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# Marx in Calcutta

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*This paper considers the importance of examples from India in the text of Marx's Capital. In tracking Marx's preoccupations, it is possible to show the relevance, especially for today, of his critique in a global frame, as political economy pivots and returns to its sources. Along the way, countering misreading and mistranslation, it becomes possible to see why studies of the agrarian, trading route and subaltern histories of capital in relation to the subcontinent, as well as of market spaces and early commercial exchange in Asia, are crucial for rethinking Marxist approaches to urbanism today. Targeting the archetypal corporate entity of his time, and its ideological supporters, the themes of tribute, exoticism, animals and the slave trade restore a reading practice that owes as much to Marx's biography as to any one Marxist mode of analysis. The idea of a postcolonial, vegetarian or saffron Marx is not on the cards—since Asia is not simply a place to which Marx goes—but a more careful and at the same time experimental reading can perhaps restore enthusiasm for the critique of political economy and provide ways of teaching old texts that remain relevant, and by remaining relevant, indicate what is to be done.*

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**Key words:** exchange, East India Company, urban marketplace, tribute, Asia, animals, slavery

**W**hat if the urban site and example par excellence in the analysis of capitalism were not Manchester but Calcutta? If it wasn't for some accidents of history . . .

## Engels considered a post in Calcutta

In the aftermath of the summer of 1848, when the defeat of the revolution had so disappointed the prophecies of the *Communist Manifesto*—‘*ein gespenst geht um in Europa*’—Friedrich Engels was visited by his father. The family was disturbed by the son's adventures, the Prussian Police were on his trail (in the same week they arrested associates of Marx and searched their houses, prompting both Marx and Engels to

burn letters and documents) and his mother threatened to cut off financial support because in his journalism he had been spreading ‘the sin’ of communism (letter to Engels, January 1851). During the visit, Engels *père* suggests a post in India as a possible destination for developing business activities for the family firm (Hunt 2009, 211). Probably not too much should not be made of it, but it seems both Marx and Engels from the start were looking beyond Europe, thinking of cities afar.

The details are best set out in a now superseded two volume biography of Engels by Gustav Mayer: ‘In order to make it harder for him to resume revolutionary activities, his father tried to find him a post in Calcutta. Engels would rather have gone to New York, for Marx would have gone with him’ (Mayer

1936, 130). Ever the young rebel, Friedrich chooses to stay in Manchester, and the rest, as they say, is history.

An argument of this paper is that despite the unrequited prospect of New York, Marx seems always to be heading East, and doing so with Engels' significant encouragement, and funds. After the death of his wife Jenny, and sick with pleurisy and a bronchial condition that plagued his final years, Marx was sent, by Engels, first to Marseilles and then to Algiers. Occasionally a retrospective reassessment of Marx's final years has been forward and in recent years several books have taken up Marx's first physical move out of Europe. The texts are biographical in tone, one even intended as a screenplay for an unmade film, *Die Letzte Reise* by Hans Jürgen Krysmanski (2014) who follows the earlier *Marx in Algier* by Marlene Vesper (1995). These sit alongside more general re-evaluations in Thomas Patterson's *Karl Marx: Anthropologist* (2009); and Kevin Anderson's *Marx at the Margins* (2010). Anderson has also been important, alongside others, for promoting volumes added to the Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe (the MEGA). These reveal for the first time work hinted at in the *Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, released in 1974, and promise transcriptions of the almost 30,000 pages Marx filled in his last decade. Study of these notes, alongside the release and translation of the early drafts of *Capital*, will occupy a special place in Marx historiography for years to come (see Pradella 2015). What notebooks Marx filled in Africa remains unclear, but as he headed away from London looking for warmer air, his letters make clear that his powers survived intact, and he treats himself to a haircut, shave and new coat.

If I say not much should be made of it, nevertheless, it is fun to ask about the shape *Capital* would have taken had its examples come not from Manchester but from Calcutta. Or from New York, Marseilles or Algiers. This text takes up the India connection because the record is full of cases showing Marx inclined towards Bengal and

the subcontinent—*Capital* is replete with evidence of reading and interests and metaphors of veils and idols and weavers. Not just the weavers from Silesia, who feature in the early thinking of both Engels and Marx, but for Marx also the weavers of Bihar, and India more generally. Weavers were most heavily exploited under mercantile capital, colonialism and with emergent industrial capital, the development of mechanisation—the fascination with which Marx reports on Ned Ludd and the frame-breakers and his interest in the lace-workers of Nottingham are not unrelated to his observations, informed often by Engels, of the state of exports in cotton goods and the like. Engels happily supplies Marx details on request, and writes for example with relish at the glut of product in the districts near Manchester at a time when of the East India Company (hereafter EIC) is in trouble—‘What is certain is that East India is overstocked and that for months past sales there have been made at a loss’ and his assessment is that prospects are promising, as ‘there will sooner or later be a fine old crash . . . as will warm the cockles of your heart’ (Engels letter to Marx, 23 September 1851). It is a matter of record that instead of tracking overproduction in Calcutta, Engels stays with the glutinous ‘cottonopolis’ traders in the North of England. Mary Burns accompanied him—they had been living together in Brussels in 1846, and for many years Engels maintained a second residence, with Mary, in the inner Manchester suburb of Hulme. Marx was in London, among the many refugees from June. Given half the chance, Marx and Mary might have travelled with Engels as far as India, we would have to wonder whether the climate would be well-suited to writing by a man congenitally conditioned to moan about his aches and pains and often having to stand up to read. He would also not need a coat. So if the proposed emigration had gone ahead, to what degree would *Capital* look different filled with examples from the godowns of the EIC, sweated labour, indigo and opium, rather than the details on the

Manchester cotton trade that both Mary and Friedrich shipped wholesale to Marx?

The conceit of this relocation is wild enough to be dismissed or retained on its flimsy merits. Yet, on presenting an early version of this paper at Princeton University, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak quipped in response—do we really need more Marxists in Bengal? Perhaps not, but my gamble is that we do need more imagination, to see what reading *Capital* in the city might be about today, and indeed, perhaps it could be a bit more than important to pay attention to the Marxists we do have from Bengal. Spivak's work on Marx has always been my guide (Spivak 1985, 1993, 1995, 1999, 2012),<sup>1</sup> as is that of those commentators that seek the fringes of orthodox value theory, while I am sure there is still something to learn, and stories to tell, of a subcontinental Marx. The texts are readily available: Irfan Habib's *Essays on Indian History* (1995), is especially important for understanding what Marx did write on India; the whole of the subaltern studies school can trace its lineage back to Ranajit Guha's book, *A Rule of Property for Bengal* (1963); and it is important to keep close books like Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Rethinking Working-Class History* (1989); Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory*, which dropped like a brick in a stagnant pond among Melbourne postgraduates in 1992; and Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993) for its cross disciplinary critique. The conceit is not profound, but allows me to ask what *Capital* might have been if Marx had access to the kind of archives and analysis that Bengali historians have mined to such good effect since—even as their works are insufficiently read beyond their historical period and geographical/area studies confines. This paper also advocates for the learning experience of reading the detail in this rich literature, not just Marx's sources but those also produced subsequently. Guha, introducing the Burdwan District Records in 1956, for example, distinguishes different forms of land and labour rental (rent in kind, zamindar usury etc), with produce-rent less unstable for

the peasant producers than 'the harassing uncertainties of the currency' (2009, 49). Others cited in this essay, such as Murari Jha (2013), Anand Yang (1998), Lakshmi Subramanian (1999, 2008, 2010) and Rila Mukherjee (2006, 2013) open up new routes for analysis of the market, the trading environment, the bazaar and the urban space and all more or less informed by the vigour of Marxist debates in Bengal and needed all the more globally because of what is to come. As is already evident in this century, Marx will need to be there because the analysis of capitalism, or whatever is that is replacing it, will necessarily have a significant Asian dimension, and the stakes are so high that neither the past, present nor the future can be left to the Hindutva revisionists.

