mordant eye returns his quizzing gaze. The greatness of Heine’s essay is that it so often pursues an encounter with that searching poetic eye. Heine therefore read Uhland’s poems in 1833 to his profit, and the rhetorical question he then put to his audience—“Is this the place to read Uhland’s poems?”—might as well be asked now, of the academy, in an alternative form: “Is this the place to read Heine’s essay?” The answer Heine looked to have then is exactly the same as what we should look to have now.

Afterword:
The German Ideology Once Again

My Conclusion to this book was written against the background of the post-New Critical academic situation, and especially in the context of the work on ideology and art which has been developed recently by Althusser, Macherey, and Eagleton. The central texts are Macherey’s A Theory of Literary Production, originally published in 1966; Althusser’s great essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” which he wrote early in 1969; and Eagleton’s influential book Criticism and Ideology, published in 1976. These critics have been important in the contemporary scene of literary criticism because their interpretative methods—consciously antithetical to the traditional lines of literary interpretation as these have come down to us—have had a substantial impact on the current view (and views) of academic criticism. To understand the antithesis represented by these works we shall first have to reconsider briefly The German Ideology since Marx’s work provides these contemporary commentators with their point of departure.

The German Ideology is a brilliantly satirical critique of the dominant “infantile disorder” of Marx’s day, that is, of left-wing Hegelian criticism. Feuerbach, Bauer, Stirner, and—to a lesser extent—Strauss had represented themselves and their work in a revolutionary guise. These men, the specifically German ideologues, aimed to “liberate” mankind “from the rule of concepts” (23). They launched an attack upon the dominion of various bourgeois ideologies in order to free the mind from a “false consciousness” of the human condition.

Marx’s and Engels’ purpose in their work is to expose the illusory character of the entire program of the radical Hegelians:

These innocent and child-like fancies are the kernel of the modern Young-Hegelian philosophy, which not only is received by the German public with horror and awe, but is announced by our philosophic heroes with the solemn consciousness of its world-shattering danger and criminal ruthlessness. The first volume of the present publication has the air of uncloaking these sheep, who
take themselves and are taken for wolves; of showing that their bleating merely imitates in a philosophic form the conceptions of the German middle class; that the boasting of these philosophic commentators only mirrors the wretchedness of the real conditions in Germany. (23)

In other words, Marx is saying that the attack on bourgeois ideology by the German ideologists is itself enmeshed in a network of illusions. Like the radical Hegelians he is attacking, Marx agrees that bourgeois society is held in thrall to certain reactionary and illusive ideas. But Marx attacks the German ideologues because their critique of society is made from a purely theoretical and abstract position. The illusion in the specifically German form of bourgeois ideology is that a critique of ideology can be made in the realm of ideas. The illusion is not merely that one set of (presumptively) correct ideas can "liberate" people from their subjection to other "true illusive" ideas; even more, the illusion is that a critique of ideology can be launched from, and grounded in, conceptual space. That "innocent and child-like" notion is the German Ideology:

We shall, of course, not take the trouble to explain to our wise philosophers that the "liberation" of "man" is not advanced a single step by reducing philosophy, theology, substance and all the rubbish to "self-consciousness" and by liberating "man" from the domination of these phrases, which have never held him in thrall. Nor shall we explain to them that it is possible to achieve real liberation only in the real world and by real means, that slavery cannot be abolished without the steam-engine and the mule jenny, serfdom cannot be abolished without improved agriculture, and that, in general, people cannot be liberated as long as they are unable to obtain food and drink, housing and clothing in adequate quality and quantity. "Liberation" is a historical and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the level of industry, commerce, agriculture, intercourse... Then subsequently, in accordance with the different stages of their development, [they make up] the nonsense of substance, subject, self-consciousness and pure criticism, as well as religious and theological nonsense, and later they get rid of it again when their development is sufficiently advanced. In Germany, a country where only a trivial historical development is taking place, these mental developments, these glorified and ineffective trivialities, naturally serve as a substitute for the lack of historical development, and they take root and have to be combated. (38)

