<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Socio-Criticism</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem of Reflection</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Discourse in <em>The Journey into the End of the Night</em></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ideology of Form: Partial Systems in <em>La Vielle Fille</em></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propos Theoriques</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formalism, Marxism, Psychoanalysis</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Code(s) and Ideology: Towards a Contestation of Semiology</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Reading of Ideology or an Ideology of Reading?</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward a Sociological Aesthetic: An Attempt at Constructing the Aesthetic of Lucien Goldman</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tooth, the Palm</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entretien</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourgeois Myth and Anti-Myth: The Western Hero of the Fifties</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;What had made him and what he meant:&quot; The Politics of Wholeness in 'How Bigger' was born Ideology and the Patriarchal Family: Nerval and Flora Tristan</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aesthetic Meditation on <em>Capital</em></td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludovic Janvier: A Newer Novelist</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repression in <em>Cigés</em></td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Meets West: Michel Butor’s “Dans les flammes”</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books Received</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributors</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SUB-STANCE* is a review dedicated to the discussion and dissemination of contemporary critical theory and literary texts. *SUB-STANCE* proposes the reexamination of classical literary texts in the light of developments in contemporary disciplines. *SUB-STANCE* welcomes the participation of all those—students and teachers—interested in making known their present research and results. *SUB-STANCE* will publish in each issue a section devoted to a single author, critic or problem.
NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE is the first American journal to develop a comprehensive discussion of German politics, social theory, art, and literature on an international level.

Our current issue (#8) contains the following articles:

Rob Burns  
West German Intellectuals and Ideology

Wolf-Dieter Narr  
Threats to Constitutional Freedoms in West Germany

Jürgen Seifert  
Toward Defining Friends and Enemies: Political Policies of West Germany

Morton Schoolman  
Marx's Aesthetics and the Displacement of Critical Theory

Helen Feinberg  
Enlightenment or Entanglement

Helen Feinberg  
History and Aesthetics in Bracht and Müller: Enlightenment or Entanglement

David Bathrick and Andreas Huyssen  
Producing Revolution: Heiner Müller's MAUSER as Learning Play

Betsy Nance Weber  
MAUSER in Austin, Texas

HEINER MÜLLER  
MAUSER

Published three times a year. Annual subscription $6 individuals, $12 institutions. Foreign $1 extra. Single copies $2.50. Distributor in Europe: Roter Stern Verlag, 6 Frankfurt am Main, Postfach 180147.

The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee
NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE
Department of German
P.O. Box 413
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201
Is there an insurmountable split between the structuralist and anti-structuralist Marxists? Are there means available or foreseeable for a possible integration and development? One recent effort (among many others) is found in the ongoing work of Fredric Jameson, especially if a basis could be found for reconceptualizing his final, general chapter in his book on Western Marxism (Lukács, Bloch, Sartre and Frankfurt School members) in light of his complementary study of formalist and structuralist theory—so that his perspectives on combined diachronic/synchronic analysis, culminating in the question of the relation between commodity and artistic form, could achieve a more richly instrumental synthesis. But perhaps of even greater significance for a general theory and critique of contemporary capitalist society (including artistic forms) is the work of Jean Baudrillard, especially if his work can be reconceptualized in terms of Immanuel Wallerstein's theory of the structuring and functioning of a worldwide capitalist system, and then applied to given forms in sub-systems of forms within this world system.

To give schematic expression to the synthesis of sources utilized for our aesthetic meditations and their possible development: Baudrillard makes the following Marxist-tending elaborations on Saussure:

\[
\frac{\text{Wage}}{\text{Labor}} = \frac{\text{Exchange-value}}{\text{Use-value}} = \frac{\text{Signified}}{\text{Signifier}} \quad \text{Symbolic exchange}
\]

The slash above (/) indicates "the radical exclusion of the symbolic exchange from the field of value," the separation of sign from the object world; that is,

\[
\text{Sign} \neq \text{Reality}
\]

Thus, Baudrillard gives a semiotic conversion to the implicit Marxist view that exchange-value represents, but is not equal to (\#) use-value:

\[
\frac{\text{Exchange-value}}{\text{Use-value}} = \frac{\text{Signifier}}{\text{Signified}}
\]