### Marx Gets a make-over in Algiers

We do not yet have a lot of text relating to Marx's visit to Algiers, but we can, as if habitually, take up the allegory of a coat—in this case a garment so heavy that it seemed something like a rhinoceros hide. Concern for this rhinoceros would in turn be invoked by Marx, reflexively, and can be postulated as a key to uncover a renewed appreciation of Marx's textual appropriations of India, connecting to almost every theme of his critique. What is meant by this is that we can benefit from re-reading the market for exchange in the gifts of the past, even the very far past, and even as it has been long acknowledged that a gift is never just a gift (Derrida 1991, 157), neither does the first exchange happen just at 'the boundaries' of 'the ancient Indian community', as Marx had suggested at one point in *Capital*.<sup>2</sup> Instead of locating origins however, I want to consider the what and why, and I argue that colonial era traffic in gifts given to smooth political manoeuvrings generate a global market (not only) for Indian animals: the gift of a rhinoceros for example.

The rhinoceros is not just a metaphor. In 1506 Afonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese

second viceroy of India, arrives in the sub-continent, and with superior ships, brutally (Ahmed 2012, 172) secures control of the Indian Ocean for Portugal, over against the Ottomans, for the next one hundred years. It was not an insignificant moment in a vast body of water and coastline that might be thought of as the site of the first globalisations, with Asian and Arabic trade running for millennia.<sup>3</sup> Portugal then extends its trading, as the Ottomans and others had done before, as far as Malacca on the Malay Peninsula and through the Indonesian Archipelago, seeking the fabled spice-islands in the Moluccas. In India, Albuquerque wanted to build a fort at Diu, Gujarat, and to negotiate this in 1514 sent envoys with gifts to Sultan Muzafar II, the ruler of Cambay. Muzafar refuses the request, in turn sending, as is the way, gifts for Albuquerque to take to the Portuguese King. This return gift included a Gujarati Rhinoceros named Ganda, and his keeper Ocem. While not the only rhinoceros story I want to tell, this one circumnavigates Africa, being shipped back to Portugal via Madagascar, St Helena and then stops in Marseilles when the Portuguese King decides, in 1516, to send it on to the Pope in the Vatican City. This Pope had, apparently, been thrilled at a gift the previous year of a white elephant (the term 'white elephant' as a gift has connotations of grudging respect or insult; such a gift was used by Thai kings as a way to keep a rival for the throne busy looking after a difficult but treasured animal). The Pope's rhinoceros however, does not survive. Exhibited for a time at the Château d'If, outside Marseilles, the island prison fort made famous by Alexandre Dumas in his novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1845), the onwards ship to Rome floundered near Porto Venere, and the much travelled Ganda, shackled to the deck, sadly drowned. Ocem is also missing from the record.

It is possible that while he was in transit to Algiers, Marx heard tell of or even saw the Albrecht Dürer woodcut print of a certain rhinoceros. He certainly passed by the Isle

d'If, sailing on the 'Said', skippered by a talkative and well-informed sea-captain (Vesper 1995, 13). Leaving Europe, thinking of Dürer as another skilled Nuremburg artificer, Marx might well have indulged nostalgically in terms of a lifetime review (Vesper 1995, 114). We have little evidence beyond a few letters, such as those to his daughters where we can see him speculating over the contemporary heritage of the *Arabian Nights*, in evocation of his lost grandson, and perennially rethinking land ownership and agriculture.<sup>4</sup> But in bringing together the themes of his work, the Nuremburg example appeals, since in 1515 Dürer, a print-maker rather than a watchmaker of that city, made a woodcut of a Rhinoceros *without* having seen the animal, working from sketches. The watchmakers of Nuremburg served prominently in *Capital* as an example of co-operative labour, but it was the architect making a plan before starting to build that distinguished human creativity from the instinct of bees, an example Marx took from Hegel very likely to have been recalled if the Dürer story moved him as I assume. Such profound associations are not indicated in the prison museum and exhibition on the island of d'If today, but a print from Dürer's woodcut is exhibited alongside paraphernalia from Dumas's opiate-fuelled fiction, and an Indian rhinoceros is thereby linked with one of Marx's favourite bourgeois authors, and Nuremburg and Hegel by a curiously plausible train of thought.<sup>5</sup> Reconstructing all this as a sequence is all the more plausible, in that second last year of his life, so soon after losing his wife and partner in writing and struggle, Jenny, if Marx had indeed heard about the animal and saw the Dürer print. The confirmation is that our bronchial patient, enroute to a final make or break cure, risks a kind of heavy joke in a letter to a friend when he writes to Engels on reaching Algiers to say, also by way of both Don Quixote and the 'quid pro quo' of Shakespeare, that he had exchanged his 'rhinoceros greatcoat [*rhinozerosüberrock*]' for a lighter coat' (Marx to

Engels, 1 March 1882, [2010], 213). The nod to Shakespeare and Cervantes is almost expected, but this is the only time I can identify any reference to a rhinoceros in Marx, even though, of course, coats, hide, skin, tanning, and animals of many other types, are many and varied throughout his work (see Wadiwel 2014). Reflecting on achievements and publications still pending, the significance of the coat as example in the Marx cannon cannot be underplayed. It is key in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* and throughout *Capital* as I shall demonstrate below (see Stallybrass 1998; Marx 1852[2002], 1867[1983]). We can also consider it important that he is shedding the skin within which he had been ill, under medical orders he had needed to paint his own hide each day with a *cantharidin collodion* treatment. Marx is advised by his doctor to take an opiate, spoonfuls of codeine in julep gum, as needed for his cough, and that he must leave off intellectual work, ‘except some reading for my distraction’ (Marx to Engels, 1 March 1882—alas it is not clear what Marx reads for distraction; Hegel perhaps?). How important it was though, since to be able to break out of the shell of such a greatcoat is certainly worthy of reflection.

#### *Die kapitalistische Hülle wird gesprengt*

I am anticipating my argument using a German phrase, even if it presents particular translation difficulties. It is taken from the dénouement of a few almost breathless pages towards the end of *Das Kapital, Volume 1*: that part where the expropriators are expropriated and the death knell of capitalism sounds (Marx 1867[1990], 662). It is a great evocative momentum. The words in German are lyrical—fit for expounding from lecterns and pulpits (no touching faith in any Church of Marx though). The phrase in question does not carry the same import in English however, as it is somewhat incomprehensibly rendered by Aveling and in subsequent English editions as ‘the integument bursts asunder’ (Marx 1867 [1990], 662;

1867[1976], 929). Integument does indeed mean husk, but that first word is hardly ever used nor is it understood as readily as *Die Hülle*, which is familiar in German as a furry, husk-like shell, sharing similar reference to *enthüllen*, to force open the envelope, used in Marx to force the secret of value production, or, as in the phrase ‘*die verhüllende Form des Austauschs*’, to be veiled by exchange (Marx 1867[1991], 149). This in turn possibly invoking Marx’s favourite poet, Friedrich von Schiller, in whose 1788 work, *Die Künstler*, an Indic-exoticist example features a woman on a funeral pyre who inspires art with the removal, *hüllenlos*, of her veil (Schiller 1870, 22).

