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Reseña
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Inside Marx's Industry

Carlos Casanova's short book *Estética y producción en Karl Marx* (Ediciones Metales Pesados, 2016), a portion of his important and much longer doctoral thesis, advances a thorough examination of Marx's thought, and unambiguously offers new ways for thinking from and beyond the author of *Das Kapital*. Although the title could raise false expectations of yet another volume on "Marxism and Aesthetics", or a hermeneutical reconstruction of a lost and forgotten "aesthetics" in Marx, these are neither the concerns nor aims of Casanova's important book. Indeed, he does not hesitate to claim that there is no aesthetics in Marx's thought as phenomenologically derivative from German theories of romantic idealism, conceptions of the beautiful, or a deepening of the analysis of the faculty of judgment in Kantian theory of the subject and critique.

Forcefully, Casanova situates his intervention away from two well known strands: on one hand, those that have sought to extract an aesthetics in Marx (of which Margaret Rose's 1988 classic *Marx's Lost Aesthetic* is perhaps a paradigmatic example), and on the other, those who have wanted to produce "a Marxist" social theory for art, from Georg Lukacs to Terry Eagleton, Thierry De Duve, and Fredric Jameson. Casanova's argues that Marx's aesthetic can be located in a modality of thinking through the anthropological (although, as we will see, perhaps "anthropogenic event" is more accurate, than the claim for an anthropology) conception of man and the human. The anthropogenic event in the early Marx of the *Manuscripts of 1844* is closely examined in light of the problem of praxis displacing the problem to the economy of potentiality and actuality inherited from

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the Aristotelean tradition. According to Casanova, this informs Marx's concept of "exteriorization" that bring forth the capacity of *use* in the human. Challenging the Althusserian structuralism, which reduced a heterogeneous corpus into two phases specified in the epistemological break, Casanova suggests that the early Marx inhabits the threshold of thinking the potentiality of Humanism as always producing the disruption of the apparatus of property and the person. What is at stake in Marx is an "industry of the sensible" as the constitution of the singular. Hence, Casanova writes early in the book:

Vale decir: lo que hay en Marx es un pensamiento del límite, no del fin del humanismo, sino de un pensamiento de lo humano que consiste en un pasaje al límite del humanismo donde este se verá menos suprimido que suspenso, desfondo en su "raíz". Digamos que, utilizando una expresión de Esposito y de Nancy, lo que hay en el pensamiento de Marx es mas bien una "división/interrupción" del mito del humanismo².

Marx's aesthetic industry crashes the humanist onto-theological machine, which results in reclaiming the inoperativity of man's praxis as irreducible to the concrete and abstract extraction of value and production. This displacement pushes Marx away from the humanism machine of universality or particularity as the two poles of the locational dispute of the "subject". Further, what follows from this claim are two ways of liberating Marx from the very constrains of the Marxist principal tradition and the opposition "structuralism vs. the subject" towards a new use of the praxis of man. In the first part of the book, Casanova takes up the inoperativity of Marx's humanist praxis ("Humanismo del hombre sin obra"), and in the second section ("Tecnologías de la producción"), the analysis shifts towards a polemical scrutiny of the question of *techné* against the theorizations of telecratic instrumentality, but the phenomenological interpretations that have understood Marx's thought as the consummation of the epochal technological enframing. Of course, Casanova's book, and his own reflection on Marx, is epochally situated in the wake of a reconsideration of the technology of the sensible, offering a counter-reading of Marx that moves beyond the humanist onto-theology as a messianic principle that propels the Hegelian philosophy of history as the *stasis* for mastering and amending the logic of revolution.

Casanova's Marx is an-archic or aprincipal in Reiner Schürmann's sense, as it avoids the substantialization of a "Marxist politics" to assert a stable ground for action over thinking³. But the Marx that is endowed in *Estética y producción* is

² Carlos Casanova, *Estética y producción en Karl Marx* (Santiago : Ediciones Metales Pesados, 2016), 16.

³ For the concept of anarchy in Reiner Schürmann's determination, see his *Le principe d'anarchie: Heidegger et la question de l'agir* (Paris: Seuil, 1982).

also an-anarchic in another sense: it offers no productive horizon of philosophical knowability as a new vanguard of intelligence, as a technology of critique, or even as practice of restitution. Casanova makes no concessions to epochal nihilism, and there is no attempt in making Marx the *archē* for militant hegemony or the invariant name as a truth of History. Casanova's intervention is situated at the crossroads between Agamben's *desouagement*, Jean-Luc Nancy's deconstruction, but also more esoterically, the Chilean scene that has produced an important constellation of studies, which includes, although is not limited to, Pablo Oyarzun's *Anestésica del ready-made* (2000), Miguel Valderrama's *La aparición paulatina de la desaparición del arte* (2008), Federico Galende's *Modos de producción* (2011), and Willy Thayer's *Tecnologías de la crítica* (2010)⁴. This list could go on, but none of these names are explicitly directly confronted, although it would interested to read his intervention as a radical conceptual shift of the "aesthetic" in this specific cultural field.