Appealing to other structuralist perspectives, we may say that the movement from \( C - M - C \) to \( M - C - M \) signalled a "crisis of representation"—a movement from metaphor to metonymy, as unequalized equivalent expression of the fact of Capitalist development's perpetual necessity (as basic to its structure) to produce instability and change in order to survive. In Althusserian terms, capitalist metonymy is the basis of the very synchrony of Capitalism; until rupture, contradictions are neutralized into polarities which maintain the structure. The very fact that Base \# Superstructure maintains the distortions enabling the relation between a developing and changing Capitalist base and a wide variety of superstructures which are not homologous but in functional relation to it—and which gives possibility to movement in the service not of praxis, but its negation or cooptation, assuring the
A commodity is ... an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants.... The nature of such wants, whether ... they spring from the stomach or fancy, makes no difference. (p. 35)

Aesthetic forms are also objects outside us, supposedly satisfying wants springing from fancy. We could carry such a definition to a much more precise and technical level. But here Marx warns, the subjective nature or basis of the use of the object is not important. Why? Because it is in its function as a vehicle for exchange value that the commodity as a commodity operates under capitalism. It must satisfy a basic or induced need to qualify as a commodity. But once doing this, the exchange value function predominates—and this is the tie to capitalist production. Capitalist production prevails over other productions, including the artistic. Objective exchange value predominates over use value, and in fact alters need and use value. Under capitalism, needs and demands (the cry in the marketplace) are de-natured, and what remains as the "natural" or "species" impulse or need is compounded with historic, capitalist-induced needs to such a degree as to have little significant relation to its pre-capitalist antecedent. The "subjective", the human become subverted, polarized from the objective. The objective form represents, but is not commensurate with the subjective except to the degree that it alters or distorts the subjective in conformity with itself.

Thus, it is capitalism and not Marx that makes the subjective inconsequential—or rather seems to: gives the subjective no real weight in its phenomenal manifestation. Capitalism is a process of representation which is not equivalent—it is an alienated representation, distorting man's relation to nature, to his production, to his fellows. A polarity is created (capital/labor; producer/appropriator). Unity and identity tendencies are disrupted; and even as capitalism attempts to foster an identity with its own distorted image, it presents a distorted identity. This is so because the self-perpetuating mechanism of capitalism is the distortion of and the oscillation between identity and non-identity. If it were "pure identity", the would-be adequate incentive toward productive development for profits and therefore capitalism, that system requiring continual disequilibrium as the only basis for its stasis. It is not in survivals or residues per se that the system creates non-identity. The system must keep less alienated human aspects alive even as it distorts them as the basis for wants which it "orchestrates", plays with, creates new commodities for.

Thus the only partial identity of subject and object and the non-immediacy of identity are crucial notions for the concept of representation in capitalism and Capital.24 They are tendencies which become dominant and must be reconstructed in rough relation to different moments in the development of capitalism itself.

Finally, the exchange value of a commodity—its objective, phenomenal form—tacks over dominance from the subjective pole (of the broken totality or unity of use and exchange value in the commodity), and becomes a vehicle for itself. This is merely another way of stating what we have already said: in capitalism's dominant expressive form, one aspect dominates and conditions the other. Bourgeois analysis can discover the two poles—the second submerged and perverted, but present—but it will take the subjective, in its distorted guise and subservient place, as its essence—it
which seems a market phenomenon is intrinsic in production, and it is not established but only realized in the market. The market is where its representation is specified vis-a-vis other commodities. Price is the often incommensurate representation of exchange value. But it is not its essence, but rather the conventional presentation in quantities of the universal commodity, money, of the human labor (itself increasingly quantifiable under capitalism), or the socially necessary labor time to produce and get the product to its point of realization as a commodity with a money price on the market. Price then is the phenomenal form of exchange value which is the phenomenal form of value: price ≠ exchange value ≠ value. But value is itself structured in terms of the chain of forms in which it is distortedly manifest. That is, the conditions and quality of labor are dramatically transformed by the displacement of dominance and primacy from production to profit in the market. Social alienation, initially generated by productive alienation and appropriation, comes to be the dominant form of alienation under capitalism, negating some of the positive potential induced by capitalism in terms of worker consciousness and potential praxis. The Lukácsian critique of reification is, for whatever its faults, not a mere reading of surfaces, but the expression of a real displacement effect which goes beyond what Lukács himself envisioned in its negative effect on workers under capitalism, but which itself never becomes total, but displaced. The non-immediacy of identity necessary for the continuance of capitalism also potentiates its demise by the space potentially left for a praxis from somewhere.