The coat-husk-hide connection will reveal *all* in good time. In the letter to his daughter Jenny, Marx enthuses over ‘Africa’ and ‘the East’, while pursuing texts on Algerian cultivation. He writes that he imagines himself as Scheherazade: ‘Nothing could be more magical than the city of Algiers . . . it would be like the *Arabian Nights*, particularly—given good health—with all my dear ones, in particular not forgetting my grandsons, about me’ (Marx to Jenny Longuet, 16 March 1882, [2010], 217). To Engels, he effuses: ‘At 8 o’clock in the morning there is nothing more magical than the panorama, the air, the vegetation, a wonderful *mélange* of Europe and Africa’, yet ‘with all that, one lives on nothing but dust’. He lives nearly three months in Algiers, planning to leave only in April, when he is recovered sufficiently, and as the weather has so improved, after he has himself photographed (Vesper 1995, 130). He also takes what now appears as a colossal step: he has an Algerian barber cut off his hair and shave his beard (Marx to Engels, 28 March 1882, [2010], 248). His iconic ‘look’ shorn in what is almost a classical motif, the removal of coat and fleece.

The rhinoceros fared worse by far. Unshackled, it might have swam ashore, perhaps to terrorise the Italians, who refused Marx entry to their country after he left Algiers. The Mediterranean takes many lives then and today, and Marx was right to

be concerned about the seaworthiness of his ferry. But it is the fact of Ganda, used as a gift to smooth the refusal of permission to build a fort, that marks the beginning of a more insistent colonial death drive on the part of Europe; and this biographical curio of Marx in Algiers stands in as a scaled allegory for the real stakes of his critique of capital in general, and the tale a Rhino from India invokes a whole other conception of the shackled economy.<sup>6</sup>

### Capitalism gets hooked on the opium trade

Marx has good reason to be obsessed with India. I will move past the animal trade exoticisms and fanciful allusions to Arabian nights to note the more significant, violent, economic-political markers: In chapter thirty-one of *Capital* Marx writes on the genesis of the industrial capitalist: ‘The English East India Company, as is well known, obtained, besides the political rule in India, the exclusive monopoly of the tea-trade, as well as of the Chinese trade in general’ (Marx 1867 [1996], 740). The mention of a Chinese trade here is disguised, but means only one thing—the illicit export of EIC grown opium from India to China via Canton and its nearby islands. Marx refers to this as a ‘coasting trade’ and noted that special ‘country trade’ deals ‘were the monopoly of the higher employees [of the EIC]. The monopolies of salt, opium, betel and other commodities, were inexhaustible mines of wealth’ (Marx 1867[1996], 740). It is to Marx’s credit that he identifies the importance of opium and we can note K.N. Chaudhuri’s subsequent detailed research affirming the importance of opium export: compared to indigo, exceeded by fifty percent, cotton by three times, raw silk by five times in the early 19th century (Chaudhuri 1971, 26).<sup>7</sup> Subramanian confirms ‘the export of opium and cotton into China for Chinese tea consignments into Britain ... characterised India’s trade after 1793’ (Subramanian 2010, 131; see also Bose 1993, 43).

Opium volume alone is insufficient basis on which to argue a case, but there are justifications for pursuing separate work reading the Royal Commission on Opium 1893–1895 and much else in the history of the trade which indicates that opium had long been the paste that held the colonial project together; ‘without opium, there would be no empire’ (Trocki 1999, 59; also see the Houses of Parliament 1893–5; and Hunt 1999). The deceptions and alibi-making of operatives of the EIC ran deep, so that the Royal Commission was stacked with EIC employees and agents as witnesses, against which the shrill Missionary opposition was increasingly ineffective. From the outset the Commission had refused to consider the impact of the trade on China, making the focus the health of Indian finances. Nevertheless, according to Ahmed, ‘it was opium that enabled European merchants to reconstruct ... trade in their favour’ (Ahmed 2012, 149). Always prominent in Asia, since 1708 opium had been an EIC product of Bengal and it was also well-known that the drug had deleterious effects. The Company ‘considered opium to be poison’ as Ahmed relates from the Royal Commission’s Ninth Report: not only did it sanction EIC employee involvement in the opium trade within India but, ‘as a consequence of the Qing State’s ban on opium importation, it prohibited its ships from carrying opium from Bengal to its Canton Factory’ (citing Burke in the 9<sup>th</sup> Report, Ahmed 2012, 150). Opium’s illicit character only made it more attractive to Company servants trading privately, as the Ninth Report recognises: ‘[Objects] of Export and Import were left open to young Men without mercantile experience, and wholly unprovided with mercantile Capitals; but abundantly furnished with large Trusts of the Public Money, and with all the Powers of an absolute Government’ (Ahmed 2012, 150). It was the extension of opium cultivation under the EIC monopoly from 1773, primarily in Bihar, alongside inferior Malwa, which enabled the increasingly massive export to

China which in turn made the EIC finances work. Ahmed is good on this, but seemingly accepts Edward Said's problematic rendering of Marx as a bromide of Hegel's static views on India, clearly not reading Marx's commentary on Benjamin Disraeli's 'awful solemnity'<sup>8</sup> in a speech on what Marx calls, in an article for the *New York Daily Tribune*, the 'quid pro quo', and welcome, 'national rebellion' of India in 1857 (Marx, *NYDT*, 14 August 1857). Nor does Ahmed credit Marx's writing on India after that date, and indeed ignores Ahmad, who must figure here in absentia as defender of Marx having changed and developed his understanding of India significantly over time (Ahmad 1992). Whatever the case, it is opium as trade and poison gift, acknowledged by Marx, that can move the discussion along from rhinos as an emblem of tribute and circumnavigation, with the white elephant as something more, and less, than an icon of prestige and war, to a more mythical beast. One where we will chase the dragon, so to speak, in the gilded menagerie in which the opium story that founds the trade is, as usual, dangerously obscured, as Ahmed points out.

'The fortunes Company servants made from the opium trade served as the seed capital of the expansive financial infrastructure—including merchant houses, banks, and insurance companies—that arose from colonial wealth.' (Ahmed 2012, 152)

### The British build a fort, as did everyone else

Compared with Albuquerque, a still more aggressive kind of fort negotiation arrives in Bengal with the British. This is how the British built Calcutta. A manipulative intimate betrayal, and comprador Indians coerced to do the dirty work. Key to the mythology here is the conflict that started around British arrogance in building a fort against the express wish of Siraj ud-Daulah. New to his position, the young Nawab of

