

CHAPTER 7



Karl Marx's Shandean Humour: *Scorpion und Felix* and its Aftermath

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Marx is a very funny man, very comic in a very profound way.¹
— C. L. R. JAMES

Introduction: The Funny Side of Karl Marx

Karl Marx is not normally credited with much of a sense of humour. If we think of the opening to *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* [*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*] (1852), then he is of course very well known as what one might call an ironic commentator on the unintentionally humorous outcomes of the world-historic process:

Hegel bemerkte irgendwo, daß alle großen weltgeschichtlichen Tatsachen und Personen sich sozusagen zweimal ereignen. Er hat vergessen hinzuzufügen: das eine Mal als Tragödie, das andere Mal als Farce.²

[Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.]³

But otherwise one is not often tempted to consider Karl Marx himself as a joker, a humourist (we have *Groucho* Marx for that, or at a push Slavoj Žižek, analyst of the 'ticklish subject');⁴ of the 'masters of suspicion' it was Freud who was the Jewish joke-merchant. In the Preface to the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* [*Phenomenology of Spirit*], Hegel writes of the 'Ernst des erfüllten Lebens', 'Ernst des Begriffs', 'Ernst [...] des Negativen',⁵ and Marx, too, is usually viewed as entirely post-Hegelian in respect of this prototypically Germanic earnestness. After all, some of the most serious-minded politics imaginable have been conducted in his name.

On the other hand Marxist humour is certainly not a contradiction in terms, and some of the best jokes have been told about communism.⁶ Likewise Marx himself has often been the butt of others' humour. Perhaps it is the bushy beard, which always lends him such an air of venerable gravitas but which in turn is only too susceptible to ironic debunking — as in the *Monty Python* spoof game show 'World Forum', where Marx, Lenin, Che Guevara and Mao Tse-Tung fail to answer questions about English football, and Marx misses out on winning a lounge suite in

the 'special gift section' because he does not know who won the F.A. Cup Final in 1949.⁷ The Monty Python team derive humour at Marx's expense, from the absurd incongruity between his supposedly proverbial seriousness of purpose (bolstered by the starched-shirt Victorian formality of his appearance), and the slick, American-mannered banality of the quiz-show television format, with Eric Idle as sleazy gameshow presenter and Marx (a false-bearded Terry Jones) the uneasy contestant in a competition for apparently desirable commodities.⁸ Ironically, for such an eminently practical revolutionary, it is the bookish Marx — abstruse denizen of the British Library, author of supposedly dour, detached 'graue Theorie' [grey theory] — whom British humorists have singled out to poke fun at, in more recent times at least. A decade after the Pythons the *Not the Nine O'Clock News* team produced a sketch ('Marxists') featuring members of a revolutionary cell who aim to read the whole of *Capital* together but get only a few lines in before their leader (Mel Smith) abandons the reading with 'Oh, sod it! Let's go and kill someone!', thus turning against Marx his own celebrated eleventh *These über Feuerbach* ('Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden *interpretiert*, es kömmt drauf an, sie zu *verändern*' (*MEW* 3: 7) [The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it (*MECW* 5:5)].⁹ This is, of course, cruel and unfair — in the Preface to *Das Kapital*, Marx warns readers precisely against the difficulty of the opening analysis of commodities (*MEW* 23: 11 / *MECW* 35: 7) — but it is no less well observed for all that. This is not the place to pursue possible Sternean parallels with or influences on the *Monty Python* and *Not the Nine O'Clock News* teams (although, that said, several of their number studied English literature at Oxbridge).¹⁰ In this chapter I want instead to focus on Marx, and explore the possibility that a certain kind of British humour, at least — 'Shandean humour', indeed — may not be so foreign to his work as one might imagine, especially in the early years.

Marx and Sterne

In his very first contribution to the *Rheinische Zeitung*, published (anonymously) on his 24th birthday in May 1842, Marx tackles 'die neueste preußische Zensurinstruktion' [The Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction], and complains among other things that it cramps his style:

Ich bin humoristisch, aber das Gesetz gebietet ernsthaft zu schreiben. Ich bin keck, aber das Gesetz befiehlt, daß mein Styl bescheiden sei. [...] Soll ferner die *Ernsthaftigkeit* nicht zu jener Definition des Tristram Shandy passen, wonach sie ein heuchlerisches Benehmen des Körpers ist, um die Mängel der Seele zu verdecken, sondern den *sachlichen* Ernst bedeuten, so hebt sich die ganze Vorschrift auf. Denn das Lächerliche behandle ich ernsthaft, wenn ich es lächerlich behandle, und die ernsthafteste Unbescheidenheit des Geistes ist, gegen die Unbescheidenheit bescheiden zu sein.

Ernsthaft und bescheiden! welche schwankenden, relativen Begriffe! Wo hört der Ernst auf, wo fängt der Scherz an?¹¹

[I am humorous, but the law bids me write seriously. I am audacious, but the law commands that my style be modest. [...] Further, if seriousness is not to come under Tristram Shandy's definition according to which it is a hypocritical

behaviour of the body in order to conceal defects of the soul, but signifies seriousness *in substance*, then the entire prescription falls to the ground. For I treat the ludicrous seriously when I treat it ludicrously, and the most serious immodesty of the mind is to be modest in the face of immodesty.