First: the valid exchange-values of a given commodity express something equal; secondly, exchange-value, generally is only the mode of expression, the phenomenal form, of something contained in it, yet distinguishable from it. (p. 37)

Represent ≠; = expressive forms ≠ what they express—quantitatively or qualitatively. In Marx, there is no identity theory—no simple theory of reflection or equivalence. Complete identity under capitalism at any rate is contrary to the definition of capitalism. But too, to imagine a complete non-identity in conformity with the needs of capitalism is to imagine a system in which there would be no possible threat or movement out of capitalism. Surely the threat and movement serve to enforce capitalism. But the crucial point to grasp is the point when the threat ceases to be functional, when metonymy threatens to break into diachrony.

In any event, the commodity as the heart of Capital, as the proper point to begin an analysis of capitalism, implies a complex structural-historical theory of symbolic relation and action: how the kernel of capitalism production is the basis of its development and collapse. Again: the analysis of the commodity is the model for the symbolic analysis of other forms; further, it is the basis for the analysis of less dominant (e.g., cultural, artistic, etc.) forms which are analyzed during a period when capitalist (commodity) production prevails over all modes of production. What is form but the crystallization of congelation of action? What is a commodity but the primary crystallization of the primary structured and limited action (production for profit) of the capitalist system? What are ideological and artistic forms under capitalism but the crystallization of artistic action under the sway of the primary action of the primary
unquantifiable to some degree homologous with the quantifiable? Isn't a Goldmannian approach which plays up the homological (even if to ultimately point toward difference) merely a capitulation to the process of quantifying which occurs in the bourgeois fiction?  

What of the paradoxes of number, time and geometry in Kafka, Borges, Cortazar? Of the drive toward the fantastic in literature? The use of number in an attack on number? The question is, what in a writer's world view or world may provide a valid basis for the struggle against quantification?

To the degree that Marxism represents (it, but merely seems to represent) the extension of the scientistic or quantifiable (all society is to be a factory, say the bourgeois critics), the bourgeois artist rejects it and seeks an alternative humanism—a journey to the east, to Paris, the Ivory Tower: his struggle against alienation is alienated.

Bourgeois criticism is the effort to scientize or quantify the apparently unquantifiable residue projected by the artist. Hence its supportive role vis-a-vis capitalist technocracy under advanced monopoly capital conditions. It played this role all too poorly in the past, but now has more sophisticated means for doing so: structuralist analysis. And to make the effort all the easier: the structuralist novel.

Marxist criticism is no passive polarity-finding “understanding”, but a transformative analysis—to penetrate the polarities to a dynamic hidden which dynamizes the polarities, to the praxis which has created but which may yet burst asunder these polarities. This criticism subverts the hypostatic form of the literary work (the equilibrated, perfected form which will “live eternally”) and finds the hidden or repressed sources of transformation. Hence the project of Tel Quel: to make use of and yet alienate the structuralist project, and thus to “struggle against the hypositized result of a genesis effaced.”

If ... we leave out of consideration the use value of commodities, they have only one common property left, that of being products of labor.... Along with the useful qualities of the products themselves, we put out of sight both the useful character of the various kinds of labour embodied in them, and the concrete forms of that labour; there is nothing left but what is common to them all; all are reduced to one and the same sort of labour, human labour in the abstract. (p. 38)

As capitalism installs itself, abstraction is made of all relations, “from the material elements and shapes that make [a] product a use-value.” A process of transvaluation is underway. The domination of one phenomenal form puts out of sight the existence of other objects as “material things.” And these things are no longer regarded as “the product of any other definite kind of productive labor.” In the 19th Century, we see the rise of Artist as the last Artesan, and simultaneously, we see the threat to his “definite kind of productive labor.” Marx has opened us out to the dynamics of Art under Capitalism, and the hostility of the latter to the former.

... The residue of ... these products ... consists of the same unsubstantial reality in each, a mere congelation of homogeneous human labour, of labour-power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure. All ... these things now tell us is, that human
A use value ... has value only because human labor in the abstract has been embodied or materialised in it. How, then, is the magnitude of this value to be measured? By the quantity of the value-creating substance, the labour, contained in the article. The quantity of labour, however, is measured by its duration, and labour-time finds its standard in weeks, days, and hours. (p. 38)

Art is a conglomeration of human labor, facilitated by a certain development and division in the labor process. But how can we measure the value of the art work, within the framework of the labor theory of value? It would seem an impossible Marxist problem.

