Textures
Approaching Society, Ideology, Literature*
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Criticism and Theory in the Contemporary World

For a sociologist to address those who specialize in literature, he needs to engage in the delicate act of balancing disparate approaches. So be it. I prefer not to write from the standpoint of my discipline, and, leaving my professional center of gravity, I place instead my observations in the creases that mark off the positions of the humanities, the social sciences, epistemology, and literature itself. My platform is merely interstitial, and whatever this exercise turns out to be, it will result in, to use a fashionable if elusive expression, an intertext.

The reason for my choice is plain. Much of what passes today for methodological and theoretical novelty in sociology is not, I suspect, circumscribed to this discipline, but is part of a wider network of intellectual developments—novelties in linguistics, literary criticism, metascience, even in biology—with which sociology has shown certain affinities. We have crossed a threshold, and something of a chasm separates us from the concerns of our past. How serious a break it is, how significant a leap, remains to be seen. It is worthy of notice that both Marxism and Freudianism have survived this divide—not without strains, to be sure. The continued vitality of these two theories indicates perhaps that, changes notwithstanding, we may not yet have exhausted all the possibilities of an epoch that began somewhere in the last century. But changed we have, and nowhere is the transformation more evident than in our notions of inquiry.

Across an entire range of disciplines a shift in the status of facts has taken place. Facts are no longer treated as substances "out there" that we seek to know. We no longer conceive of inquiry as a harvest. We

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have abandoned the idiom of positive realism and have substituted for it a methodological predilection for textual data. The objects of our disciplines now stand as texts that have to be interpreted. Ours, in short, is the world of Champollion: reality as a hieroglyphic. And to go about the world deciphering hieroglyphics is fundamentally different from going about the world pocketing facts. Even those no more than moderately acquainted with new methodological developments no longer tolerate expressions like "data gathering" that, by sheer momentum, still find a place in social science discourse. In the words of Fredric Jameson:

The notion of textuality, whatever fundamental objections may be made to it, has at least the advantage as a strategy, of cutting across both epistemology and the subject/object antithesis in such a way as to neutralize both, and of focusing the attention of the analyst on his own position as a reader and on his own mental operations as interpretation. At once, then, he finds himself obliged to give an account of the nature of his object of study qua text: he is thus no longer tempted to view it as some kind of empirically existing reality in its own right...necessarily reconstituting it in such a way as to resolve his "facts" back into semantic and syntactic components of the text he is about to decipher.

The texture of factual reality is both opaque and mystifying; it must be disassembled and reconstructed. The forms in which reality presents itself to us, the forms of its appearance, conceal those real relations which themselves produce the appearances. This methodological hypothesis, from which the study of ideology stems today, requires new concepts and new tools of research. As literary critics, sociologists of various persuasions, historians, anthropologists, and philosophers of science have stated more or less explicitly, there is growing curiosity, across disciplinary frontiers, about the meccanisms by virtue of which appearances are structures and texts produced. The methodical suspicion that data are not given but produced, that phenomenal forms are mystifying, that facts are artifacts, and the recipes for retracing the steps of these productions, are the basic ingredients of modern criticism. In short, inquiry today proceeds under the imperative that ruse has to be met by double ruse, since we believe that every practice tends, as it moves forward, to efface its own procedures. Thus we compose inquiry in two movements. First, the translation of ideology (manifest text, surface phenomena) into the underlying text, with its attendant methodologies, is what we call criticism. Second, the construction of a hypothetical model of production, and conversion of one into the other, is what we call theorizing. Criticism is the terminus a quo theory the terminus ad quem, of inquiry.

*Ideology, From Mirage to Pseudomorphosis*

When Marx produced his first draft of a theory of ideology, bourgeois epistemology held that man was the eye for which reality had been made visual: the ideal eye, the eye of the viewpoint of Renaissance perspective. The greatness of this eye lay in its ability to reflect and contain what was. In short, the metaphorical model for the function of the mind was the mirror. The mirror renders the appearances of reality and delivers them into the possession of the universal subject. Marx proposed that the mirror was defective because man was an interested part of the reality that he observed. No ideal eye is possible in a society split into warring classes, a society in which the state is the organized will of the upper class. With the loss of his freedom, man, insisted Marx, developed false consciousness—the consciousness of the subject in alienation which creates ideologies or systems of ideas that are object-inadequate, and, therefore, without effect upon reality. These ideas merely react upon man's imagination. This false or ideological consciousness creates religion as well as other realms of fancy that offer substitute satisfactions and escape from this-wordly misery. Marx struggled to break the metaphor of the mirror and to discover an adequate language in which to express his suspicion. The initial result was a series of different metaphors—reflex, echo, phantom, sublimate—of which the strongest was the camera obscura:

If in ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life process.

