The Pleasures of Labour: Marxist Aesthetics in the 1990s[1]

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Abstract

The paper explores the consequences for Marxist aesthetics of the emergence of a post-Marxist world. Proposing that we bracket the 'truth' of Marxist theory (as anticipated by Derrida) it assesses the continuing effectivity of Marxist aesthetics through close attention to four central instances.

Through labour in its struggle with nature the human species produces simultaneously itself and the human environment. Under private ownership that production is appropriated by capital so that the human subject becomes alienated from its own objective realisation. Under public ownership this externalisation will once more become free expression, annealing the gap between subject and object. Of life, including artistic life, in a communist future Marx (1973:705f) wrote in note form:

> ... production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis. The free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labour time so as to posit surplus labour, but rather the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them.

As I heard Raymond Williams say once, with socialism people will become their own art.

Even before then, with capitalism, under the conditions of alienated labour, Marx imagines art as holding out to us the possibility of unalienated labour. At the same time, of course, art is an instance of ideology compromised by its entanglement with the present aims and purposes of capitalist society. Marxist aesthetics does not consist of a given body of knowledge but rather a tradition, a continuing practice. I shall take this double aspect of art, both complicit with the norms of society and resistant to them, as the working definition to characterise that tradition.

Classic Marxism

A Marxist aesthetic arises from and within classic Marxism. One can assume that its validity and continuing interest depends upon the validity of classic Marxisms. The question, then, for a Marxist aesthetics in 1994 is how we would now assess classic Marxism.

So far the left in Britain has been thrown into disarray by its failure to confront the loss entailed by the utter and unanticipated collapse in 1989 of Eastern European communism, whether previously condemned as Stalinist or

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naturalised as actually existing socialism. Part of this failure has been a widespread refusal to come to terms with the theoretical limitations of classic Marxism. These need to be faced directly and openly.

We might begin with two empirical objections to classic Marxism: Firstly, it is a fact that you cannot run a modern, national economy through centralised, state control, no matter how many bureaucrats you appoint or how many computers you cram together in the Ministry of Economics in your capital city. Secondly, Marx believed that within his lifetime the main form of collective identity would be class, in a world divided between bourgeois and proletarian, and stretching from Birmingham to Bangkok. History shows this view was mistaken. Emerging into modernity the world has chosen as its essential mode of collective identity not class (or, for that matter, race or gender) but, stretching from France to the Philippines, the nation state and national identity.

Besides empirical queries there are a number of objections in principle to classic Marxism. One is to its anthropology. Unlike its cousin, Darwinism, classic Marxism is founded upon an anthropology which privileges labour and the instinct for survival over the instinct of reproduction. 'Eat first', as Brecht says. A better anthropology would recognise both survival and reproduction as necessary instincts for the species. Developing this, Freud insists that the instincts for survival and reproduction are signified by the human species in the form of unconscious drives. And developing these, psychoanalysis would conclude that to perform as a speaking subject every human being must achieve a sense of his or her own identity through recognition from others. As GA Cohen (1985:154) argues, against the anthropology of classic Marxism, 'nothing is more essentially human' than 'the need for self identity'.

Classic Marxism is logocentric. It finds a centre for itself by means of a series of binary oppositions. Materialism/idealism, use value/exchange value and base/superstructure are to be held in place by a foundational opposition between the real and the apparent. Foundational or would-be foundational: for as Derrida (1994:37) indicates, referring to Marx's discussion of the mysterious, spectral unreality of commodity fetishism with such delicacy and wit you might miss his critical intent:

> Marx does not like ghosts any more than his adversaries do. He does not want to believe in them. But he thinks of nothing else. He rather believes in what is supposed to distinguish them from actual reality, living effectivity. He believes he can oppose them, like life to death, like vain appearances of the simulacrum to real presence.

Althusser's revisionism aimed to step aside from this binary real and apparent by claiming for example that the lonely hour of economic determination in the last instance would never come. Derrida (1993:208) again has shown the difficulties with Marx's logocentrism even in Althusser's attempt to improve it:

> If the economy as last instance can never appear as such, then to what concept of present, of non-presence, of phenomenon or essence does one have recourse?

Derrida goes on to urge recourse to a Heideggerian account of Being-under-erasure. Such recourse was impossible for Althusser; he might have escaped logocentrism but only by ascribing to a position outside the Marxist tradition.