Marx himself touched on the issue, most directly and consistently in his *Theories of Surplus Value*. Here he indicates that when Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* and sold it for £5, he was an unproductive laborer, while under capitalism the artist is increasingly brought under the conditions of a capitalist market, by demands induced by prior production which then condition the presentation of the artistic product, but also its production.30 Thus “Capitalist production is hostile to certain branches of spiritual production, for example, art and poetry.”31 And according to Sánchez Vázquez, who has examined the matter, the hostility of capitalist production to art rests not on any simple relation between material and intellectual production (Marx attacked this notion in both the *Grundrisse Introduction* and *Theories*), but on the conditions of capitalist production—which implies a tendency toward a direct negative relation between economy and art, with the uneven development between art and material production not having to do so much with the relative autonomy of art, but the very character of this material production itself. In other words, the development of art and its particular manifestations (including the drive to establish internal autonomy for the given work or art system) is governed by the conditions of capitalist production; there can be "great art" under capitalism, but this art is achieved only to the degree that a given artistic production can escape the grip of capitalist production.32

We will return to this subject, but it seems clear that the question of the value of a work of art as art cannot be determined by labor time. Even if we were to consider the socially necessary labor time to produce a Picasso painting, even if we were to consider in Picasso’s years of training, the time embodied in the works he studied, in the production of the genre or genres, etc., upon which he worked.... Even if one could theorise such factors, how could one calculate them? How is the price of a work determined? What is the relation of price and value? The work of art takes its place on the market in the midst of more calculable values; its price is determined in relation to the prices of other commodities in the commodity circuit. But to make value determinations requires tools we do not possess, nor can we envision them at this point.

Some people might think that if the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of labour spent on it, the more idle and unskilful the labourer, the more valuable would his labour be, because more time would be required in its production. (p. 39)
First Aesthetic Meditations on Capital

Refusal, the Ivory Tower if necessary).

b. A playing off (a preserving in negating or a more successful negating through preserving) — a dialectical relation to commodity forms and their structural equivalents internalized in the art work itself.

The model for the latter alternative is Brechtian theater (especially in its later dialectical phase, with its tension/tussle of alienation/non-alienation) — not his earlier left extremist Street Scene model.33 Also, while surrealism generally fits the first alternative (in its rejection of direct political content) some surrealist ventures — those preserving a negating object (ultimately, the commodity world): the light and heavy dice, etc. — correspond to the second.34

By “absolute purity”, art may pose as a model of transcendence, prefigure a utopia beyond prehistory), but such art may well lose its link to existing conditions; and by not expressing the struggle of distorted freedom and necessity overtly enough (attempting the disappearance of even the trace of a degraded reality, in the achievement of a perfect ideosyncratic inviolable form), may completely lose its capacity to engage any real, concrete historical struggle. (Here, only the Marxist critic can transform the work by an illumination that makes the work an instrument of struggle.) Further, the very perfection of the completely distanced form — bound by its internalized coordinates, distanced and closed off from any direct tie to the real — only duplicates the structural situation of advanced monopoly capital and the internalized system of the commodity circuit itself. As a perfected form, such art may achieve a following — i.e., can be a source of profit — and become the necessarily deviant commodity the artist has attempted to have his work elude being.

The only partial separation, the imperfect internalization of the struggle itself seems the preferable method of a Marxist aesthetic (Brecht again): forms never fully radicalized, refusing submission to capitalism and complete identity with an opposition which may be distorted by capitalism’s dominance; forms inwardly opened to all entrance from a reified world, and outwardly opened to expell (displace) this now critiqued, ironized and alienated reification. But the critique is never completed; the chain of displacements can extend beyond the historical moment of the work; the immanent structure of the work provides this: it is not so generalized that it loses clear relevance to the most progressive possibilities visible in the moment of its production; it is not so specific that it loses the possibility of multiple relevance to future possibilities in the midst of distinct productions. Thus it is not purely mimetic or non-mimetic — it is not pure. Art as pure creation is mere capitulation to the narrow vistas of praxis for a given class at a given moment; the only progressive role it can serve is the exasperation and rejection it may induce, the Marxist critique of it it may call forth. The Brechtian open form needs no Marxist critique; it contains it — and the basis of that critique’s further development in relation to future conditions of capitalism. "raison d’être" of the first form is a drive for insulated stasis; of the second, combative dynamism.

