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TRANSUBSTANTIATION OF PRODUCTION AND CREATION: METAMORPHIC
IMAGERY IN THE *GRUNDRISSE* (1981, 7,050 words)

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0. Introduction

0.1. The following essay attempts to read Marx's *Grundrisse*^{1/} as an imaginative, i.e. literary, text -- not as fiction by any means, but as a semantic and rhetorical artifact consisting of historically and teleologically shaped language. Thus, this attempt is not concerned with the verifiability of the cognitive process in the *Grundrisse*, but with a preliminary clarification of one important -- I would argue central -- aspect of them. I believe that, as in any text, such a clarification is an indispensable introduction to any overall or final judgment. In any case, the *Grundrisse* cannot be verified or falsified by a "literary" analysis (nor, I hasten to add, by what usually passes for scientific analysis in the natural sciences); they can only be verified in an interaction of practice with ideology (as I shall call it for want of a less ambiguous word). The metamorphic imagery I shall concentrate upon (to the exclusion of other important imaginative aspects of the *Grundrisse*) strongly enhances the whole text and helps to constitute its central value, but I am here primarily interested in establishing the coherent and meaningful existence of this metaphoric cluster rather than in discussing all the implications of its meaning(s), which would properly be the task for a book and not an essay.

0.2. This essay could have been fuller and more encompassing. It could have taken for its corpus a larger selection from Marx's writings, notably *Capital* and the early works. But I have gambled on the *Grundrisse* being sufficiently illuminating for a separate analysis -- by virtue both of their central position in Marx's development between the "early" and the "late" phase (thus best denying the Althusserian cleavage between aesthetic and scientific cognition) as well as of being a first draft and not really a completed work, i.e. in some ways nearer to the imaginative matrix of Marx's own creativity as a process. No doubt, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. Furthermore, in order to combine a synoptic view with arguing inductively from the text, this essay will proceed by a scissors-and-paste method, taking what I understand to be the paradigm-constituting elements of the text out of its middle-range syntagmatic context in order to reveal the underlying imagistic-cum-notional (or topic) paradigm.

0.3. Some Semantic Traps in Reading the *Grundrisse*: Ellipse

The advantages of the *Grundrisse* are countered by traps that have to be avoided when reading them. First of all, since this text consists of notes for a book rather than a book, it is a series of fragments (albeit sometimes very long ones) which are, paradoxically, both elliptical and redundant: they are syntagmatic chains developing a provisional paradigm in a feedback process itself clarifying and confirming that paradigm by expansion, qualification, and other retouching. (This is not a value-judgment: the fragment is a recognized literary genre.) The basic traits due to the first-draft character of this text can be divided into qualitative and quantitative ones. Qualitatively, the constitutive parts or fragments form a spread on the one end of which are

excerpts from other writers and on the other end Marx's new texts. But most of them are shadings somewhere in between these extremes, often near the middle, where by mimicry the context, narrative voice, and even the point of view are not explicated: in such cases, it is necessary to find out what are Marx's context, narrative voice(s), and point of view (see e.g. the discussion of two opposed meanings of production in 3.2 below). Quantitatively, there is a fair amount of repetition with variation as well as of omission of important points or links in the argument tacitly understood as existing elsewhere in the text.

0.4. Some Further Traps: Polysemy

It is neither possible nor necessary here to go through the semantic and/or rhetorical "figures" that can be found in Marx's text.^{2/} I just wish to point out some traps that will crop up later in the essay. First, Marx sometimes uses several signifiers for the same signified (synonymy) -- e.g. "worker" and "producer." Second, he sometimes uses several signifieds for the same signifier (ambiguity) -- most importantly for the central notion, image, and thematic subject of the *Grundrisse*, i.e. production. Finally, there are some cases in which a 19th-century term has by now acquired a different meaning (semantic shift), a problem aggravated by the fact that my discussion deals with the English translation (see e.g. "suspend" vs. "abolish" in 4.2. below). However, for most purposes Martin Nicolaus's translation is good enough -- indeed, considering the immense difficulties of the text, one should say excellent - and I shall not refer to the original German nor comment on the translation in this investigation.

