Marxism and Literature

RAYMOND WILLIAMS

Oxford University Press
1977
1. Base and Superstructure

Any modern approach to a Marxist theory of culture must begin by considering the proposition of a determining base and a determined superstructure. From a strictly theoretical point of view this is not, in fact, where we might choose to begin. It would be in many ways preferable if we could begin from a proposition which originally was equally central, equally authentic: namely the proposition that social being determines consciousness. It is not that the two propositions necessarily deny each other or are in contradiction. But the proposition of base and superstructure, with its figurative element and with its suggestion of a fixed and definite spatial relationship, constitutes, at least in certain hands, a very specialized and at times unacceptable version of the other proposition. Yet in the transition from Marx to Marxism, and in the development of mainstream Marxism itself, the proposition of the determining base and the determined superstructure has been commonly held to be the key to Marxist cultural analysis.

The source of this proposition is commonly taken to be a well-known passage in Marx's 1859 Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made
The base and superstructure of society. The main sense of the term, base, refers to the economic conditions which determine the superstructure. The economic conditions are the foundation of the political and social superstructures. The base is both the source of the superstructure and the cause of its development. The superstructure, in turn, reflects and reinforces the base.

The economic conditions are the material basis of political and social superstructures. They are the determinants of political and social relations. The political and social superstructures, in turn, are the expressions of these economic conditions. The superstructure, therefore, is not independent of the base, but is a product of it. The superstructure cannot exist without the base, and it is necessary to understand the base in order to understand the superstructure.

The political and social superstructures are the expressions of the economic conditions. They are the means by which the economic conditions are reflected and reproduced. The political and social superstructures are the means by which the economic conditions are transmitted to future generations.

The economic conditions are the source of the political and social superstructures. They are the cause of the superstructure. The superstructure is a reflection of the economic conditions. The economic conditions are the cause of the superstructure, and the superstructure is the effect of the economic conditions.
The economic basis of a political struggle could be called in...
The base is a category:

The base is the category of productive forces, which makes the production of goods and services possible. The base is also referred to as the economic foundation or the economic base. It includes the production relations and the productive forces that determine the social structure. In a capitalist economy, the base is made up of the means of production, which are owned by the capitalists. In a socialist economy, the means of production are owned by the workers and the state. The base determines the superstructure, which consists of the political, legal, and ideological institutions that support and justify the economic base. The superstructure is built on top of the base and is influenced by it, but it also has an independent role in shaping society. The class struggle and the dialectic movement of the base and the superstructure are the driving forces of historical change.
2. Determination

We can read that while a particular state of real social existence,
The English define that under capitalism, the function of production is determined by the laws of supply and demand. This is because, in the capitalist mode of production, the profit motive drives the economy. The demand for goods and services is determined by the needs and desires of the consumers, while the supply is determined by the producers who seek to maximize their profits. The market mechanism ensures that the goods and services produced are those that are in demand. This process is known as the law of supply and demand, which states that the price of a good or service is determined by the interaction of supply and demand. When the supply of a good exceeds the demand, the price will fall, and vice versa. This mechanism ensures that the production of goods and services is adjusted to meet the needs of the consumers, thereby ensuring a smooth flow of goods and services in the market.
Here society is the objectified unconsciousness and unconscious processes and the only alternative forces are individual wills and the only alternative forms are individual wills. The historical event... may be viewed as the product of a power which works as a whole, unconsciously and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else and what emerges is something that no one wills.

But to say only this is to be in danger of falling back into Engels' passive and objectivist model. This is what happened to Engels after he published his definitive work, 'On the History of the Working Class in the 19th Century.'

The historical event is, may be viewed as the product of a power which works as a whole, unconsciously and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else and what emerges is something that no one wills.

But to say only this is to be in danger of falling back into Engels' passive and objectivist model. This is what happened to Engels after he published his definitive work, 'On the History of the Working Class in the 19th Century.'
...established structures. These structures are not absolute, but rather change over time and historically. The process of development is a result of the interaction between these structures and the contradictions within them. The development of social and productive forces is a continuous process, where contradictions are resolved through struggle and change.