Each of these units is the same as any other, so far as it has the character of the average labour-power of society, and takes effect as
extend production time to such a degree that there may be no way for him to realize his product or get the going market equivalent in price for his labor—this tied to our concept of “deepening”.

Commodities ... in which equal quantities of labour are embodied, or which can be produced in the same time, have the same value. The value of one commodity is to the value of any other, as the labour-time necessary for the production of the one is to that necessary for the production of the other. (p. 39-40)

What does this mean for the artist, considering the questions of training, “deepening” in the elaboration of his product, whether embodied in his work or his capacity of appropriation? Two responses: (1) All this is “mechanistic and vulgar”; (2) Why “mystify art”? The point is not to mystify. But there can be no doubt that the work of art is a production, subject to given conditions of production. The labor theory of value cannot grasp art because that theory is one which grasps production to the degree that it approaches or extends out of the bourgeois form. Thus, the labor theory can only grasp art to the degree to which art becomes subsumed under capitalism.36

Even when writers were paid by the word and chapter in serialized forms of their books—even when these conditions became major determinants of artistic forms—the artist tried to coopt these factors, just as capitalism tended to coopt him. But to say that artistic production is other than material commodity production is not to establish any theory of relationship by which to deal with works which resist or do not seem to be completely determined by commodity production. This theory of relation is what we are after. Marx also wished to find the basis for such a theory:

The unequal relation between the development of material production and art.... In general, the conception of progress is not to be taken in the sense of the usual abstraction.... This conception of [unequal] development appears to imply necessity. On the other hand, justification of accident. How...

(Freedom and other points)(The effect of means of communication.)

World history does not always appear in history as the result of world history.37

Did Marx find the basis? One thing seems of little doubt: the rapidity of “spontaneous appropriation” of a reified reality (the mimesis of the phenomenal, eternal-seeming hypostatization of historical-human dynamism as determined by the domination over all social life by the commodity form) conditions the writer (and his own petit-bourgeois interests may conspire here) and in fact narrows as it creates his market—and makes his entry into the market all the more problematic or structured. Artistic revolt is structured, positioned, limited—even as a field for its expression is pushed open. The opening is one serving only “repressive desublimation”—and if not, if the revolt goes beyond the severely limited sphere allowed for it, the sphere is then closed (censorship, varying degrees of fascism), and the opening has only functioned as one for alerting the enemy. It is then “coopted” or, if not cooptable, suppressed. One final note on this point: the “reflections” and products of reification serve directly to
First Aesthetic Meditations on Capital

Under capitalism, forms are "resultants" of alienated praxis, quantified and reified into homogeneous labor time. The alienation or hypostatization of praxis into a "value" which is to be seen only as quantity is achieved by forms under capitalism also, the distortion or negation of future praxis. The reification emanating from the commodity and its fetishism (\(\rightarrow\)) works on the reception and consumption of artistic forms (\(\rightarrow\))—an effect more powerful than its inverse (\(\leftarrow\)), the effect of the art form on other commodities; and this reception-consumption process sets up or affects (\(\rightarrow\)) the reproduction or changed production (change signifying a movement from metonymy to genuine diachrony) of the social formation and its own processes at the next "moment" in the cycle or historical transformation of production.

As for the artistic form itself:
The analysis of these perspectives affects our conceptualization of both
"commercial art" and "elite art"; the latter is in a dialectical relation to the former,
yet always seeking to transcend and break out of that relation, which is structured in
part by the need created by commodity production for a product which is not or does
not seem to be a commodity—in production terms: by a need for supposed
disalienation, which actually maintains and extends (i.e., reproduces) the sources of
alienation in production itself.

This productiveness is determined by various circumstances,
amongst others, by the average amount of skill of the workmen, the
state of science, and the degree of practical application, the social
organisation of production, the extent and capabilities of the means of
production, and by physical conditions. (p. 40)

The theory of the relations among these factors, or rather the movement toward
establishing a theory of these relations is what marks a Marxist structuralist
historian. Here we may note that the determinations of productiveness also
determine what may be loosely designated as the “diametries” of artistic forms—their
supposed resistance to science, technology, etc. But of course the highest forms of
avant garde art incorporate the new technology—supposedly to transcend them, if only
by irony or by making them the means of a mystification (when they are presumably
instruments of clarification and objectification). They are highly technological forms
themselves—those of Borges, Cortazar, Carpentier, Márquez, etc. That is, now in the
midst of programmed economic underdevelopment, a highly developed Latin
American literature emerges, a literature of technically sophisticated structural forms,
which like most “exotic” Latin American commodities, are destined for export.