It is in the context of Marx's (rather contemptuous) dismissal of German Ideology that we have to consider the recent work of Althusser, Macherey, and Eagleton. In 1966, apparently under the influence of Macherey's work on Lenin and Tolstoy, Althusser wrote: "I do not rank real art among the ideologies." By this statement Althusser meant to align art and (what he calls) "scientific knowledge" as the two types of human activity which are not subject to the imaginary dislocations of ideologically knowledgeable. For Althusser—and, in this respect, he speaks for virtually all English, West European, and American Marxist thinkers—ideology is "false consciousness," or (more particularly) the system of structures and concrete apparatuses which generate and maintain an "imaginary representation of the real world" (154). Like scientific knowledge, however, art—according to this view of the matter—at once escapes a subjection to ideology and preserves itself as a weapon for exposing the existence, the precise character, and the domain of particular ideologies (and, sometimes, of ideology in general).

Macherey's book shares all of these Althusserian positions, but it goes on to specify how art escapes, and even attacks, the ideological realities which it represents. The operative term in Macherey's analysis is "absence."

Between the ideology and the book which expresses it, something has happened; the distance between them is not the product of some abstract decorum. Even though ideology itself always sounds solid, copious, it begins to speak of its own absence because of its presence in the novel, its visible and determinate form. By means of the text it becomes possible to escape from the domain of spontaneous ideology, to escape from the false consciousness of self, of history, and of time. The text constructs a determinate image of the ideological, revealing it as an object rather than living it from within as
though it were an inner conscience; the text explores ideology (just as Balzac explores the Paris of the Comédie humaine, for instance), puts it to the test of the written word, the test of that watchful gaze in which all subjectivity is captured crystallised in objective form. The spontaneous ideology in which men live (it is not produced spontaneously, although men believe that they acquire it spontaneously) is not simply reflected by the mirror of the book; ideology is broken, and turned inside out so far as it is transformed in the text from being a state of consciousness. Art, or at least literature, because it naturally scorns the credulous view of the world, establishes myth and illusion as visible objects. (132-3)

A passage like this indicates the close affinity which exists between Macherey and the Frankfurt School, and in particular with Adorno’s idea that art is the negative knowledge of reality. We must keep this relationship in mind if we mean to fill out our sense of the relationship of Macherey’s work to the most influential recent trends in Western Marxist thought about art and literature.

A dual weakness haunts this view of art and ideology, however, and it reflects the persistent hold which certain types of Romantic idealism—have even in the Marxian wings of the academy. Macherey and Althusser set poetry apart from ideology because they identify the latter with false consciousness and historical limits. Because poetry and art appear to transcend such limits, they are not ranked among the ideologies. This is clearly a rationalist conclusion in a rationalist form of thought. The view is belied in the actual facts of the poems from the past which we read, as well as in the poems of the present which are being written. Furthermore, it is a view which betrays a corresponding idealization of criticism, and in particular of the criticism practiced by Macherey and Althusser themselves.4

Let me begin with the poems and their relation to ideology. As has been argued in the course of the previous study, and as Marx himself said in The German Ideology, works of art—depending as they do upon their special circumstances of production and of reproduction—will represent themselves, or be made to represent through our criticism, the widest possible variety of ideological positions. Furthermore, the ideology of a given work (say, Aurora Leigh) will assume various specific forms, and these will be ranged at different points on a scale of social consciousness. These ideological forms can be studied within the confines of the poem or they can be separated from the poem and examined in their own right, formally or historically. A good deal of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poem still seems ideologically advanced to this day because our own cultures have not yet settled accounts with certain of the most basic rights of women. From an historical point of view, the ideological forms enmeshed within the poem will be seen to have changed their import over time. Poetry, however, saves those ideas and attitudes intact by arresting them forever in expressive forms which will always be, from the poem’s original point of view, historically and socially particular. For the reader (any reader) of Aurora Leigh, the set of ideological formations imbedded in the poem at its historical inception will always remain part of the work’s fixed dialectical pole with which the moving pole of the reader interacts. Both poles are historically specific, the one fixed in time and place, the other moving in the field which we now call the work’s reception history.