1. "Obvious and Trite" Signposts

1.1 Production in General

All production, Marx states, is social appropriation of nature in accord with human needs:

All production is appropriation of nature on the part of an individual within and through a specific form of society. . . . The obvious, trite notion: in production the members of society appropriate (create, shape) the products of nature in accord with human needs. . . . (G.87-88)

However, in each particular societal form, there is a dominant or hegemonic kind of production:

In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it. . . . Capital is the all-dominating economic power of bourgeois society. (G.106-07)

1.2. Capitalist Production Based on Exchange Value: Pros and Cons

The dominance of exchange over all relations of production develops fully "in bourgeois society, the society of free competition." In it, as a consequence of capitalist production, the individuals

become, on the one hand, "indifferent to one another," so to speak "free," and on the other, mutually and universally interdependent through exchange-value:

The dissolution of all products and activities into exchange values presupposes the dissolution of all fixed personal (historic) relations of dependence in production, as well as the all-sided dependence of the producers on one another. Each individual's production is dependent on the production of all others; and the transformation of his product into the necessities of his own life is [similarly] dependent on the assumption of all others. . . . The reciprocal and all-sided dependence of individuals who are indifferent to one another forms their social connection. This social bond is expressed in exchange value. . . . (all quotes G.156)

This is preferable to earlier social bonds or dependencies:

[T]his is precisely the beauty and greatness of it: this spontaneous interconnection, this material and mental metabolism which is independent of the knowing and willing of individuals, and which presupposes their reciprocal independence and indifference. And, certainly, this objective connection is preferable to the lack of any connection, or to a merely local connection resting on blood ties, or on primeval, natural or master-servant relations. Equally certain is it that individuals cannot gain mastery over their own social interconnections before they have created them (G.161-62).

And yet it is also limited and inherently ambiguous:

[P]roduction on the basis of exchange values . . . produces not only the alienation of the individual from himself and from others, but also the universality and the comprehensiveness of his relations and capacities. In earlier stages of development the single individual seems to be developed more fully, because he has not yet worked out his relationships in their fullness, or erected them as independent social powers and relations opposite himself. It is as ridiculous to yearn for a return to that original fullness as it is to believe that with this complete emptiness history has come to a standstill. (G.162)

The cause and most important aspect of this ambiguity is that "there is a limit, not inherent to production generally, but to production founded on capital" (G.415). This inherent limit, coinciding with the essence or nature of capital, is reducible to

exchange value as such, as limit of production; or exchange founded on value, or value founded on exchange, as limit of production. This is. . . again the same as restriction of the production of use values by exchange value. . . . (G.415-16)

In other words, while capital tends to acknowledge no limits in the heightening of the productive forces, it "also and equally makes onesided, limits etc. the main force of production, the human being himself" (G.422), and thus tends, obversely, to restrict those same productive forces.

2. Life into Death: Stealing the Soul of Labour

2.1. Creative and Productive Force Alienated into Capital

As a result, the exchange relation becomes alien to the producer:

[T]he exchange relation establishes itself as a power external to and independent of the producers. What originally appeared as a means to promote production becomes a relation alien to the producers. As the producers become more dependent on exchange,

exchange appears to become more independent of them, and the gap between the product as product and the product as exchange value appears to widen. . . .

The product becomes a commodity; the commodity becomes exchange value; the exchange value of the commodity is its immanent money-property; this, its money-property, separates itself from it in the form of money, and achieves a general social existence separated from all particular commodities and their natural mode of existence. . . . (G.146-47)

The producer's creative power is appropriated by capital:

[I]n exchange for his labour capacity as a fixed, available magnitude, [the worker] surrenders its creative power, like Esau his birthright for a mess of pottage. . . . The creative power of his labour establishes itself as the power of capital, as an alien power confronting him. He divests himself [*entäussert sich*] of labour as the force productive of wealth; capital appropriates it, as such. The separation between labour and property in the product of labour, between labour and wealth, is thus posited in this act of exchange itself. (G.307)

Thus, capital is essentially the transposition and transubstantiation of labour's productive force:

The productivity of labour becomes the productive force of capital. . . . Capital itself is essentially this displacement, this transposition [of the productive force of labour], and . . . this transubstantiation; the necessary process of positing its own powers as alien to the worker. (G.308)

