

KUNST UND POLITIK

JAHRBUCH DER GUERNICA-GESELLSCHAFT

Schwerpunkt:

Keywords for Marxist Art History Today

**Kunst und Politik
Band 21/2019**

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V&R unipress

Redaktion: Martin Papenbrock, Norbert Schneider, Elke Wüst-Kralowetz
Redaktionsadresse: Guernica-Gesellschaft, Brauerstraße 17,
D-76137 Karlsruhe, Tel. 07 21/3 52 93 79
Erscheinungsweise: Jährlich im Herbst
Abonnement: Der Preis für ein einzelnes Jahrbuch beträgt EUR 22,50
im Abonnement EUR 19,50

Gedruckt mit Unterstützung der
Stiftung Kritische Kunst- und Kulturwissenschaft

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
<http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

1. Aufl. 2019

© 2019, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Theaterstraße 13, D-37073 Göttingen

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Einbandgestaltung: Tevfik Göktepe

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com

ISSN 1439-0205

ISBN 978-3-8470-1114-9

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Foreword: Keywords for Marxist Art History Today

This volume of *Kunst und Politik* borrows its title from Raymond Williams's well-known book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, first published in 1976. This was a hugely successful work, which went through eight impressions in five years, before appearing in a second and revised edition in 1983. There have been several editions since, the most recent from Oxford University Press in 2014.

Unlike *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958) – the study out of which it grew – *Keywords* was openly an essay in historical materialism; in the Introduction Williams took his distance from Structuralist approaches to language.¹ Describing his field as »historical semantics«, Williams emphasized that the book was the fruit of work »done in an area where several disciplines converge«. ² In that respect our enterprises coincide. But while we acknowledge the inspiration of Williams's work our own objectives are necessarily more modest. We are not so much interested in the »historical semantics« of words – although that plays some role in the essays that follow – as in the present state of Marxist art history. We conceived the volume as an assemblage of soundings into current debates and concerns, rendered timely by the discernible uptick in interest in Marxist art history over the last two decades.

Williams himself acknowledged that a vast amount of research needed to be done in the field he had mapped and that this would necessarily require work that was collective in nature.³ In conceiving this volume, we wanted to involve a range of scholars from different generations, different national contexts and with different relationships to Marxism. (To come clean: one of the editors is near the beginning of her academic career, the other is well into his retirement). We hope that it will contribute to the strengthening of links both nationally and internationally, and provide helpful overviews for those seeking to grasp the history of concepts sometimes taken for granted. When assembling the volume, it became clear that while certain keywords have been crucial to recent developments in Marxist art history and cultural theory more broadly, others seem to have slipped out of view. While the debates of the last decade around art and labour have meant terms such as commodity, labour, value and autonomy are never far from view, terms including ideology, period, style, public sphere, and patron have been far less present in recent years. We therefore hope that these keywords will clarify the continued purchase of concepts that have been displaced, and that connecting the dots between entries may further invigorate current Marxist art history. For example, elements of James Van Dyke's discussion of style might offer ways to address the contemporary inter-media relations described by Marina Vishmidt in the entry on Mediation, while read together, Ciarán Finlayson's entry on Uneven and Combined Development and Avigail Moss's entry on Period clarify the political stakes of historiography and periodization both historically and today.

The first edition of *Keywords* has 110 entries and took almost twenty years to gestate and write – it began life as a 60-word appendix to *Culture and Society*, which had to be

sacrificed for reasons of length.⁴ We too had restrictions of length as well as the problems that arise in collaborative projects that depend on the generosity of over-worked friends and colleagues. We originally commissioned 21 entries but in the way of things, three of these were not delivered for one reason or another. Those which remain at present in the status of unrealized intentions include Contemporary, Imperialism, and Post-Colonialism. We should also acknowledge that some of the topics arose from the suggestions of contributors and three of our original proposals – Global, Materialism, and Reproduction – were not taken up. It's also easy to think of other terms that would be included were we envisioning a larger project: Abstraction, Academy, Art Theory, Avant-Garde, Form, Genre, Hegemony, Iconography, and Sign are obvious omissions. One of our original invitees – who sadly could not contribute – observed: »what kind of Marxist work is it that doesn't include Class?« This was a problem we were not able to resolve and about which a few words are necessary.

We do of course accept David Harvey's terse formulation that »class is the foundational inequality necessary to the reproduction of capitalism«,⁵ but the changes wrought by globalization and financialization force on us a rethinking that looks backwards as well as forwards. Harvey has made a useful distinction between capital (the systemic exploitation of proletarians through wage labor) and capitalism as a larger system in which workers are exploited in a whole range of different ways throughout their lives: »the left, obsessed with the figure of the factory worker as the bearer of class consciousness and as the avatar of socialist ambition, fails largely to incorporate this other world of class practices into its thinking and its political strategies.«⁶ In other words »there is necessarily a contradictory unity in class conflict and class struggle across the spheres of working and living.«⁷ It is through the structures of exploitation that pervade daily life that racialization, gender and other forms of differential empowerment reproduce inequalities that divide working class people from each other. It has long been evident that Marxism needs to develop modes of analysis more attentive to this level of everyday experience. These transformations partly inform our decision not to have an entry on Class. It seemed that if we were to have an entry on that term, we would also want to include entries on Gender and Race. Yet, to separate out these terms asks too little of Marxism, enabling us to proceed as if those vectors of experience are not constantly interrelated and reproduced by capital, and therefore should not inform the way we understand *all* our categories, from Autonomy to Value. In this spirit, many of our entries incorporate theoretical advances made in black studies, postcolonial thought, feminist theory, queer theory and ecocriticism alongside Marxism. To work in this way is to work against the ossification of thought, and also against scholarly novelty as a career-building mechanism. Instead, it signals a commitment to keep pushing for ways of understanding the world that clarify both our targets and our resources in the ongoing project to end capitalism. This has to remain our baseline, and the project shared with our comrades in order to maintain that thread between intellectual work and practical action, especially during the current, global rise of the far-right whose targets painfully remind us of the lines of solidarity we must forge.

Raymond Williams died in 1988. He lived long enough to see Margaret Thatcher elected to her third term of office as British Prime Minister in 1987 and was acutely sensitive to the reactionary turn of the western democracies from the mid-1970s. The period since his death has been one of successive crises and wars to the extent that in-

formed commentators have begun to speak of global capitalism entering a phase of terminal breakdown and decline. One response to this situation – from the most prominent public intellectual of the art-historical left in the English-speaking world – has been to emphasize the failure of Marxism’s predictive powers (the non-appearance of the triumphant working-class subject) and advocate a turn to a vision of human prospects more tailored to the limitations of the human species. A »pessimism of strength« one might say, to borrow a phrase.⁸ This is emphatically unlike Williams’s perspective. In one of his last books Williams wrote: »As things now are, all the good ideas, and especially the ways in which they connect or might connect with how people are actually living, have to be rigorously examined.«⁹ Williams saw that »mode of production«, the central concept of Marx’s critique of capitalism, was itself tainted by capitalism’s instrumentalist mentality and called for a »unified social theory« that encompassed humanity’s affective life as well as those aspects that could be quantified.¹⁰ This perspective also informs our previous comments on class, for as Cedric Robinson describes, where Marxism »absorbed the conceits of bourgeois historical consciousness, a formal (mathematical), rationalist epistemology costumed in a teleological historicity« it cannot help but give »primacy to commerce« and thus, reinscribe the classical figure of the revolutionary proletariat as its privileged agent.¹¹ More importantly, Williams and Robinson share a conception of human nature premised in an essentially optimistic view of human potential, even against the odds. We support this perspective.¹²

Williams wrote in his Introduction that »this is a book in which the author would positively welcome amendment, correction and addition as well as the usual range of responses and comments.«¹³ He was good to his word and in the second edition included twenty-one new words, acknowledging that these – together with additions and corrections to the original text – had arisen partly from the stimulus of the many people who had written or spoke to him about the book, some of whom he named.¹⁴ We hope that our readers will follow this example. *Kunst und Politik* has generously promised us space for an Addendum in a future issue.

Our thanks to all the contributors for their time and patience and to Norbert Schneider and Martin Papenbrock for their support.

Larne Abse Gogarty and Andrew Hemingway

¹ For the origins of *Keywords*, see Raymond Williams: *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Glasgow 1976, pp.12-13; for historical materialism, see p. 20-21.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 11-12, 15. Williams used the same term to describe the work in his interviews with *New Left Review*, although his interviewers described it as »a sort of historical philology«. Raymond Williams: *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review*. London 1979, p. 175.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁵ David Harvey: *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism*. Oxford 2010, p. 231.

⁶ David Harvey: *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*. London 2014, p. 68. This is not to deny the continuing importance of factory labor as a potential social force globally.

The largest factories in human history are currently operating in China. See Joshua B. Freeman: *Behemoth: A History of the Factory and the Making of the Modern World*. New York 2018, chapter 7.

7 Harvey 2014 (as note 6), p. 85.

8 T.J. Clark: »For a Left with No Future« In: *New Left Review*, series 2, no. 74, March/April 2012, pp. 53-75.

9 Raymond Williams: *Towards 2000*. Harmondsworth 1983, p. 243.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 260, 264-7.

11 Cedric Robinson: *The Anthropology of Marxism*. Aldershot 2001, p. 134.

12 Susan Watkins, in her response to Clark's pessimistic charge against human nature has challenged both his use of anthropological evidence and his reading of sources. She also draws on Williams to propose an alternative to Clark's call for a tragic understanding of history (pp. 98-100). See Susan Watkins: »Presentism« In: *New Left Review*, series 2, no. 74, March/April 2012, pp. 77-102.