Structuralist analysis is the result of scientific developments made possible by
capitalism, even as they make capitalism possible. This analysis rests on the technique
of the object of study, and the presumption that this technique merely establishes a
transformational relation to a deeper and more general metastructure. With
structuralism, artists create more consciously structured forms, and the validity of
structuralist analysis easily confirms itself by working on such obliging objects.
Underdevelopment is the achievement of a highly developed technology operating in
capitalist conditions; “uneven development” is not an “exception to be explained”,
but the result and necessity of capitalist production. It is no surprise then that the
displacement of capitalist relations of exploitation and immiseration leads to a
displacement in fictional hegemony to a group of “creators” given privileged position
and perspective to translate the full weight and implications of capitalist cultural
relations into exquisitely wrought linguistic constructs. In fact, the “boom” of Latin
American literature we have witnessed in recent years may be understood as a new
organization in an international division of labor, corresponding unevenly to a new
stage in the necessarily uneven development of capitalism.

Here we have come upon what is for us the genuine meta-structure: Fictional
production. In the wake of Cuba, a proliferation and intensification of Latin American
expressive forms ones frequently treating but rarely able to transcend their own
negating work on the theme of trajectory of revolutionary possibilities.
given structures and conditions of production and property. Art forms have thus expressed aspects of existence which distinct social formations placed in relief but did not otherwise allow for.

Tied to productive utility, the function of art became subject to it—an "impure" social function. As utility (that is, use value and the needs objects with use value satisfied) became compounded with and subordinated to exchange value, so the function of art became entwined and dislocated: the distortion of use value and needs under capitalism leads to a distortion of artistic production and the artistic function. The possible supersession of this distortion of art resulting from the relative subordination and transformation of use value through its compounding with exchange value (the latter being the only means of realizing the former) rests on conditions enabling a working through the mediations of this distortion to what still exists or potentially exists in terms of "non-alienated" or "alienation-resisting" qualities under a given status of capitalist development. That is, the dialectics of the use value-exchange value relation imply some potential preservation of disalienation even in the commodity formulation and thus in capitalism itself: capitalist alienation necessitates the maintenance of a non-alienation to be worked upon. But this non-alienation is itself distorted or so historically and structurally determined that any talk of the preservation of a "human essence" in Frommian, Marcusean or "Marxist humanist" terms is highly suspect or too vague to adequately produce conceptual instrumentalities in the direction of praxis.

Under less developed capitalism, under less economic alienation, this aesthetic use value could be still quite great and relatively independent of exchange, since the force of economic relations was not as heavy upon art, and since the very pre-capitalist superstructural "alienations" themselves were means of expressing totality. That is, a lesser development of human material production meant a closer symbolic approximation and appropriation, through myth and ritual, of the existent sense of totality than possible under capitalism in its apogee.

The very proliferation and apparent diachrony of forms under liberal capitalism is a veritable negation of true creative possibility and development; a sign of extended, divisive alienation and a desperation over genuine possibility. The return to synchronic emphasis today (comparable to past cultural totalitarianisms) is a mark of a drive toward homology which may be a token of a breakdown in the capitalist world system, even as capitalism deepens its shadow in the sectors of the world still most fully under its sway, producing a reification of consciousness in depth.

The masters of artistic forms in "a dying culture" (cf., by displacement to the Third World, a Borges) are masters of the labyrinths, fictions and games of nothingness. Again, as with structuralist praxis, the only potential transcendent function of their art (which is formally to coopt and negate every possible transcendence or breakout) is the rebellion against nothingness it may stir in the minds of readers (but what readers?) who may reject, contest, or rebel against it. There is a tension in this direction in a Cortazar or in a Genet. But the dominant mode of artistic production (i.e., fiction) is still a capitalist mode, which limits, distorts and ultimately capitalizes the tension toward breakthrough generated within it: a distorted ideological image of oppression, produced by oppressor-dominated means of production, leads to
First Aesthetic Meditations on Capital

When the work of art (a use value serving the need for sensuous appropriation by the artist, and the need to experience this appropriation by others) becomes caught up in a circuit that goes from production to exchange and back—that is, once the use value of the object becomes subservient to exchange value—that work and its very productive process enter a quantitative reified world alien to its original and potential nature and function.