The metaphor suggests that representations are mere illusions, without truth content or practical effectiveness, standing in a relation of inversion with regard to real objects—an inversion produced by the distorting lens of the class-bound subject. The overwhelming presence of inequality and exploitation generates this distortion, through conscious deceit, self-deception, or the infection of cognition by values. Ideology is reality seen through class experience. This, in my view, is the 'optics' of The German Ideology.

Marx's early discourse on ideology, which he considered as no more than a sketch and which he substantially modified in his later work, has nonetheless crystallized in a series of common assumptions about the nature and functions of belief systems in society. The view that ideology is made up of ideas is one of these assumptions. It suggests that ideas, the units of which ideology is composed, or out of which it is constructed, are more or less independent of one another and stand in some simple, though inverted, relation with non-ideological, non-distorted, factual or scientific concepts, propositions, or facts. The problem with this view is that it is strictly Manichean. It accommodates quite comfortably the crudest positivist dogma, according to which "biased," fanciful, unverifiable propositions are compared, one to one, with scientific propositions. We find abundant examples of this positivist critique in works that span several decades and many disciplines, from Pareto's social theory to Carnap's
metascience. Fortunately, there are subtler views of ideological distortion within this same tradition, and their yield is consequently greater. Thus, in the Marxian critique of religion and of idealist philosophy, ideology is characterized as a set of statements that display the products of human labor as if they were things or qualities independent of that labor. This is a false explanation of human activity as caused by the reified results of such activity. In spite of its limitations this thesis has proved to be quite productive. A second thesis, stemming from the 'optics' of The German Ideology, calls ideological those statements that present as a fact, or objective quality, what is a subjective quality. A good example is the familiar Marxist indictment of misplaced universality, the critique of worldviews that present particular class interests as if they were general interests. In the same vein, but on an individual level, personal value judgements can be masked as factual statements, and personal emotion can be expressed in the displaced language of objective qualities. Thus, psychological theories of projection and, more generally, of rationalization, blend well with critiques of ideology on the societal level. Rather than multiply examples, I will simply propose that these are all epistemological theses in which error is presented as masking. The underlying metaphoric model is, to repeat, the optical illusion.

Accompanying these theses, there is another order of propositions about ideology based on an ontological thesis that rests on a different, architectural metaphor: the well-known distinction between base and superstructure. In this case, ideologies appear as the expression of beliefs that are rooted in social relations—the precise nature of this rootedness being always a matter of dispute. As a late example, Mannheim's essay on "Conservative Thought" is, perhaps, a classic. When function is stressed rather than cause, ideologies are examined as to whether they satisfy such social needs as solidarity or organized and stable domination. In both cases, the ontology is the same, and the propositions are neutral as to the truth or falsity of ideologies. They simply aim at linking thought to social structure. In sum, the doctrine of ideology that Marx first sketched in his critique of German idealist philosophy has given rise to two sets of preoccupations with different theoretical functions—gnoseological and sociological—that pretty much stake out the gamut of standard social criticism and research on ideology.

The optical and architectural metaphors, the gnoseological and ontological theses, and the manifold research built upon these premises tell us a familiar story: that ideology constitutes a mystification or deception, that it functions as a defense of class interest, that it promotes social solidarity, and that it has the result that what appears to be objective, positive, scientific discourse is not in fact "value free." Now this conglomerate of conventional wisdom on ideology is being challenged in some important ways by developments in such fields as semiotics, the history of science, the anthropological study of myth, Marxian economics, and textual analysis, to cite but a few. The challenge is contained in the answers which these different fields are attempting to give to the general questions "What are the conditions for the production of knowledge and what are the conditions for the production of various systems of mystificatory belief?". Since I began these remarks on ideology with Marxian exegesis, and made The German Ideology a prototype of our conventional view of ideology, I will recommence with the Marx of Capital, and stylize his analysis of commodity fetishism into a prototype of more recent approaches to ideology.