13 Williams 1976 (as note 1), p. 23.

14 Raymond Williams: »Preface to the Second Edition« In: *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. London 1983, p. 27.

Peter Smith

Aesthetic

On Marx, Marxism and the Aesthetic

Since the word »aesthetic« was first assimilated into philosophical discourse in the eighteenth century it has entered everyday language. Related terminology including judgment, value, sensibility, and taste is part of the historical genesis of established notions of the aesthetic. These terms indicate a human capacity for »higher perception« – often used as discursive markers of social refinement and sensibility. In an early formulation the aesthetic implied moral sense and a social perspective and later aspired to greater autonomy in the kind of art that is said to function »without ... rules or constraints other than its own.«¹ In general the term is rooted in the social categories of artistic perception with due emphasis on the life of the senses and the ideal of beauty.

Thinking through the use of the term in relation to the world-changing ideas of Marx requires critical engagement with his conception of the human subject. His early writings underline the idea that the development of the senses is a constituent part of full human development. The significance of this perspective had lasting importance in Marx's systematic writings on the relationship between the economic, political and intellectual activities of humankind. In his early writing he alludes to the quality of human life as the basis for a person's way of being in the world. Following this we argue that Marx's critique of alienation represents an aesthetic outlook centered on human self-creation in free activity and self-determination.

The importance of the aesthetic for Marx and other theorists who followed German idealist thought lies in the discovery that aesthetics is connected with the emergence of subjectivity as a key issue in modern philosophy. Andrew Bowie has noted that »without recourse to divinity«² knowledge is grounded in the subject and the aesthetic becomes a link between internal and the external worlds, between self-consciousness and nature. The characteristic forms of aesthetic production, including the visual arts, provided an experience of natural and artistic beauty that is »vital to the understanding of self-consciousness.«³ The emphasis on making, doing, and self-creation figure prominently in a search for meaning after the demise of theological authority in the world. Bowie notes: »[...] The new awareness of the fact that human beings can create aesthetic products whose interrelating parts are significant in ways which natural science cannot explain are essential to this search.«⁴ Sensuous perception in this view indicates an aptitude beyond the instrumental view of things, beyond scientific quantification and the commodity form. As Bowie observes: »Marx's insights into the social and cultural effect of capitalism have their roots in aesthetics.«⁵

Although he left no systematic exposition of his ideas on aesthetics Marx's thought was guided by the epistemological turn in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century philosophy that had given prominence to this term. We will argue therefore that art and aesthetics, or theoretical products and forms of consciousness more generally, belong to a Marxist conception of history that connects these interests with material practice. The romantic vision of the unalienated state of humankind in a classless society centers squarely on labor in its various forms. The early writings of Marx develop a theory of alienated labor linked with the liberation of the senses and a way of approaching things in the world. In a description of the material conditions in which people live Marx and Engels present an ontological definition of the human subject as something inscribed within its capacities and its endeavor: »The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions of determining their production.«⁶ This in turn relates to the way in which human activity is understood to be more than mere survival or (of necessity) the reproduction of physical existence:

»Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals [men/humankind], a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with what their mode of production.«⁷

Marx's ideas on the philosophical principle of labor are based on study of its historical manifestations. His early critical thinking derives from Rousseau and Schiller whose attacks on modernity were expressed as a revolt against social fragmentation, division of labor, alienation in the workplace, and the characteristic eighteenth-century idea of society as a mechanically driven whole.⁸ This moral critique has a philosophical counterpart in the Hegelian dialectic and later in Marx's own dialectical philosophy. Both Hegel and Marx attacked the systematic abstraction of the categories of work, exchange value, and money in political and economic discourse.⁹ The outstanding idea of Hegel's philosophy was his conceiving of human labor as the act of self-creation and as process. As Marx writes:

»The importance of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and its final result [...] lies in the fact that Hegel conceives of the self-creation of man as a process, objectification as loss of object [*Entgegenständlichung*], as alienation and as supersession of this alienation; that he therefore grasps the nature of *labor* and conceives objective man – true, because real man – as the result of his own labor.«¹⁰

For Hegel labor is the »self-confirming essence of man.«¹¹ Building on this Marx observes that for Hegel »the self is *abstractly* conceived man, man produced by abstraction.«¹² In this abstraction, Marx argues, Hegel fails to recognize that labor has a negative side, embodied in the crucial concept of alienated labor.¹³ In this view, labor still remains as an abstraction and it is wrong, according to Marx, to say, as Hegel appears to say, that »*self-consciousness* has eyes, ears and essential powers.« This conceptualization makes no sense for Marx because, as he notes »*self-consciousness* is rather a quality of human nature, of the eye, etc; human nature is not a quality of *self-consciousness*.«¹⁴

Marx thus posits that humankind *is* human nature, a human natural being and a *species-being* differentiated in itself as conscious activity, and in its developmental and productive labor. The real corporeal *man*, is an »active natural being« with »dispositions

and capacities«¹⁵ and passions deployable in establishing standards and producing »in accordance with the laws of beauty«:

»It is therefore in his fashioning of the objective that man really proves himself to be a species being. Such production is his active species-life. Through it nature appears as *his* [sic] work and *his* reality. The object of labor is therefore the *objectification of the species-life of man*: for man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate for himself in a world he has himself created. In labor therefore tears away from him his *species-life*, his true species-objectivity, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage of his organic body, nature is taken from him.«¹⁶

Marx is most eloquently »aesthetic« in his thoughts on the notions of »fashioning« and »making« as human capacities that unfold in the free exercise of the senses or lack of fulfillment in the conditions of oppression. István Mészáros thus observes:

»The ideal of »positive transcendence« of alienation is formulated as a necessary socio-historical supersession of the »mediations«: *private property – exchange – division of labor* which interpose themselves between man and his activity and prevent him from finding fulfillment in his labor, in the exercise of his productive (creative) abilities, and in the appropriation of the products of his activity.«¹⁷

In other words what Marx opposes is not mediation as such but the mediation of the mediation, and the rupturing of the »*ontologically fundamental* self-mediation of man with nature«¹⁸

In his early writing and consistently in his mature writing Marx tried to find ways »to get history started, by removing obstacles in its path.«¹⁹ In a materialist aesthetic this will require the full powers of the human subject, freely expressed as constituent parts of a world in which work, leisure and happiness might be realized. The Marxian notion of this sublime condition, it should be noted, would in any case require a more concrete historical definition of the problem of alienation than had hitherto been available. Eagleton writes: »Marx's *Paris Manuscripts* surpass the duality between the practical and the aesthetic« which, he [Eagleton] says, »lies at the heart of philosophical idealism«²⁰ and separates culture from material life.

The convergence of the practical and the aesthetic in Marx's formulation of his thoughts in the 1840s is expressed in relation to the mediation of private property and the capitalist mode of production. Understanding the linkage between growth of independent private capital (that is private property) and labor as the source of property is central to Marx's critique of alienation in the past as well as in the industrial age. Private property is a concept viewed by Marx from both sides of its meaning – that is from the side of the worker and the non-worker. One is the »master of labor« and the other is not. The laborer is thus estranged from herself and her own activity since the product is not hers. She creates »the domination of the non-producer over production and its product«.²¹ A little further on Marx adds: »*Private property* is therefore the product, result and necessary consequence of alienated labor, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself.«²²

The concept of private property and the reality to which it refers is viewed by Marx in relation to the human body and »the sensuous appropriation of the human essence« in which the human subject is transmogrified by »a sense of *direct*, one-sided *consumption*,

of *possession*, of *having*.²³ For Marx the remarkable upshot of this »sense of having« is expressed as follows:

»Although private property conceives all these immediate realizations of property only *as a means of life*; and the life they serve is the *life of private property*, labor and capitalization. Therefore *all* physical and intellectual senses have been replaced by the simple estrangement of these senses – the sense of having. So that it might give birth to its inner wealth, human nature had to be reduced to this absolute poverty.«²⁴

The solution to the alienation of the senses for Marx is in the supersession of the rule of money and private property:

»The positive supersession of private property is therefore the complete *emancipation* of all human senses and attributes: but it is this emancipation precisely because these senses and attributes have become *human*, subjectively as well as objectively. The eye has become a *human* eye, just as its object has become a social, *human* object. Made by man for man. The senses have therefore become theoreticians in their immediate praxis.«²⁵

In short the alienated version of visuality and the life of the senses more generally will be resolved in the struggle against private property. Margaret A. Rose notes:

»The end of the alienation of our senses will, according to these terms also mean an end to the fetishization of both human qualities and objects ... production will again be artistic ... and the appreciation of artistic value no longer dominated by the sense of ›having‹.«²⁶

For Marx the senses are endowed with knowledge and possess a power of reasoning in their »theoretician character« as Mészáros calls it.²⁷ In a restricted form human powers are limited to the sphere of utility and impoverished by dehumanization. In other words the alienation of the senses from the praxis of life was intensified when human skills and labor were subdivided into discrete categories and the day-to-day notions of industry and progress were increasingly distanced from the world of art.