Serious and modest! What fluctuating, relative concepts! Where does seriousness cease and jocularity begin?]¹²

In this paradox-courting paean to anti-gravity, the young Marx both lays explicit claim to a humorous, jocular style and posts an explicit allegiance to Sterne in this respect. The definition of ‘gravity’ which he cites here is attributed early in *Tristram Shandy* to ‘a French wit’ (in fact La Rochefoucauld): ‘*A mysterious carriage of the body to cover the defects of the mind*’.¹³ As David Walsh points out, ‘the first significant literary reference in Marx’s initial effort as a revolutionary journalist (his comments on the Prussian censorship in 1842) was drawn from Sterne’s work’.¹⁴ Now scholars of Marx have known of his admiration for Sterne at least since the 1929 republication of this article in the first volume of the *Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe*, which in turn was republished in the 1975 second edition, just in time to be cited, along with other references to Sterne in Marx’s writings, in Siegbert Praver’s classic 1976 study of *Karl Marx and World Literature*.¹⁵ Surprisingly, though, for all the immense amount of scholarly work that has been carried out on Marx, and for all the Marxist readings of Sterne,¹⁶ there has not yet been a single article devoted to Marx and Sterne, never mind a book-length study. Hegel’s interest in Sterne has been previously addressed in the criticism,¹⁷ but Marx’s interest has been neglected, and there is certainly still work to be done in simply tracing Marx’s references and allusions to the novelist. For example, in June 1848, in his first contribution to the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx recycles this selfsame Sterne allusion (if this time unattributed) in order to poke fun at Ludolf Camphausen, newly appointed presidential chair of the Ministry of State in Berlin.¹⁸ Then in his extended 1860 essay *Herr Vogt* Marx explicitly refers to *Tristram Shandy*’s chapter on noses;¹⁹ elsewhere he uses the Shandean term ‘Steckenpferd’ (‘hobby-horse’),²⁰ and so on. There is not a huge amount of material, and Marx appears to confine himself to *Tristram Shandy*, for one thing, indeed to some of the most celebrated passages in it, but that is not to deny the evidently strategic importance of some of his references to Sterne, and of his programmatic confession of allegiance to Shandean humour, on which I shall concentrate in the remainder of this chapter.

Given that Marx himself lays claim to Shandean humour, what can it be said to amount to in his case? One answer has already been given by Marx’s most recent English-language biographer, Francis Wheen: an awful lot. As is perhaps only to be expected from the Deputy Editor of the leading British satirical magazine *Private Eye*, and a regular panellist on the BBC’s topical TV comedy programmes *The News Quiz* and *Have I Got News for You*, Francis Wheen’s prize-winning biography — dubbed by Robert Skidelsky ‘the first “post-Marxist” life of Marx’²¹ — brings this aspect of Marx’s work very much to the fore, and it is this irreverent aspect that was most often picked up by reviewers. Specifically, both in his biography of Marx and in the spin-off book *Marx’s ‘Das Kapital’: A Biography*,²² both of which have been translated into German,²³ Wheen advances the contention that *Das Kapital*

resembles nothing so much as ... Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, and needs to be read as an epic case study in Shandean humour writ large:

Like *Tristram Shandy*, *Capital* is full of systems and syllogisms, paradoxes and metaphysics, theories and hypotheses, abstruse explanations and whimsical tomfoolery. [...] To do justice to the deranged logic of capitalism, Marx's text is saturated, sometimes even waterlogged, with irony — an irony which has yet escaped almost every reader for more than a century.²⁴

I shall return to Wheen's Shandean reading of *Das Kapital* in my final section, for as Wheen acknowledges, this kind of iconoclastic approach to Marx's *Hauptwerk* in fact merely considers it to be a continuation and culmination of 'his first youthful infatuation with Laurence Sterne'.²⁵ And this was an infatuation which had already borne fruit when, by way of recreation, the young law student Marx had dashed off what he called a 'Humoristischer Roman' entitled *Scorpion und Felix*.²⁶

Scorpion und Felix: An Apprenticeship in Shandean Humour

Marx wrote *Scorpion und Felix* in early 1837, five years before the *Rheinische Zeitung* article cited above. It is not clear how much of it he actually finished, because all that survives is a disjointed sequence of two dozen chapters given as a birthday present to his father in April of that year, as an appendix to an anthology of his youthful attempts at poetry. One might think that such a gift would be unlikely to find favour, yet (surprisingly) Marx's father had in fact encouraged him to hone his literary skills. As Sam Stark explains, quoting a letter from father to son the previous December:

Before Hallmark cards, poems were given in Germany as gifts, greetings, signs of affection or respect — general evidence of culture, an important thing for a provincial middle-class teenager looking for a patron. The right sort of poems could be the 'first lever' of a career, as Heinrich Marx put it, could have a 'magic effect', could help to 'create prospects for a good situation and, eventually, to realise them'.²⁷

Marx's early poetry is mostly Heine-clone love poetry dedicated to *his* Jenny, future wife Jenny von Westphalen — indeed he had given one earlier collection the title *Buch der Lieder* (*MEGA*² 1/1: 555–613).²⁸ From a Sternean point of view it is of some interest, perhaps, that these poems thematise stars, 'Sterne', to such an extent (two are entitled 'Lied an die Sterne' [Song to the Stars] (*MECW* 1: 608–09) and 'Die zwei Sterne' [The Two Stars] (*MEGA*² 1/1: 529, 530)). More pertinently, though, Sterne's influence on the early Marx is palpable in the fragments from his 'Humoristischer Roman'. It is not clear when Marx first actually read Sterne, and no copy of *Tristram Shandy* (or any other work by Sterne) remains in his (reconstructed) personal library, but the teenage Marx, at least, had already fallen under Sterne's spell.²⁹

Prawer describes *Scorpion und Felix* as 'heavily dependent on Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and Heine's *Pictures of Travel* in its over-all construction, the cadences of its prose, its sudden, deliberate let-downs, and its verbal cartoons'.³⁰ Formally, Marx's fragmentary novel clearly owes a huge debt to *Tristram Shandy*: 'only' two

dozen disjointed (non-sequentially numbered) chapters from ‘Book 1’ remain, totalling 5,500 words, but it is unclear whether there were ever any more, for much is in any case made of lacunae in a deliberate attempt to baffle the reader. Several characters are introduced, but character development is minimal and plot is effectively eschewed. There is a great deal of playful self-referentiality, including cross-references to missing chapters, and the typography is very ‘busy’ in the Sternean manner, including a line and a half of dashes in Chapter 35 to represent one of the frequent aposiopeses (*MEGA*² 1/1: 698 / *MECW* 1: 627). Non-sequiturs, interpolations, digressivity and bathos are the order of the day, and there is a self-conscious experimentalism about the great variety of themes and styles adopted. The chapters are mostly very short, ranging from the three-page Chapter 21 — subtitled ‘Philologische Grübeleien’ [Philological Broodings] and devoted to cod etymologies of the name of one of the characters (*MEGA*² 1/1: 690–93 / *MECW* 1: 618–21) — down to the two lines of Chapter 12, which in its entirety reads:

‘Ein Pferd, ein Pferd, ein Königreich für’s Pferd’ sprach Richard der dritte,
 ‘Ein Mann, ein Mann, mich selbst für einen Mann’ sprach Grethe. (*MEGA*²
 1/1: 689)

[‘A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!’ said Richard III.
 ‘A husband, a husband, myself for a husband,’ said Grethe.] (*MECW* 1: 617)

Two things are apparent from this sample of Marx’s text: firstly, there is much play with (more or less faithful) literary quotations and allusions in the tradition of learned wit.³¹ Here it is Shakespeare with whom Marx assumes (of course with every justification) that his reader will be familiar, elsewhere it is more Shakespeare, several passages from the Bible, a sizeable quotation from Ovid, a reference to E.T.A. Hoffmann’s gothic novel *Die Elixiere des Teufels* [*The Devil’s Elixirs*], and so on. And those are just the explicit literary references — Sterne, for example, is not among them, although stars/‘Sterne’ are mentioned three times (*MEGA*² 1/1: 688, 698, 702 / *MECW* 1: 616, 626, 631). Secondly, the kind of (*en passant* modishly sexist) humour on display in Chapter 12 is forced and just not funny: in Marx’s hands, Shakespeare’s horse (Marx’s hobby-horse) goes lame.

Thematically speaking, philosophical references in *Scorpion und Felix* include an attack on Lockean ‘Ideenassociationen’ [associations of ideas] in Chapter 16 (*MEGA*² 1/1: 689 / *MECW* 1: 617) and a chapter on knees which could hardly be more clearly modelled on *Tristram Shandy*’s chapter on noses (*MEGA*² 1/1: 694–95 / *MECW* 1: 622). A strong desire to *épater la bourgeoisie* leads to some incongruously high-flown descriptions of bodily functions, and the work’s parodic anticlericalism gives way in places to full-blown blasphemy. Some political themes are taken up which appear significant in the light of Marx’s later career: the (first remaining fragment of the) work opens with a reflection on the rightful ownership of a sum of money (*MEGA*² 1/1: 688 / *MECW* 1: 616), and Chapter 29 features an attack on the right of primogeniture (*MEGA*² 1/1: 696–97 / *MECW* 1: 624–25), but then this kind of knockabout political reference is par for the course in *Tristram Shandy*, too. Other obviously Sternean (or, perhaps better, would-be Sternean) features on display in Marx’s youthful attempt at a novel include a host of mock Latinate names

and a sprinkling of mock-scholarly references (*MEGA*² 1/1: 699 / *MECW* 1: 627), a narrative tone marked by self-deprecation, and a general indulgence of idiosyncrasy. The last chapter we have suggests that the whole novel will be a shaggy-dog story, for it ends bathetically, scatologically, with an apostrophic invocation of the constipation of a dog ('o du fromme Verstopfung!' [O pious *constipation!*]) (*MEGA*² 1/1: 703, *MECW* 1: 632)).

So far, so derivative: on this evidence, Marx was no great loss to literature. Margaret Rose has attempted to salvage the work and sees it as a kind of exorcism, helping Marx to overcome earlier literary and philosophical models through parody. She suggests: '*Scorpion und Felix* [...], in many ways, appears to serve Marx in bringing to the surface the concealed models of his youth at the same time as it frees him from them and from those openly imitated in the poems'.³² This would seem to me to be an overly generous interpretation, though, and others have been less charitable. Writing as early as 1940, H. P. Adams remarks: 'In the humorous prose chapters of "Scorpion and Felix" the influence of Sterne is very obvious, but in the place of Sterne's delicacy there is a too frequent and inconsequent recourse to calculated bathos.'³³ Peter Demetz is even less indulgent:

Die groben Scherze, die an den Haaren herbeigehten literarischen Assoziationen, der ganze chaotische Wust von Wortspielen, verdient kaum den Untertitel 'Ein humoristischer Roman', den Marx seinem Versuche zudachte. Der Dilettant wollte zuviel: da er alle Tugenden Sternes, Jean Pauls, Hippels und E. Th. A. Hoffmanns in einem einzigen Stücke imitierend zu vereinen suchte, mußte sein Versuch ohne Ordnung, Kraft und Wirkung bleiben.³⁴

[The crude jokes, the far-fetched literary associations, the entire chaotic tangle of word-games, scarcely deserve the subtitle 'A Humorous Novel' which Marx intended for his experiment. The dilettante wanted too much: as he sought to combine all the virtues of Sterne, Jean Paul, (early Sterne imitator Theodor Gottlieb von) Hippel and E.T.A. Hoffmann in one single imitative piece, his experiment had to remain lacking in order, power and effect.]