In Capital, Marx's conception of the minimum necessary condition to be satisfied by any work aspiring to scientific status is, in the words of Norman Geras, "to uncover the reality behind the appearances that conceal it."1 Apparances must be dissolved if reality is to be correctly grasped. Critical penetration rather than mere factual discovery is the new guiding thread of scientific work.

All of Capital can be read as the unfolding of a critical approach towards the fetishism of capitalist society entailing a mapping out of a not immediately evident theoretical space which cannot be dealt with either by bourgeois science or traditional philosophy, since both fall under the same criticism of fetishism in so far as they pretend to base themselves on abstractions assumed as autonomous realities.4

Marx no longer considers the critique of ideology a sarcastic byproduct of research but an indispensable moment of inquiry. His approach to ideology has changed: it is no longer a relativization of thought, a reduction of ideas to their social substratum. It is now a critique of visible social relations—a shift in perspective that entails a certain restitution of innocence to cognition and the bestowal of suspicion upon reality itself. The critique of ideology ceases to be the correction of an optical illusion and becomes instead the diagrammatic account of how visible relations conceal invisible processes, forces, structures. Marx finally succeeds in finding a proper metaphorical model of science to replace the old epistemology: the model of the diagram, which differs from the bourgeois mirror in the same way in which Cubism differs from Renaissance perspective. It suggests a concern with what is not self-evident.

What is more self-evident, in capitalist society, than "the immense accumulation of commodities"? Marx starts with this situation by force of circumstance, not by abstract choice, and works his way through the maze of commodities. A commodity first appears as an object that satisfies a human need. This is its social utility, or use value. Another dimension of value appears as soon as we start trading commodities, as a pipe is traded for two kruche, or for their equivalence in currency. This exchange value. But there is something immutable that stands, invisible, behind all transformations: a common substratum that allows us to equate dissimilar
substances. There is only one possible answer to the puzzle: all commodities are products of human labor, abstract human labor, social production. Just as there are two sides to the expression of the value of commodities, so there are two sides to the character of labor. Human labor is concrete, dissimilar, in relation to use value, and abstract, homogeneous, in relation to exchange value. In this second aspect, labor appears as socially necessary labor time, embodied in commodities.

The exchange of commodities reveals a dimension of their value that remains concealed when they are considered in isolation from each other. But exchange value is also a phenomenal form. The act of exchange does not reveal the origin of value, which is to be found in production, not in circulation. Exchange, in other words, is the misleading form in which value is expressed, the guise in which it surfaces. Marx treated economic exchange as if it were a compromise formula, since in circulation value is both expressed and concealed. This, for Marx, is the quotidian texture of capitalist society, a texture that becomes nearly universal as capitalism develops and the market penetrates every nook and cranny of existence. As commodity exchange becomes generalized, one commodity becomes specialized in expressing the value of all the rest: money. Commodities need other commodities to express their value, and, finally, money becomes the common yardstick of value. All these appearances mask the true nature of value, which Marx finds in the social reality of labor. Hence, far from being self-evident, commodities are enigmatic:

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.\footnote{We have already seen, from the most elementary expression of value, x commodity A \textsc{by} commodity B that the object in which the magnitude of the value of another object is represented, appears to have the equivalent form independently of this relation, as a social property given to it by Nature. We followed up this false appearance to its final establishment, which is complete as soon as the universal equivalent form becomes identified with the bodily form. What appears to happen is, not that gold becomes money, in consequence of all other commodities expressing their values in it, but on the contrary, that all other commodities universally express their values in gold, because it is money. \textit{The intermediate steps of the process vanish in the result and leave no trace behind}. Commodities find their own value completely represented, without any initiative on their part, in another commodity existing in company with them. These objects, gold and silver, just as they come out of the bowels of the earth, are forthwith the direct incarnation of all human labour. \textit{Hence the magic of money.\footnote{What is of interest to us in this context is the general relationship of Marx's method of analysis and the more or less spontaneous representations of the actors inhabiting a commodity-producing society. If we follow Marx's analysis, soon enough the spontaneous consciousness of the actors seems absurd. Theirs is a world of false appearance, of pseudo-evidence. But notice that false consciousness is no longer the result of individual prejudice or class-rooted illusion; it is not, as Marx once claimed in reference to German philosophy, the result of speculative alienation from factual reality. Ideology is object-adequate, paradoxical as this proposition that has become explicit only in our time, namely, that systems of mystificatory belief are possible by virtue of the fact that they are too firmly established on the basis of the immediately perceivable forms of empirical reality. The insight was surprisingly advanced, and its importance went largely unnoticed until, much later, a series of disciplines rediscovered the cognitive basis of systems of mystificatory belief. Thus, for the modern history of science, such prescientific systems of belief and practice as alchemy or natural magic do not result from lack of interest in empirical facts, or from simple mistakes and oversights of an alleged "primitive mentality." Historians of science also reject the view that such systems were essentially the result of enterprises that were overwhelmed by affect, that is, by non-cognitive subjective forces. These systems of belief are now treated as forms of cognition that failed to penetrate the surface of appearance. Similarly, in their studies of mythology, Claude Lévi-Strauss and his followers have sought to return to the savage mind the cognitive character that previous research in anthropology had for so long withheld from it. Marx came upon this insight on the occasion of the study of value and its transformations. Value appears in a form that dissimulates its true nature, a form that shows precisely the opposite of what value actually is. But the inversion is not produced in the retina of the beholder. Ideological deception is not the subject's misprision of an object that is readily available. Marx's inquiry destroys the innocence of facts. The surprising demonstration that the world of economic facts plays such a masquerade on us is one of the major achievements of his mature work. As soon as this realization is firmly established, referential positivism is no longer tenable. Spontaneous consciousness becomes suspect, and a new approach to ideology is outlined. The imaginary expressions of ideology have their home in the ordinary language of everyday life, that is, in the practical consciousness of a fetishized world. Ideology refers to both the order of reality and the order of language: the ideological process starts on the level of everyday practice and moves on to other levels of organization and discourse. What phenomenological sociologists have called the "social construction of reality" is then, ideology \textit{par excellence}. Scientific inquiry begins with its de-construction, which means that ordinary language, far from being something to which we should appeal in theoretical discussion," is}
something which we have good grounds for suspecting of distortion. Theory is the reorganization of that which criticism destroys. To theorize is to derive the forms of daily life from a model of their underlying structure. Or, to put it more systematically, ideology is what we might call the phenostructure of society, criticism—both practical and theoretical—is its methodical undoing, and theory is the model of the genostructure. The metaphor of base and superstructure has undergone a final metamorphosis. Marx's social theory is then the first grand critique of modern pseudomorphism.

The upshot of Marx's mature work is the sketch of an objectivist theory of ideology, the suggestion that there is a structured world of mystification. Among the inmates of this world are, most importantly, relations, rituals, institutions, as well as ordinary discourse, and only secondarily individuals holding "beliefs." In analogy to a physical state we may, following Marx, speak of the state of an ideology, e.g. the state of fetishism under late capitalism. In short, we may speak of ideology without an ideological subject. For instance, the fetishism of commodities is not the result of an individual's history, a function of his biography. It is not a subjective deficiency but an objective state of affairs: the state of the social order, the product of a collective history. Just as the subject's consciousness is not responsible for this state of affairs, so the subject's knowledge, that is, his, occasional or systematic, penetration of the ideological veil, does not depend on his own powers and does not, by itself, dispel mystification. The conditions for the development of systems of mystificatory belief, on the one hand, and of knowledge, on the other, depend on the development of productive forces, that is, on large-scale social processes. There is, no doubt, an individual creative element, the relation of give-and-take between an individual and his practices, the subversive intervention. But it is limited. Even the development of knowledge is a component, but not an agent, of change, and the critique of ideology is a weapon of limited effectiveness:

The recent scientific discovery, that the products of labour, so far as they are values, are but material expressions of the human labour spent in their production, marks, indeed, an epoch in the history of the development of the human race, but, by no means, dissipates the mist through which the social character of labour appears to us to be an objective character of the products themselves. The fact, that in the particular form of production with which we are dealing, viz., the production of commodities, the specific social character of private labour carried on independently, consists in the equality of every kind of that labour, by virtue of its being human labour, which character, therefore, assumes in the product the form of value—this fact appears to the producers, notwithstanding the discovery above referred to, to be just as real and final, as the fact, that, after the discovery by science of the component gases of the air, the atmosphere itself remained unaltered. 6

Fetishism, then, is the inevitable feature of life in a given type of society. Only the latter itself is not immutable. Therefore, critical inquiry does not stop with the discovery of fetishism, but continues in search of the "laws of motion" of that order. Only at the end of this search can major strategies of intervention be mapped out. The critique of ideology is an important battle, but not the war. To indicate this is also to insist that all major claims made on behalf of the critique of ideology as the crowning aspiration of social science must be disbelieved, since they mistake the part for the whole. The kind of Ideologiekritik that Marx anticipated in his mature work and which is being carried out today in several disciplines is at once more modest and more rigorous than its past and present competitors. Among these we must include the now defunct neo-Hegelian critique of religion chided in The German Ideology, much in present-day interpretative sociologies, and, last but not least, vulgar Marxism itself.