The work of art is a product made for others, crystallizing the possibilities generated by the work of others; but it is not a commodity until it has been transferred by means of an exchange—that is by what constitutes an appropriation of surplus value in a given social formation. A work of art's value in terms of quantifiable capitalist labor relations is alien to its nature; but the fact is that that nature becomes increasingly conditioned by such value determinations—or by what is left over from the expenditure of other products more readily figured in terms of labor time. And once its production—the artist alone, the artist employing a staff, a publishing company mounting reproduction, promotion and distribution costs, etc.—becomes in part determined by such factors, art tends toward closer and closer relation with the commodity form itself and loses its "pure status" as use value.

Nothing can have value, without being an object of utility. If the thing is useless, so is the labour contained in it; the labour does not count as labour, and therefore creates no value. (p. 41)

Value only appears when the product is exchanged. That is, first of all, the artist's labor which is not ultimately realized in the exchange moment is not labor. Only that labor which is actualized in exchange constitutes value. Surely it is more "profitable" for the artist to organize his work for an efficiency determined by capitalist relations. Second, under capitalism, the work of art's use value can only realize itself by relating to the commodity circuit. This is a vicious circuit: art which is not a commodity cannot even realize its anti-commodity status in a world dominated by capital. Even granting a preservation of need under capitalism, the only way for the work to fight or counter commodity hegemony is for it to be a commodity—that is to be the very thing it may be trying to struggle against. While a thing can have use value without being a commodity, needs expressing and leading to the production of commodities are subject in capitalism to commodity production, and thus the art work gets caught up in this necessity.

The artistic form is another means of representing the social totality, like the commodity. It is the expression of human labor and need, the concentration of many determinations. But just as the commodity is both a crystallization and distortion of human labor, so is the artistic form. That a modern work may be coherent in its expression of incoherence, even "beautiful" in its expression of modern ugliness, is not to disprove the hostility of capitalism to art, but to demonstrate that the quality and "beauty" of our art is the result of a baleful, and ultimately crippling struggle against the source of this hostility. Ultimately, however, while artistic coherence or beauty negates the force of capitalism in some distance, symbolic and even symptomatic way, it simultaneously represents that force. The artistic form must both relate to and


12. This is our Marxist way of understanding the relations charted in Foucault's *Les Mots et les Choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).


Insofar as such a doctrine encourages intellectuals in the belief that with a little ingenuity their analysis of historical reality can be manufactured inside their own heads, it reinforces their occupational idealism by isolating consciousness from the resistance of the infrastructural context and the social ground itself; as a method, therefore, the search for homologies is open to ideological, as well as theoretical, criticism (Jameson, *Prisonhouse* p. 214).” But see note 24.


36. For an elaboration of this point, see *The German Ideology*, p. 108, and *Theories of Surplus Value*, pp. 284-5.


38. On this issue of function, see Engels to Schmidt, Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, pp. 686-88; and Marx, *Theories*, pp. 386-8. The relations between form, function, structure and "possible praxis" are well articulated in Leebvre's recent work - cf. note 6.

39. On these matters, Marx comes closest to a clear, mature formulation in *Theories*—especially, p. 405. In the *Grundrisse* Introduction, Marx says: "Production not only provides the material to satisfy a need, but ... the need for the material.... The need felt for the object is induced by the perception of the object. An objet d'art creates a public that has artistic taste and is able to enjoy beauty—and the same can be said of any other product. Production accordingly produces not only an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object.” Capitalist production produces a reified subject.

40. The critiques of Proudhon’s polarities, etc., appear, certainly, in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, but also in Marx’s letter to P. V. Annenkov, in *Selected Works*, 669-79—a must text for the Marxist structuralist encounter, as is Marx and Engels’ jeering parody of Hegelian abstractionism, as a cat eating a mouse is shown to be based on the "self-consumption of nature—cf. *The German Ideology* Part III, quoted in the edition cited (note 35), p. 6.

41. For a fine critique of the difficulty in uniting structuralism and Marxism, along these lines, see Lucien Sève, “Méthode structurale et méthode dialectique”, in *La Pensée*, Paris, October, 1967, No. 135 (Numéro spécial: Structuralisme et marxisme).