It should be clear that we wish to defend the aesthetic as key component in Marxism as a philosophy of freedom that is rooted in the concept of human nature. It is precisely the concept of human nature, with its humanist connotations, that was challenged by Althusser²⁸ and his followers in the 1970s and the 1980s and later defended against its detractors in the writing of Norman Geras and others.²⁹ The anti-humanist argument effectively constructs the view that Marxism is a »science« and as such is inimical to aesthetics and the ethical dimension which may be dispensed with as residues of bourgeois philosophy. It is a view that marginalizes the creative potential of human beings and establishes a binary opposition »as destructive for cultural theory as it is for Marxism in general.«³⁰ In our view the historical differentiation of science and art dissociates the latter from its critical cognitive functions as part of life praxis, devaluing theory and eliding materialist conceptions of human nature. Marx formulates this point in *Capital* when he writes: »[Man] ... acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature.«³¹

Geras argues that human nature and the related concepts of »natural desire« and »needs« is subject to historical variation and yet maintains general and enduring characteristics. Human nature, therefore, is »fundamental to historical materialism in the exact

sense of being part of its theoretical foundation.«³² The aesthetic implications of this argument occur in the recognition of enduring imperatives of essential human needs and capacities. As Marx puts it: »the full development of human mastery over the forces of nature... the absolute workings of his [sic] creative potentialities... the development of all human powers.«³³

As we have noted human nature is stunted and alienated under capitalism in ways that are directly related to the labor process. Where human activity is compromised and debased under capitalism, the experience of loss and fragmentation is replaced by a call to action (the Marxist option) or, alternatively, the intellectualist option: separation from mainstream society. Critics and historians have thus observed a turning point after 1848 when art increasingly came to be seen as »the social anti-thesis of society«³⁴ and an escape from the banality of official culture.

The Autonomy of the Aesthetic

From the early nineteenth-century there was a distinction between two conceptions of art. Michael Podro notes a fundamental opposition between »a conception of art as part of a contemplative and as a part of active life – as tied primarily to thought or primarily to social relations.«³⁵ This opposition was played out in the formation of artistic factions with common interests: there was at one extreme the trend towards hermetic modes of aestheticism, underscored by the label *l'art pour l'art*, and at the other, an art of confrontation and social engagement. Released from the metaphysical moorings of the church or the state, art becomes an autonomous institution no longer attached to the praxis of life and oriented to »purely aesthetic« ways of seeing. Löwy and Sayre note »the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest«³⁶ as characteristic of a sense loss and alienation of human relations. This feeling of apartness is reflected in the bleakness of Peter Bürger's conclusions on the fate of modern art: firstly: »As the division of labor becomes widespread, the artist and the writer turn into specialists«³⁷ and secondly:

»The citizen who, in everyday life has been reduced to a partial function (means-ends activity) can be discovered in art as »human being«. Here, one can unfold the abundance of one's talents, though with the proviso that this sphere remains strictly separate from the praxis of life.«³⁸

For Bürger the separation is definitive and irreversible: »Art becomes the content of art«³⁹ and this, for him, confirms a reading of the way philosophical aesthetics in the late eighteenth century had already established a »non-purposive realm of art« where in theory the notion of usefulness (or *prodesse* as Bürger calls it) is viewed as »an extra-artistic factor [...] and criticism censures as inartistic works with a didactic tendency.«⁴⁰

Aesthetic activity in the past included ritual functions incorporated into the life praxis of the societies that they served. These included cultic and representational works serving the church or the court. These constituencies changed in the industrial period as the arts were no longer defined by or responsive to the collective modes of reception of the past. Bürger notes that when art is no longer »tied to the praxis of life«⁴¹ it becomes a new kind of social phenomenon. And this in turn calls into being a negation of the autonomy of art in the form of counteractive and revolutionary critique.

This negation represents a turning point and the formation of the historical avant-garde – a short-lived but influential movement – that represents an »attempt to organize

a new life praxis from a basis in art« (49) and an attack on the *institution* of art as a bourgeois concept: »Seen in this fashion, the separation of art from the praxis of life becomes the decisive characteristic of autonomy of bourgeois art« (49). Eagleton captures the paradox of the historical avant-garde when he says:

»An aesthetic society will be the fruit of the most resolutely instrumental political action ... The disinterested emancipation of human faculties will be accomplished not by by-passing specific social interest, but by going all the way through them and coming out the other side.«⁴²

Art in bourgeois society is an escape from the means-end logic of everyday life, assigned to a place of confinement in an ideal sphere. In the period of the historical avant-garde the attempted conciliation of art and life »had all the pathos of historical progressiveness on its side«⁴³ but failed in its political objectives. The institutionalization of art marked a separation of aestheticist or modernist art from society. Schulte-Sasse underlines the importance of Bürger's attempt to show there is a »historically specific institutionalization of aesthetic praxis in every era«⁴⁴ and that art and society are always mediated. Most acutely Bürger has in mind the mediations of aesthetic theory itself which he claims is its most »developed exemplification«⁴⁵ in bourgeois society and the paradigm case for its ideological institutionalization. The debate has continuing relevance to the aesthetic as a largely abstract and reified concept. If bourgeois society is the enemy of aesthetic thought we manage, nevertheless, to continue to work with the concept. And in so doing recognize the moral, social and the political matters that concern us are not immune to the cultivation of sensibility and whatever lies ahead must include some recognition of this.

The failings of aesthetic theory result from its apparent externality to art as if it were some kind of conceptual framework for something other than itself. In opposition to this approach the work of Adorno is predicated on the primacy of the work of art itself. He avoids the magisterial tone of academic writing by adopting a paratactical and aphoristic style that requires the reader to engage with the performative and manipulative aspect of the text as if its materiality stood for something more than its argument. What Adorno presents is an aesthetic theory in which the work of art refuses classification and works against fashion, good taste and the exchange economy. It is an alien formation in a society where »art no longer has a place«.⁴⁶

The bland sensuality of mass culture and the degeneration of aesthetic attention under capitalism had thus become a primary target for critics. John Roberts notes Adorno's post-war aesthetic philosophy denotes a crisis in art's reception⁴⁷ and there is a sense in which he (Adorno) saw radical aesthetic modernism as an impossible but somehow necessary response. Walter Benjamin's dissolution of the »aura« (and the faith in its sublime and aesthetic validity) is replaced in the Adornornian schema by a return to renewed belief in »art« as the last refuge of truth in what was increasingly seen as a barbaric and philistine world. There is great strength in Adorno's originality and his rethinking the way aesthetics and politics converge, but readers struggle with his negative evaluation of the prospects for a dialogic and *social* use of art and many are driven to question the limitations in the case he makes for its autonomy. He recognizes the impoverishment of the human senses under capitalism but ignores the socializing potential of art and its emancipatory effects.

Conclusion

What are the prospects for the aesthetic? In what conditions could a radical or emancipatory aesthetic be found? This is a rewording of questions posed by Joseph North.⁴⁸ Rather than dismissing the term (the aesthetic), as Raymond Williams appeared to have done in his later writings⁴⁹ North has argued for a re-founding of the term »in properly materialist ground«⁵⁰ which he claims is present but concealed in his (Williams') writings. The particular focus of this study by North is what he considers to be the troubling relationship between *aesthetic* response and *political* response in judgments that relate to specific sites and objects under discussion in the various historical and critical writing of Williams. The argument relies on the suggestion that a certain tension is intrinsic to the relation between these two kinds of response.

In his book *The Country and the City* Williams shows how class politics relate to material and geographical elements in the English country house (its stones, furniture, location etc.). North shows how Williams observes »the social impulses which people bring to saying ›this is a beautiful building«⁵¹ and the difficulty he has in theorizing these responses. The difficulty, according to North, is in his wanting to abandon the notion of the aesthetic and yet finding himself returning to it.⁵² Having rejected the idealist notion of a dispassionate or »purely aesthetic« response, North cites Williams' judgment on »the way somebody has shaped a stone or uttered a musical note«⁵³ invites the kind of social response which, Williams observes, is »right there in the senses themselves«.⁵⁴ For Williams this kind of judgment (on the building's proportions, say, or the character of stone) is, as he puts it: »what your eyes are quite aware of when you are looking at it.« Significantly, it is something (the »what your eyes are aware of«) that cannot be isolated from its functional or other readings.⁵⁵

The disparity in scale between the country house and working farms function as signifiers of domination and class difference and this *very difference* is a key issue for Williams. The two building types invite comparisons between opulence and modesty in ways that have historical and political resonance. And yet Williams goes further. He is also saying, and this is North's argument, that aesthetic readings are inscribed in other sensibilities including the moral and the political. In other words a reconstruction of the aesthetic in materialist terms insists upon continuity between aesthetic and social responses. North observes how Williams »teaches us how to perceive, feel and value more deeply [...] with a richer fuller sense of history«.

»It is«, North comments, »an aesthetic effect that works on our moral social, political and historical sensibilities«.⁵⁶ Williams writes:

»[...] You know, looking at the land and then at the house how much robbery and fraud there must have been, for so long, to produce that degree of disparity, that barbarous disproportion of scale.«⁵⁷

In thinking it through as *labor* or as the »sensible history of the place« we can appreciate what lies beyond the purely formal aspects of the experience.⁵⁸ The house and the land around it, in this reckoning, becomes a social and historical sign. North thus concludes: aesthetic readings are thoroughly historical and have moral, social and political value.

It is implicit in the formulation of a materialist aesthetic that human labor, in all its forms, is accounted for. Williams notes how far cultural artifacts, the stones and the furniture and the land, should be thought through as the results of human labor. The

judgments we make about things have an aesthetic quality measured in terms of suffering and loss and in its counteractive reading of the measurable achievements of human productive powers. Williams' sensitivity to the agreeableness or otherwise of human labor is implicit in his attentions to the aesthetic and so – we may argue for its recovery as a keyword in what North has called a »crucial unfinished project of the New Left«. ⁵⁹

In taking account of the force of Williams' critique of the aesthetic we have noted his rejection of the traduced use of the term as a by-word for specialization and privileged modes of artistic practice. The skepticism he shows towards the aesthetic in his *Marxism and Literature* is tempered by his comment that its history is in large part a protest against the »forcing of all experience into instrumentality ... [and] ... the reduction of art to social engineering«. ⁶⁰ We might conclude that where Williams and others express a critical response to the aesthetic it often remains a component part of their wider politics in spite of itself.