In conclusion, the concept of dialectical materialism provides a framework for understanding the development of social and productive forces. It highlights the role of contradictions and conflicts in the development of society, and emphasizes the importance of historical materialism in understanding the dynamics of society.
From Reflection to Mediation

The usual consequence of the base-abstraction formula.
From Reflection to Mediation

...
From Reflection to Mediation
5. Typification and Homology

and consulting sense regards the concept of the intermediary, which, at best, this conceptual mediation of all for the mediators lacks us back to the very communication. It is really only a position in description as a necessary process of the former social process of signification and the success of mediation is seen as possible and stipulational. It is when mediately rendered back to an assumed primary category.
The relation between everyday things is that they are connected by correspondences. These correspondences are discovered by the process of social interaction, where individuals and groups interact and share experiences. These experiences are then translated into a language of correspondences, which are used to describe and explain the world. This process is known as the interactionist perspective, which is based on the idea that knowledge is constructed through interaction.

In this perspective, knowledge is not something that is given to us, but rather something that we construct through our interactions with others. This construction of knowledge is ongoing and dynamic, and is shaped by the social and cultural context in which it occurs.

One of the key features of this perspective is the idea that knowledge is not fixed, but rather is always in the process of being constructed. This means that knowledge is always changing, and is always being revised in light of new information and new experiences.

Another key feature of this perspective is the idea that knowledge is always context-dependent. This means that what is known in one context may be different from what is known in another context. This context-dependence is important because it means that knowledge is always relative, and that what is known in one context may not be known in another.

In conclusion, the interactionist perspective provides a powerful way of understanding how knowledge is constructed and how it changes over time. This perspective is important because it helps us to understand how knowledge is always in the process of being constructed, and how it is always context-dependent.
In the development of a theory, a known structure or known discipline can be found in the development of a theory. The development of a theory is often directly opposed to the process of practical application. An alternative approach to the same problems is often the productive relation of practical application. Known products, productive relations can be handled in this way.
As a result of this displacement, the formations and their work are not seen as the active social and cultural substance that they quite invariably are. In our own culture, this form of displacement, made temporarily or comparatively convincing by the failures of derivative and superstructural interpretation, is itself, and quite centrally, hegemonic.

8. Dominant, Residual, and Emergent

The complexity of a culture is to be found not only in its variable processes and their social definitions—traditions, institutions, and formations—but also in the dynamic interrelations, at every point in the process, of historically varied and variable elements. In what I have called 'epochal' analysis, a cultural process is seized as a cultural system, with determinate dominant features: feudal culture or bourgeois culture or a transition from one to the other. This emphasis on dominant and definitive lineaments and features is important and often, in practice, effective. But it then often happens that its methodology is preserved for the very different function of historical analysis, in which a sense of movement within what is ordinarily abstracted as a system is crucially necessary, especially if it is to connect with the future as well as with the past. In authentic historical analysis it is necessary at every point to recognize the complex interrelations between movements and tendencies both within and beyond a specific and effective dominance. It is necessary to examine how these relate to the whole cultural process rather than only to the selected and abstracted dominant system. Thus 'bourgeois culture' is a significant generalizing description and hypothesis, expressed within epochal analysis by fundamental comparisons with 'feudal culture' or 'socialist culture'. However, as a description of cultural process, over four or five centuries and in scores of different societies, it requires immediate historical and internally comparative differentiation. Moreover, even if this is acknowledged or practically carried out, the 'epochal' definition can exert its pressure as a static type against which all real cultural process is measured, either to show 'stages' or 'variations' of the type (which is still historical analysis) or, at its worst, to select supporting and exclude 'marginal' or 'incidental' or 'secondary' evidence.

Such errors are avoidable if, while retaining the epochal hypothesis, we can find terms which recognize not only 'stages' and 'variations' but the internal dynamic relations of any actual process. We have certainly still to speak of the 'dominant' and the 'effective', and in these senses of the hegemonic. But we find that we have also to speak, and indeed with further
differentiation of each of the 'residual' and the 'emergent',
which in any real process, and at any moment in the process,
are significant both in themselves and in what they reveal of the
characteristics of the 'dominant'.

