be born. The monster of revolution might be a problem for Burke, then, because the monster is undead and thus somehow breaks what is implicit in our contract with the dead: that the dead do live on, but only as national tradition and not as revolution.

This mention of Burke points to a more general problem. McNally suggests that Mary Shelly recoiled from the ugliness of the monster, but that working-class radicals would come to *affirm* proletarian monstrosity in a way that would be claimed by Marx. "Part of the genuine radicalism of Marx's critical theory resides in its insistence on tracking and naming the monsters of modernity." That might be true, but Marxism is hardly the only politics to try and track and name the monsters of modernity (see my own *The Monstrous and the Dead*, University of Wales Press, 2005). Burke's work is replete with monsters – far more than is alluded to by McNally and possibly far more even than Marx. And it might equally be said that fascism also seeks to track and name what it sees as the monsters of modernity. Marx was far from alone in thinking politically about the monstrous.

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During the years of "high neo-liberalism" – from approximately 1979 to the early years of the twenty-first century – capitalism seemed politically and ideologically unassailable. Under the banner "There is No Alternative," pro-capitalist politicians and "public intellectuals" (or more accurately apologists) proclaimed that the "free market system" was not only the best of all possible worlds, but the inevitable outcome of all of human history. In this period, no thinker was subject to more vilification, falsification or condescending disregard than Karl Marx. Marxism was dismissed as "outdated" and "naive" at best, if not a nefarious theory that had only produced tyranny, poverty and human misery on a mass scale. Even on the left, Marx's theories were rejected as variants of Enlightenment thinking with its totalitarian "grand narrative," in favour of new variants of idealism and causal pluralism – post-structuralism and post-modernism.

The neo-liberal consensus began to unravel in the mid and late 1990s as the Zapatista rebellion in Mexico against the North American Free Trade Agreement, the mass strikes in defence of public pensions in France and the rise of the global justice

movement challenged "free market" orthodoxy in practice. However, it was the beginnings of a long-period of capitalist economic stagnation, marked by the global financial meltdown of 2007-2008, that opened the flood gates to the revival of anti-capitalist criticisms. In the past few years, establishment publications from the *Harvard Business Review* to the *Wall Street Journal* have all run essays asking whether Marx was, after all, right. Clearly rejecting Marx's politics – working class struggle for socialism – mainstream academics and journalists have been forced to admit that Marx's predictions that capitalist growth was necessarily crisis-ridden may, in fact, be true.

Terry Eagleton, perhaps the most prominent Marxist literary theorist writing in English, has entered this discussion was a zealous defence of Marx, *Why Marx Was Right.* With his characteristic clarity and humour, Eagleton demolishes ten of the most common anti-Marxist myths. Eagleton gleefully dissects claims that Marxism is outdated in today's classless "post-modern" world; notions that Marxism's naïve notion of human nature have led to horrendous violence and the establishment of brutal, repressive anti-democratic regimes; and the all-too familiar assertions that Marxism is a form of economic reductionism and determinism that ignores human spirituality and non-class forms of oppression. While none of his arguments are original – all have been made by critical Marxist thinkers over the past eighty years – few have been able to muster their arguments with such wit, passion and insight.

Eagleton is at his best in answering the hoary assertion that Marxism inevitably led to the repressive, bureaucratic regimes that masqueraded as socialism in the twentieth century. He effectively demolishes the notion that Marxism advocates an undemocratic, minoritarian and violent social transformation. Eagleton defends Marx (and the Marxist tradition, including Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg) as advocates of a more radical democracy in which working people do not get to periodically choose which of their oppressors will rule, but actually decide the use of society's productive resources. In terms of violence, Eagleton points to how:

> the reluctance of working people to shed blood has contrasted tellingly with the readiness of their masters to wield the lash and the gun… If socialist revolutions have generally involved violence, it is largely because propertied classes will rarely surrender their privileges without a struggle (187).

Synthesizing the arguments of Trotsky, Deutscher, Mandel and Callinicos, Eagleton demolishes the notion that Marxism was responsible for the horrors of Stalinism, pointing to its material roots. The tiny size of the working class in pre-revolutionary Russia and the creation of a capitalist world economy in the late nineteenth century made "socialism in one country" a reactionary utopia. While the isolation of the Soviet regime with the failure of revolutions in the industrialized west was primarily responsible for the

rise of the bureaucratic post-capitalist dictatorships, Eagleton also recognizes the Bolsheviks' tendency to underestimate the importance of safe-guarding democratic rights and institutions.

Eagleton is also extremely effective in demolishing the common-sense of the academic left – in particular in cultural studies – that Marxism is a form of class and economic reductionism that is teleological and unable to account for gender or racial oppression or the degradation of the natural environment. He defends class struggle as "*fundamental* to human history," (34) not in the sense that that without class exploitation "Buddhism, astrophysics and the Miss World contest would come tumbling down," but that class "shapes events, institutions and forms of thought which seem at first glance to be innocent of it; and it plays a decisive role in the turbulent transition from one epoch of human history to another" (35). Eagleton goes on to summarize the rich, but incomplete Marxist discussions of gender and national, racial and colonial oppression and environmental degradation – and the track-record of revolutionary socialism in fighting sexism, racism, colonialism and environment destruction. For Eagleton, Marxism has made "issues of culture, gender, language, otherness, difference, identity and ethnicity…inseparable from questions of state power, material inequality, the exploitation of labour, imperial plunder, mass political resistance and revolutionary transformation" (221-222).

One could make a number of minor criticisms of Eagleton's defence of Marx. I am much more cynical than Eagleton about the possibilities that market mechanisms and democratic planning ("market socialism") can stably coexist for prolonged periods in post-capitalist societies. His attempt to avoid the issue of whether class struggle or an independent development of the productive forces drives historical change – which may reflect his reliance on two of the most sophisticated advocates of these divergent views, Alex Callinicos and Ellen Meiksins Wood, for input on this book – is disappointing. The largest absence is a discussion of why capitalism cannot produce economic stability – why capitalist crises are *inevitable* – is especially regrettable as we are in the midst of the most severe global economic downturn since the mid-1970s. However, all of these short-comings pale in comparison to the wit, passion and clarity of Eagleton's defence of Marx. *Why Marx Was Right* is an accessible and sophisticated introduction to modern Marxist thought.