Perhaps the sternest critic of his early literary work was Marx himself, though, for he recognised that the project was ultimately a failure. In November of 1837 he wrote to his father, looking back on his literary activity earlier in the year:

Am Ende des Semesters suchte ich wieder Musentänze und Satyrmusik, und schon in diesem letzten Heft, das ich Euch zugeschickt, spielt der Idealismus durch erzwungenen Humor ('Scorpion und Felix'), durch ein mißlungenes, phantastisches Drama ('Oulanem') hindurch, bis er endlich gänzlich umschlägt und in reine Formkunst, meistens ohne begeisternde Objekte, ohne schwunghaften Ideengang, übergeht. (*MEW* 40: 8)

[At the end of the term, I again sought the dances of the Muses and the music of the Satyrs. Already in the last exercise book that I sent you idealism pervades forced humour (*Scorpion und Felix*) and an unsuccessful, fantastic drama (*Oulanem*), until it finally undergoes a complete transformation and becomes mere formal art, mostly without objects that inspire it and without any impassioned train of thought.] (*MECW* 1: 17)

Marx is his own harshest critic here, and in retrospect it is ironic that he should

reach for the same term with which to chastise himself — ‘formalism’ — as would be levelled in intemperate criticism at so much Soviet literature and art during the century to follow.³⁵ Marx himself admits that the humour of *Scorpion und Felix* is forced: it is clearly ‘Shandean humour’ after a fashion, but it clearly also tries too hard, going through the motions with what one might call a kind of external, tick-box approach to ‘Shandeanism by numbers’, a deliberate mimicry of the style which ultimately fails to rise above the superficial and certainly falls far short of capturing the spirit (by which I mean above all the humanity) of Sterne’s creation.³⁶ The lesson of Marx’s abortive *Scorpion und Felix* — as of so many other Sterne imitations before and since — is that it takes a lot more than this kind of apparatus to be truly funny in a Sternean manner, that no amount of Sternean scaffolding will ensure that (anything other than low-grade) ‘Shandean humour’ results. Lesser literary writers of the late Enlightenment and Romantic periods persisted in churning out derivative pastiches of *Tristram Shandy* for an eager literary market; the best writers of this generation absorbed Sterne and were able to transform the Sternean impulse into something more truly productive by transcending mere imitation.³⁷

Das Kapital: Marx’s Shaggy-Dog Novel

As for Marx, of course after his youthful literary peccadillo he put away such childish things as poetry and humorous novels, and graduated to an illustrious political career. Yet such a pat encapsulation fails to do justice to what one might call the persistence of the Sternean impulse in Marx, too, for one might say that Sterne gets under Marx’s skin more subtly than that. In a very direct sense it does not pay to dismiss *Scorpion und Felix* too summarily, for as Francis Wheen points out,³⁸ the famous 1852 opening to *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, with which I began, is clearly anticipated in Chapter 37 of the abortive novel from fifteen years earlier:

Die ersten sind zu groß für diese Welt, drum werden sie hinausgeworfen. Die letzteren dagegen schlagen Wurzeln in ihr und bleiben, wie man sich denn aus Thatsachen überzeugen kann, denn der Champagner läßt einen bleibenden, widerlichen Beischmack, der Held Cäsar den Schauspieler Oktavian, der Kaiser Napoleon den Bürgerkönig Ludwig Philipp, der Philosoph Kant den Ritter Krug, der Dichter Schiller den Hofrath Raupach, der Himmel Leibnitz die Schulstube Wolf, der Hund Bonifacius dieß Kapitel.

So schlagen die Basen als Bodensatz nieder, aber der Geist verraucht. (MEGA² 1/1: 699–700)

[The first are too great for this world, and so they are thrown out. But the latter strike root in it and remain, as one may see from the facts, for champagne leaves a lingering repulsive aftertaste, Caesar the hero leaves behind him the play-acting Octavianus, Emperor Napoleon the bourgeois king Louis Philippe, the philosopher Kant the carpet-knight Krug, the poet Schiller the Hofrat Raupach, Leibniz’s heaven Wolf’s schoolroom, the dog Boniface this chapter.

Thus the bases are precipitated, while the spirit evaporates.] (MECW 1: 628)

It may be a big stretch to imagine a similarly alchemical transformation of *Scorpion und Felix* into *Das Kapital*, but that is precisely what Wheen claims when he stresses the continuity between Marx’s early literary attempts and later theoretical

masterworks, and reads *Das Kapital* as a glorious instantiation of that same (Sternean) ironic impulse which had characterised the earlier failed novel project:

It is surprising that so few people have even considered the book as literature. *Das Kapital* has spawned countless texts analysing Marx's labour theory of value or his law of the declining rate of profit, but only a handful of critics have given serious attention to Marx's own declared ambition — in several letters to Engels — to produce a work of art.³⁹

Reading *Das Kapital* as literature is like reading the Bible as literature: the text has been treated as holy writ for so long and by so many that such an approach attracts deep suspicion in some quarters, especially given the longstanding suspicion of 'formalist' analysis on the part of Marxism itself. As a result, most commentaries on the text ignore its formal and stylistic qualities altogether, or at best include a cursory treatment of 'The Structure of *Capital*'.⁴⁰ In his recent study *Representing 'Capital'*, Fredric Jameson stresses the text's formal problems (as one would expect from the author of *Marxism and Form*), but seeks to resolve them by means of musical analogies and explicitly rejects literary readings as misguided (even if he cannot resist sneaking in parallels to Tolstoy and Keats himself in a later footnote).⁴¹ Louis Althusser at least appreciates the need to justify the lacuna when he explains at the outset of *Lire le Capital* (1965): 'Nous étions tous des philosophes. Nous n'avons pas lu *Le Capital* en économistes, en historiens ou en littéraires.'⁴² David Harvey, likewise, introduces his highly regarded *Companion to Marx's 'Capital'* by conceding that 'when read as a whole, it is an enormously gratifying literary construction',⁴³ but then proceeds to ignore the text's literary qualities for the rest of his study, in common with the other leading contemporary English-language commentators.⁴⁴ Yet the literary treatment of Marx effectively began over a century ago with the article 'Karl Marx und das Gleichnis' [Karl Marx and Metaphor] by the man who coined the term 'Marxismus' and first edited Marx's literary *Nachlass*, German Social Democrat and Marx biographer Franz Mehring.⁴⁵ A notable early proponent of the literary reading of Marx's *Hauptwerk* was the American critic Edmund Wilson, who in 1940 dubbed Marx the 'Poet of Commodities' and hailed him as 'certainly the greatest ironist since Swift'.⁴⁶ Since the Second World War, interest in Marx's rhetoric has grown apace, with important work being carried out in recent decades by Hayden White, Jacques Derrida and other (post-)structuralist or postmodernist commentators.⁴⁷ Moreover, several critics besides Wheen have focused on the literary ambition of *Das Kapital*, tracing its relation to literary models and to Marx's own earlier literary efforts, ascribing it a literary form of its own (generally melodrama).⁴⁸