Bengal promptly sacked the town, driving out the British. Clive was called to lead an expedition of retribution, and was merciless. Subsequently Holwell raises an atrocity narrative and monument, which in turn—through the writings of Mark Twain, John Stuart Mill, and others—becomes fictional 'fact'. Marx summarises this history as a sham, excerpted in his late notebooks, from the work of Madras Records Office historian Robert Sewell's *Analytic History of India, from the Earliest Times to the Abolition of the Honourable East India Company* (Sewell 1870; Marx 1947, 81). It was the alleged atrocity of the iconic, if fictional, 'Black Hole of Calcutta': doing multiple duty as a metaphor for debt, dubious exchange, plunder and value extraction, accumulated crime and brutal reprisals. I have told this story elsewhere, with several angles on the particular dank reputation of the fortress prison,<sup>9</sup> but from this date the EIC turns to cultivation, or rather turns Indian cultivation towards the cash crops of opium, indigo and jute. These three crops and their fortunes vary in subsequent commentary—Clive's colonial manipulations are regarded as more treacherous than most. Pirates all, the EIC was as bloodthirsty a corporation as no other before, and Clive's bribe asking Mir Jafar Ali Khan Bahadur to deceive and kill Siraj ud-Daulah pays off in monstrous abundance.<sup>10</sup> Mir Jafar in turn bestows privileges upon Clive after Plassey/Palashi—a detail Marx omits, but Guha helpfully reveals that Mir Jafar's Persian name for Clive was: 'the light of my eyes, dearer than my life, the Nabooob Zobdut ool Mulk Mayendowla Sabut Jang Bahadr' (Guha 2009, 116). This sham is not out of the ordinary, more or less the rule for colonial intrigue—I also wish we could talk here of Tipu's Tiger, and Clive's role in the fabrication of the image of Tipu as enemy, Clive helping to destroy the French connection all the more to the benefit of the Raj by sacking Chandernagore and later sending his wife on collecting expeditions to gather Tipu paraphernalia. The collection—not exchange, not market—



of peacock or tiger thrones, ornate swords, slippers and such like is the booty of empire alongside taxes and bribery.<sup>11</sup>

To also return briefly to the animal theme, these hyperbolic and treacherous stories could also be told with exploited beasts as weaponry—war horses and war elephants. An elephant is depicted at Palashi in a famous Nathaniel Dance painting with Clive's horse and Mir Jafar. The generals are accepting their bribes, and will betray the Nawab who is already the hapless quarry, soon to be extinguished, in a hunt. Mir Jafar becomes a puppet Nawab and supplies many lakhs of tribute to Clive, and makes possible the *diwani*—the all important right to raise taxes in Bengal, the basis of the future 'settlement' that secures British colonial accumulation for centuries. This extortionate land rent, tribute, not trade, is the vastly profitable consequence of building forts and prisons, and fabricating tales of humans caged and corralled in black holes and bribes on battlefields to smooth the way. EIC officials and associates become very well versed in the 'extra-economic' practice of plunder and extraction deals resulting in huge wealth even beyond mercantile trade at the time. Marx writing on India in *Capital* and in the *New York Daily Tribune* notices this 'country trade', and especially observes that while the EIC commanded the global trade, its employees were engaged with 'inland' opportunities (Marx 1867[1996], 740). In the accumulation section of volume one he notes how the looted treasures from the East Indies 'floated back' to Europe as a part of the 'dawn of the era of capitalist production' (Marx 1867[1996], 739). Marx's articles in the *Tribune* on EIC opium are where he most clearly expresses his fascination with and condemnation of Clive, 'the robber baron' (*NYDT*, 8 August 1853). Clive's encouragement of EIC involvement in Bengal opium dates from his first activities alongside EIC employees, with EIC opium plantations thriving in the second half of the Eighteenth century and expanding further

again with Warren Hastings as key dealer introducing a company monopoly in 1773 (Farooqui 2005, 13). This British drug trade then increases exponentially and Marx himself will note the ever larger volume over the years—the trade would last, despite denials, until well after the end of the Opium wars. By that time opium production and taxes—transit and pass duties, taxation on domestic use, according to Richards—were the second largest revenue earners for the empire (Richards 2002, 152). In Marx's journalistic commentary he exposed 'flagrant self-contradiction of the Christianity-canting and civilization-mongering British' in their efforts to 'affect to be a thorough stranger to the contraband opium trade, and even to enter into treaties proscribing it' (Marx, *NYDT*, 28 September 1858). This is the definition of hypocrisy, since despite also forcing 'opium cultivation upon Bengal' (*NYDT*, 28 September 1858) and arranging 'for private ships trading to China', the regulations governing this shipping carried a provision which imposed 'a penalty to them if freighted with opium of other than the Company's own make' (*NYDT*, 28 September 1858).

The hypocrisy is well known, but what Marx saw and which deserves further attention is where Amar Farooqui points out that 'country trade' and smuggling of opium was a significant parallel economy and an important form of subversive resistance to 'colonial domination' (Farooqui 2005, 57). There are nuances to be found. Amiya Kumar Bagchi confirms this when pointing out that 'profits made by European traders, financiers, and the like are either ignored altogether or grossly underestimated in the usual accounts of benefits of imperialism to the ruling countries', what this means is that an 'underestimation of the tribute and profits of monopolistically organized trade, finance, and processing industries together' (Bagchi 2005, 242) skews the origin story of capitalism away from actuality. Farooqui points out that revenues from smuggling helped fund military mobilisations on behalf

of the ruling state elites ‘since many of the big *sabukas* were simultaneously contractors for recruitment of troops’ (Farooqui 2005, 57, original italics). The rest of the subcontinent was colonised on the back of opium profits, and Marx saw these as central to the game of control and resistance. His other journalism on the East, indeed, that collected together by his daughter Eleanor and published as *The Eastern Question* in 1897, some of it written by Engels and attributed to Marx, also examines the ‘great game’ of diplomacy and militarism as support for accumulation, in this case in the period of the Crimean War. Marx was always on the lookout for the ways history sets up the shapes of capital today, and he was looking also in Algiers. As a promenading gentleman on the (Roman) cornice in the city, he was fully aware how initial plunder opens up the possibility of what Marx calls ‘so-called *originary* accumulation’ (Marx 1867[1996])<sup>12</sup> and subsequent commercial gain, with of course this entailing attendant exploitations. This is the crux of the argument in section 8 of *Capital Vol 1*. The stolen booty was sunk into the circuits of industrial production in a kind of colonial money-laundering enterprise hitherto not seen at such a scale except, also significantly, in the Atlantic slave trade.

Mention of the slave trade invokes its successor, indentured labour as yet another aspect of general exploitation with a major focus in India, but reaching elsewhere. The British development of a ‘China Trade’ is perhaps most important insofar as it involved the appropriation, formal subsumption, of an agriculture labour force, recruited to grow not rice but opium, and indigo, later tea plantations—in symbiosis with the port city for export, building up a hinterland of cheap labour. Many examples are possible but it can be seen as something like a ‘secular Malthusian’ (Brenner 1974, 14) obsession of the Royal Commission, that some races were suited to work while using opium, hence no need to restrict it, while others were made indolent, and they should be prevented. A

more recent study of the Opium trade in Burma reports in this regard:

‘Opium sales were rationalised to those groups whose use seemed to facilitate the extraction of labour that was deemed beneficial to the [colonial] state, and forbidden to those groups among whom consumption was associated with idleness and decay.’ (Wright 2014, 88)

The building of the city takes the labour of millions, and the connections that facilitate wealth extraction here stem from the very silver that was extorted in the slave trade in order for the British state to pay for its trade with China. Pirate booty as the ‘origin of British foreign investment’ (Ahmed 2012, 57) is then subject to a squeeze on finances and balance of payments meant replacing the bullion with opium. The peripheral consequences of this are a racial demarcation and a prejudice that is in play right up to the present-day, albeit in different forms. That the agrarian system which the EIC subsumed was ‘ill equipped to cope with the fiscal [and other] demands they imposed upon it’ (Guha 2009, 118) also imposed a Malthusian aspect. The expectation that workers take responsibility to consume only sufficient to maintain labour capacity is the parallel foundation of expropriation, and of course this was already pointed out by Marx in *Capital*.