Other Marxist writers have sought to trace the interrelationship between the stratified social levels of the arts. The sociological analysis of art and art history in the writings of Arnold Hauser has parallels with the Williams-North attack on idealist-aesthetics and relates in a very particular way to the banausic and technical elements of art. Williams' sensitivity to the shaping of stone or the expression of a musical note is consistent with a version of art that has been described as a kind of »embodied technology« ⁶¹ – an expression which underlines the sensuous aspects of art and its assimilation of the material and technical resources at its disposal. John Roberts' observation that: »Art and technology for Hauser are dialectically inseparable« ⁶² provides a grounding for the idea of a labor theory of culture ⁶³ and lays stress on the quality of work experience which, as we have argued, always has a social as well as a physical and psychological value. It is a perspective that gives prominence to the belief that aesthetic value is not merely a compensation or substitute for alienated labor but an aspect of »expressive« life in its widest sense. ⁶⁴

¹ Pierre Bourdieu: *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice. London 1994, p. 491.

² Andrew Bowie: *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester 2003, p. 2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

⁶ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: *The German Ideology*. New York 1967, p. 7.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ E.g. Friedrich Schiller: *On the Aesthetic Education of Man and Letters to Prince Frederick Christian von Augustenburg*. Trans. Keith Tribe. London 2016, Letter 6, p. 19.

⁹ Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre: *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Durham/London 2001, p. 39-40.

¹⁰ Karl Marx: *Early Writings*. Intro. Lucio Colletti. Trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton. London 1992, p. 385-6.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 386.

¹² Ibid., p. 387.

- 13 István Mészáros: *Marx's Theory of Alienation*. London 1970, p. 18.
- 14 Marx: *Early Writings* (as note 10), p. 387.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 389.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 329.
- 17 Mészáros 1970 (as note 13), p. 78.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- 19 Terry Eagleton: *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Oxford 1990, p. 215.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- 21 Marx: *Early Writings* (as note 10), p. 331.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 331-2.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 351.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 351-2.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 352.
- 26 Margaret A. Rose: *Marx's Lost Aesthetic: Karl Marx and the Visual Arts*. Cambridge 1984, p. 72.
- 27 Mészáros 1970 (as note 13), p. 203.
- 28 Louis Althusser: *For Marx*. Trans. Ben Brewster. Harmondsworth 1969.
- 29 Norman Geras: *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend*. London and New York 2016; see also Simon Clarke, Terry Lovell, Kevin McDonald, Kevin Robins, and Victor Jeleniewski Seidler: *One-Dimensional Marxism: Althusser and the Politics of Culture*. London and New York 1980; Andrew Hemingway: »New Left Art History's International« In: Andrew Hemingway, ed.: *Marxism and Art History: From William Morris to the New Left*. London and Ann Harbor, MI 2006, pp. 187-191.
- 30 Kevin McDonnell and Kevin Robins: »Marxist Cultural Theory: The Althusserian Smokescreen« In: Clarke et. al. 1980 (as note 29), p. 184.
- 31 *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1. Harmondsworth 1976, p. 283.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 66.
- 33 *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. Trans. Martin Nicolaus, London 1993, p. 488.
- 34 Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory*. Trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, London and New York 2004, p. 9.
- 35 Michael Podro: *The Critical Historians of Art*. New Haven and London 1986, p. xxii-xxiii.
- 36 Löwy/Sayre 2001 (as note 9), p. 41.
- 37 Peter Bürger: *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Trans. Michael Shaw. Minneapolis. 2009, p. 32.
- 38 *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 49.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- 42 Eagleton 1990 (as note 19), p. 206.
- 43 Bürger 2009 (as note 37), p. 50.
- 44 Jochen Schulte-Sasse: »Forward: Theory of Modernism versus Theory of the Avant-Garde« In: *ibid.*, p. xxxvii.
- 45 Bürger 2009 (as note 37), p. 98.
- 46 Adorno 2004 (as note 34), p. 18.
- 47 John Roberts: »Arnold Hauser, Adorno, Lukács and the Ideal Spectator« In: Hemingway, ed. 2006 (as note 29), p. 168.

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- 48 Joseph North: »Two Paragraphs in Raymond Williams: A Reply to Francis Mulhern« In: *New Left Review*, 116/117, March/June 2019, pp. 161-187.
- 49 See Williams: »Aesthetic and Other Situations« in his *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford 1978, pp. 151-157.
- 50 North 2019 (as note 48), p. 163.
- 51 Raymond Williams: *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review*. London 1979, pp. 348-9; cited in North 2019 (as note 48), p. 173.
- 52 Ibid. Cited in North 2019 (as note 48) p. 171.
- 53 Ibid., p. 171.
- 54 Ibid., p. 175.
- 55 Ibid., p. 173.
- 56 Ibid., p. 181.
- 57 Raymond Williams: *The Country and the City*. London 1985, p. 105; cited by North 2019 (as note 48), p. 180.
- 58 Ibid., p. 181.
- 59 Ibid., p. 165.
- 60 Williams 1978 (as note 49), p. 150.
- 61 John Roberts: »Arnold Hauser, Adorno, Lukács and the Ideal Spectator« In: Hemingway ed. 2006 (as note 29), p. 169.
- 62 Ibid., p. 169.
- 63 See Charles Woolfson: *The Labour Theory of Culture: A Re-examination of Engels's Theory of Human Origins*. London. Boston and Henley 1982.
- 64 See Peter Smith »Attractive Labour and Social Change: William Morris Now« In: Phillipa Bennett and Rosie Miles, eds.: *William Morris in the Twenty-First Century*. Oxford 2010, pp. 129-150.

Jan Dumolyn and Andrew Murray

Artist

»Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.« So wrote Karl Marx. This basic insight into the historical sciences is known today as the interaction between structure and agency, between the determinative circumstances of social life and the freedom of action to intervene in that environment. Such considerations over the limits and potential of human agency have not only been central to Marxism, but also to the history of the category »artist«. Indeed, this idea precedes Marxist thought by centuries, and it has produced intellectual traditions and circumstances in which Marxists have had to refine their understanding of the relation between the individual and their society. To continue the famous quote we opened with, these traditions weigh »like a nightmare on the brains of the living«. Blockbuster exhibitions and their scholarly monographs continue to reproduce the idea of the genius individual working in abstraction from their society, either by rebelling against bourgeois mores or by supposedly producing work expressing universal ideas and experiences. As O. K. Werckmeister argues in his critique of the exhibition, »Images of Man in the Art of the West« (1980), radical art historians have an urgent political agency in exposing the ideology inherent to such ideas.¹

Ideally, such a critical position should enter into the literature of exhibitions dedicated to individual artists. Indeed, a major forthcoming exhibition on one renowned painter Jan van Eyck (d. 1441, »Van Eyck: An Optical Revolution«, Ghent, 2020) partly curated by one the authors (Jan Dumolyn), offers such an occasion. Van Eyck is a particularly important case for reconsidering the concept of »artist«. Although he is among the most famous painters of the fifteenth century, that he was Flemish rather than Italian means that he does not fully align with the ideal model of the Renaissance artist. Art historians have therefore studied his art and career as stemming from the interaction between multiple centres of cultural production, including courts and towns as well as different European countries. A historiography of how Marxists have dealt with Van Eyck and Flemish art therefore provides some perspective on how they have revised the concept »artist« as well how their ideas on this concept can be extended further.

The historiography shows that there have been two main vectors for a Marxist critique of the »artist«: one that, like a lot of non-Marxist historical, sociological and philosophical research, associates the artist with the history of modernity, individuality and creative freedom; and another that conceives of artists as an emergent property of specific fields of production and consumption. This overview will allow us to argue for a third, underexplored position: an attention to Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony and, more specifically, the strategic means by which artists manipulate the ideology of a

society to secure for themselves their desired social and symbolic status. This position, we argue, addresses weaknesses in how the two prior Marxist theorisations of the artist conceptualise agency. The first position reifies the concepts of individuality and freedom, whereas the other reduces such agency to a function of the social field, and thus cannot account for how that field can itself be affected by artists. A renewed focus on the conception of hegemony would allow the artist to be historicised to particular social fields whilst also concretely describing how they produce change within them.

Although it had undoubtedly circulated before him, the modern history of the concept »artist« has its most notable roots in Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Great Artists* (1550, 1568). For Vasari, the artist was courtly, erudite and inventive, and the greatest were touched by inexplicable, even divine, inspiration and ability. Vasari attributed such qualities to the artists he admired unevenly, defining the work of some artists and cities (notably, Michelangelo and Florence) as a norm for others. The example of Van Eyck throws into relief the merits and limitations of these norms. He developed his career far from Florence and although Vasari was aware of his work and abilities he knew little of him (evident in his erroneous claim that Van Eyck invented oil painting). Yet, an overview of Van Eyck's life reveals that there is some truth to Vasari's description of the emerging artist as courtly, learned, competitive and conscious of their abilities. Van Eyck was a courtier, being retained by Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy as a *valet de chambre*. He was reputed to be learned; the duke claimed that there was no other »so excellent in his art and science« (a judgement also echoed in 1456 by the Italian humanist Bartolomeo Facio, who described Van Eyck as »not unlettered, particularly in geometry« as well as a reader of Pliny and other ancient authorities). He promoted himself as an individual and not only signed his work, but perhaps made a self-portrait (*Portrait of a Man*, 1433), and certainly included himself within his works as cryptic self-portraits in reflective objects, most famously in the *Arnolfini Double-Portrait* (1434). Furthermore, a personal cult seems to have existed around both Jan and his brother, Hubert van Eyck (d. 1426), during their lifetime and soon after their death. Contemporaries gave Hubert an epitaph »a better painter than him was never found«, which indeed seems to refer to the modern, individualistic notion of artist, while Jan was called »second in art«.