Wheen's approach to *Das Kapital* is nevertheless distinctive, for he combines an interest in the work's literary qualities with an interest in its humour, linking both to the Shandean inclinations of Marx's youth. In fact he proposes several styles of reading:

The book can be read as a vast Gothic novel whose heroes are enslaved and consumed by the monster they created [...]; or as a Victorian melodrama; or as a black farce [...]; or as a Greek tragedy [...]. Or perhaps it is a satirical utopia like the land of the Houyhnhnms in *Gulliver's Travels*.⁴⁹

Ultimately, though, When revels in ‘the absurdities to be found in *Capital*’, and finds parallels with Sterne’s ‘comic shaggy-dog novel’ to be the strongest.⁵⁰ To support this claim, he adduces evidence from *Das Kapital* such as the ‘picaresque odyssey through the realms of higher nonsense’ provided by the description, early in Volume 1, of the difference between a coat and twenty yards of linen, or the rich irony of the ‘Digression: On Productive Labour’ from ‘Volume 4’.⁵¹ Following Edmund Wilson, When highlights the comic figure of the vulgar capitalist ‘Mr Moneybags’ introduced in Chapter 6 of the first volume — although it must be said that here the standard English translation of ‘unser Geldbesitzer’ (*MEW* 23: 181) as ‘our friend Moneybags’ (*MECW* 35: 177) heightens the dramatic effect.⁵² After the manner of Gillian Beer analysing *Darwin’s Plots*, When invites us to read *Das Kapital* with a literary sensibility, alert to cross-discourse questions of metaphoricity, characterisation and plot development.⁵³ He dares to take another pot-shot at the po-faced revolutionary titan who figures in so much of the more adulatory, hagiographical reception, and definitively dispels *Das Kapital*’s reputation — ironically reinforced by the *Not the Nine O’Clock News* sketch which I cited at the outset — for being ‘long, verbose, abstruse, [...] one of the most unreadable books of all time’,⁵⁴ ‘boringly literal in [its] scientificity’.⁵⁵ Incidentally, of course, he also sends us back to consider the revolutionary nature of Sterne’s novel, not only in the aesthetic, formal sense but in the progressive political sense, too: to consider, say, the novel’s ‘labour theory of literary value’ or Uncle Toby as a ‘configuration of the nature and cost of social labour in the crucible of empire’.⁵⁶

In likening *Das Kapital* to a work of fiction, and playing up the comic aspects of ‘The First Marx Brother’,⁵⁷ When’s provocative biography has certainly invited criticism, and Robert Skidelsky, for one, rises to the bait:

to treat Marx just as a black satirist, a pamphleteer in the tradition of Swift, or as a literary prankster — to analyse his work, that is, in purely literary terms — is, surely, as When would say, ‘to miss the plot’. *Das Kapital* was not just a satire on ‘Mr. Money Bags’, but a call to revolution, based on what purported to be a ‘scientific’ analysis of capitalism.⁵⁸

Now this reductive characterisation is itself unfair, for When does not analyse *Das Kapital* ‘in purely literary terms’, but it is true that he unrepresentatively exaggerates the importance of the book’s humorous aspects in the service of his own comic effect (so that one might term his a kind of meta-Sternean reading in this regard). After all, *Das Kapital* did not acquire its fearsomely rebarbative reputation for no reason: drawing heavily on government reports, it includes many passages of dry statistical and historical analysis which Marx makes no attempt to leaven with levity, and much of the story it tells is no laughing matter, anatomising as it does the grimly exploitative — if not outright murderous — practices of industrial enterprise in mid-century England.

The fact remains, though, that *Das Kapital* does tell a story, and it tells it well, bringing to bear a fine literary sensibility in the process. As Stanley Edgar Hyman remarks: ‘Like a poet, Marx strives to summon up an immediacy of sensation, to make the reader feel the experience itself.’⁵⁹ To this end, a key trope mobilised throughout the text is personification: Marx enlivens his subject-matter by focusing

much of the time not on capital but on the figure of the capitalist, who we are repeatedly told is nothing other than 'personifiziertes, mit Willen und Bewußtsein begabtes Kapital' [capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will] (*MEW* 23: 168, *MECW* 35: 164).⁶⁰ The dialectic of capitalism is inherently dramatic, but Marx is not content merely to pit abstract forces against one other, and instead dramatises the contesting agents for stylistic effect, creating a series of what sociologist Max Weber would later call *Idealtypen* [ideal types]. Not only the capitalist but also the landlord, the worker and wage-labourer are admitted to be personifications of otherwise inanimate forces,⁶¹ and indeed Marx assembles a whole cast list of 'character mask'-wearing antagonists which includes 'der Geldbesitzer', as we have seen, but also such specimens as 'der Freihändler vulgaris' [the Free-trader Vulgaris] (*MEW* 23: 190, *MECW* 35: 186), 'die Herrn Fabrikanten' [our friends the manufacturers] (*MEW* 23: 501, *MECW* 35: 479) and 'der Vulgärökonom' [the vulgar economist] (*MEW* 25: 826, *MECW* 37: 805).⁶² Moreover, capital has a life of its own (*MEW* 24: 156 / *MECW* 36: 158), and is variously ascribed a 'Lebensgeschichte' [life history] (*MEW* 23: 161; 24: 157, 194 / *MECW* 35: 157), 'Lebensprozeß' [life process] (*MEW* 23: 329 / *MECW* 35: 315) or 'Lebenstrieb' [life impulse] (*MEW* 23: 247 / *MECW* 35: 241), even outside its 'investment' in the figure of the capitalist. Like Hegel's *Geist*, 'Monsieur le Capital' (*MEW* 25: 838 / *MECW* 37: 817) is accorded (grammatical) agency countless times in the course of the book, not least in the lurid guises of the ghosts and vampires which have dominated critical appreciations of Marx's metaphors in recent years.⁶³ Like Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *Das Kapital* has been likened to a *Bildungsroman* with capital as its ironic (anti-)hero,⁶⁴ whose progress is staged for vivid effect in a series of vignettes, at least some of which are clearly humorous in intent (as is signalled surprisingly often by an ironic exclamation mark). At the very least, then, we can say, with Hyman, that '*Capital* is sometimes quite funny, in a sardonic fashion', for among other things it is 'a tissue of puns and word-play, most of them untranslatable.'⁶⁵