For this reason we must say that a poem’s formal and substantive components, whether retrograde or advanced, preserve their original specificity. If they did not do so the poem would lose all its concrete force, all its specific human contours, as Della Volpe (for one) has so well shown.5

Althusser’s position is implicitly contradicted in his own celebrated essay on Ideological State Apparatuses, a work that also provides the ground for a more critical view of the forms and practice of criticism itself, including Marxist criticism. Althusser’s gripping argument shows that all ideological phenomena, including poetry, are produced and reproduced within some concrete historical apparatus. Poetry is written, and read, within the determinate limits of specific social structures. This crucial fact tends to be ignored by all the literary critics in the tradition I am sketching. The neglect occurs not merely with respect to poetry as it has been culturally produced (i.e., poetry as a written phenomenon), but even more crucially with respect to poetry as it has been reproduced (i.e., poetry as an object of reading and study). Great poetry is not written out of the conceptual space of a ‘German Ideology,’ and neither does criticism
occur in such a space. Both take place within concrete and specific Ideological State Apparatuses. As far as modern criticism is concerned, this means that the theory and practice of criticism reflect the authority of the western university's complex ideological structures.

Too much Western Marxist literary criticism fails to take account of its own investment in the Ideological State Apparatuses which we operate within—indeed, which we all serve. Reading and studying poetry (reproducing it), just as much as writing it (producing it), is a tendentious affair, whether we are conscious of that fact or not. The problem is that many Marxist critics do not recognize, or take account of, the specific ideological determinants of their own work. A *Theory of Literary Production*, like Eagleton's *Criticism and Ideology*, seems to transcend not merely its subject but its own originating environment (something which the art criticism of John Berger does not do). But this seeming is an illusion, and a concrete instance of a false consciousness that must be overcome. To argue art's ideological disengagement merely reifies that most fundamental of all bourgeois aesthetic concepts: that the essence of poetry is to transcend, and to make the reader transcend, concrete spatial and temporal circumstances. Such a view of poetry and art develops its own necessary critical method and theory, that is to say, one which speaks of poetry and art from the cool regions of mental disinterestedness. Reading many contemporary Marxist critics one is often reminded of Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach.

Though I have—correctly, I believe—associated the work of Adorno, Althusser, Macherey, and Eagleton, I must point out that Eagleton's work is by far the most advanced, from a theoretical point of view. His critique of Althusser and Macherey is trenchant in many respects, not least because he is well aware that ideology operates historically, and hence that it appears in different forms and degrees of illusiveness. When Eagleton says that "some ideologies, and levels of ideology, are more false than others" (69), he follows Marx (and departs from his European mentors), for in *The German Ideology* Marx took pains to emphasize the special, "local" (38) character of the German Ideology, and to distinguish it from (for example) French and English ideological formations (55).

Furthermore, when Eagleton seeks to define the special type of ideological formation which is literature—when he attacks Macherey for suggesting that literature is a *vehicle* for ideologies rather than an ideological form *per se*—he has made a truly signal advance in theoretical understanding. Nevertheless, Eagleton's arguments themselves contribute to that fetishization of art which is so characteristic of Western culture. The sure sign of this is Eagleton's constant resort to the term "text" when he speaks of literary works. For Eagleton, "text" and "work of art" are synonymous terms.