2.2. Fantastic Metamorphoses and Anamorphoses: Monsters, Vampires, Robots, Devourers

The worker is impoverished by the process of production, for his "value-creating possibility" is transformed into

capital, as master over living labour capacity, as value endowed with its own might and will, confronting him in his. . . poverty. He has produced not only the alien wealth and his own poverty, but also the relation of this wealth as independent, self-sufficient wealth, relative to himself as the poverty which this wealth consumes, and from which wealth thereby draws new vital spirits into itself [emphasis added, DS], and realizes itself anew.... The product of labour appears as. . . a mode of existence confronting living labour as independent. . . ; the product of labour, objectified labour, has been endowed by living labour with a soul of its own, and establishes itself apposite living labour as an alien power. . . . As a consequence of the production process, the possibilities resting in living labour's own womb exist outside it . . . as realities alien to it (G.453-54)

Thus we have arrived at an image-cluster in which the product of a certain subject is unnaturally born out of that subject as not simply an objectified reality (like a baby) but as a malevolent usurper, taking its "vital spirits" or vitality from the subject, quite oblivious of having been endowed with its soul by the subject. This is not too bad an approximation to a classical horror-fantasy or Gothic tale, in two variants, male and female: the first, in which the unclean capitalist Power seeds the womb of labour (here a *succuba*) with a demon birth; the second, in which the unsuspecting hero is beset by a power he unwittingly let loose out of his soul-substance or vitality, and which turns upon him to suck the rest of such "vital spirits" -- from the Sorcerer's Apprentice folktale (already used in *The Communist Manifesto* through the mediation of Goethe's

ballad) to the popular image -- though not the more sophisticated original novel -- of Dr. Frankenstein and his monster.^{3/}

If such an interpretation seems a bit startling, let us consider some further evidence in other passages. Thus, the forcible bringing together of labour in the capitalist process of production appears just as subservient to and led by an alien will and an alien intelligence -- having its animating unity elsewhere -- as its material unity appears subordinate to the objective unity of the machinery, of fixed capital, which, as animated monster, objectifies the scientific idea. . . . (G.470)

The same image cluster is apparent in turning the binocular around and -- instead of calling the capitalist master a monster -- calling the labour-servant in the Hegelian master-slave couple an automaton or robot; and the above quotation continues, in the same breath, by pointing out that in the described relationship "the individual worker. . . exists as an animated individual punctuation mark, as its [the capital's] living isolated accessory" (G.470). And further:

once adopted into the production process of capital, the means of labour passes through different metamorphoses, whose culmination is the machine, or rather, an automatic system of machinery . . . set in motion by an automaton consisting of numerous mechanical and intellectual organs, so that the workers themselves are cast merely as its conscious linkages (G.692).

This metamorphosis is not accidental but a historical reshaping of traditional living labour and use-value into an existence, "into a form adequate to capital. The accumulation of knowledge and of skill, of the general productive forces of the social brain is thus absorbed into capital, as opposed to labour. . . ." (G.694).

As in fantastic stories, here we come upon an absorption of brain-forces into the villain. This is paralleled by an image of soul-extraction, soul-transferral or soul-eating. For when value becomes capital, living labour confronts it "as a mere means to realize objectified, dead labour, to penetrate it with an animating soul while losing its own soul to it" (G.461). The underlying image of vampirism is spelled out when the performance of value under conditions of capital is discussed as a "passage-process-life," in which capital "alternates between its eternal form in money and its passing form in commodities" and in which the vampiric reincarnation (Marx uses this very term of incarnating ever anew) is only rendered possible by capital "constantly sucking in living labour as its soul, vampire-like." I shall quote the whole passage to make apparent just how Marx modulates in and out of the vampire imagery, and how his very syntax reproduces the incarnation process:

Capital posits the permanence of value (to a certain degree) by incarnating itself in fleeting commodities and taking on their form, but at the same time changing them just as constantly; alternates between its eternal form in money and its passing form in commodities; permanence is posited as the only thing it can be, a passing passage-process-life. But capital obtains this ability only by constantly sucking in living labour as its soul, vampire-like. (G.646)

In another passage, Goethe's metaphor of incubic possession from *Faust I*, "als hätt' es Lieb im Leibe" (literally something like, "as though its body were possessed by love" -- substituting love for demonic possession), is used for a metamorphosis suggesting something like a female spider devouring its male in the (indeed "coarsely sensuous") act of copulation, or -- more distantly -- suggesting perhaps some classical allusions such as Circe consuming one of her lovers after his metamorphosis into an animal:

What was the living worker's activity becomes the activity of the machine. Thus the appropriation of labour by capital confronts the worker in a coarsely sensuous form; capital absorbs labour into itself -- 'as though its body were by love possessed' ["als hätt' es Lieb im Leibe", Goethe, *Faust*, Pt I, Act 5, Auerbach's Cellar in Leipzig -- note by translator into English]. (G.704)

In sum, then, living labour "turns into its opposite," since "the use of labour capacity, as value, is itself the value-creating force; the substance of value, and the value-increasing substance." When such living labour is exchanged for "the equivalent of the labour time," the worker "sells himself as an effect. He is absorbed into the body of capital as a cause, as activity" (G.674).

By now, this absorption/ transubstantiation should not be too surprising. It is the true state of affairs underlying the semblance of the free and equivalent exchange between worker and capital. Behind, beneath, or within "the laws of private property," the slogans of "liberty, equality, property -- property in one's own labour, and free disposition over it," stands the loss of the immediate producer's soul, brain, living substance, extracted from him and giving rise to an alien force consisting of alienated life, a demon spawn. The domination of capital turns the master/slave relationship into the dehumanized juxtaposition of vampiric monster and robotic zombie, or indeed of infernal incubus and possessed/ dispossessed succuba.

3. Prerequisites for a Classless Society: Death into Life

3.1. Some Foundations

[I]f we did not find concealed in society as it is the material conditions of production and the corresponding relations of exchange prerequisite for a classless society, then all attempts to explode it would be quixotic. (G. 159)

More precisely, the historical position and determination of capital is to develop surplus labour to a point "where labour in which a human being does what a thing could do has ceased." At such a (potentially or technically) already post-capitalist point, the economic prerequisites have been created for the development of a "rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption, and whose labour also therefore appears . . . as the full development of [human] activity [in which] . . . a historically created need has taken the place of the natural one" (both G.325).

Thus, "the correct observation and deduction of [the laws of bourgeois economy]" (G.460) leads to the point at which the abolition of "the present form of production relations" can be envisaged, as "foreshadowings of the future" (G.461). If I understand correctly Marx's complex passages beginning on p. 459, in the context of his other utterances, this happens as a dialectical fusion of two formal, anamorphic processes -- *per parva*, observing the small seeds of the future in the present, a "baby figure of the giant mass/ Of things to come," as Marx's favourite writer would say (*Troilus and Cressida*, I.iii); and *per contraria*, as an inversion, conversion or righting of the most acute contradictions created by bourgeois economy. In sum, the growth of the contradiction and of the seeds of its resolution reshapes or reforms the radically wrong or deformed production relations. Logically, "the most extreme form of alienation" in capitalist relations of production is a necessary point of transition -- and therefore already contains in itself, in a still only inverted form, turned on its head, the dissolution of all limited presuppositions of

production, and moreover creates and produces . . . the full material conditions for the total, universal development of the productive forces of the individual. (G.515)

This is why capitalism is such an ambiguous formation and epoch: the most necessary and magnificent, yet also the most unhappy and cacademonic one, a *felix culpa* or (potentially) Happy Fall.

3.2. Two Meanings of Production

This radical and essential ambiguity of all relationships under the hegemony of capital is based on and can perhaps most clearly be seen in the two closely related but diametrically opposite meanings of "production" in the *Grundrisse*. I shall attempt to disentangle Marx's semantics for this privileged term by using P1 for economic production or "production founded on capital" (G.415) as critically and theoretically formalized by Marx's acceptance of the classical bourgeois meanings, from Smith, Ricardo, etc., and P2 for meta-economic or better meta-capitalist production in the sense of creative making (see also sections 1.1 and 1.2 above):

The uneven development of material production [P1] relative to e.g. artistic development. . . . Certain forms of art, e.g. the epic, can no longer be produced [P2] in their world epoch-making, classical stature as soon as the production [P1] of art, as such, begins (G.109-10)

[T]he advance of population. . . too belongs with production. [P1] (G.486)