By 'residual' I mean something different from the 'archaic',
though in practice these are often very difficult to distinguish.
Any culture includes available elements of its past, but their
place in the contemporary cultural process is profoundly vari-
able. I would call the 'archaic' that which is wholly recognized
as an element of the past, to be observed, to be examined, or even
on occasion to be consciously 'revived', in a deliberately
specializing way. What I mean by the 'residual' is very different.
The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the
past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and
often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective
element of the present. Thus certain experiences, meanings, and
values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in
terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and prac-
tised on the basis of the residue-cultural as well as social—of
some previous social and cultural institution or formation. It is
crucial to distinguish this aspect of the residual, which may
have an alternative or even oppositional relation to the domi-

cant culture, from that active manifestation of the residual (this
being its distinction from the archaic) which has been wholly or
largely incorporated into the dominant culture. In three charac-

teristic cases in contemporary English culture this distinction
can become a precise term of analysis. Thus organized religion
is predominantly residual, but within this there is a significant
difference between some practically alternative and opposi-
tional meanings and values (absolute brotherhood, service to
others without reward) and a larger body of incorporated mean-
ings and values (official morality, or the social order of which
the other-worldly is a separated neutralizing or ratifying com-
ponent). Again, the idea of rural community is predominantly
residual, but is in some limited respects alternative or oppo-
sitional to urban industrial capitalism, though for the most part it
is incorporated, as idealization or fantasy, or as an exotic—resi-
dential or escape—leisure function of the dominant order itself.
Again, in monarchy, there is virtually nothing that is actively
residual (alternative or oppositional), but, with a heavy and
deliberate additional use of the archaic, a residual function has

been wholly incorporated as a specific political and cultural
function—marking the limits as well as the methods—of a form
of capitalist democracy.

A residual cultural element is usually at some distance from
the effective dominant culture, but some part of it, some version
of it—and especially if the residue is from some major area of the
past—will in most cases have had to be incorporated if the
effective dominant culture is to make sense in these areas.
Moreover, at certain points the dominant culture cannot allow
too much residual experience and practice outside itself, at least
without risk. It is in the incorporation of the actively resi-
—by reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating in-
clusion and exclusion—that the work of the selective tradition
is especially evident. This is very notable in the case of versions
of 'the literary tradition', passing through selective versions of
the character of literature to connecting and incorporated defini-
tions of what literature now is and should be. This is one among
several crucial areas, since it is in some alternative or even
oppositional versions of what literature is (has been) and what
literary experience (and in one common derivation, other sig-
nificant experience) is and must be, that, against the pressures of
incorporation, actively residual meanings and values are sus-
tained.

By 'emergent' I mean, first, that new meanings and values,
new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are
continually being created. But it is exceptionally difficult to
distinguish between those which are really elements of some
new phase of the dominant culture (and in this sense 'species-
specific') and those which are substantially alternative or oppo-
sitional to it: emergent in the strict sense, rather than merely
novel. Since we are always considering relations within a cul-
tural process, definitions of the emergent, as of the residual,
can be made only in relation to a full sense of the dominant. Yet the
social location of the residual is always easier to understand,
since a large part of it (though not all) relates to earlier social
formations and phases of the cultural process, in which certain
real meanings and values were generated. In the subsequent
default of a particular phase of a dominant culture there is then a
reaching back to those meanings and values which were created
in actual societies and actual situations in the past, and which
still seem to have significance because they represent areas of
human experience, aspiration, and achievement which the
dominant culture neglects, undervalues, opposes, represses, or
even cannot recognize.

The case of the emergent is radically different. It is true that in
the structure of any actual society, and especially in its class
structure, there is always a social basis for elements of the
cultural process that are alternative or oppositional to the
dominant elements. One kind of basis has been invaluable
-described in the central body of Marxist theory: the formation
of a new class, the coming to consciousness of a new class, and
within this, in actual process, the (often uneven) emergence of
elements of a new cultural formation. Thus the emergence of
the working class as a class was immediately evident (for example,
in nineteenth-century England) in the cultural process. But
there was extreme unevenness of contribution in different parts
of the process. The making of new social values and institutions
far outpaced the making of strictly cultural institutions, while
specific cultural contributions, though significant, were less
vigorous and autonomous than either general or institutional
innovation. A new class is always a source of emergent cultural
practice, but while it is still, as a class, relatively subordinate,
this is always likely to be uneven and is certain to be incomplete.
For new practice is not, of course, an isolated process. To
the degree that it emerges, and especially to the degree that it is
oppositional rather than alternative, the process of attempted
incorporation significantly begins. This can be seen, in the same
period in England, in the emergence and then the effective
incorporation of a radical popular press. It can be seen in the
emergence and incorporation of working-class writing, where
the fundamental problem of emergence is clearly revealed, since
the basis of incorporation, in such cases, is the effective pre-
dominance of received literary forms—an incorporation, so to
say, which already conditions and limits the emergence. But the
development is always uneven. Straight incorporation is most
directly attempted against the visibly alternative and opposi-
tional class elements: trade unions, working-class political par-
ties, working-class life styles (as incorporated into ‘popular’
journalism, advertising, and commercial entertainment). The
process of emergence, in such conditions, is then a constantly
repeated, an always renewable, move beyond a phase of prac-
tical incorporation: usually made much more difficult by the fact