And classic Marxism is functionalist. As Jon Elster (1985:27) writes in *Making Sense of Marx*:

> Intentional explanation cites the *intended* consequences of behaviour in order to account for it. Functional explanation cites the *actual* consequences. More specifically, to explain behaviour functionally involves demonstrating that it has *beneficial* consequences for someone or something.

There's nothing wrong with functional explanation if you can specify a mechanism which moderates the relation between behaviour and consequence.[2] As Steve Rigby (1992:182-184) points out, evolutionary biology, for example, has some very good functional explanations—the human species lost all its body hair except in places where it protects vital organs because that increases the species' chances of survival, and there is genetic machinery to ensure reproduction of this beneficial effect. Functional explanations are much more problematic when applied to society yet they pervade classic Marxism and generally without providing an adequate feedback mechanism.

For example, a Marxist account of the institution of literature teaching in Britain. You can easily show that Englit. promotes individualism at the expense of a social perspective; sets up a canon, an ideal tradition with a trans-class character; discriminates a liberal elite from the masses, and so on. The institution has these actual consequences and many others besides. Further, it would not be hard to demonstrate that at times certain groups (the Newbolt Committee, for example) have had explicit intentions in promoting Englit. So far, no problem. The objection arises if you name the consequences of the institution of Englit. and then go on to argue that these work to the benefit of an agent (say, the ruling class) without specifying mechanisms by which those benefits are ensured and monitored. When it relies on functional explanation classic Marxism lists actual consequences as though they were all *intended*.

Here classic Marxism betrays a Hegelian residue. When Marx writes famously that 'mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve', he assumes that the real is rational (if only it were) and that in history there are no accidents, as if some ever-living brain controlled the universe from the centre of the ultraworlds. It doesn't. Global warming may have already released enough frozen methane to terminate the species with extreme prejudice.

Classic Marxism encourages a slide from 'capital', a category of economic analysis, to 'capitalism', both an economic category *and* a way of thinking. My question would be: does capital think?

Truth or practice?

I now have to cancel or put into suspension the whole of this critique, for

2. In their critique of Elster, Levine, Sober and Wright (1987:67-89) fail to take cognizance of this crucial issue of feedback mechanism.

what it has been doing is to argue that Marxist aesthetics depends on Marxism and that in some serious respects classic Marxism is not *true*. To determine the truth of Marxism in this way is to try assess the general adequacy between Marxist theory and the world, a correspondence, that is, between a discursive formation and the real. Such an enterprise, as more than one commentator has argued, is fraught with epistemological difficulty. Not only that, it may be politically limiting, for it ignores the inescapability of the Marxist tradition. Derrida (1994:55) again:

> Whether they wish it or know it or not, all men and women, all over the Earth, are today to a certain extent the heirs of Marx and Marxism. That is ... they are heirs of the absolute singularity of a project—or of a promise—which has a philosophical and scientific form.

Marxism envisages the possibility of justice, which is of course justice for all in that we are, as St Paul said, 'members one of another', but it does so not as a mythological or mystical form but in an Enlightenment, scientific discourse.

The same rationale holds for Marxist aesthetics. We would do far better to attend to the strategies and effectivity of Marxist aesthetics as an inescapable inheritance, asking not so much 'Is it true?' but 'What can it do?'. I shall consider four examples as offering terms for the discussion of aesthetic texts. I don't think I could set out these terms programmatically, but I can say I'll approach the examples with a series of questions: how does this instance put to work the double vision of Marxist aesthetics? what kinds of analysis does it make possible compared with others on offer? what does it let us say and what does it inhibit? what are its *effects*?

For Marx art shows unalienated labour trapped inside ideology but it isn't clear how he would explain the relation there is (or will be) between artwork and audience, text and reader. Does the reader respond to the image of unalienated labour cognitively or emotionally or both? Or is some other connection envisaged? The problem of how texts and readers work on each other is crucial to our understanding of Marxist aesthetics but has often been fudged. Brecht, for example, criticises bourgeois art on psychoanalytic grounds (it encourages identification and 'implicates the spectator') and then goes on to defend his radical alternative for essentially *cognitive* reasons (it 'turns the spectator into an observer'—Brecht 1964:37). Can he really claim the two exclude each other? I shall watch out for the way each writer conceives the text/reader relation and return to the topic at the end.