Such formulations, of course, lead to and are confirmed by Engels's famous preface to *The Origin of the Family*: "Production and reproduction of immediate life. . . is of a twofold character. On the one hand, the production [P 1] of the means of subsistence. . . ; on the other, the production [P2] of human beings themselves."^{4/}

Two final quotations dealing with the most ticklish and crucial area of spiritual or aesthetic production, which is both clearly creative from Marx's basic anthropological standpoint and yet clearly unproductive from the standpoint of classical bourgeois political economy, will point up this redoubling:

[According to Adam Smith], actors are productive [P1] workers, not in so far as they produce [P2] a play, but in so far as they increase their employer's wealth. (G.328-29)

What is productive labour and what is not, a point very much disputed back and forth since Adam Smith made this distinction,^{+/} has to emerge from the dissection of the various aspects of capital itself. Productive [P1] labour is only that which produces capital. Is it not crazy, asks e.g. (or at least something similar) Mr. Senior, that the piano maker is a productive worker, but not the piano player, although obviously the piano would be absurd without the piano player?^{++/} But this is exactly the case. The piano maker reproduces capital; the pianist only exchanges his labour for revenue. But doesn't the pianist produce [P2] music and satisfy our musical ear, does he not even to a certain extent produce [P2] the latter? He does indeed: his labour produces [P2] something; but that does not make it productive labour in the economic sense [P1]; no more than the labour of the madman who produces [P2] delusions is productive [P1]. Labour becomes productive [P1] only by producing its own opposite [i.e. capital] (G.306)

^{+/} Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Vol. II, p. 355-85.

^{++/} Senior, *Principes fondamentaux*, p. 197-206. [both notes by translator into English]

Clearly, the two meanings of production arise from the fact that Marx must more or less simultaneously explain and criticize Smith's and Malthus's political economy, that he must simultaneously meticulously account for the epoch-making innovation of capitalist production [P1] and sweepingly condemn it by indicating the anthropological limitation which renders it unable to subsume human production outside of the realm of necessity, i.e. the "species-specific" production [P2], that would not reproduce capital. This production [P2] has in bourgeois society only been preserved in enclaves such as artistic production; while this has been the case in all class societies, Marx's wrath implies that it is now for the first time both an unnecessary case (in view of the giant development of the forces of production) and a case that is being denied by the ideological mystification of the new ruling class (with its pretence to freedom and integral humanism).

3.3. Production of the Social Human Being: Use-Value as Repristination of Life

Use-value, the economic equivalent of the human, species-specific [P2], is therefore treated by Marx as qualitative, and exchange-value, arising out of measurable labour, as quantitative. The distinction is determined by contact with "living labour":

Use value is not concerned with human activity as the source of the product, . . . but with its being for mankind. In so far as the product has a measure for itself, it is its natural measure as natural object, mass, weight, length, volume etc. Measure of utility etc. But as effect, or as static presence of the force which created it, it is measured only by the measure of this force itself. The measure of labour is time. (G.613)

As a specific, one-sided, qualitative use value, e.g. grain, its quantity itself is irrelevant only up to a certain level; it is required only in a specific quantity; i.e. in a certain measure. . . . Use value in itself does not have the boundlessness of value as such. Given objects can be consumed as objects of needs only up to a certain level. (G.405)

Use value is concerned only with the quality of the labour already objectified . . . through the contact with living labour. The use value of cotton, as well as its use value as yarn, are preserved by being woven. . . . (G.363)

Labour is the living, form-giving fire; it is the transitoriness of things, their temporality, as their formation by living time. In the simple production process. . . the transitoriness of the forms of things is used to posit their usefulness. When cotton becomes yarn, yarn becomes fabric, fabric becomes printed etc. or dyed etc. fabric, and this becomes, say, a garment, then (1) the substance of cotton has preserved itself in all these forms. . . ; (2) in each of these subsequent processes, the material has obtained a more useful form, a form making it more appropriate to consumption; until it has obtained at the end the form in which it . . . satisfies a human need, and its transformation is the same as its use. (G.361; emphasis added)

In brief, as opposed to production of exchange-values for profit [P 1], the production of use-values for consumption [P2] is a beneficent, indeed Promethean, metamorphosis of life into more life, human quality into another human quality:

The same holds for the instrument. A spindle maintains itself as a use value only by being used up for spinning. . . . The use value of wood and iron, and of their form as well, are preserved only by being posited as a means of living labour, as an objective moment of the existence of labour's vitality The increased productivity which it lends to labour creates more use values and thereby replaces the use value eaten up in the consumption

of the instrument. This appears most clearly in agriculture, because there the instrument appears most easily, because most anciently, as a use value, directly as a means of life [emphasis added] -- in contrast to exchange value (G.362-63)

Thus, in all cases there occurs a transmigration and metamorphosis of labour's soul and vitality. This becomes demonic when reproducing capital, and clearly life-giving and life-enhancing when producing use-values: "[L]iving labour makes instrument and material in the production process into the body of its soul and thereby resurrects them from the dead . . ." (G.364). The new classless society or realm of freedom necessitated by the qualitative logic of human vitality, which sublates the quantitative logic of political economy, could therefore be understood as one which has turned the vampiric dispossession of labour and its vitality into Promethean form-giving fire, into a means of renewed life. Humanized production or creativity replaces death with life: the essential Marxian argument is as "simple" as this.

4. The World's Human Body: Foreshadowings of a Higher Epicureanism

4.1 Life Presupposed by Labour

What are, then, historical images of "happier forms of [living labour]" which would not at the same time be historically "lower forms" (G.464) but on the contrary higher ones? Forms in which workers would relate not only to earth but also to all other developed productive forces as to a "community producing and reproducing itself in living labour," and in which "each individual conducts himself only as a link, as a member of this community as . . . [collective] possessor" (G.472)? Where "the economic aim is. . . the production of use values, i.e. the reproduction of the individual within the specific relation to the commune in which he is its basis . . . [with] appropriation not through labour, but presupposed to labour. . .?" (G.485)

These foreshadowings are possible and indeed legitimate because

the monstrous objective power [of alienated social wealth] . . ., this twisting and inversion. . . is a merely historical necessity, a necessity for the development of the forces of production solely from a specific historic point of departure, or basis, but in no way an absolute. . . [W]ith the positing of the activity of individuals as immediately general or social activity, the objective moments of production are stripped of this form of alienation; they are thereby posited as the organic social body within which the individuals reproduce themselves as individuals, but as social individuals. (G.831-32)

The huge powers of social production are thus not necessarily an alienated monster, their "mere" alienated givenness within history is not an absolute presupposition for social production: "Machines will not cease to be agencies of social production when they become e.g. the property of the associated workers" (G.833).

The *raison d'être* of the de-alienated social production is a new human personality, an individual who is a member of the associated producers. What will some of his essential characteristics be? On the analogy of the historical "happier forms" of living labour, this "labouring individual" will have an "objective mode of existence" in his collective stewardship of productive forces,

an existence presupposed to his activity. . . just like his skin, his sense organs, which of course he also reproduces and develops etc. in the life process, but which are nevertheless presuppositions of this process of his reproduction . . . (G.485)

For him, as for individuals in tribal communism, "property" will mean "belonging to a . . . community (having subjective-objective existence in it)," and by means of that relationship relating to the new productive forces as to "the individual's inorganic body. . . -- as to a presupposition belonging to his individuality, as modes of his presence" (G.492). In fact,

when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature? The absolute working-out of his creative potentialities [emphasis added], with no presupposition other than the previous historical development, which makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a predetermined yardstick? Where he does not reproduce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality? Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? (G.488)

4.2. Time, Work, Art, and Science To Be Transmuted

[The] mass of workers must themselves appropriate their own surplus labour. Once they have done so . . . then, on one side, necessary labour time will be measured by the needs of the social individual, and, on the other, the development of the power of social production will grow so rapidly that, even though production is now calculated for the wealth of all, disposable time will grow for all. For real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals. The measure of wealth is then not any longer, in any way, labour time, but rather disposable time. Labour time as the measure of value posits wealth itself as founded on poverty . . . (G.708)

In this transformation [of the worker], it is neither the direct human labour he himself performs, nor the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body -- it is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth. The theft of alien labour time, on which the present wealth is based, appears a miserable foundation in face of this new one, created by large-scale industry itself. As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The surplus labour of the mass has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the non-labour of the few, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, 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. (G.705-06)

At the further limits of this vision, when use-value and disposable time have supplanted exchange-value and labour time, the associated workers who have reappropriated their productive power have become a social individual or a social body. Paradigmatically, this "transformation of the worker" has resulted in a body politic which is also, through its appropriation of nature as its inorganic body, the world's body. But syntagmatically or diachronically, what do these associated producers then do?