When's biography has the great merit of popularising the literary reading of Marx's work and has itself found a receptive readership (in over twenty languages) in our largely post-Marxist age, in turn provoking further literary investigations.⁶⁶ Like Sterne surveying the fictional world of *Tristram Shandy*, Marx finds many aspects of capitalism simply 'laugh-at-able',⁶⁷ but it would be going too far to call *Das Kapital* a Sternean novel *tout court*, since its Sternean features form part of an eclectic ensemble of literary influences which also include, for example, Swiftian satire (as When himself readily acknowledges). In reading Marx's *magnum opus* against the grain and linking it back to the early humorous impulse of *Scorpion und Felix*, When nevertheless alerts us to what one might call, in Sternean manner, some of the *Eigenheiten* [peculiarities] in Marx's rambling, incomplete masterpiece, and confirms that there is Shandean humour to be found in even the unlikeliest of places.

Notes to Chapter 7

1. Cited in Barry Baldwin, 'Marx for Kapital Pun-ishment?', *Morning Star*, 2 March 2011.
2. *Marx-Engels-Werke* (hereafter *MEW*), 43 vols (Berlin: Dietz, 1956–90), VIII, p. 115.
3. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, trans. by Saul K. Padover, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* (hereafter *MECW*), 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975–2004), XI, p. 103. See also the predecessor to this remark in the Introduction to 'Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie' [A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, 1843–4]: 'Die letzte Phase einer weltgeschichtlichen Gestalt ist ihre Komödie' (*MEW* 1: 382) ['The last phase of a world-historical form is its comedy', *MECW* 3: 179].
4. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: An Essay in Political Ontology* (London and New York: Verso, 1999). See also Žižek's *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London and New York: Verso, 2009).
5. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Werke in 20 Bänden*, ed. by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), III, pp. 14, 24: 'seriousness of a fulfilled life', 'seriousness of the concept', 'seriousness [...] of the negative', trans. by Terry Pinkard.
6. See Ben Lewis, *Hammer & Tickle: A History of Communism Told Through Communist Jokes* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008).
7. 'World Forum — Communist Quiz', *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, Episode 25, first broadcast BBC2, 15 December 1970. On Monty Python and Marx, see Patrick Croskery, 'Monty Python and the Search for the Meaning of Life', in *Monty Python and Philosophy: Nudge Nudge, Think Think!*, ed. by Gary L. Hardcastle and George A. Reisch (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2006), pp. 161–71 (especially pp. 163–64).
8. Jones reprised his role for the sketch 'The Philosophers' Football Match', where Marx claims that Socrates' late headed winner is offside (*Monty Pythons fliegender Zirkus*, Episode 2, first broadcast ARD, 18 December 1972).
9. *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, Series 3, Episode 5, first broadcast BBC2, 24 November 1980.
10. Eric Idle studied English at Pembroke College, Cambridge; Terry Jones studied English at St Edmund Hall, Oxford; Griff Rhys Jones read History and English at Emmanuel College, Cambridge.
11. Marx, 'Bemerkungen über die neueste preußische Zensurinstruktion' (1842), *Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe*, 2nd edn (hereafter *MEGA*²) (Berlin: Dietz, 1975–), 1/1, pp. 100–01.
12. Marx, 'Comments on The Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction' (1842), trans. by Clemens Dutt (*MECW* 1: 112–13).
13. Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. by Melvyn New and Joan New, 3 vols (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978), 1, pp. 28–29 (ch. 11).
14. David Walsh, 'Not a film review, properly speaking: Michael Winterbottom's *Tristram Shandy*', World Socialist Web Site, 16 March 2006 <<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2006/mar2006/tris-m16.shtml>> [accessed 12 September 2012].
15. S. S. Prawer, *Karl Marx and World Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976).
16. Most notably by Georg Lukács and Viktor Shklovsky: see John Neubauer and Neil Stewart, 'Shandean Theories of the Novel: From Friedrich Schlegel's German Romanticism to Shklovsky's Russian Formalism', in *The Reception of Laurence Sterne in Europe*, ed. by Peter de Voogd and John Neubauer (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 259–79.
17. See also Tommaso Pierini's contribution, chapter five in this volume.
18. Marx, 'Camphausens Erklärung in der Sitzung vom 30. Mai', *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 3 (3 June 1848) (*MEW* 5: 25) / 'Camphausen's Statement at the Session of May 30' (*MECW* 7: 30).
19. Marx, *Herr Vögt* (*MEW* 14: 601 / *MECW* 17: 245).
20. See *MEW* 4, 192 (*MECW* 6: 221); *MEW* 14: 491 (*MECW* 17: 134).
21. Robert Skidelsky, 'What's Left of Marx?' [review of Francis Wheen, *Karl Marx: A Life*], *New York Review of Books*, 47.18 (16 November 2000), 24–27 (p. 24).
22. Francis Wheen, *Marx's 'Das Kapital': A Biography* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006).
23. Wheen, *Karl Marx*, trans. by Helmut Ettinger (Munich: Bertelsmann, 2001); and *Francis Wheen über Karl Marx, 'Das Kapital'*, trans. by Kurt Neff (Munich: dtv, 2008).