In the first section "Humanismo del hombre sin obra", Casanova complicates the early Marx of the *Manuscripts of 1844* by suggesting that the notion of the "generic being" takes place in a double-bind as part of the historicity of the human's sensible organs that are both conditions *and* products of a "sensible activity" of the exteriorization of abilities. If both idealism and alienation are the forgetting of the material forms of production, Casanova is quick to underline that it is not just a mere extraction and division from a point of view of "functional socialization", in terms of Alfred Sohn Rethel, but an activity that is the very "mediality" of life as the potentiality in which man can exercise a direct and unmediated relation with nature. In a crucial passage, Casanova writes:

Los órganos humanos son las capacidades desarrolladas, esto es, el poder ser actual de los individuos al igual que los medios o instrumentos a través de los cuales esas mismas facultades se ejercen. Al mismo tiempo, ellos son los productos, el mundo objetivo del trabajo de toda una historia pasada: son los sentidos de una actividad productiva, entendida como "la relación histórica real de la naturaleza (el 'mundo sensible') con el hombre. Son, en suma, los órganos *de* la industria *del* hombre"⁵.

What capitalism stages in the figure of the proletariat, as a result, is a series of divisions that obfuscate the taking place of a praxis constitutive of the industry of man; that is, of the life of the generic without work. In this intersection, Casanova is very much dependent on the Aristotelian's definition of man's essence as

⁴ For a critical examination and theoretical implications of some of these debates in the context of Chilean post-dictatorship, see Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott, *Soberanías en suspensión: imaginación y violencia en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: La Cebra, 2014).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

an-argos, or without work⁶. Hence, Marx's "real humanism" entails necessary praxis of the industry of the senses, which capitalist humanism divides and codifies in terms of exploitation, alienation, rule of law, and private property. However, and more importantly for Casanova, is the privatization of the sensible transformed into an aesthetic apparatus that governs over life⁷. The modes of production are in this sense already a semblance and reduction of the overflowing of the senses in the praxis of man, which necessarily posits *poesis* as what cannot amount to work through the unlimited process of accumulation. The labour of the proletarian, understood as the industry of the generic being, enacts an undefined potentiality, which action and thought, singularity and commonality, sensing and reason, collapse in a heterochronic plane of immanence without separation.

The becoming of man, as a fulfillment of his sensible potentiality, corresponds to the becoming of the world beyond the principle of equivalence as the structural circuit through which global spatialization of capital replaces the possibility of the "earth". Marx's humanism without work is situated against this ruinous and fallen world confined to the logic of exchange and appropriation. The proletariat stands here less than a subject for and in history, as the site where an excess to productivity and equivalence is latent as a multiplicity of singular potentialities:

Ya no hay *nada* que apropiarse más que lo inapropiable –el libre uso de común de las fuerzas de producción– de una apropiación no capitalizable, es decir, excesiva respecto del marco económico político de productividad, por ende no mensurable de acuerdo a la medida del valor, es decir, no gobernable bajo el principio o ley universalidad de la equivalencialidad⁸.

To appropriate the inappropriable is Marx's industry of the forms of life as the production of the improper and excess to equivalence. But Casanova's Marx as the thinker of the inappropriable cannot escape here the function of appropriation in the event of a modality of work, which constitutes, perhaps to the very end, the aporia's of Marx's thinking⁹. The function of positive appropriation of force

⁶ This thesis pertains to the passage from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934) in which the philosopher argues that the musician has a particular function that defines his work, but the human to the extent that he is human, is born without work. 1098 a7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁹ This is what Agamben detects in *The Use of Bodies* (California: Stanford University Press, 2015), as the insufficiency of Marx's *oeuvre* in terms of the fixity to the modes of production: "One-sidedly focused on the analysis of forms of production, Marx neglected the analysis of the *forms of inoperativity*, and this lack is certainly at the bottom of some of the aporias of his thought, in particular as concerns the definition of human activity in the classless society. From this perspective, a phenomenology of forms of life and of inoperativity that proceeded

in Marx is still tied to “esta producción multiforme del globo entero (*Schöpfungen der Menschen*)”¹⁰.

Casanova forces Marx to say that a relation always constitutes this production with its own potentiality, but it is not hard to see a shared appropriation of production haunted by the unproductivity that is deposited in every praxis. That is, only because praxis is use, there is no longer an appropriation of wealth, which remains on the side of vitalism as a productive entelechy disposable for work. However, Casanova claims that Marx’s communism was perhaps the first in taking into account how labour and property are economic categories of policing and subjecting the organization of life. In fact, all subjectivization is already a movement capture of immanence as a regime of equivalence that Casanova glosses both in the apparatus of modern sovereignty and in the capitalist form of exchange of the commodity. Marx’s communism is thus not a movement that trends towards the transformation of the actual state of things, but a deposition of a self-relation of one’s potentiality.