**Criticizing and Dreaming**

My foregoing observations represent no more than a highly stylized mapping model of Marxian analysis that is applicable to the study of ideology in a number of fields. Similarly, we can map a pattern of inquiry from the Freudian interpretation of dreams and from an idealized—in the methodological sense of the term—psychoanalytic situation. As with Marxian economics, we shall here disregard all technicalities of psychoanalytic procedure because we are interested in the applicability of the model of the development of knowledge and self-understanding in the psychoanalytic situation to the development of a theory of ideology. The task is made easier by several excellent readings of Freud of recent vintage.

The "pure" psychoanalytic situation can be characterized by a procedure of dialogic self-reflection. In the words of Gerard Radnitzky ... the governing research-motivating and research-guiding interest is the hermeneutic one: increased self-understanding for analysand and, indirectly, also for the analyst (as well as development of psychoanalytic theory). 7

The psychoanalytic interpretation is a form of hermeneutics that enlightens by disclosing hidden textures of meaning. What Freud did in his practice was not explain the analysand's actions causally but to understand them and give them meaning. The procedure he engaged in was not one of elucidating causes but the hermeneutic practice of making sense of them. It can be argued, as Habermas and Ricoeur have done, that Freud made a revolutionary breakthrough in hermeneutics with his insistence that neurotic symptoms are meaningful disguised communications, even though, owing to his scientific training and allegiance, he formulated his findings in the idioms of the physical sciences. As Palmer comments:
The elements of the hermeneutical situation are all there: the dream is the text, a text filled with symbolic images, and the psychoanalyst uses an interpretive system to render an exegesis that brings to the surface the hidden meaning. Hermeneutics is the process of deciphering which goes from manifest content and meaning to latent or hidden meaning. The object of interpretation, symbols in a dream or even the myths and symbols of society or literature.  

Whether they consider themselves researchers or not, analysts do, in their clinical practice, engage in research into the private language of patients. Psychoanalytic theory is unavoidably hermeneutic insofar as the analyst must interpret cryptic and disguised utterances and gestures and translate them back into a common language. An analyst encountering a new analysand is in a position similar to that of a linguist who encounters a community that speaks an unfamiliar language, and similar to that of an anthropologist who faces a wealth of myth material. To get his bearings, the analyst listens to the analysand, explores how much language they both have in common, and by locating the contexts in which initially incomprehensible utterances occur and referring them back in his own mind to other languages he knows, he gradually learns the language of the other—an Other that, in some versions of this critical practice, is no longer the Subject. In ways similar to the linguist’s encounter with ordinary language in his or another community, and the ethnologist’s encounter with myth, the analyst confronts structures that encompass the subject rather than being encompassed by him. This last observation touches a serious point of contention between those who seek to find out what psychoanalysis is about. For those who focus on therapy, analysis is “successful” when the analyst’s interpretation becomes accessible to his patient, i.e., when the patient reappraises his own, formerly obscure language. Therapy is then conceived as a type of hermeneutics that restores, so to speak, private property. To others, psychoanalytic interpretation ultimately dissolves the subject in the impersonal realm of unconscious production. The iconoclastic shattering of manifest meaning typical of psychoanalysis thus reveals an elective affinity with the Marxian critique of ideology. Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* ranks equal in status to Marx’s *Capital* in the development of an epistemology of mystification. Freud’s procedures also establish simultaneously the demystification of appearance and a scientific discourse. Here too, understanding comes from discovering that which is concealed by the apparent “facts,” by that which is directly perceivable and talked about. Once again, criticism destroys this texture and theory grasps the hidden coherence of the object. The shattering of deception in both cases is similar. Nevertheless, although Marxism and psychoanalysis share common ground, they may easily diverge. Psychoanalysis aspires to produce enlightenment in a micro-setting that leaves the real relations of the wider social world untouched. This is what Habermas calls the “emancipatory” cognitive interest. Marxism, for its part, is better able to grasp the structure of real social relations that psychoanalysis ignores. Harsh as this may sound to those who greet with satisfaction the advent of a humanist Marxism, neither enlightenment nor healing recollection are the resting points of Marxist practice—political or theoretical. They are, however, closer to the heart of psychoanalysis, a fact that explains why psychoanalysis falls prey, more easily than Marxism, to the blandishments of authenticity. Be that as it may, and without entering the debate at this point, let us retrace, in a gross and sketchy manner, Freud’s procedures in dream analysis.