### Marx’s India tick

A market in a ‘global’ urban centre generates a hinterland of informal and illicit trade that fortifications may or may not repel. A fortified and regulated market would be opposed, in the transition model, to one informed by relations of prestige and tribute. It is a ‘tribute-paying mode of production’ that Samir Amin posits in *Unequal Development* (1973, 13) and which Spivak brilliantly deconstructs in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999, 89). Without going into all the details of this debate, the tributary mode implies elaborate codification of the economy into which

Europeans sailed. Arriving with varied individual intent, the underlying extractive alibi was a political economy of free trade, and an actual practice of plunder, which then funds European industrialisation as described by Marx in *Capital*. Arriving with gifts, perhaps the question to ask is if the kind of market practices introduced by the European colonial powers were fundamentally at odds with the open festive or 'mela'-style markets of India? We might ask this as well of those perhaps in China, on the Malay Peninsula and across the Indonesian archipelago: did the different character of market styles, exchange styles, even tribute through gifts of, for example, animals, giraffes, a rhinoceros, have a discernable global significance over time? It took Marx to notice, but did he make this the foundation of his analysis of accumulation and capital, more or less explicitly? How important is the transition of market styles?<sup>13</sup>

This section will not be a discussion of the 'Asiatic mode of production'. That ship has sailed, as we will see below when Spivak shows this and suggests ways to rewrite and extend even as she overwrites her Marx essay and leaves the traces, like a palimpsest, in a vanishing present that she still wants to rewrite again. The foreground of gendered financialisation of the globe is not one I have the presumption, nor scholarship, to attempt and what I offer is not much more than an obscure footnote to her work. It is also misreading perhaps, but I will risk the strong thesis that *Capital* is a book marked by a conception oriented towards the importance of Asia, and the activities of the EIC especially in its introduction of massive plunder, as that which fuelled the originary accumulation of capital. A weaker version of this thesis would note colonial profits in Asia as a part of an emergent mercantilist redirection that meant inevitably incidental references to global economy included several ad hoc, as it were, citation of Indian examples or writers from the EIC.

I think the strong thesis is preferable because all through his life Marx seems to have a tick that draws him to India.<sup>14</sup> From

his early reading of Hegel and others he picks up an interest in 'ancient' Hindu land-use patterns and caste structure. He reads Bernier (1891), Campbell (1866), Dickenson (1853) and James Mill's *History of India* (1818). His journalism for the *NYDT* has him interested in colonial impact of British rule in 1852 and the uprising against that rule in 1857. His political solidarity with workers most impacted by the transition from feudalism to capitalism is formed through his support for the Silesian weavers in 1844, but it is as often as not extended in admiration to the weavers of Dacca, with their fine muslins, and 'proficiency of a spider' (Marx 1867[1996], 345) as well as those of Coromandel, Bengal and Bihar, whose bones are left to bleach on the plains (Marx 1867[1996], 435)—Marx is citing Governor General of India Bentinck from a report in *The Times* (28 April 1863). His solidarity is also expressed in abstract and gently mocking examples in *Capital*, when 'friend weaver' exchanges linen for a bible at the market, before the bible-seller, preferring a warming brandy (*kornbrantewein*, made from rye or barley, not grapes), exchanges 'the water of everlasting life for the distillers eau-de-vie' (Marx 1867[1996], 122).<sup>15</sup> Marx's interest in Bihar extends to the crops the peasants were compelled to sow: cotton, wool, hemp, jute (Marx 1867[1996], 454); and again to opium cultivation with its baleful impact upon China, both through the poison of the drug and the wars the British conduct to protect the trade, right through to the irreligious mass doping of workers' children in the UK with 'Godfrey's Cordial' as reported in the Government's own Blue Books (Marx 1867[1996], 398).<sup>16</sup> He even comes out in favour of legalisation of opium by the Chinese to undermine the profiteering of the drug dealing EIC, knowing full well that class politics must also be international, and that British support for the Qing in the Taiping Civil War was implicated with the US cotton blockade and depressed conditions in the Lancashire mills (see Platt 2012, 234).

On a rhetorical level the strong thesis also makes some sense. The ‘Critique of Political Economy’, is more than a subtitle of the book; it can be read as a sustained commentary on apologists for EIC extortion. His targets are EIC employees, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, and that ‘sycophant and fine talker’ Macauley, or immediate bourgeois critics of the EIC, Adam Smith, Edmund Burke. Then the critique takes as prime targets the apologist ‘learned professors’, those abstemious ‘penitents of Vishnu’ (Marx 1867[1996], 593), who train the EIC officer corps at Haileybury College, ‘population’ Malthus<sup>17</sup> and Sir Richard Jones,<sup>18</sup> both professors of political economy at the EIC training school. Alongside some anonymous—to Marx—texts on the benefits of the East Asia trade to Britain and the like, these are the majority representatives of the political economy he critiques. Of course Ricardo, Fourier and Owen also feature, but more often in a kind of agreement. Finally, if there were a final thought, the metaphors that challenges capitalism as such with its eventual overthrow is one that secretly revolves around the bursting of a shell, the throwing off of shackles, of a husk, of a dubious cloak that must be forced to reveal its secret, that behind this veil, which must be torn asunder—*enthüllen*—truth will out. If, in a sense, all this does come from a Schiller poem about a certain oriental lady, covered by a veil, it is transformed through all sorts of exercise of metaphors of skin, tanning, hide and coats, the juggernaut of capital that comes into the world dripping blood and dirt (see Barbagallo 2016), having sacrificed so many of the vulnerable under its grotesque wheels, and having covered itself in the alibis of the very political economists Marx critiques. This is subject then to the organised resistance of the workers, who follow the logic of collective action to throw off the fetters and limits, to expropriate the expropriators—the death knell of capitalism sounds, *die kapitalistische Hülle wird gesprengt*.

In the strong version of this argument we should recall that at each key moment of

the critique of political economy, Marx reaches for his examples, to either India—the ancient Hindu communities, the weavers, the abstemious penitents of Vishnu, the apocryphal story of sacrifices under the wheels of Lord Jagannath’s chariot (Marx 1867[1996], 639—or, if not India, he links the American Civil War and slavery back to Indian cotton production. All capital is global capital—and ‘labour in the white skin cannot emancipate itself while in the black it is branded’ (Marx 1867[1996], 329). Is it too wild to suggest this Asia focus is unavoidable for Marx, that everything from Engels’ father’s early advice to his son to take up business opportunities in Calcutta to the incidental recognition of a Gujarati rhinoceros off the coast of Marseilles, is more than coincidence, that this is all the consequence of having in mind as a target the number one largest global corporate entity of the time? To suggest this is to say that Marx’s interest in capital where it is most decisive is of course legitimate. To Engels he says that land use and slavery are the two big issues of the day (Marx to Engels, 11 October 1860; in Blackburn 2011, 189). One hundred and fifty years later, what is important might be that readers not miss these markers; a global ‘pivot’ back to Asia makes the politics of asserting the primacy of Asian trade, and the significance of what crosses the first global ocean of Arab-African-Asian trade, a pressing present-day concern.