The development of the use-value of labour "corresponds generally . . . [to a] half-artistic relation to labour" (G.587). It also corresponds to a scientific character of production. Marx assumes -- more than he argues -- that "the creation of disposable time is then also creation of time for the production of science, art, etc." (G.401n -- clearly, by this time the humanized production, [P2], has sublated purely economic production, [P1]. He takes great pains to delimit his vision from Fourier's, but as opposed to Marx's total denial of bourgeois political economists such as Adam Smith, that visionary clearly remains his main interlocutor in the subterranean dialogue he embarks upon here -- and which will be explicated much later in Engels's generous praise of Fourier in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*:

[Smith] is right, that, in its historic forms as slave-labour, serf-labour, and wage-labour, labour always appears as repulsive, always as external forced labour; and not-labour, by contrast, as "freedom, and happiness." This holds doubly: for this contradictory labour; and, relatedly, for labour which has not yet created the subjective and objective conditions for itself (or, also, in contrast to the pastoral etc. state, which it has lost), in which labour becomes attractive work, the individual's self-realization, which in no way means that it becomes mere fun, mere amusement, as Fourier, with **grisette**-like naïveté, conceives it.^{+/} Really free working, e.g. composing, is at the same time precisely the most damned seriousness, the most intense exertion. The work of material production can achieve this character only (1) when its social character is posited, (2) when it is of a scientific and at the same time general character, not merely human exertion as a specifically harnessed natural force, but exertion as a subject, which appears in the production process. . . as an activity regulating all the forces of nature. (G.611-12)

^{+/} Fourier, *Le Nouveau monde industriel et sociétaire*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris, 1848, Vol. VI, p. 245-52.

Labour cannot become play, as Fourier would like,^{++/} although it remains his great contribution to have expressed the suspension [i.e. sublation], not of distribution, but of the mode of production itself, in a higher form, as the ultimate object. Free time -- which is both ideal time and time for higher activity -- has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he then enters into the direct production process as this different subject. (G.712)

^{++/} Fourier, *ibidem* [both notes by translator into English]

It seems to me undeniable that in these blue distances of utopian foreshadowings Marx -- while, no doubt, explaining the future of attractive labour in more convincing categories -- briefly, sketchily, and with some embarrassment begins to rub elbows with Fourier.

5. A Provisional Conclusion

Thus, finally, the *Grundrisse* are the high point and crown of a whole millennia-old (if not millenary) plebeian tradition of metamorphic imagery, in which the immortal labouring people constitute the world's body -- a tradition best set forth in Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*. This tradition runs on the affirmative side from early metamorphic myths, such as the central one here, Prometheus as both fire-bringer and shape-giver (*pyrphoros* and *plasticator*), and from folktales, through what Bakhtin calls "prandial libertinism" such as the Cockayne stories -- positing a magically unimpeded direct appropriation of nature without war, scarcity or work -- to Fourier's fantastic future. On the negative side, Carnival is accompanied by Lent: all that falls short of such full contentment is treated as a demonically unnatural state of affairs, a misappropriation of the people's living forces or vital spirits by vampiric villains. To mention only Marx's most likely sources, such a filiation runs again from the horrific elements in folktales, culminating in those of the Grimm brothers, through classical antiquity (Homer's Circe and Lucretius rather than Ovid's decorative codification of metamorphoses), to the Preromantic and Romantic elaborations on these motifs (e.g. the scene from Goethe's *Faust* alluded to in G. 704, my section 2.2). Marx changed and fulfilled this tradition by fusing it with the materialist intellectual tradition which stems, no doubt, from the same roots but developed somewhat independently from Epicure to Hegel and Feuerbach, briefly fusing with the plebeian tradition also at such earlier high points as Lucretius, Rabelais, and Cyrano. Marx's main innovation -- altering the people's body into labour's living body -- supplied this whole tradition with the crucially new cognition which incorporated and dialectically sublated bourgeois political economy. In such a way, the notion introduced by the Russian Formalists into the understanding of fiction, that low or plebeian genres of a preceding historical epoch are elevated by the rising social classes or strata into the high or canonic genres of a new historical epoch, can illuminate Marx's work too. The subversive plebeian genres (or the twin genre) of utopian alternative cum horror fantasy, radically alienated from the seemingly fixed order of the status quo and therefore committed to seemingly fantastic processual and metamorphic imagery, were appropriated by Marx in the *Grundrisse* (and in *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*) as bearers of the plebeian, popular, spontaneously materialist, imaginative tradition which in its own way first formulated the lot of exploited men as a struggle between living renewal of their forces and a zombie-like death-in-life.