Given the geographical and temporal distance between Van Eyck's career and Vasari's account of great artists, some broad historical analysis is necessary to explain their similarities. The earliest and most influential explanation comes from Jacob Burckhardt's *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860). Burckhardt associated the arrival of the »artist« with a more general rise of individuality in the late medieval and early modern period. From his perspective, the mosaic of smaller city states and despotic regimes across Italy, unified neither by the Papacy nor the Empire, created the conditions for rulers to develop and maintain their power through the calculated manipulation of political networks and opportunities. The state, in such precarious conditions, was itself »a work of art«, and the retainers and advisors of rulers, including their poets and artists, had to assess and act on their individual capacities and resources to survive as well as advance their careers. Although centred on the Peninsula, Burckhardt's correlation between state formation and the rise of individuality created a general model for cultural development, one in which Italy was »the first-born among the sons of modern Europe«.

In the first half of the twentieth century, a series of Marxist art historians sought to revise Burckhardt's thesis. Scholars such as Frederick Antal, Meyer Schapiro and Arnold Hauser maintained Burckhardt's association of the artist with freedom and creativity, but found the conditions for such freedom in productive labour. This allowed the origins of the modern artist to be pushed back into the artisanal classes of the Middle Ages. This form of argument had already been developed in the 1920s and 1930s by Schapiro, who saw in the monstrous and acrobatic themes of Romanesque sculpture an expression of a secular culture of burghers and craftsmen. In *The Social History of Art* (1951) Hauser also stressed the importance of a rationalised, capitalist economy to Renaissance art and, in doing so, emphasised the cultural continuities between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. An alternative position that reaffirmed the distinctive nature of Florence was made by Antal in his conclusion to his *Florentine Painting and its Social Background* (1947). He claimed that »the social origin of these modern artists was often no longer the artisan class; they sprang from middle-class surroundings and became artists from talent and conviction.« For each of these writers, the formation of commercial societies was the precondition for the development of an alleged burgher class who were able to operate outside the confines of feudal authority. Hauser applied this view to Van Eyck and this position also survived in later Van Eyck scholars, notably Hans Belting and Craig Harbison.

The twentieth-century Marxist tradition seems to have been less concerned with Burckhardt's Italocentrism. Although Burckhardt himself acknowledges that Hubert and Jan van Eyck »suddenly lifted a veil from nature« and that they influenced Italian art, these remarks do not constitute a comparative account of the development of the artist between Italy and Flanders. Such a task was left to a series of French, Belgian and Dutch scholars who advocated for their national traditions. Notably, Louis Courajod (1841–1896), a professor at the École du Louvre, argued that Burgundian and Flemish painters formed a school that initiated a European-wide Renaissance and in which Van Eyck was a principle figure. Courajod's thesis influenced monumental exhibitions such as the seminal *Exposition des primitifs flamands à Bruges* of 1902. Johan Huizinga (1872–1945), inspired by this exhibition, developed an alternative and even more influential view of Flemish painting. He saw in Van Eyck's work the swansong of medieval society, one of the expressions of a courtly and chivalric culture gradually decaying at the same moment as the Italian Renaissance was emerging.

In retrospect, the fact that there was no Marxist analysis of, or alternative to, Huizinga's work or those of his predecessors seems like a missed opportunity. Instead, the first attempted comparative, sociological analysis of fifteenth-century Flemish and Italian artists arose in the work of the American anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, a student of Franz Boas. In his wide-ranging work *Configurations of Cultural Growth* (1944), Kroeber analysed the economic, political and cultural preconditions for the development of »genius«. He surveyed societies and artists across cultures as diverse as ancient Egypt and Greece, China from the ancient to the modern eras, medieval Japan, Renaissance Italy and, indeed Flanders during the life of Jan van Eyck »under whom the great development of Netherlands painting begins«. But, despite recognising the Flemish painting as a cultural achievement distinct from Italian influence, he could not account for the coincident »florecescence« of painting in both of these nations. On the level of drawing general conclusions, his comparative and functionalist approach was a failure.

It was only in the late eighties that a scholar working within the tradition of the social history of art addressed the appearance of the artist in Europe from a perspective that accommodated both northern and southern Europe. In *Hofkünstler* (1985), Martin Warnke located the origins of the artist's self-identity and freedom of expression in the courts rather than the towns. He uses Van Eyck as an example of an artist that the court allowed to work outside the supposed restrictions of the painters' guild. This view of Van Eyck is one that goes back to Max J. Friedländer, who Warnke quotes: »Freedom from compulsory membership of a guild made it easier for the master in princely service to break with tradition«. This negative view on the economic and innovative effects of craft guilds is one that went back to the influential medieval historian Henri Pirenne and even further to Adam Smith. Such an attention to court societies allowed Warnke to demonstrate similar cultural developments across southern and northern Europe. Nevertheless, he maintained Burckhardt's association between the artist, freedom and individuality. In doing so, he projected the dialectic between freedom and corporatism onto the courts and towns, isolating each from the other, and thereby foreclosing any analysis of their economic and cultural interrelationships.

Today, it seems that Burckhardt's connection between the artist and individuality has come to a dead end. By looking for the specific environmental conditions for such individuality, scholars have underestimated the complexity of the social field in which artists operated, a field that included not only the towns, the church and the courts, but also their interaction. Furthermore, the opposition between the free modern artist and the corporate medieval artisan creates a periodisation that projects a post-industrial »bourgeois« consciousness back onto the fifteenth century. As an alternative, historians of the late twentieth and twentieth-first century, such as David Gary Shaw and Gervase Rosser, have revised the assumption that the development of collective identities would be at the expense of individual expression and vice versa. Such historians have argued that social standing and participation within a city, guild or confraternity could underline one's individuality rather than diminish it.

A second tradition of Marxist scholarship holds a similar position. However, if we first return to Marx, we can see that such an understanding of the artist was not only possible in the nineteenth century before Burckhardt published his *magnum opus*, but also one Marx opposed to the Burckhardtian association of the artist with the free individual. In response to Max Stirner's statement that Raphael's works are »of a unique individual which only this unique person is capable of producing«, Marx and Engels write in *The German Ideology* (1845–46):

»If he were to compare Raphael with Leonardo da Vinci and Titian, he would see how greatly Raphael's works of art depended on the flourishing of Rome at that time, which occurred under Florentine influence, while the works of Leonardo depended on the state of things in Florence, and the works of Titian, at a later period, depended on the totally different development of Venice. Raphael as much as any other artist was determined by the technical advances in art made before him, by the organisation of society and the division of labour in his locality, and, finally, by the division of labour in all the countries with which his locality had intercourse. Whether an individual like Raphael succeeds in developing his talent depends wholly on demand, which in turn depends on the division of labour and the conditions of human culture resulting from it.«

In sum, the individual and their creativity do not precede society, waiting for conditions of freedom, but are rather produced by a society and its particular labour processes. This was also a key component of Marx's economic thought. In both his introduction to the *Grundrisse* (1857–58) as well as in the first volume of *Capital* (1867), Marx discusses the figure of Robinson Crusoe to deride the view of the individual in classical economics. His own position, as explained in the introduction to these texts, was that: »The human being is in the most literal sense a ζῷον πολιτικόν, not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society.«

Marx did not turn his attention to Burckhardt's work. A critique of Burckhardt similar to that Marx made of Stirner only appears decades later when Antonio Gramsci sketched some ideas on Renaissance humanism within his prison notebooks.² Developing his position by commenting on the ideas of Burckhardt, Francesco de Sanctis, Ernst Walsler and Vittorio Rossi, Gramsci was able to position cultural developments in Renaissance Italy within a European perspective. He distinguished between two humanist currents: a »regressive« and Latinate one made of the functionaries of Papal and local nobilities, and a »progressive« and vernacular one comprised of »bourgeois« intellectuals in the service of nation states. Whereas, for Gramsci, the former eventually succeeded in Italy, the latter were dominant in northern Europe, especially through the influence of the Reformation. The formation of a cosmopolitan group of humanist intellectuals in Italy was therefore split between different classes, and it was but one influence within a more general Renaissance culture that was developing across Europe from the eleventh century.

Gramsci's analysis is undoubtedly vague, especially for our purposes in that it is concerned with humanism generally rather than art more specifically. Nevertheless, it provides a framework to be revised and developed in that it analyses the formation and agency of individuals in terms of their status as intellectuals. This idea is salient to understanding Van Eyck's career, which seems to mark a transition for painters from what Gramsci would call »organic intellectuals« (those with a technical and specialised knowledge of a craft and connected to new classes in society), to »traditional intellectuals« (those who are considered specialists in traditions of philosophy and culture and support the traditional ruling classes). That Van Eyck was aware of his position between these two types of intellectual is evident in his recurring motto, *als ich can* (»I do as I can«). This phrase expresses a craft ideology that values humble service and the dignity of labour. However such modesty rings false. Indeed, such mottos with obscure wordplay were more often adopted by the nobility at court as well as the urban culture of Burgundian rhetoricians. Even if he was not directly influenced by humanism, Van Eyck can thus be compared to Italian artists in that he presents his knowledge and abilities as exceeding those of the humble craftsman. The basic similarities between Van Eyck and his Italian counterparts is that their careers and self-presentations do not mark a shift from artisans to artists (however the latter is defined) but rather, more concretely, from organic to traditional intellectuals.