Such an idea is an illusion, however, as even a few moments of critical reflection will show. Submitting to that illusion has two immediate consequences: first, the literary work of art is fetished—frozen, immobilized, abstracted—into an arrangement of words; and second, the critic comes to imagine himself as removed from the works he studies, analytically detached from the "text." For a Marxist critic, this set of related illusions permits him to imagine that his own criticism is uncontaminated either by the text's false consciousness or by the Ideological Apparatuses in which his criticism is carried on.

It is in this general context that we can see the special relevance which *The German Ideology* has for modern Marxist criticism: for the latter is, in many ways, a parodic version of the sort of left-wing Hegelianism which Marx was attacking in his book. The whole thrust of *The German Ideology* is to bring critique out of the realms of consciousness (out of "German" ideological space) and return it to the world of praxis. No criticism, not even literary criticism, can invoke a conceptual privilege for its activity. Least of all can it privilege the activities of critical consciousness.

Consequently, Marx's indictment of the radical Hegelians of his own day carries an application and a warning for our own:

> It has not occurred to any one of these philosophers to inquire into the connection of German philosophy with German reality, the connection of their criticism with their own material surroundings. (30)

Literary criticism today is practiced under the aegis of very particular sorts of Ideological State Apparatuses, and no adequate criticism can occur which does not force itself to take such conditions into account. In part this will mean that criticism must analyze, self-critically, the effects of those apparatuses have in shaping, and distorting, our critical activities. Such an analysis...
presupposes an historical inquiry into how the works we inherit have been reproduced in the past, that is to say, an analysis of the critical history of the works of literature which we are currently reproducing in our age. Furthermore, these analyses must continually translate themselves into those practical projects which address themselves to the fundamental issue: what is the function of criticism at the present time?

Criticism is historical not simply by explaining the "texts" we read in terms of the past historical contexts which penetrate them. Such a criticism must remain as fruitless and arid as any type of formal or structural or thematic criticism so long as it does not make equally explicit, first, the dialectical relation of the analyzed "texts" to present interests and concerns; and second, the immediate and projected ideological involvements of the criticism, critical theory, and reading we practice, study, and promote.

Works of literature neither produce nor reproduce themselves; only texts do that, which is merely to say that the idea of literature-as-text fetishizes works of art into passive objects, the consumer goods of a capitalized world. To return poetry to a human form—to see that what we read and study are poetic works produced and reproduced by numbers of specific men and women—is perhaps the most imperative task now facing the world of literary criticism. That purpose will only be fulfilled when literary critics, especially Marxist critics, cease reproducing texts and begin reproducing literary works of art.

Notes

INTRODUCTION


2. I suppose it does not need to be said, at this late hour, that these levels interpenetrate with each other at all points. We distinguish the levels for purposes of analysis.


4. Ibid., 23-4.

5. Ibid., 28.

6. Ibid., 17-18.


8. I have borrowed the Scott and Napoleon quotations from Raymond Williams' discussion of ideology in Keywords (Oxford, 1976), 126-7. For a good general introduction to the early history of the concept of ideology see Emnet Kennedy, "Ideology" from Destutt de Tracy to Marx," Journal of the History of Ideas 40 (July-Sept., 1979), 353-68.


10. Engels, letter to Franz Mehring, 14 July 1893, in Marx.


13. For a more extended theoretical discussion of this point see below, Conclusion.

14. See below part II, n. 7, and the Afterword, 'The German Ideology Once Again.'

PART I

1. See A. O. Lovejoy's "On the Discrimination of Romanti-
cisms," PMLA 39 (1924), 229-53; and Réné Wellek, "The Concept of Romanticism in Literary Scholarship," Comparative Literature 1 (1949), 1-23, 147-72. Wellek's essay is reprinted in his Concepts of Criticism (New Haven, Conn., 1963), 128-98, and it is the latter text I shall be citing below. The concepts of "intrinsic" and "historical" Romanticism are employed by Jacques Barzun in Classic, Romantic, and Modern (Boston, 1961). The scholarly literature on the subject of Romanticism is extensive, and in my presentation I synthesize and trace out the chief