Notes

1/ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, transl. Martin Nicolaus (London and New York: Penguin-Vintage, 1974). Citations from the *Grundrisse* are given parenthetically in the text as G. followed by page numbers.

2/ On Marx's use of metaphors and topoi of literary provenience, see also, chronologically: Paul Lafargue, *Karl Marx* (New York, 1972, earlier in French); Mikhail Lifshitz, *The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx* (London, 1973; earlier in Russian); Pamela Hansford Johnson, "The Literary Achievement of Marx," *The Modern Quarterly* N.S. 2 (1947); Wylie Sypher, "Aesthetic of Revolution," *Kenyon Review* 10 (1948); Edmund Wilson, *To The Finland Station* (Garden City, 1955); Eduard Kölwel, *Von der Art zu Schreiben* (Halle a/S, 1962); Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Tangled Bank* (New York, 1966); Peter Demetz, *Marx, Engels and the Poets* (Chicago, 1967); G. Cwojdrak, "Karl Marx, die Phantasie und die Kinderliteratur," *Der Bibliothekar* 22 (1968); H. Kolb, "Karl Marx und Jacob Grimm," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* no. 206 (1969-70); Peter Walton and Stuart Hall eds., *Situating Marx* (London, 1972); Ludovico Silva, *El Estilo literario de Marx* (Mexico, 1975);

Prawer, see note 3 below; Darko Suvin with Marc Angenot, "L'aggirarsi degli spettri. Metafore e demifisticazioni, ovvero l'implicito del manifesto," in Marina Galletti ed., *Le soglie del fantastico* (Roma, 1997, briefer early version in French in *Études françaises*, 16 [1980]). I also wish to acknowledge the help of Charles Elkins, whose dissertation "The Development of British Marxist Literary Theory" (Southern Illinois University, 1972) contains a good critique of Demetz and Sypher, of an MLG Marx-study circle in Montréal 1975/76, in particular of Marc Angenot, and of some comments by Ursula K. Le Guin.

Specifically on the *Grundrisse* see the helpful introduction by Martin Nicolaus to his Penguin-Vintage translation, David McLellan's *Marx's Grundrisse* (London, 1971), and Stuart Hall's "A 'Reading' of Marx's 1857 Introduction to the Grundrisse" (University of Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies, 1973), photocopied. The plebeian tradition of metamorphic imagery associated with a radically more perfect life is touched upon in my *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven & London, 1979), especially chapters 5-8 and 11; abundant bibliography can also be found there.

3/ S.S. Prawer, *Karl Marx and World Literature* (Oxford, 1978), mentions on p. 392 that Frankenstein's monster himself walks again in one of Marx's letters (unfortunately not identified by Prawer). For other recurrences of references to popular literature and in particular to horror-fantasy in Marx, see Prawer, p. 51, 93-96, 117, 127, 138-41, 154, 168, 238, 331-32, 342, 351, 378.

4/ Everybody writing about Marx on art and production is indebted to the lucid distinctions -- mostly on the material of the *Theories of Surplus Value* -- by Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, *Art and Society* (New York and London, 1973), pp. 181ff. Cf. As usual, the matter is put precisely and succinctly by Raymond Williams: "Marx was perfectly clear about the distinction between 'production in general' and 'capitalist production.' Indeed it was the claim of the latter, through its political economy, to the universality of its own specific and historical conditions, that he especially attacked. But the history had happened, in the language as in so much else. What is then profoundly difficult is that Marx analysed 'capitalist production' in and through its own terms, and at the same time, whether looking to the past or the future, was in effect compelled to use many of the same terms for more general or historically different processes" (*Marxism and Literature* [Oxford, 1977], p. 90).