that much incorporation looks like recognition, acknowledge-
ment, and thus a form of acceptance. In this complex process
there is indeed regular confusion between the locally residual
(as a form of resistance to incorporation) and the generally
emergent.

Cultural emergence in relation to the emergence and growing
strength of a class is then always of major importance, and
always complex. But we have also to see that it is not the only
kind of emergence. This recognition is very difficult, theoreti-
cally, though the practical evidence is abundant. What has
really to be said, as a way of defining important elements of both
the residual and the emergent, and as a way of understanding
the character of the dominant, is that no mode of production and
therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant
culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice,
human energy, and human intention. This is not merely a nega-
tive proposition, allowing us to account for significant things
which happen outside or against the dominant mode. On the
contrary it is a fact about the modes of domination, that they
select from and consequently exclude the full range of human
practice. What they exclude may often be seen as the personal
or the private, or as the natural or even the metaphysical. Indeed it
is usually in one or other of these terms that the excluded area is
expressed, since what the dominant has effectively seized is
indeed the ruling definition of the social.

It is this seizure that has especially to be resisted. For there is
always, though in varying degrees, practical consciousness, in
specific relationships, specific skills, specific perceptions, that
is unquestionably social and that a specifically dominant social
order neglects, excludes, represses, or simply fails to recognize.
A distinctive and comparative feature of any dominant social
order is how far it reaches into the whole range of practices and
experiences in an attempt at incorporation. There can be areas of
experience it is willing to ignore or dispense with: to assign as
private or to specialize as aesthetic or to generalize as natural.
Moreover, as a social order changes, in terms of its own develop-
ing needs, these relations are variable. Thus in advanced
capitalism, because of changes in the social character of labour,
in the social character of communications, and in the social
character of decision-making, the dominant culture reaches
much further than ever before in capitalist society into hitherto
This complex process can still in part be described in class
communist terms.

Residual practice is a necessary condition of the world-wide
community of cultural practice is still interrelated and together with the rest of culture
in the local environment in which the ecological and social conditions are so
very different. The residual community is a complex of ecological and social relations
that exist as the core of the concept of culture.

Residual practice is the core of the concept of culture.

Residual practice is the core of the concept of culture.

Residual practice is the core of the concept of culture.

Residual practice is the core of the concept of culture.

Residual practice is the core of the concept of culture.

Residual practice is the core of the concept of culture.

Residual practice is the core of the concept of culture.

Residual practice is the core of the concept of culture.

Residual practice is the core of the concept of culture.

Residual practice is the core of the concept of culture.
experience, feeling—and then watch even these drawn towards
accept, more facilely, less singularly—towards consciousness.
accept, more facilely, less singularly—towards
consciousness.
accept, more facilely, less singularly—towards
consciousness.
accept, more facilely, less singularly—towards
consciousness.
accept, more facilely, less singularly—towards
consciousness.
accept, more facilely, less singularly—towards
consciousness.
Structures of Feeling

...
Structures of Feeling

Structures of Feeling can be defined as social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations. For structures of feeling can be defined as social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations.

Excised: Mechanical mending processes are much more widely expert.

Feeling which in living processes are much more widely expert.

Feeling which in living processes are much more widely expert.

Feeling which in living processes are much more widely expert.

Feeling which in living processes are much more widely expert.

Feeling which in living processes are much more widely expert.

Feeling which in living processes are much more widely expert.

Feeling which in living processes are much more widely expert.

Feeling which in living processes are much more widely expert.
Marxism and Literature

Structures of Feeling

135

...