The overall purpose of interpretation is to transform the dream into a normal communication, to produce self-clarification in both dreamer and analyst. The guiding purpose or dream theory, on the other hand, is to explain the procedures whereby some utterances have become opaque, mysterious, to both dreamer and analyst. It is clear that Freud considered this procedure akin to literary criticism. When, many years after the publication of *Traumdeutung*, he set out to recapitulate some of his achievements, he gave a very lucid description of what he had intended:

What has been called a dream we shall describe as the text of the dream or the manifest dream, and what we are looking for, what we suspect, so to say, of lying behind the dream, we shall describe as the latent dream-thoughts. Having done this, we can express our two tasks as follows. We have to transform the manifest dream into the latent one and to explain how, in the dreamer’s mind, the latter has become the former. The first portion is a practical task, for which dream-interpretation is responsible, it calls for a technique. The second portion is a theoretical task, whose business is to explain the hypothetical dream-work, and it can only be a theory. The manifest dream does not differ from any other text in its various possibilities: it may range from smooth composition, like some literary texts, to the unintelligibility of delirium. The first operation of the analyst is to produce some distance, for himself as well as for the analysand, from the dream as a whole, from its reified completeness as a text, by separating portions of its content. The analysand is asked to produce associations with different portions of the dream. The function of these associations is to loosen the structure of the manifest text as a closed totality. The task is, undoubtedly, a recourse to what Mannheim called “extrinsic interpretation.” When this procedure ceases temporarily to yield results, the analyst once again violates the text by recourse this time to an even more radically extrinsic procedure, namely by temporarily abandoning the dialogue with his patient. At that point the analyst takes the analysand’s utterances not as discourse but as verbal behavior, that is, as symptoms of objective conditions, which he tries to explain “from the outside,” in terms of a special sublanguage which the other does not possess and which is closer to the naturalistic methods of behavioral science. This quasi-
naturalistic phase of the inquiry produces a temporary distantiating—a kind of Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*—the purpose of which is precise and calculated: to bare and unmask the grammar by violating the text in some manner until the rules betray their presence.

The dream is seen to be an abbreviated selection from the associations, a selection made. It is true, according to rules that we have not yet understood.\textsuperscript{11}

The procedure is similar to the ethnographic demonstration in sociology and the impulse is the same: to bring routines and ordinary discourse, including dream accounts, to a halt, to make the world and time of everyday stop. Once some of the productive rules are laid bare, interpretation resumes. Freud had difficulty in making his method explicit beyond a few abstract generalities. He preferred to display it as a craft in case reports.

This sounds as though we allowed our ingenuity and caprice to play with the material put at our disposal by the dreamer and as though we misused it in order to interpret into his utterances what cannot be interpreted from them. Nor is it easy to show the legitimacy of our procedure in an abstract description of it. But you have only to carry out a dream analysis yourselves or study a good account of one in our literature and you will be convinced of the cogent manner in which interpretative work like this proceeds.\textsuperscript{14}

This is precisely the point at which the literary critic may come to the aid of the analyst—and more generally, to the aid of anyone concerned with the interpretation of textual data and the deciphering of ideologues—and provide the tools of investigation. I will leave this as a suggestion and a query: we can make a strong case for methodological cross-fertilization on this score.