### Indian Ocean trade

The protocols and obligations of older trade relationships deserve attention in any contemporary critique of political economy. In the Indian Ocean—Kala Pani, black water; Ratnakara, the Sanskrit name for ocean; or Yin-thu-Yong, to seek its Hakka name—long voyages more marvellous than the stories of Sinbad predate the arrival of Vasco de Gama, Afonso de Albuquerque, William Dampier, Clive or Duplex. This is

not to say the exchanges they made were unimportant—indeed, we can see the receipts of transition in their stories—but the motivations of pecuniary gain over those of tribute or honour and due regard, also play their part. Perhaps the early trader-explorers were also not strong advocates of anything much but trade, performing the role of emissaries for European kings and queens just to fit out their adventure ships, their impulses on arrival may include relief or speculation, fear, bribes, ego, pride. The human co-ordinates of capitalism generalised only once initial exchange are done, not so much at the boundaries, as proposed for the ‘ancient Indian community’ (see footnote 2), but here with plenipotentiaries confronting unknown new powers, seeking to ensure their passage, survival and return, which perhaps in turn depended upon observing protocols of exchange that only later would be reoriented, expropriation by Clive, and only subsequently routinised and regulated as capitalism.

Marx’s commentary on India is discussed, but perhaps no-one has been rash enough to say that without his thinking on India there could be no critique of political economy. As noted above, already Spivak dealt with the Asiatic Mode of Production in *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* and there brilliantly described it as the necessary fiction required to lever the modes of production model (Spivak 1999, 92) and where the ‘ruse of declaring the dangerous supplement a stasis that must be interrupted in its own interest’ (Spivak 1999, 97) is still, despite the well-known critiques, important. While not simply repeating her crucial transformative rereading, strangely not taken up by Western Marxist criticism, I find Spivak’s Marx opens up many further possibilities, so long as it is recognised that mine is not an argument that just tries to Asianise Marx—a vegetarian or saffron Marx is not on the agenda. Yes, there are gaps and euro-centrisms in Marx no doubt, but the Asian underpinnings of his arguments are significant and I think it is above all necessary to

see that it was the largest corporation in the world, and its apologists and agents, who he has in his sights. The errors Marx makes in an imaginary ancient Hindu polity, repeating apocryphal horrors of Jagannath, lack of specificity in how land-use, cultivation, transportation, communication work, are all significant, but nevertheless, understandable consequences of distance. Marx is reading the then equivalent of a contemporary multinational like BHP, Riotinto, or Apple Corp; and the political economists in their employ, Mill, Malthus, Jones et al., were the ideologues of the leading edge of industrial capitalism. A lesson for our own predicament might help us face the corporate opportunism, commercial and financial monopoly, and the state-conglomerate hypocrisy that offers Malthusian constraint as imperious benevolent managerialism: ‘what is good for company is good for you’ is the main mode of incorporation. Writing a book for German readers of course makes the EIC element somewhat decontextualised, the book is perhaps closer to home (*de te fabula narratur*, says Marx) for English readers or Indian readers, perhaps also African-Americans, given the whole commentary on slavery, civil war and Lincoln, but on the whole it is now, in these times, again relevant for India, and China, because of the newsworthy ‘pivot’ of global capitalism towards Asia, again. Not to claim anything so grand, the current pivot makes Marx topical and it is worth, at least, the thought experiment of trying to see who it is that all these footnotes refer to in Marx’s big well-known often re-read and mis-read book.

What it is not necessary to concede here is the historical stasis Marx ascribes to India, coming from sources as remote as Hegel, nor that his conception of the land ownership that pre-existed the imposed taxation regimes of the Raj was derived from anything but secondary sources in a very early stage of anthropological veracity, filtered often through missionary commentary, at best *The Friend of India*. Marx is not on the spot, but he is at least reading the Mission

Press sent from Serampore to the London Museum, also the numerous Parliamentary Reports, Blue Books, the speeches of Disraeli, Campbell's *Ethnology of India* (1866) and Wilk's *Historical Sketches of South India* (1817).<sup>19</sup> For sure further scholarship to specify all this would be welcome. Not that the historians currently working on Bengal read only what Marx read. They go far beyond and the work is immense, but while I have learnt so much from reading their engaging studies, promotional work is not the key here. The point is rather to identify the lessons for the present day in the strong version of the critique of political economy Marx proffered, where he has his sights—*am ersten blick*—set upon the EIC operatives trained by the 'learned' Vishnu penitent professors at Haileybury.

### Friends of India: concluding thoughts

The idea that India was static<sup>20</sup> has been substantially washed away by a body of maritime work exemplified perhaps by Lakshmi Subramanian and Rila Mukherjee, taking into account the trade in the Bay of Bengal or Indian Ocean littoral. As Subramanian notes, it is difficult to understand how the 'agrarian bias' of immobility and stasis had prevailed at all—exchanges, communication, waterways, trade links, silk roads, urbanisation, diasporas (Subramanian 2008, 8). It is worth questioning how the sedentary bias continues in ideas that locate the colonial market as a single site, and in Algiers, where Marx's view from the Grand Hotel d'Orient overlooked the Casbah, he could perhaps develop a different conception of the marketplace that would be useful in India. While the market changes, in the subcontinent, as the colonial powers build walls around their compounds, even if these were, ostensibly, a contradictory effort to prevent movement, we can expect Marx to see how the fortress works as economic power. Shackling a gifted Rhinoceros to a moving deck as it rounds the horn of Africa is as antithetical

to exchange as a trading company with a compound and an army. The iron gates of a factory or the locked doors of a commercial godown, are all about the effort needed to keep things shifting in place on the part of colonial powers in the expropriative business of making things move: treasures, produce, cargo, indentured labour, along river and shipping routes, later with railroads: the brutal contradictions of fixed history recording movement for profit.

The work is underway. While not explicitly a critique of Marxist approaches, Yang prefers a dynamic 'enmeshed' model where the imagined village is linked to 'larger units of rural society organized around the marketing system' (1998, 14). This should have significance for all located urban studies, where the function of the market as site for communication and exchange hardly needs to be reasserted: 'Markets have long been a familiar and essential feature of the historical landscape, central places of exchange at which peasants, townspeople, landholders, and rulers have historically converged' (Yang 1998, 1). The debates over transition and the role of markets in relation to subsumption of an agricultural system into something more suited to provision of labour force fodder than innovation and advantage is also part of the history of markets (again, see Brenner 1974), but the market here is a gathering at a mela, not the abstract market metaphor of global capital. That convergence too, however, does not, in turn, confirm stasis—it never does—Marx was commenting on the panorama, and he knew well enough to look beyond the appearances of a metaphor, a fetish. At the mela, people came 'to conduct wholesale and retail trade, to gather news and information, and to engage in various social, cultural, religious, and political activities' (Yang 1998, 1–2). Sen notes 'a vast number of people were engaged in river traffic, marketing, pilgrimages and fairs' (Sen 1998, 20) and that 'a host of European companies had been buying and selling, vying with one another and resisting the reach of local rulers in the lower part of the

river Ganges for more than a century before the British conquest' (Sen 1998, 21). There would be much here for Marx to study, maybe a chance to complete unfinished volumes, to rethink the reproduction of value, the family, the social context, the volume on wages, on the state, or to write on the first organised cry of the oppressed masses, on opiates in another sense. Yang's study foregrounds pilgrimage, movement, and women's 70% participation in melas, fairs and markets as important cultural factors alongside trade. Melas are 'notorious' for prostitution, jugglers, nautches, puppet shows and 'roundabouts' (Yang 1998, 152). Mukherjee identifies bazaars in pre-colonial South Asia as sites where 'economic relations could be observed at play' not only for 'the demonstration of social power' (2006, 184), but also as part of 'larger network[s] of religio-political compulsions ... towards Buddhist lands to the East' and 'Islamic lands to the west' (2006, 205). Sen's focus is on markets as sites of conflict where indigenous resistance is occluded in the record under criminality (Sen 1998). Jha takes the river as an organising frame (Jha 2013) and Habib makes the point that the British took over, at least initially, 'the administrative apparatus they found in place' (Habib 2013, 22). In all these cases, the problem of veracity is complicated by there being so many roles, by so much undocumented allegedly non-economic behaviour, by travel and movement that is never easily recorded, and by, most importantly, a logic of little importance to the categories of conventional colonial reportage, whether missionary, government or academic. When the market and the mela are bound together, the situation demands not separation and distance, but critics able to see both clearly. Marx is described as 'an excellent observer and connoisseur of the Rhineland Carnival' (Vesper 1995, 48, my translation). So if an alert aficionado of markets were to report from Calcutta, as indeed has happened after Marx, the news that then might float back to the notice of those waiting expectantly in London could