Gramsci's ideas have already had some influence within art history, making their way into the discipline through the highly influential work of Michael Baxandall. In interviews with Allan Langdale and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Baxandall states how important Gramsci and his concept of the intellectual were to his research and teaching. Indeed, Alberto Frigo has recently pointed out how, throughout his output, from *Giotto and the*

Orators (1971) to *Words for Pictures* (2003), Baxandall's central concerns are consistently Gramscian.³ Baxandall would analyse the commonly used phrases and ideas used for describing and assessing images, and he grounded their origin in the social, technical and economic skills and interactions of the artists and their patrons. Such a method is famously evident in his term »Period Eye«. This concept attracted the predictable charge of Hegelianism from Ernst Gombrich. Baxandall's defence, as stated in his 1994 interview, was that »I thought I was sticking to skills«; in other words, the specialised forms of knowledge and practice that can also define the organic intellectual.

Baxandall was a selective reader of Gramsci. In his interviews he states how Gramsci's concept of hegemony did not appeal to him. As Frigo notes, Baxandall's work is therefore synchronic rather than diachronic, mapping fields of experience and culture rather than their internal conflicts, differences and resulting transformations. It is therefore unsurprising that the warmest reception for his ideas came not from Marxist art historians (indeed, T. J. Clark was critical of Baxandall's analytical elision of class conflict and ideology) but rather from the fields of cultural anthropology, with both Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu writing extensive and positive responses to *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (1972). They praised Baxandall's ability to reveal the mediations between art and other practices within the social and cultural field, a central concern of their own research. In particular, Bourdieu's work on social, symbolic and cultural capital provides further means to ground Baxandall's and Gramsci's ideas within further lines of mediation between the economy and culture. Such a multi-dimensional model of capital accumulation would be essential to mapping the cultural environment in which Van Eyck operated. What we call, perhaps anachronistically, the Burgundian State (some prefer to speak of a composite monarchy) formed a field that was highly responsive to prestige, symbolic communication and clientage and operated in a constant interaction with the developed economies of the Netherlandish towns. Cultural, symbolic and social capital were therefore concentrated to a high degree within the Burgundian court and towns, producing the material conditions for its »Renaissance« or »*ars nova*«.

Yet, as with Baxandall's work, Bourdieu's does not address social transformation. Although his expanded categories of capital are heavily influenced by Marxist thought and can describe the forms of status artists and their patrons fostered, they are designed to account for how social fields reproduce themselves rather than how they originated and transform. At this stage, we should therefore define a third possible Marxist reading of the »artist«, one in which they do not simply emerge within particular economic and cultural fields, but rather become *artists* by attaining some form of hegemonic leadership within them. Van Eyck did not simply provide his clients with cultural and symbolic capital, but sought it for himself, as is evident in his *als ich can* motto. His success in doing so was vital to the status he attained in Burgundy and across Europe (both then and now). A return to Gramsci is therefore an underexplored avenue for Marxist art historians, one that emphasises more emphatically the important role of hegemony. Marxist scholarship that maps how »cultural producers« or »artisans in the luxury industry«, particularly those working at the economic, cultural and social peripheries, achieved a hegemonic position as *artists* would depend on writing a history of class interest and the strategies and ideologies used to extend it. Such a story might prove

difficult for an audience accustomed to the idea of the artist as a »genius«, but for an artist like Van Eyck it is persuasive and compelling.

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- 1 O.K. Werckmeister, »Radical Art History«, *Art Journal* vol. 42, 1982, pp. 284-291.
 - 2 Antonio Gramsci: *Selections from Cultural Writings*. Cambridge, MS 1991, pp. 217-234.
 - 3 Alberto Frigo, »Baxandall and Gramsci: Pictorial Intelligence and Organic Intellectuals« In: Peter Mack and Robert Williams (eds): *Michael Baxandall, Vision and the Work of Words*. Farnham 2015, pp. 49-68.

Sven Lütticken

Autonomy

Though the term is oddly absent from Raymond Williams's *Keywords*, modernity is haunted by the problematical promises and compromised realities of autonomy. The constitutive contradiction here is between the autonomy of the *subject* and that of *social spheres*, such as art, science or the law. If the functional differentiation between different »value spheres« (Weber) holds the promise of various fields of knowledge becoming each firmly entrenched in their unique »area of competence«, as Clement Greenberg famously put it for modernist art, then this reflects a social division of labour that can (and has) been seen as stunting the subject's organic development into a fully rounded being. No more fishing in the morning, hunting in the afternoon, and critiquing at night, to refer to Marx's famous socio-aesthetic utopia from *The German Ideology*. Is an artist flinging paint on a canvas a fully realized subject expressing himself, or a trained specialist producing apocalyptic wallpaper for an elite audience?

It was only in the 1830s and 1840s that the phrase »autonomy of art« began to be used with any regularity. Heinrich Heine was one of the pioneers. In Heine's 1837 *Letters on the French Stage*, he noted that Victor Hugo was under attack from all political quarters, including the Saint-Simonians, who »regard art as a priesthood, and require that every work of the poet, the painter, the sculptor, or musician shall in itself bear witness to its higher consecration and set forth its holy mission, which is the making happy and beautiful of the human race. The works of Victor Hugo indicate no such moral standard, and they sin against all the noble but erroneous laws of the new church. I call them erroneous, because, as you know, I am for the autonomy of art, which should be the handmaid of neither religion nor politics, for it is in itself its own aim, like the world itself.«¹ Having experienced the censorship of the reactionary German states of the post-Napoleonic era, Heine was equally suspicious of progressive attempts to instrumentalize the arts.

His qualms about instrumentalization notwithstanding, Heine agreed to have his polemical poems about the King of Bavaria reprinted in Marx and Arnold Ruge's *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher* (1944). As a lover of literature, Marx was well aware that Heine's poems or Balzac's novels are dense aesthetic articulations that are informed by, but cannot be reduced to, the author's class basis and economic position. Nonetheless, his comments on the »superstructure« – »the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of [economic] conflict and fight it out« – suggest a polemical materialist reductivism.² Later sociologists and philosophers, from Weber to Habermas and Bourdieu, have stressed the progressive autonomisation of the constituent »legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic« parts of Marx's superstructure. Max Weber argued that in the process of modern ration-

alisation, several distinct »value-spheres« emerge, which he identified as religion, the economy, politics, aesthetics, the erotic and the intellectual sphere.³ Habermas later reworked and reduced this list (invoking Weber) to »science, morality and art.«⁴

Heine's justified concerns over political censorship and repression led him to pronounce the autonomy of art in the starkest terms. One example can be found in an 1838 letter to Karl Gutzkow: »The autonomy of art is what is at stake here, not the moral needs of a respectable married citizen of a corner of Germany. My motto remains: Art is the purpose of art, just as love is the purpose of love, and even life that of life itself.«⁵ While Heine's words prefigure the later *l'art pour l'art* aestheticism of Gautier (who was of course well aware of Heine's work), it is crucial to note that in defending art for art's sake, Heine creates a homology with forms of experience that can never be reduced to Weberian specializations: love and life. This does not situate art as an »area of competence« but as a manifestation of autonomy in a more truly human sense; at that historical moment, this assertion still had a certain ring of plausibility.

Heine's protests against ideological tutelage prefigure later discussions about the fraught relation between the artistic and the political avant-garde – for instance by Clement Greenberg in »Avant-Garde and Kitsch« (1939), which argues that the bohemians of the artistic avant-garde first derived strength from »the first bold development of scientific revolutionary thought in Europe«, only to turn against revolutionary as well as bourgeois politics once it »had succeeded in ›detaching‹ itself from society.«⁶ In a 1937 dialogue, Ernst Bloch and Hanns Eisler suggest that the two avant-gardes manifest different forms of »progressive consciousness« (political and aesthetic): »The division of labor in developed capitalism also has the consequence that these two avant-gardes, which certainly travel separately, do not necessarily arrive simultaneously.«⁷ The result is that »human existence breaks apart into two sharply distinct spheres: social reality and aesthetic appearance.«⁸ This diagnosis of breakage is another indictment of division, differentiation, alienation, in which functional social autonomies effectively preclude a more meaningful autonomy of human agency.

Furthermore, was art's vaunted autonomy in bourgeois society not in fact a particularly perverse form of instrumentalization? For many, an artistic autonomy that is connected to society only through the market's golden chains becomes a substitute for genuine human autonomy. This human autonomy had been both celebrated and betrayed by bourgeois ideology. John Heartfield's cover for *Die goldne Kette* (*The Golden Chain*) (Fig. 1), the 1928 German edition of Upton Sinclair's *Mammonart*, shows a George Grosz caricature of a wealthy bourgeois sitting in front of a great heap of historical masterpieces – not limited to easel painting since the Renaissance, but also including older artefacts.⁹ Socialist and Communist artists and intellectuals in the West, including Sinclair and Heartfield but also Brecht and Benjamin, sought to develop an emancipatory instrumentalism of art against its bourgeois instrumentalization. By 1934, under steadily worsening political circumstances, Benjamin in his Paris exile delivered a rousing productivist call for a literature that dispenses with (the bourgeois illusion of) autonomy: while bourgeois writers are in denial about working in the service of class interests, the more advanced writer decides »to side with the proletariat. This puts an end to his autonomy. His activity is now decided by what is useful to the proletariat in the class struggle.«¹⁰