24. Wheen, *Karl Marx* (London: Fourth Estate, 1999), p. 308; cf. Wheen, *Marx's 'Das Kapital'*, p. 42.
25. Wheen, *Karl Marx*, p. 307.
26. See Marx, 'Einige Kapitel aus: *Scorpion und Felix. Humoristischer Roman*' (*MEGA*² 1/1: 688–703) / 'Some Chapters from *Scorpion and Felix: A Humorous Novel*', trans. by Alick West (*MECW* 1: 616–32).
27. Sam Stark, 'The Violet Notebook', *The Believer*, 6.2 (February 2008), 13–19 (p. 14).
28. On Marx's early poetry, see: Marcel Ollivier, 'Karl Marx poète', *Mercur de France*, 243/836 (15 April 1933), 260–84; William M. Johnston, 'Karl Marx's Verse of 1836–1837 as a Foreshadowing of his Early Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28.2 (April–June 1967), 259–68; Prawer, *Karl Marx and World Literature*, pp. 4–22. On the young Marx and Heine, see: Nigel Reeves, 'Heine and the Young Marx', *Oxford German Studies*, 7 (1973), 44–97; Jeffrey L. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine: A Modern Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 260–65; Ritchie Robertson, *Heine*, 2nd edn (London: Halban, 2005), pp. 68–70; David Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx: German Philosophy, Modern Politics, and Human Flourishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 29–31.
29. For Marx's library, see *MEGA*² 4/32: *Vorauspublikation zu: Die Bibliotheken von Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels. Annotiertes Verzeichnis des ermittelten Bestandes*, ed. by Hans-Peter Harstick, Richard Sperl, and Hanno Strauß (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999). On the wider context of nineteenth-century German Sterne reception, see my article "'Sterne-Bilder": Sterne in the German-Speaking World', in *The Reception of Laurence Sterne in Europe*, ed. by Peter de Voogd and John Neubauer (London and New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), pp. 68–84, 288–96.
30. Prawer, *Karl Marx and World Literature*, p. 15.
31. See D. W. Jefferson, 'Tristram Shandy and the Tradition of Learned Wit', *Essays in Criticism*, 1 (1951), 225–48; and more recently Judith Hawley, 'Tristram Shandy, Learned Wit, and Enlightenment Knowledge', in *The Cambridge Companion to Laurence Sterne*, ed. by Thomas Keymer (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 34–48.
32. Margaret A. Rose, *Reading the Young Marx and Engels: Poetry, Parody and the Censor* (London: Croom Helm; Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), p. 40.
33. H. P. Adams, *Karl Marx in his Earlier Writings* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1940), p. 21.
34. Peter Demetz, *Marx, Engels und die Dichter: Ein Kapitel deutscher Literaturgeschichte*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main and Berlin: Ullstein, 1969), p. 57.
35. Most notably, in 1936 Shostakovich's second opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* was denounced by a *Pravda* editorial for its 'petit-bourgeois formalism'.
36. Despite the weaknesses of Marx's early literary experiment, it served the contemporary British artist Liam Gillick as inspiration for his recent show 'Scorpion or Felix', which premiered at the Galerie Eva Presenhuber in Zurich (March–April 2012: <http://presenhuber.com/en/exhibitions/2012/Gillick_2012_3.html> [accessed 12 September 2012]) before crossing the Atlantic for exhibition (as 'Scorpion and und et Felix') at the Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York City (May–June 2012: <http://www.caseykaplangallery.com/exhibitions/2012/liam_gillick/01.html> [accessed 12 September 2012]). Bizarrely, someone has even created a 'Scorpion and Felix' Facebook page: <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Scorpion-and-Felix/186329034744836>> [accessed 12 September 2012].
37. This was the case with Goethe, who in the 1760s began showing his enthusiasm for Sterne by writing a derivative poem on noses, but much later on, at the end of his literary career in the 1820s, professed a continuing indebtedness to Sterne which can only be demonstrated much more subtly. See my article 'Goethe, Sterne and the Question of Plagiarism', in *Goethe at 250: London Symposium / Goethe mit 250. Londoner Symposium*, ed. by T. J. Reed, Martin Swales, and Jeremy Adler (Munich: iudicium, 2000), pp. 85–108.
38. Wheen, *Karl Marx*, pp. 25–26.
39. Francis Wheen, 'The Poet of Dialectics', *The Guardian*, 8 July 2006.
40. See Ben Fine and Laurence Harris, *Rereading Capital* (London: Macmillan; New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 15–18; Allen W. Wood, *Karl Marx* (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), pp. 219–22.
41. See Fredric Jameson, *Representing 'Capital': A Reading of Volume One* (London and New York: Verso, 2011), pp. 4, 13, 74 and 74 n. 52.