The mediality exposed in humanism without work is juxtaposed and analytically enlarged in the second part of the book when thinking the question of technology as originary *techné*, which Casanova also calls “co-constitutive” of the generic being. Challenging Kostas Axelos’ standard reading of Marx as an epochal product of the complete exposure of the age of technology, he polemically advances a production of technology that is never reduced to instrumentalization, nor to the clarity of the concept in philosophy as a secondary tier of appropriation. Following Nancy, Marx’s thought is registered as one of finitude, as it opens to the mundane and profane dimension of the material conditions of sensibility:

Un pensamiento de las condiciones denominadas “materiales” de existencia es –como bien ha sabido reconocer Jean-Luc Nancy– un pensamiento que necesariamente vincula, como cuestión ineludible la deconstrucción de la metafísica de la presencia con la pregunta por la condición material, económica, y social de los hombres. Un pensamiento así es, por otra parte, un pensamiento que se piensa en “la ausencia de presencia como imposibilidad de clausura del sentido o de acabada presentación de un sentido en verdad”¹¹.

in step with an analysis of the corresponding forms of production would be essential. In inoperativity, the classless society is already present in capitalist society, just as, according to Benjamin, shards of messianic time are present in history in possibly infamous and risible forms”, 94.

¹⁰ Carlos Casanova, *Estética y producción en Karl Marx* (Santiago: Ediciones Metales Pesados, 2016), 52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

Marx's critique of political economy as a translation of his critique of religion is in this precise sense always a deconstruction of the onto-theology of capital and the subject as coterminous with the principle of general equivalence. Equivalence is what renders abstract the industry of sense, capturing every singularity in a regimen of equality in exchange value and the commodity form. As such, the technology of capital equivalence is what separates and articulates for "work" the co-constitutive modal ontology of originary *techné*. More importantly, the originary *techné* allows for the emergence of politics in Marx that Casanova does not shy away to call "politics of presence" (*política de la presencia*) as the force that un-works the labour apparatus of labour. But, even in its appropriative force, is not production solicited in the "absolute movement" towards non-work?

Casanova is well aware of this aporia when at the very end of his book he asks: "¿Continúan siendo las fuerzas en este movimiento metamórfico, fuerzas dispuestas dentro del marco de la productividad? Siguen siendo las fuerzas del hombre *fuerzas de trabajo*, o mas bien, se transforman en fuerzas humanas en cuanto tales..."¹². Could the limit of Marx's thought be inscribed in the freeing of a concrete work of the essence of man, only to be dispensed towards appropriation of what is proper and common in the productive condition of the anthropogenic event? Why is there force as condition in the becoming of the sensible of the singular? At the very end of the seminar *Heidegger: The Question of Being and History* (2016), Jacques Derrida posits the existential analytic as what precedes anthropogenic event based on labor and its force of the negative¹³. But this is only the Hegelian force that keeps telling "stories". Casanova's gesture grasps a Marx of the originary *techné* in a metamorphic movement that brings to a zone of indistinction thought and action, whose appropriation is always that of the excess of the proper. This entails that the communism in Marx declines the notion equipementality (*Verlässlichkeit*) for a program of emancipation in the movement of appropriation of work. But, similarly, the labor of *stasis* at the heart of the industry is never a "politics of presence".

¹² *Ibid.*, 118.

¹³ Jacques Derrida writes in *Heidegger: The Question of Being & History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016): "One might perhaps say that it is on the condition and on the ground of this existential structure that subsequent and essential determinations of the meaning of labor – in Hegelian, for example, Marxist or Christian terms – can make an entrance, and that one can once more tell stories, be they those of original sin and of what follows, or those of the phenomenology of the spirit describes an anthropogenesis and that labor and the negativity of labor are indispensable to it, Heidegger, for his part, is describing an ontological structure that precedes anthropogenesis (...) that alone can make possible and intelligible the movement of phenomenology (...), which presupposes at least at a given moment being in the world condition the relation of the self to the this, and that follows, up to the point where it finds itself face to face, consciousness at war, and so on", 195-196.

What opens up is an infra-political relation, a necessary fissure within any articulation of the common in the event of appropriation. In relocating Marx to the improper site of *desouvement* and the ungovernable, Casanova's stops short of offering a marxist politicity. But perhaps no such thing is needed: the task of freedom is to abandon any metaphoricity as a new *nomos* of the senses. Bresson captured this freedom in an aphorism on cinema: "*Equality of all things. Cezanne painted with the same eye, a fruit dish, his son, and Mt. Sainte-Victoire*"¹⁴. The *grandeur* of Marx resides in that the sensible machine is never ontology of art, in the same way that hegemony never constitutes a phenomenology of the political. At the heart of Marx's industry lays always and necessarily a life without "work".

¹⁴ Robert Bresson, *Notes On The Cinematographer* (New York: NYRB, 2016), 86.

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