Marcuse

In a far-sighted and succinct essay of 1937, *The Affirmative Character of Culture*, Herbert Marcuse picks up the double-sided feature of art from Marx but also from the Lukacs of *History and Class Consciousness*. Art in the classical period pertained to a world beyond, an impossible and elite ideal, while, Marcuse says, in bourgeois society everyone is supposed to participate equally in a universal culture freely accessible to all—except, of course, that this notional freedom of access is contradicted by the inequalities of class

society. Even so, Marcuse (1968:103,95) describes such culture as affirmative because it is spiritual and establishes 'an inner state', 'an independent realm of value ... considered superior to civilisation'.

Art and culture would escape the realities which are its condition of existence and make it desirable. If bourgeois society is coldly utilitarian, art is passionately useless; if it binds its subjects to objective necessity, restricting the body, art envisages subjective freedom and celebrates the body; if such society is unequal, art asserts perfect democracy. Culture, then, as Marcuse insists, exhibits a double character, both as evasion which would justify the reality it evades *and* as utopian promise furnishing a critique of the conditions which make it necessary:

> Affirmative culture uses the soul as a protest against reification ... it anticipates the higher truth that in this world a form of social existence is possible in which the economy does not preempt the entire life of individuals (Marcuse 1968:108f).

Writing admittedly under the immediate threat of fascism Marcuse (1968:131) remarks that 'even keeping alive the desire for fulfilment is dangerous in the present situation'. Against a Kantian aesthetic which defines art as useless in its address to the perception of the individual, Marcuse can give a coherent account from a social perspective of how that very uselessness makes it useful to bourgeois society.

English writers in the 1930s, such as Christopher Caudwell, derive much satisfaction from castigating art for the crime of being a bourgeois illusion: unlike these, Marcuse situates himself in a lived relation to the culture he analyses. My summarising comments do not do justice to the way the writing of the essay keeps doubling back on itself, exposing art as escapist other only to affirm its divided character as an other affording a position of critique, a critique which is itself only possible because of art's alternative status. We are left with the sense, undeveloped perhaps, that Marcuse's critique is established not on some absolute point outside and looking on but precisely in relation to the critical feature of art he announces.

And yet Marcuse never asks himself about any mechanism or mediations by which art does and does not do all that he says. The essay remains, I think locked into a bad functionalism, stepping aside from questions of why, even given the situation he analyses, anyone might come to desire such culture, or, equally, how bourgeois society knows such culture is good for it, in its long-term interests (and maybe it isn't, on Marcuse's showing).

Adorno

Marcuse treats high and popular art together, thinking the double feature of Marxist aesthetics as the ambivalent potential of culture. Writing *On Popular Music* in 1941 in the same journal that published Marcuse's essay, Adorno takes the opposition between unalienated labour and ideology, and renders it as the split between high art and popular culture. Thus the potentially utopian and critical side of culture is discovered 'in Beethoven and in good serious music in general' whereas popular music is defined as complicit and escapist.

In its formal properties, Adorno says, popular music exhibits standardisation while serious music resists such standardisation, constantly, through unanticipated moves, unsettling its listener. In this essay Adorno (1973) is on his way to the uncompromising position he takes up in 1948 in *Philosophy of Modern Music* where he rejects Western Renaissance tonality represented by Stravinsky as symptom of an exhausted traditionalism and asserts that the radical novelty of Schoenburg's avant-garde experiments with an atonal system are more fitting to modernity.

There are probably two ways to refute Adorno's formal contrast between 'classical' and popular music: either you reject the opposition standardisation/non-standardisation by denying his formal analysis; or you could argue that techniques he describes as non-standard in fact do occur in popular music. (Adorno seems to have missed Duke Ellington, for instance, and quite a lot more.) Nevertheless, musical standardisation, demanded by commodity production, correlates to what he names as 'pseudo-individualisation' and defines by saying that the effect endows 'cultural mass production with the halo of real choice or open market on the basis of standardisation itself' (Adorno 1992:217). It is this which lends popular music its hold on the masses. What makes Adorno's essay exciting is not only its ability to frame culture in a social perspective but its willingness to pursue discussion onto the traditional terrain of formalism, and this in the case of that art-form most notoriously resistant to conventional analysis, music. Adorno's sympathetic yet critical insight contrasts favourably with, say, the snooty attitudes of Queenie Leavis writing about popular fiction in 1932.

