary and procedures of critical theory, the criticisms of postmodernist theory that recur throughout his book seem contradictory, when they are not tangential. McNally takes legitimate objection to the decontextualizing excesses of postmodernist theory, as exemplified by Jean Baudrillard's work for instance (155); but sometimes these objections risk losing the main line of argument, symptomatic perhaps of other research interests intruding on an already sufficiently complex conjunction of theoretical and historical subjects and contexts that the book has put into play. In addition, it seems curious that McNally so categorically rejects postmodernism when his critical method in some ways exemplifies postmodernism. The conclusion in particular exhibits both the preoccupation with popular culture and the textual playfulness that are commonly attributed to postmodernism, in its account of oppositional cultural practices that invoke monsters, and its suggestive critique of Hollywood's historical transformation of zombie characters from mindless producers to ravenous consumers. In the process of this critique, McNally hopefully (if somewhat abstractly) imagines the now ubiquitous "zombie apocalypse" narrative as an image of revolutionary insurrection (258). His reading thus contextualizes and explains the cultural popularity and political ambivalence of all things zombie and vampire in a way that can inform film and genre fiction teaching, and it resonates with the best postmodernist scholarship (e.g. that of Frederic Jameson). Like postmodernism, too, McNally's method involves a high degree of self-reflexivity, in that his critical method of creating "shock effects" is brought to bear on a body of work that has in many ways innovated and advanced this very method, from

Shelley's Gothic novel of industrial horror and Enlightenment hope, to Marx's "radical poetics" for reading capitalism (115), to Okri's reworking of African folklore "to illuminate the dynamic forces tearing at postcolonial capitalism" (233).

The contradiction between McNally's arguably postmodernist method and hostility to postmodernism maybe suggests nothing more, ultimately, than the vicissitudes of translation and reception endured by postmodernist thinking (for which Baudrillard is a fish in a barrel but far from the only fish in the sea); it may also provide an opportunity for further, more sustained theoretical reflection and elaboration on the otherwise creative and forceful critical method that McNally develops here, about which I for one would be keen to read more—and to adapt in my own critical practice. *Monsters of the Market* calls for and models a kind of cultural praxis that appeals to pop culture interests while transforming the procedures of critique, in order to dissect the mysteries—and fight the monstrosities—of a rigged and rapacious global economy that profits Frankensteinian firms at the expense of the people.