In a book published in Paris in 1936, Herbert Marcuse reflected on a tendency in bourgeois thought from Luther to Kant and beyond: a »union of internal autonomy and external heteronomy« in which »what is internal to the person is claimed as the realm of freedom: the person as a member of the realm of Reason or of God (as ›Christian‹, as ›thing in itself‹, as intelligible being) is free. Meanwhile, the whole ›external world‹, the person as member of the natural realm or, as the case may be, of a world of concupiscence which has fallen away from God (as ›man‹, as ›appearance‹), becomes a place of unfreedom.«¹¹ Marcuse notes that »[this] thought reappears in a secularized form in Kant: man's freedom as a rational being can only be ›saved‹ if as a sensual being he is entirely abandoned to natural necessity.«¹²

While Marcuse was concerned with the role played by a reductive »internalization« of autonomy in the birth of fascist authoritarianism, he is all but silent on the *racial hierarchy of autonomy*, according to which various racialized Others were not even accorded the most limited form of autonomy deemed the property of white subjects. By the 1930s, a critique of the hierarchical racialization of subjecthood was beginning to emerge among young black writers such Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor – and after WWII more systematically by Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter, and more recently Denise Ferreira da Silva and Achille Mbembe, among others.¹³ Today, a certain radical aesthetic(ism) sides with blackness as the site of fugitivity and resistance – the obdurate autonomy of the other.¹⁴

In 1967, Marcuse's old Frankfurt School colleague Adorno debated his conservative opponent Arnold Gehlen on German television, on the subject of »Freedom and Institution.« While the debate's title used the term »freedom«, Adorno at one point explicitly recasts the issue as being one of autonomy, of self-determination, defending the Dutch Provo movement, film footage of which was used to introduce the debate, as well as the budding student movement in Germany against Gehlen's insistence that such contestations were dangerous symptoms of hubris.¹⁵ While increasingly wary of the young radicals' anti-institutional »actionism«, Adorno was all too aware of the reactionary implications of his colleague's institutionalism. Referencing Hegel's notion of *objective spirit*, Emile Durkheim's concept of *faits sociaux* and Thorstein Veblen's understanding of institutions in terms of *habits of thought*, he argued that even while institutions are not



Fig. 1: Upton Sinclair, *Die goldne Kette*, 1928
(Cover: John Heartfield)

purely external but rather shape our mind and our social *habitus*, they are still imposed by coercion and as such are alien, reified or objectified – *vergegenständlicht*.

While neither Adorno nor Gehlen addressed this during the 1967 debate, the Amsterdam Provo movement was not purely a matter of youth protest. With its imaginative and »ludic« tactics, it was a form of aesthetic practice that to a significant extent derived its tactics from the provocative happenings Robert Jasper Grootveld had started staging in the centre of Amsterdam at some remove from the »official« artistic avant-garde, yet loosely based on the transatlantic Fluxus movement.¹⁶ Furthermore, a crucial point of reference for Provo was Constant's Situationist utopia of New Babylon and its vision of the unalienated life of the *homo ludens*, inspired by Johan Huizinga's famous 1938 book on the play-element in culture.¹⁷ Originally developed under the auspices of the Situationist International, New Babylon is art that wants to become lived aesthetic praxis beyond »the autonomy of art.« Meanwhile, the German student movement was indebted – via Dieter Kunzelmann, Rudi Dutschke, Bernd Rabehl and other members of the group Subversive Aktion – to Situationism. When not defending the Provos or the APO against reactionaries, Adorno was highly critical of what he called *Aktionismus*, or the radical avant-garde attempt to transform society right here right now by jettisoning the relative autonomy of artistic and academic pursuits in the vain hope that this would rid the world of oppression and alienation.¹⁸

In the 1960s, Adorno worked on his monumental *Aesthetic Theory*, whose dialectical account of the artwork as being both autonomous and *fait social* is a nuanced and incisive defense of art as a refuge of non-identical experience in the *verwaltete Welt*, at the cost of hypostasizing and universalizing a certain conception of modernism without acknowledging the transformations taking place in the 1960s.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the young radicals found intellectual ammunition not so much from Adorno as from avant-garde productivists such as Brecht, Eisler and Benjamin.²⁰ In scholarship and theory, the artistic and political upheavals of the 1960s resulted in a renewed historicization and problematization of the concept of the autonomy of art – for instance in the volume *Autonomie der Kunst. Zur Genese und Kritik einer bürgerlichen Kategorie* by Horst Bredekamp et al., which focused on early modern art, and Peter Bürger's far more influential *Theorie der Avantgarde*.²¹

Theorizing a historical dialectic of modernist autonomy and avant-garde transgression, Bürger arrived at a notoriously bleak indictment of the fate of the post-war neo-avant-garde as having been coopted and reintegrated into the institutionalized sphere of art and the art market. This diagnosis appears to have been based on limited sources: Pop Art and Nouveau Réalisme, but no Fluxus or Situationist International (or »Aktionismus« in general), no Third Cinema or Brazilian Antropofagia. However, Bürger's book prefigured a key trope of the postmodernism discourse of the 1980s, in which Bürger himself would also participate: the collapse of disciplinary specificity in a *falsche Aufhebung* of artistic or aesthetic autonomy.²² In his 1980 Adorno Prize lecture, in which he referenced Bürger, Jürgen Habermas argued that »[a] rationalized everyday life, therefore, could hardly be saved from cultural impoverishment through breaking open a single cultural sphere – art – and so providing access to just one of the specialized knowledge complexes.«²³ Habermas sought to defend the autonomy of modern(ist) value-spheres both against the avant-garde's »false programs of the negation of culture«

and the postmodern translation of this avant-garde negationism into a neoconservative historicism.²⁴

Taking his cue from Bürger, Habermas effectively presents postmodernism as a conservative (mis)translation of the avant-garde programme: the *falsche Aufhebung* is now practiced not with revolutionary fervor (albeit misplaced) but with an a priori embrace of the culture industry and the commodification of everyday life. If he emphasized the ideological dimension of postmodernism as a neoconservative, regressive assault on modernism that remained stumm on the ongoing onslaught of neoliberal economic modernization, Fredric Jameson's famous periodization presents postmodernity as the cultural logic of late capitalism.²⁵ This totalization in fact allows Jameson a degree of critical differentiation found in neither Habermas or Bürger: we are all postmoderns, but there are critical as well as affirmative and conservative postmodernisms. One is hard pressed to imagine Bürger or Habermas writing about Hans Haacke in 1986, when Jameson published a catalog essay on »Hans Haacke and the Cultural Logic of Postmodernism«.

Here, Jameson situated the artist's work at the confluence of »two powerful ›traditions‹ which emerged from the 1960s: the preoccupation with the whole issue of the autonomy of art and culture (something which only becomes intense after that autonomy is objectively problematised), and the inflection of the critique of ideology in the direction of institutions (I will call this institutional critique or institutional analysis).«²⁶ The issue of the autonomy of art can be framed either »as the phenomenological experience of the ›work‹ or as the socially given space of culture itself«, with the »demystification of aesthetic ideology [beginning] in the realm of superstructures«, and »[analyses] in terms of base [beginning] with institutions, such as the museum, to which superstructural or ideological effects are attributed.«²⁷ Jameson frames Haacke's work as a dialectical mediation between these two movements, in one of the earliest texts discussing such practices under the moniker of *institutional critique*.

Institutional critique effectively starts from the acknowledgement that the »value sphere« of art, as the institutional bearer of aesthetic experience, is thoroughly integrated in the capitalist economy, and takes this premise as guiding the form of the artwork as in Haacke's investigations into sponsorship deals, museum trustees and so on. Emerging from the neo-avant-garde of the 1960s, institutional critique accepted that the field of art could not be unilaterally abolished, but it also took aim at the de facto erosion of what passed for the autonomy of this value sphere. As contemporary art became an ever more successful commodity, or asset class, its purported autonomy was in danger of becoming a »representational leftover.«²⁸ For the more or less precarious workers of this post-autonomous sphere, bereft of modernist bearings in what the Italian Operaists termed the social factory, autonomy once more becomes an urgent problem.

In his early essay on Wagner, Adorno had argued that an artwork's autonomy is predicated on »the concealment of the labour that went into it.«²⁹ This is precisely where Italian Operaismo of the 1960s parted ways with Adorno. Raniero Panzieri criticized Adorno's focus on consumption and the commodity fetish rather than labour and production, while Mario Tronti's insistence on the primacy of labour and of worker's resistance in the historical development of capitalism itself aimed at forging a movement of true workers' autonomy, distinct from and against co-opted trade unions.³⁰ After the

crushing of revolutionary class struggle during the deindustrialization of the West post-Operaist thought sketched out an alternative, post-industrial and multitudinous vanguard subject as the replacement for an industrial proletariat.³¹ As value progressively emancipated itself from living labour, becoming a short-circuiting automaton, the very proliferation of forms of precarity and unemployment demonstrated the need for siding with work as human potential and counter-value – as emancipatory praxis.

For the German *Wertkritiker* of the Krisis group operaist/autonomist accounts of the crisis of labour and value remain too anecdotal and too voluntarist, failing to address the fundamental logic and systemic crisis of capitalism.³² For all their digging in the *Grundrisse*, the Italians ultimately privileged the Marx of *The Communist Manifesto*, of workers' emancipation. In contrast to the *operaist* insistence on the historical primacy of working-class struggle, and the subsequent autonomist emphasis on the multitude as a potential revolutionary subject, the *Wertkritiker* side with Marx as the theorist of the value form and of abstract labour. They approach value itself as an »automatic subject«, engaging with capitalism's intrinsic logic.³³ However, for Tronti and other Operaists it was crucial to assert that from a historical point of view there could be no real automatism here; capital develops by responding to forms of *refusal*, that is: forms of workers' autonomy. As Negri has recently reiterated, from an Operaist/Autonomist perspective the essence of »Marx's teaching [is] that the worker is always powerful. Without the worker's activity, there is no production of value. Capitalism does not exist without workers' productive power. [...] To affirm the *class as a subject*, to build it in a process of subjectivation, is the first and most important of Marx's contributions, to anyone becoming aware of exploitation and who is willing to fight it.«³⁴ Yet as manual and even much cognitive labour becomes surplus to requirement, it is doubtful whether the networked and competitive cognitive worker-subjects can ever play such a role.