be quite different. For example, consider the story of one of Siraj ud-Daulah's wives had inherited control of the Mudafatganj marketplace after his murder. She sent petitions to Governor Cornwallis to try to gain exemption for shopkeepers from paying revenue to the police if they contributed to the upkeep of the adjacent mosque (Sen 1998, 149). This intervention is neither stasis, nor easily included in expected narratives—it would need someone on the spot to mediate its importance in analysis, whether it is this special pleading for architectural restoration work or a conflict between moral and ethical favouritism in the face of a universalising but brutal commercialism. It is unlikely that Marx ever heard of the begum's petition to Cornwallis, but he readily identified the deadly duel between the ethical Chinese, who would not impose an opium tax upon citizens merely to return a profit from degradation, and the 'representatives of the overwhelming modern society [who] fight for the privilege of buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest markets ... a tragic couplet, stronger than any poet would have ever dared to fancy' (Marx, *NYDT*, 20 September 1858). Marx reading the *Friend of India* or the bi-monthly *Bengal Harkuru* in the British Museum, or even watching the magical panorama and 'wonderful mélange of Europe and Africa' (Marx to Engels, 1 May 1882) from his room in the Hotel Pension Victoria in Algiers, means he was still unlikely to hear too much about pilgrimage patterns. Nor of the huge importance the Company set on interrupting these flows, intervening to eradicate the many and varied brokerage roles, tolls and commissions, introducing a more simplified tribute in the *divvani*, or tax system, by way of fortification and law. The shape of the market in *Capital* perhaps suffers from the omission.<sup>21</sup>

The *Friend of India* did however include a diverse amount of relevant material. For example, the report from the 1820 edition, published by the Mission Press, seems to confirm Yang's earlier citation of the Resident of Revelganj where complaints of

market festivals as scenes of ‘immorality and debauchery’, and where ‘displays of magnificence and wealth’, have come to displace good behaviours within the ‘vicious tastes of the rabble’. According to the *Friend of India* author, presumably one of the Serampore Baptists, perhaps Carey himself, in less than five decades, ‘the original design of these poojas is completely subverted, and that which originally was only an insignificant appendage to the festival, has usurped the status of the idol’ (Carey 1820). I will note, as neutrally as possible, that just fifty years before this observation the festival had become an unseemly marketplace, there had been the terrible Bengal Famine of 1770, with ten million deaths over four years. The famine is now largely blamed upon the EIC land tax and forced poppy cultivation, as was documented in the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings in the British parliament, the charges read out by Burke. Marx cites Burke in *Capital*, admittedly calling him ‘that celebrated sophist and sycophant’ (Marx 1867[1996], 327). Jane Austin closely followed the trial as well, though it is uncertain if Marx read seven years of transcripts, he does express outrage that the Company received £6 Million in gifts from India in the years preceding the famine, and had indeed ‘manufactured the famine by buying up all the rice and refusing to sell it again, except at fabulous prices’ (Marx 1867[1996], 741). Nevertheless, for the missionaries, merely thirty years later, the Durga puja is said to have become an ‘exhibition of opulence’ because, it seems, the Government no longer extracts the taxes, so ‘the natives give themselves up to unlimited extravagance in all that relates to their public festivals’ and ‘almost every year brings some fresh innovation in Hindoo worship’ (Carey 1820, 125–7). The festivals are put on not only for worship, but for ‘luxuries’ and ‘gratification’ (Carey 1820, 130). Marx did read this volume, but it is not recorded if he nodded his approval when this same *Friend of India* author noted that ‘in former times the wealth of India was scattered over the

country, and its influence was broken into separate divisions’ whereas now it comes to ‘the city, the emporium of trade’ (Carey 1820, 127).

I intend to come back to the coat and *hülle-entbüllen* in future work to assess the place of the India-China trade within the arguments of Marx’s *Capital* and in the light of more careful reading of subsequent Bengal historiography, exploring the extent to which *Capital* figures with political resonances like the still unfolding Maoist-inspired ‘spring thunder’ after Naxalbari (People’s Daily 1967; Banerjee 1980). While my reading has always been to try to see *Capital* as a planned whole—it did after all take several drafts, much reorganisation, and time—there is clearly another text needed after Gandhi, Mao, the various factionalisms of the CPI, CPM and CPI (M-L) and more.<sup>22</sup> Colonial history too is not finished, and Amitava Ganguly has encouraged further work on those aspects of the opium story that have been ignored, as against the history that is passed off as established truth. A useful test will be to what value is given to the opium trade as represented in historical accounts and museum displays. As a final point of note, and promise, let me refer to the gallery inaugurated in 2012 as ‘Traders: the East India Company and Asia’ at the Royal Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England. The exhibit has splendid models of EIC sailing ships, mannequins in ceremonial dress, swords, tea chests, navigation equipment, but only one small vitrine admitting the opium trade existed. Correspondingly, in the nearby slavery wing, there is no significant display of shackles either—one set—with reportedly (personal communication) debates within the museum board as to whether such instruments should be shown at all. Preserved in dry dock across the park, the rebuilt colonial era ‘tea clipper’, Cutty Sark, clearly also had some role in a darker trade, since similar ships of the line did, as is grudgingly acknowledged. We do not, for example, hear of the Indian merchant Jamsetjee



Jejbhoy sending ‘most of his opium to Jardine Matheson, the infamous firm at the end of the supply chain in China’ (Habib 2013, 96). In *The Jade Empire*, a glossy historical self-published coffee-table book by the Jardine Matheson company, the opiate smuggling profits are relegated to the glamorous past and subsequent legitimate business emphasised, Peninsula and Orient Cruises, HSBC banking, etc. The glossy renovation of the company’s reputation was not sufficient to allay fears that it would suffer for its smuggling history when the 1990s brought the prospect of Hong Kong’s return to China. The company promptly relocated to Bermuda. Side note: its share price has almost tripled in the years since the 2008 economic crisis, trading at the time of writing at \$81 a share.