Here is Adorno's psychoanalytic-informed account of the internal process with which standardisation produces the effect of pseudo-individualisation:

> ... when the audience at a sentimental film or sentimental music become aware of the overwhelming possibility of happiness, they dare to confess to themselves what the whole order of contemporary life ordinarily forbids them to admit, namely, that they actually have no part in happiness .... The actual function of sentimental music lies rather in the temporary release given to the awareness that one has missed fulfilment .... Emotional music has become the image of the mother who says, 'Come and weep, my child' (Adorno 1992:222).

This maternal image is very tricky. According to the usual structure of melancholic fantasy, the intensity of dyadic union desired from the mother is expressed by the intensity felt at her loss; lost, along with the possibility of happiness, the mother is (impossibly) refound as she tells the child to come and weep precisely for that loss. The marvelously suggestive implication of the analogy seems to be this: just as the commodity form of popular culture reminds us of the social alienation it means to conceal, so the imaginary fullness of 'sentimental music' reinstates lack by insisting so coercively on that very plenitude.

Adorno's image of popular culture as promising to restore the nostalgic, melancholic, masochistic, dyadic moment between mother and child, though extraordinary powerful, is not developed. Yet it pulls Adorno off any serene pedestal and into identification with the listener to popular

music. And it outlines a sense of a mechanism at work between the commodity and its subject. Adorno does not, however, risk extending the terms of his explanation to performances of Mozart, Beethoven and Stravinsky; these remain somehow exempt from the intense emotional effects of songs such as 'Deep Purple', 'Sunrise Serenade' and 'Alexander's Ragtime Band'. Like Brecht before him, psychoanalytic explanation is good enough for popular culture—high culture requires something more uplifting.

'Screen' and Cultural Studies in Britain

In the 1970s a group of writers associated with the film journal, *Screen*, worked out a development of Marxist aesthetics which has come to be called '*Screen* theory'. This in turn was hugely influential on cultural studies in Britain during the 1980s and beyond. Drawing on Brecht and Althusser rather than Adorno and Frankfurt, *Screen* took the double vision of Marxist aesthetics and gave it the full formalist treatment, mapping the distinction between everyday ideology and radical practice onto that between the textual modes of realism and modernism. Aiming, in the words of Stephen Heath (1981:201), to stage a totalising theoretical 'encounter of Marxism and psychoanalysis on the terrain of semiotics', *Screen* was determined to look beneath the surfaces of content analysis for a formalist analysis of what it called the specific 'ideological operation' of its chosen topic, film. And it addressed, via Lacanian psychoanalysis, the question of the mechanisms operating between reader and text. (Once again, like Brecht and Adorno, *Screen* was acute in suggesting the psychic effects of mainstream cinema but not able to say much about the radical text beyond claiming it interrogated or challenged the imaginary complicities of realism.)

Even with its confident discussion of mechanisms the *Screen* project remained implicated in unsatisfactory functional explanations. Capitalism, through its chosen film institution, Hollywood, secured its interests by promoting the smoothly realist text leaving it to a politicised avant-garde to attack capitalism by making films (usually with government money) whose jagged modernism confronted the reading subject with their own constructedness. But *Screen* came up with a brave and inventive if finally unconvincing manoeuvre to make good its functionalism: it distinguished between two kinds of reader of the text, the implied and the actual.

When Colin MacCabe (1993:58) wrote in an essay published in *Screen* in 1974 that 'the classic realist text ensures the position of the subject in a relation of dominant specularity', he is talking about the effect of the text on its reader as understood within the parameters of *Screen* theory (and of course there are no facts outside a particular theoretical interpretation). That implied effect of the text is ultimately a consequence of Hollywood as capitalist institution. Meanwhile, any other actual effects of the film text can be safely pushed offstage since they are not visible under the spotlight of *Screen* theory.

Adorno discussing popular music warms to the listener seeking to refind his or her mother: *Screen* had nothing but icy contempt for readers

trapped in the realist text, sunk in ideology, captured by dominant specularity and limply subject to all the narcissistic pleasures of the Lacanian imaginary. Meanwhile, high above the struggle, like Moses on Sinai, the well-versed film theorist could see and judge everything except themselves, measuring exactly the degree to which a given text reproduced or subverted the dominant ideology, an ideology to which those positioned within theoretical practice were themselves happily immune.