Freud reports that the task of interpretation is similar to swimming against the tide. The analyst finds, on the part of the analysand, a strong communicative resistance. On the basis of this discovery, repeated in every psychoanalytic situation, Freud suggests that the dream should be considered a compromise between reality and wish, between consciousness and the unconscious repressed. Dreams are the “harmless hallucinations” in which those structures interact. The psychoanalytic situation retrieves the encounter and makes it yield further meaning. Freud did not envision other, less private, situations in which this harmless and productive encounter could take place. His world was flanked by the opposite but equally stark images of bleak realism and pathology. The intentional turning away from the demands of reality, and the consequent lowering of repression, entice hidden desires to work their way to the surface of symbolic expression, to obtain a harmless satisfaction. The work of censorship then becomes more readily accessible to study, just like, under a tottering authoritarian regime, the very relaxation of controls makes oppression stand out more clearly than when it was administered with full force. It is this situation that allows the analyst to observe what Freud called the dream-work. Freud’s reconstruction of this process is, roughly, as follows. In sleep, an instinctual impulse is expressed on the occasion of chance stimuli and makes use of the residues of the day’s experiences. This expression is toned down and disguised. Since the path to action is blocked, it takes a backward course in the direction of perception and hallucinatory relief. The end result is a tableau alien to conscious thinking. All linguistic elements with which we express the subtler nuances of thought are dropped and replaced by visual scenes that very often appear disconnected. Those elements that enter in contact with each other are condensed into new units. Through compression and concentration latent dream-thoughts are transformed into pictures. There is also a shift of effective accent. Ideas are separated from the affects attaching to them. The affective accent passes from important elements to indifferent ones, and conversely, what is minor may be magnified. The dream is now complete; it faces the subject without revealing the quite elaborate distortions involved in its production and it then becomes subject to what Freud calls “secondary revisions” after it has been presented to consciousness. We fill in gaps, develop themes, introduce connections, complete, embellish, or gloss over the text in ways that never connect with its actual production. These procedures Freud sums up under the label of rationalization. As a mystifying activity, it is similar to the systematization of ordinary practice and ordinary discourse that are the hallmarks of ideology. If criticism—literary criticism included—does not recover the dream-work, it becomes part of the dream.

**Modes of Production**

For such phenomena as class, domination, and ideology to become thematized they must have reached a historically advanced point. Thus, it was the very development of capitalism that generated the conditions for the emergence of Marxist theory. Similarly, for psychoanalysis to formulate its views, the father had to become available for criticism, as a result of changes in family structure. On a more general level, for interest and passion to become the object of rational scrutiny, civilization must have progressed according to certain identifiable patterns. Today we know something about the cultural conditions that have given rise to social theory and to the modes of critical inquiry that I have mapped out above. Once articulated, such theories and modes of inquiry can be applied, in retrospect, to previous eras to which they were unavailable. Such is the insight contained in Marx’s aphorism, “Reason has always been there, although not always in reasonable form.”

Something similar seems to have happened with *textuality* and *textual production* in the realm of literary studies. Literary studies remind us today of something that literature itself practiced, but did not know, all along, namely, that writing is a specific production process. Until recently it had
been presented as a world of “creation” and, quite often, as the scene of charismatic authorship.

The judgements passed on literature by traditional criticism were of the order of paraphrase and commentary. Studies of fiction, for example, were committed to the principle that the elements of a masterwork cohered in some harmonious ethical or thematic statement which was the business of the critic to recover. We find echoes of this traditional interpretation even in the Marxist sociology of literature, as witnessed in the work of Lukács and Goldmann, whose novelty in reference to more conventional modes consisted in imputing the thematic statements to the world-views of a class. One way or another, literature was supposed to “reflect” social values, and the task of criticism was to translate such reflection into an intelligible language. But both reflection and translation were not examined as to the laws of their production. The inner workings of the text, the tissues of writing, went unobserved. Leo Lowenthal’s *Literature and the Image of Man*, one of the more interesting works in this tradition, shows best its limitations.

What has been proposed to replace the traditional approach to literature is a type of criticism free from the notion of reflection and capable of discerning the various and quite intricate ways in which modes of social production are articulated with literary production. As I see it, with the limitations typical of an outsider, the proposal is no more than a general mapping model for literary investigations. It promises, however, to integrate a great number of technical procedures developed by criticism in recent years, both in the field of literature and outside, of the type I have described above. Here I can do no more than sketch the contours of the model and comment on its significance.