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## Notes

- 1 This paper was first presented at the ‘Regionalising the globe’ symposium at Princeton University, USA, 21 April 2014. Then again in Senegal at ‘Radiating the Globe: Old Histories, New Geographies’, at Universite Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD), Dakar, Senegal, 20 February 2016. For their comments I am thankful to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Sophie Fuggle, Ben Baer, Niranjan Goswami, Amitava Ganguly, Eddie Malloy, Ursula Rao, Kumar Sarkar and Pradip Baksi, as well as Bob Catterall and the anonymous readers of *City*.
- 2 ‘a state of reciprocal independence has no existence in ... as society ... [such as] ... the ancient Indian community ... The exchange of commodities, therefore, first begins on the boundaries of such communities, at their points of contact with other similar communities’ (Marx 1867[1983], 76).
- 3 ‘Unlike the merchants who had traded from time immemorial across what contemporary economic historians describe as a genuine *mare liberum*, or “free sea”, the [Portuguese, Dutch, British] sailors came armed, using the backing of sovereign power to break pre-existing trading arrangements and subject them to their own monopoly control’ (Ahmed 2012, 26).
- 4 Agricultural works of course should be read in urban studies. A helpful collection offers Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg and Mao’s writing on the agrarian sector (Patnaik 2007, 2011). Bose, following Chakrabarty (1989) challenges materialist historians for having ‘overstated the case for economic determination’ in this field (Bose 1993, 6): a demographers’ bias, but his ‘bibliographical essay’ at the end of the volume is also very useful (Bose 1993, 186–196).
- 5 Marx’s version of the ‘fable’ of the bees in *Capital* is where ‘a spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees ...’ is that bees do not plan imaginatively (Marx 1867[1990], 154). This idea is arguably restating Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in the section on The Artificer: ‘SPIRIT, therefore, here appears, as an artificer, and its action whereby it produces itself as object but without having as yet grasped the thought of itself is an instinctive operation, like the building of a honeycomb by bees’ (Hegel 1807, 421).
- 6 There are other animals in this paper, but a longer discussion of this economy will eventually appear in a book on Marx’s bestiary, emulating Wadiwel (2015).
- 7 ‘The sale of Bengal opium was a Government monopoly’. It was grown by peasants in Bihar and in the country around Benares ... in the hands of country traders ... opium exports were a most lucrative item of India’s foreign trade’ (Chaudhuri 1971, 32–33).
- 8 Marx writes: ‘Mr. Disraeli affects an awful solemnity of speech, an elaborate slowness of utterance and a passionless method of formality, which, however consistent they may be with his peculiar notions of the dignity becoming a Minister in expectance, are really distressing to his tortured audience. Once he succeeded in giving even commonplaces the pointed appearance of epigrams. Now he contrives to bury even epigrams in the conventional dullness of respectability ... Mr. Disraeli ... should ... [heed] Voltaire’s warning, that “Tous les genres sont bons excepté le genre ennuyeux.” [all genres are good except those that are boring]’ (NYDT, 14 August 1857).
- 9 On black holes, fabrication and prisons, see Hutnyk (1996, 2000, 2014); Chatterjee (2012); and Molloy (2018).
- 10 On the Nawab’s name, I follow Pradip Baksi and use Siraj-ud-Daulah, Sewell has ‘Suraj-u-dowla’ and Marx ‘Suraj-ud-daula’—personal communication.
- 11 The Tipu collection, more abundant and ornate than any other Indian booty held in the British Museum, is

- housed in the Powys castle that our opiated villain Lord Clive had built on his return from India.
- 12 The translation of *'Die sogenannte ursprüngliche Akkumulation'* (Marx 1867[1983]) as 'so-called originary accumulation' is preferable to the loaded word in 'so-called *primitive* accumulation' (Marx 1867) but see Baer: 'Marx's "ursprünglich" here ... distances us from a secure sense of an empirically locatable origin. The "originary," as it could be translated, is neither a specific historical moment (empirical) nor a transcendental deduction' (2014, 489).
  - 13 Murthy notes that 'For a number of years, Marxists have been debating whether markets are inherently capitalist' and, follows Bockman and her provocative case that 'markets could be used for a socialist project' in 'possible futures that have been eclipsed after the fall of actually existing socialisms' (Murthy 2018, 232).
  - 14 Baksi has set out schematic assessments of Marx on India following Susobhan Sarkar and G. R. Madan. Sarkar (1969) had grouped Marx's remarks on India under five headings: ancient society, history of India; East India Company; Revolt of 1857; and the consequences of the British rule. (Baksi 1997, 13).
  - 15 The curiously named 'friend weaver' is not a real person (*'unsern altbekannten Leinweber'*, Marx 1867[1983], 66). Swapping linen for a bible and the bible-seller swapping bibles for brandy is funny, but the scenario is only an example Marx uses to introduce concepts to comprehend the component complexities of capitalist production – while many factors are held in abeyance.
  - 16 Marx reads the 'Sixth Report on Public Health' and writes 'In the agricultural as well as in the factory districts the consumption of opium among the grown-up labourers, both male and female, is extending daily'. 'To push the sale of opiate ... is the great aim of some enterprising wholesale merchants. By druggists it is considered the leading article'. Infants that take opiates 'shrank up into little old men', or 'wizened like little monkeys' and adds, acerbically 'We see here how India and China avenged themselves on England' (Marx 1867[1996], 402; (1867[1983], 389).
  - 17 Marx continually derides Malthus particularly, as a 'master of plagiarism' (Marx 1867[1996], 508), stealing from Stuart, Wallace and Townsend (Marx 1867[1996], 357) and in a 2 page footnote in chapter 25 adding DeFoe, with 'not a single sentence thought out by himself', all 'superficially compiled', the celibate Malthus (Marx 1867[1996], 611–2), one among a host of protestant parsons who ruined political economy as once studied by philosophers like Hobbes, Locke and Hume, statesmen like Thomas More, and medical men like Mandeville, among others. He finds the 'bungling interference' of these Protestant priests unacceptable (see Marx 1867[1996], 612). At the same time, as we shall see, he reads the Baptist Press from Serampore.
  - 18 It is in Marx's commentaries on Richard Jones' work in the notebooks gathered by Kautsky into *Theories of Surplus Value* that we can find comments on the 'Asiatic communal system (primitive communism)' (Marx 1863, 340), and tribute to the state, (Marx 1863, 338). Marx is generally more approving of Jones than, for example, Adam Smith, Ricardo or Malthus, yet the critique of political economy is nevertheless directed also at the way Jones is still rooted in economic prejudice' (Marx 1863, 344). He writes: 'Jones was a professor of political economy at Haileybury and the successor to Malthus. One can see here how the real science of political economy ends by regarding the bourgeois production relations as merely historical ones' (Marx 1863, 345).
  - 19 The list could be extended to include from Marx's library collection besides those not already mentioned: Mun (1621); Urquhart (1857), including 'the wondrous tale of the greased cartridges'; Grant (1813); the India Reform Act of 1853, and more.
  - 20 To be clear about an important essay: Said's polemic against Marx in *Orientalism* (1978) was in turn critiqued by Ahmad in his book *In Theory* (1992) who demonstrates that Marx's arguments after 'The British Rule in India' were more relevant than Said credits.
  - 21 The work surveyed here on the market reaches far. Sen sets out to show 'how marketplaces become the site of conflict between the Company and the traditional rulers of Bengal and Benares, and how extensive reorganization in revenue and customs affected the substance and hierarchy of long-established rights to market exchange' (Sen 1998, 2–3). The same year as Sen's book, Yang's work gives immense detail on market places in India, including purchase of animals and objects in great variety (Yang 1998, 148). Such studies develop the earlier unavoidable contribution of Christopher Bayly (1983), as does Jha on the Ganga trade (2013), and Habib's more general introduction to macro conditions in his *Indian Economy* (2013). As Murthy is aware, discussions of the market have present and future resonances—implying effort to 'return to the problem of raising class-consciousness toward creating society beyond the production of surplus value, the treadmill dynamic, and class oppression on both the organisational and market poles of capitalist society' (Murthy 2018, 251).
  - 22 The Communist Party of India was founded by M. N. Roy in Tashkent in 1920, CPM split to the left in 1964, and CPI(M-L) and its many factions were left to support Naxalbari when the CPM moved to suppress the uprising in 1968, see Banerjee (1980) and Hutnyk (2005).

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