In *Screen* theory, and in subsequent work in cultural studies in Britain, that ascribed position outside and looking on was justified by appeal to Althusser's opposition between science and ideology. In its disdain for ordinary people, however, I think it reveals something rather more familiar to us.

Wonderfully unEnglish as *Screen* theory was in its theoretical rigour and its tenacity in pursing history through and beyond formalism, it fixed an unbridgeable gulf between those who understood theory and could sit through the more extreme interventions of British Independent cinema, and, on the other hand, we ordinary punters who go to the movies. In retrospect, (and I am indulging in a little auto-critique here) I am struck by how far that pitiless and superior demarcation inhabited a traditional English moralism, bringing *Screen* into unconscious and unconscionable proximity to the aesthetic moralising of FR Leavis.

Derrida

While Marcuse, Adorno and *Screen* theory fit snugly within Marxist aesthetics because of their adherence to the view of art as double featured, my next contender, although he claims his project is as much a beneficiary of Marx as Young Hamlet is heir to his dead father, may not—or not properly—qualify as Marxist. We'll see. For him art has a single effect and is always radical.

Difference (*différance*) you'll recall, 'instigates the subversion of every kingdom' (Derrida in Attridge 1992:123), and for Derrida writing—and especially literature as the military wing of difference—has a crucial function in subverting kingdoms:

> Whether it is phallocentric or not (and that is not so easy to decide), the more 'powerful' a text is (but power is not a masculine attribute here and it is often the most disarming feebleness), the more it is written, the more it shakes up its own limits or lets them be thought, as well as the limits of phallocentrism, of all authority and all 'centrism', all hegemony in general (Derrida in Attridge 1992:59).

Although officially committed to the view that 'No *internal* criterion can guarantee the essential "literariness" of a text' (Derrida in Attridge 1992:73), Derrida (see Attridge 1992:46f) speculates that the potentialities of some texts 'are richer and denser' than others, embodying a performativity which 'in some sense, appears the greatest possible in the smallest possible space'. 'Every literary work', he says, '"betrays" the dream of a new institution of literature' (Derrida in Attridge 1992:73f), a unique institution, though if it

really were unique we couldn't read the text at all. These are the views of the man who when asked to lecture at the *Ninth International James Joyce Symposium* at Frankfurt in 1984 told his astonished and appalled listeners that theirs was an institution Joyce had done everything 'he could to make impossible' (Derrida in Attridge 1992:268).

Derrida's High Modernist aesthetic would attribute inherent properties to certain aesthetic texts—richer, denser—as much as any Kantian or Coleridgean aesthetic: some texts, he argues, are just more *written* than others. And it's all high art, for there is not a trace here of popular culture (I've not come across anything to suggest that Derrida has ever sat in a cinema or watched television). His aesthetic picks up Adorno's trust in the power of high art as an alternative cultural mode; in fact, via the opposition between logocentrism and writing Derrida actually extends the radical force of Modernist textuality by proclaiming it as a threat to 'all authority' and 'all hegemony in general'.

Although there is clearly a conceptual opposition between presence and difference, logocentric power and the subversions of writing, Derrida does not otherwise offer an account of how writing menaces phallocentrism (this may be the juncture at which to recall the argument of Peter Dews that in comparison with Lacan, Derrida lacks a conception of the subject). And although Derrida knows perfectly well that writing doesn't do anything unless its process is enacted in and through human subjects, frequently (as in the bits I've cited here) he stakes out a position in the form of a bad functionalism. It is, however, a left functionalism since its effect is radical. Thus, given the present field of forces, by instancing the violence of difference, writing in the Modernist mode operates not to the benefit of established power but always to its detriment.

Derrida owes this kind of functional explanation not so much to Adorno, Frankfurt and the Marxist tradition as to something quite different. In his discussion of *The Origin of the Work of Art* and elsewhere Martin Heidegger (1993:139-212) also rejects a Kantian aesthetic, on the grounds that it supposes an epistemological relation between reader and text, that 'art works become the object of a form of human experience' and 'in accordance with that, art counts as an expression of human life' (Heidegger 1992:263). In contrast, Heidegger (1992:264) proposes an ontological conception of the art work, beyond any merely cognitive or emotional appropriation, as one of the most important modes in which *Dasein* brings its own possibilities into existence by 'discovering what it is to be human'.