42. Louis Althusser, 'Du "Capital" à la philosophie de Marx', in Louis Althusser, Étienne Balibar, Roger Establet, Pierre Macherey and Jacques Rancière, *Lire le Capital*, 2nd edn (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), pp. 1–79 (here, p. 4): 'We were all philosophers. We did not read *Capital* as economists, historians or literary specialists.'
43. David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's 'Capital'* (London and New York: Verso, 2010), p. 2.
44. See Anthony Brewer, *A Guide to Marx's 'Capital'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and Ben Fine and Alfredo Saad-Filho, *Marx's 'Capital'*, 5th edn (London and New York: Pluto Press, 2010). Even Stephen Shapiro's *How to Read Marx's 'Capital'* (London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2008) neglects the text's formal features.
45. Franz Mehring, 'Karl Marx und das Gleichnis', *Die Neue Zeit*, 26.1 (1908), 851–84.
46. Edmund Wilson, 'Karl Marx: Poet of Commodities' [review of *Das Kapital*], *New Republic*, 102.2 (8 January 1940), 46; and *To the Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History* (London: Phoenix, 2004), p. 286. Cf. Wheen, *Karl Marx*, pp. 308–10.
47. See Pamela Hansford Johnson, 'The Literary Achievement of Marx', *Modern Quarterly*, New Series, 2 (Summer 1947), 239–44; Eduard Kölwel, *Von der Art zu Schreiben: Essays über philosophische und dichterische Ausdrucksmittel* (Halle: Sprache und Literatur, 1962), pp. 130–59; Jacques Derrida, 'La mythologie blanche: La métaphore dans le texte philosophique', in *Marges: de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), pp. 255–58; Sarah Kofman, *Camera obscura: de l'idéologie* (Paris: Galilée, 1973); David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (London: Macmillan; New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 44; Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), pp. 281–330; Helmut Hirsch, 'Zur Sprache von Karl Marx: Aus der Sicht eines Historikers und Publizisten', *Muttersprache*, 93.5–6 (1983), 293–305, and 'Karl Marx als Dichter: Zur Sprache von Karl Marx aus der Sicht eines Historikers und Publizisten. Teil II', *Muttersprache*, 94.6 (1984), 435–49; Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993); Thomas Keenan, 'The Point is to (Ex)Change It: Reading "Capital," Rhetorically', in *Fables of Responsibility: Aberrations and Predicaments in Ethics and Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 99–133; Terrell Carver, *The Postmodern Marx* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).
48. See Wylie Sypher, 'Aesthetic of Revolution: The Marxist Melodrama', *Kenyon Review*, 10.3 (Summer 1948), 431–44; Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Tangled Bank: Darwin, Marx, Frazer and Freud as Imaginative Writers* (New York: Atheneum, 1962); Praver, *Karl Marx and World Literature*, ch. 12 (pp. 307–47); Robert Paul Wolff, *Moneybags Must Be So Lucky: On the Literary Structure of 'Capital'* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988); Thomas M. Kemple, *Reading Marx Writing: Melodrama, the Market, and the 'Grundrisse'* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).
49. Wheen, 'The Poet of Dialectics'.
50. Wheen, *Karl Marx*, pp. 306–07.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 307, 308–09.
52. See Kemple, *Reading Marx Writing*, p. 221.
53. See Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
54. Niall Ferguson, 'Full Marx', *Financial Times*, 17/18 August 2002.
55. Carver, *The Postmodern Marx*, p. 9.
56. See, respectively, Scott R. MacKenzie, 'Homunculus Economicus: Laurence Sterne's Labour Theory of Literary Value', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 18.1 (2005), 49–80; and Carol Watts, *The Cultural Work of Empire: The Seven Years' War and the Imagining of the Shandean State* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 98.
57. Wheen, 'The First Marx Brother', *The Observer*, 3 October 1999.
58. Skidelsky, 'What's Left of Marx?', p. 26. Terry Eagleton, by contrast, gave the book a glowing review ('Nothing to Lose but his Change', *The Observer*, 3 October 1999).
59. Hyman, *The Tangled Bank*, p. 135.
60. For the capitalist as the personification of capital, see also *MEW* 23: 16, 326, 328, 618; *MEW* 24: 120, 121, 131, 470; *MEW* 25: 274, 295, 300–01, 386, 827, 832, 886–87, 888. For the trope of personification, see I. I. Rubin, 'Reification of Production Relations among People and

- Personification of Things', in *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, trans. by Miloš Samardžija and Fredy Perlman (Detroit, MI: Black & Red, 1972), pp. 21–30; Hyman, *The Tangled Bank*, p. 138; Mark Neocleous, 'Staging Power: Marx, Hobbes and the Personification of Capital', *Law and Critique*, 14.2 (May 2003), 147–65, and 'The Personification of Capital', in *Imagining the State* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003), pp. 78–87; Ivan Ascher, 'All the Wor(l)d's a Stage: Persons and Personification in Karl Marx's *Capital*', unpublished paper presented at the ECPR workshop 'Metaphor in Political Science', University of Granada, April 2005.
61. For the worker (*Arbeiter*), see *MEW* 23: 258; for the landlord (*Grundeigentümer*), see *MEW* 23: 16; 25: 802, 829, 832–33; for the wage-labourer (*Lohnarbeiter*), see *MEW* 25: 886–87.
62. For the image of the *dramatis personae*, see *MEW* 23: 125, 191.
63. See Chris Baldick, 'Marx's Vampires and Grave-Diggers', in *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 121–40; Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*; Ken Gelder, 'Marx and the Vampires', in *Reading the Vampire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 20–23; Carver, 'Spectres and Vampires: Marx's Metaphors', in *The Postmodern Marx*, pp. 7–23; Mark Neocleous, 'The Political Economy of the Dead: Marx's Vampires', *History of Political Thought*, 24.4 (Winter 2003), 668–84; Riccardo Bellofiore, 'A Ghost Turning into a Vampire: The Concept of Capital and Living Labour', in *Re-Reading Marx: New Perspectives after the Critical Edition*, ed. by Riccardo Bellofiore and Roberto Fineschi (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 178–94.
64. See Jean Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel*, 2 vols (Paris: Aubier, 1946); and Kurt Heinzelman, *The Economics of the Imagination* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), p. 182.
65. Hyman, *The Tangled Bank*, p. 148.
66. Explicitly following Wheen's lead, Anna Kornbluh reads *Das Kapital* as a Victorian novel, focusing on the tropes of personification and metalepsis. See 'On Marx's Victorian Novel', *Mediations*, 25.1 (Fall 2010), 15–37.
67. Laurence Sterne, *The Letters*, ed. by Melvyn New and Peter de Voogd, 2 vols (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009), 1, p. 80 (letter to his publisher Robert Dodsley, 23 May 1759).