In a recent essay on the subject, Noe Jitrik indicates that criticism is not in the business of glossing over a text. It is, like any other scientific enterprise, an effort to produce generalizable knowledge with an object of study (the text), a methodology (operating with, or on, the text), and a goal (the production of verifiable and generalized propositions). Criticism, then, is no longer conceived as the privileged commentary that accompanies charismatic authorship. The proposal amounts to a desacralization of literature. To do otherwise, to follow the traditional path of criticism, to contemplate the text as a harmonious whole—as in the application of Gestalt techniques—is essentially similar to engaging in the secondary revision of a dream memory. The same epistemological problem is involved that Freud observed in the recollection of dreams. After waking we try to recall a dream we will inevitably project a better Gestalt into it, iron out seemingly superfluous detail and fill incoherences and gaps. Anton Ehrenzweig has captured the problem when he writes:

Art is a dream dreamt by the artist which we, the wide awake spectators, can never see in its true structure; our waking faculties are bound to give us too precise an image produced by secondary revision. The work of art remains the unknowable Ding an sich.

Our impressions amount to illusions, possibly even hallucinations of non-existent data. A sociology of literature that employs such categories as Weltanschauung or “images of man” should take heed of these remarks lest it shift attention from the hidden, unrevised, and initially dispersed process of textual production to the narrower focus of everyday vision, thus plugging its commentary into the ongoing recreations of ideology.

What then, is writing, escritura, escritura? A set of operations that transform a given language into something new, the production of new significations comparable to other processes of organized human work, yet with its own specific properties. Writing, we are told, does not commence when someone takes the pen. It began before, in social life, when those conditions emerged that gave literary practice its place and its function in a determinate social formation. Once in motion, writing proceeds according to patterns that “pass through,” but also exceed, the writer. And writing does not cease with the accomplishment of a final opus, nor with the social consumption of the text, for the consumption is almost inexhaustively renewed, and, in some instances, itself productive of new texts.

If we accept this view, we are required to reconstruct the nexus that binds literary practice to other types of practice in ways for which the "sociologies"—of knowledge, literature, and culture—are largely unprepared. This task demands a theory of general and regional modes of production, and a method for isolating and connecting structures. The terrain has already been charted, but the field awaits case studies and demonstrations. Only then shall we know when and how the practice of writing subverts or reaffirms the established productive practices of a given society. We need studies of the effect of changing techniques of production and reproduction on artistic practices, following, perhaps, Walter Benjamin’s brilliant *Proust*. We need to synthesize the existing work on textual grammars, the present wealth of accounts of narrative procedures, the studies on character construction, in order to go beyond the largely sterile debates on imputation that still rage in the sociology of knowledge, the content analyses of mainstream sociological research, and the glosses of conventional criticism. We need to combine all the available instruments for registering the ideological. In other words, “to go about the principal critical business of our time, which is to forge a kind of methodological synthesis from the multiplicity of critical codes”.

The means with which to forge this synthesis will be, I suspect, the imaginative fusion of structuralism and dialectics, to use these worn-out words. The initial yield will be, I am almost sure, a typological series projecting writing and reading onto the space of socio-economic production. And it will look more or less as follows, if we attend to the main types:
1) A map of conservative writing, that is, writing performed in consonance with the established mode of production as directed by the dominant class. Corresponding to it, there will be a map of alternative readings, either supportive or oppositional.

2) A chart of revisionist writing, that is, writing that starts on the platform of the established mode of production but modifies it on its own level; and readings that are either supportive of, or resistant to, revision.

3) Marginal writing, which bases its opposition on outmoded forms of production, and its attendant readings, that is, those types of reading that assume that marginality, or, alternatively, reject it in the name of other, established or disestablished, productive practices.

4) Finally, a map of insurgent writing, that is, writing performed against the dominant productive mode, sometimes in the name, and from the platform, of dominated classes and new productive processes. Here again, reading may accompany and collaborate with the insurgency, or react against it.

The terms that have come up while outlining this typology are obviously political, even though not partisan. This means that they are at the same time the terms of a literary and of a political discourse. I do not believe, however, that here politics is grafted on to literature as an extraneous substance. The terms are indices of a theoretical decision taken in consonance with the modern sensibilities of inquiry. To stress the productive capacity of literature is to rescue it from the encapsulation that it must normally suffer. It is to show, without recourse to commentary or denunciation, how literature is pressed into the service of existing institutions, and to suggest how both writing and reading can participate in other enterprises. Thus understood, materialist criticism starts by retracing the marks of labor in the space where ideology has effaced them.

NOTES

6 Ibid., p. 92, my italics.
8 Karl Marx, *Capital*, I, 74.
13 Ibid., p. 12.
14 Ibid., p. 12.
17 Jitrik, op. cit.