If, as Heidegger repeatedly maintains we must, we start by posing *every* question as a question in relation to the truth of Being, then, I think, we arrive inevitably at something like Heidegger's analysis of the work of art. Similarly, if we start by posing every question in relation to an opposition between presence and difference, speech and writing, then, I think, we are driven in a fairly straight line to Derrida's view that literature in the twentieth century has a radical power to shake up the limits of 'hegemony in general'.

Well, perhaps it does. But that account leaves some queries

unanswered. What are the mechanisms by which literature does this, or are we to accept that question is sufficiently answered by indicating the opposition between presence and difference? How does literature establish what its effects are, that it is indeed threatening hegemony and not unwittingly consolidating it? And crucially: should we really think of art as a social and cultural phenomenon without introducing any sense of agents, subjects and intentions *at all*? In admitting to these worries I hasten to say that it would be a false and unnecessary alternative to return instead to humanism, whether naive or sophisticated, and the belief that subjects are freely constitutive. And this may be the moment to interject that the necessary alternative to crude functionalism is not methodological individualism.[3]

Let me begin to sketch a conclusion. Marcuse, Adorno, the *Screen* position, and, yes, Derrida too (despite Heideggerian attachments), reproduce and rework the Marxist aesthetic tradition because they explore varying implications of Marx's conception of art as unalienated labour. (One might even think of claiming Heidegger as a cognate line of the same tradition, not only because of his enormous respect for Marx, but because for him too art has a progressive force insofar as it may recall us from our forgetting of Being). Yet my constant reservation has been that the continuing discourse of Marxist aesthetics relies too much on inadequate functional explanations, not detailing sufficiently how a social organisation determines what is or is not in its interests and the means it uses to make this knowledge effective. A consequence of this functionalism is that Marxist aesthetics does not always deal satisfactorily with the question of how readers experience texts.

I want to end by trying another take on this issue. Marx assumes within the alienated forms of ideological production art keeps alive the hope of unalienated labour. Suppose one was to approach that idea not from the side of history and the social formation but from the side of subjectivity and the unconscious. Leaving aside the possibility that the reader's response to the idea of unalienated labour is cognitive, that from art he or she acquires a piece of knowledge, what fantasy pleasures might the reader find in that image. How might the figure of unalienated labour serve as an object of desire?

On very different grounds to Marx, Jacques Lacan discusses a quite different conception of alienation and arrives at a much more pessimistic conclusion. What Lacan names as the *vel*—the either/or—of alienation is represented by a Venn diagram in which *Being* and *meaning*, the subject and the Other, the real and the rational, necessarily exclude each other. Choose being and you fall into non-meaning; choose meaning and you get it, but only because your being is eclipsed by its disappearance into the field of the signifier. It is, as Lacan (1977:212) says brusquely, 'Your money or your life!'. Now if this is really something like the situation into which we're thrown, it would reveal the immense attraction of any representation promising escape from the alienation of the subject, any image restoring unity between subject and object, any dyadic relation in which being and meaning appear to be at one.

3. This is well argued by Levine, Sober & Wright (1987).

Obviously, Marx's economic alienation and Lacan's alienation of the subject run at tangents to each other. However, the Lacanian thing would explain, in a way the Marxist tradition itself cannot, why art's representation of unalienated labour draws the imagination so seductively. But it provides this explanation at a price (your money or your life again). For it asserts that no matter what might happen in a Communist future and no matter how much we might hope that people could become their own art, through the rendering of objective realisation as free choice and by closing the gap between subject and object, no one will ever elude the *vel* of alienation, that constitutive either/or between meaning and Being which generates all those familiar self-cancelling, excessively embedded Lacanian sentences that always say the same thing: that the signifier

> functions as a signifier only to reduce the subject in question to being no more than a signifier, to petrify the subject in the same movement in which it calls the subject to function, to speak, as subject (Lacan 1977:207).

Reading Lacan against Marx implies we may have to surrender our Utopian hopes. Some things, like cigarettes, we do have to give up. But that is no reason to stop trying to make the situation better in the meantime.

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