Wertkritik stands for pessimism of the intellect; *Autonomia* for the voluntarism of the imagination. Both strands of theory articulate the crisis of value, and analyse the current state of spluttering financialized global capitalism as one which, in its growing dysfunctionality, contains the seeds of a post-capitalist future that could be either a mere collapse – economic, but also ecological and social – or a consciously shaped alternative. In the latter case, according to Marx, the »development of the social individual« – rather than labour power and labour time – will be the cornerstone of production and wealth; an individual, to be sure, that should not be seen in liberal terms as an entrepreneurial atom, but as a socialized subject.³⁵ This returns us to the aesthetic dimension of Marxism, and of leftist political and aesthetic contestation in general.

In 2008, Tate Modern hosted an »Art and Immaterial Labour« conference, featuring Negri and Lazzarato. Just why have the Italian post-Operaists and Autonomists and their buzzwords (immaterial labour, the social factory, the multitude) gained such traction in the art world? Reporting on the Tate conference, David Graeber sardonically characterized contemporary artists as »a kind of imaginary proletariat assembled by finance capital, producing unique products out of for the most part very inexpensive materials, objects said financiers can baptize, consecrate, through money«.³⁶ In more general terms, the cultural precariat can indeed be seen as an imaginary proletariat that tries to cobble together a collective identity and a set of theoretico-practical tools that allow it to function. At its most superficial moments, one can get the sense that a reserve army of sur-

plus labour is deluding itself by daydreaming an imaginary life as part of a revolutionary multitude even while the real autonomy is being exerted by finance capital.

However, an undialectical overemphasis on such pathologies would disregard the important impulses that have come, for instance, from the autonomist feminism of Wages for Housework and Silvia Federici, and the focus on »feminine« reproductive labour as a category that has the potential to destabilize the chain of value creation.³⁷ In an age of services and immaterial labour, the reexamination of this gendered »immanent exception« of capitalism has assisted in analysing the current crisis of »productive labour« itself, and also formed a political and theoretical framework for artistic-activist practices revolving around care work, performance, and remuneration. Operaismo at times glorified workers' autonomy in ways that seemed as reductive and cartoonish as the old hymns to the proletarian subject, but autonomist feminists have long insisted that autonomy needs to be understood not in terms of a delusional autarky, but as the ability to choose one's dependencies.³⁸

At their best, today's autonomisms start from the realization that autonomy is not an easy answer – a magical spell that works so much better if spoken in Italian – but a lingering promise and perpetual problem requiring hard work beyond and against productive labour.

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- ¹ Heinrich Heine: »Letters on the French Stage« (1831) In: *The Salon, and Some Letters on the French Stage* (I), *Works* vol. 7, trans. Charles Godfrey Leland. New York: Croscup and Sterling, s.d., pp.205-206.
 - ² Karl Marx: *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>. This is Marx's most elaborate enumeration of the fields that make up the superstructure.
 - ³ The fullest discussion of Weber's value-spheres is in »Religious Rejections of the World and Their Rejections« (1915) in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans./eds. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press 1946, pp. 323-359.
 - ⁴ Jürgen Habermas: »Modernity – An Incomplete Project« In: Hal Foster (ed.): *The Anti-Aesthetic*. Port Townsend WA: Bay Press 1983, p. 9.
 - ⁵ Heinrich Heine, letter to Karl Gutzkow, 23 August 1838. In: *Heinrich Heine's Memoirs: From His Works, Letters, and Conversations* (Vol. 2), ed. Gustav Karpeles, trans. Gilbert Cannan. London: William Heinemann 1910, p. 73. Translation adapted by SL on the basis of the original German.
 - ⁶ Clement Greenberg: »Avant-Garde and Kitsch« (1939) In: *The Collected Essays and Criticism I: Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, ed. John O'Brian. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press 1984, p. 7.
 - ⁷ Voiced by the »Sceptic« in Ernst Bloch and Hanns Eisler's dialogue »Avant-Garde and the Popular Front« (1937) In: *Volksfronten/Popular Fronts: Art and Populism in an Era of Culture Wars*, eds. Ekaterina Degot and David Riff. Berlin: Hatje Cantz 2019, p. 15.
 - ⁸ Ibid.
 - ⁹ Upton Sinclair: *Die goldne Kette, oder Die Sage von der Freiheit der Kunst*, trans. Hermyna zur Mühlen. Berlin: Malik Verlag, 1928.

- ¹⁰ Walter Benjamin: »The Author as Producer« (1934) In: *Selected Writings 2: 1931-1934*, eds. Michael Jennings, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone and others. Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press 1999, p. 768.
- ¹¹ Herbert Marcuse: *A Study on Authority* (1936), trans. Joris de Bres. London/New York: Verso 2008, pp.7-8.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ¹³ For the latter two, see Denise Ferreira da Silva: *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press 2007; Achille Mbembe: *Critique de la raison nègre*. Paris: La Découverte 2013.
- ¹⁴ See for instance Fred Moten's work, such as *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2003.
- ¹⁵ *Die Freiheit und die Institution* was broadcast on WDR television on June 3, 1967, presented by Alexander von Cube. A recording of this broadcast has been posted online with a 1965 date (possibly due to a confusion with a famous 1965 radio debate between Adorno and Gehlen, »Ist die Soziologie eine Wissenschaft vom Menschen?«), which a number of recent German academic publications have erroneously taken for a fact. Right at the beginning of the broadcast, the reference to the *dissolution* of the Provo movement (which happened on May 13, 1967) should make it patently clear that 1965 cannot be the year of this debate.
- ¹⁶ In 1962, Grootveld witnessed an evening of »Parellele Aufführungen neuester Musik« organized by Wolf Vostell, and including contributions by Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles and Nam June Paik; the evening of events became a model for Grootveld's happenings when Vostell attempted to perform a *décollage* action outside, on the street, and the police intervened. According to a report published by the weekly *Haagse Post* at the time, Grootveld tried to convince the remaining attendees that Amsterdam was to become a magic center. See Ludo van Halem: »Parallele Aufführungen neuester Musik. Een Fluxusconcert in kunsthandel Moneet« In: *Jong Holland* 6 (1990), no. 5, p. 26 (quoting from *Haagse Post*, 13 October 1962).
- ¹⁷ Constant and New Babylon were *fêted* in *Provo* no. 4 (October 1965).
- ¹⁸ Theodor W. Adorno: »Marginalien zu Theorie und Praxis« (1969) In: *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II. Gesammelte Schriften 10.2*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2003, pp. 760-782.
- ¹⁹ Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor. London/New York: Bloomsbury 2013, p. 7.
- ²⁰ In their Californian exile during the 1940s, Adorno had co-authored a book on film music with Eisler (*Composing for the Films*, published under Eisler's name in 1947) that amounts to a fascinating hybrid between Adorno's modernism and Eisler Brechtian avant-gardism.
- ²¹ Michael Müller, Horst Bredekamp, Berthold Hinz, Franz-Joachim Verspohl, Jürgen Fredel, Ursula Apitzsch: *Autonomie der Kunst. Zur Genese und Kritik einer bürgerlichen Kategorie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1972; Peter Bürger: *Theorie der Avantgarde*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1974.
- ²² For a 1987 volume edited by Christa and Peter Bürger, Russell A. Berman read Bürger's *Theorie der Avantgarde* through the prism of the postmodernism debate, focusing precisely on the motif of the *falsche Aufhebung*: Russell A Berman: »Konsumgesellschaft. Das Erbe der Avantgarde und die falsche Aufhebung der Autonomie« In: Christa and Peter Bürger (eds.): *Postmoderne: Alltag, Allegorie und Avantgarde*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1987, pp. 56-71.
- ²³ Habermas 1980 (as note 4) p. 11.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

- 25 Fredric Jameson: *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press 1991. Jameson's original essay was first published in *New Left Review* in 1984.
- 26 Fredric Jameson: »Hans Haacke and the Cultural Logic of Postmodernism« In: Brian Wallis (ed.), *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*. New York/Cambridge MA: New Museum of Contemporary Art/MIT Press 1986, p. 38.
- 27 Ibid, p. 46.
- 28 Kerstin Stakemeier: »(Not) More Autonomy« In: Kerstin Stakemeier and Marina Vishmidt: *Reproducing Autonomy: Work, Money, Crisis and Contemporary Art*. London: Mute 2016, p. 28.
- 29 Theodor W. Adorno: *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone. London/New York: Verso 2005, p. 72.
- 30 Raniero Panzieri: »Relazione sul neocapitalismo« In: *La Ripresa del Marxismo-Leninismo in Italia*. Milan: Sapere Edizioni 1972, p. 212, quoted in Pier Vittorio Aurelli: *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism*. New York: Tenple Hoyne Buell Center/Princeton Architectural Press 2008, p. 27.
- 31 The reception of Autonomist thinking in cultural and artistic circles started to gather pace during the 1990s. Germany, where Operaismo had had a significant impact during the 1970s (in the journal *Autonomie* and with the Trikont and Merve publishing outfits) was in the vanguard with the mid-1990s journal *Die Beute*, on whose pages Negri and Lazzarato rubbed shoulders with the likes of Critical Art Ensemble, Sabeth Buchmann, Creischer/Siekmann and Diedrich Diederichsen. The Berlin bookstore and publisher b_books, founded in 1996, tapped into some of the same position and practices. The French journal *Multitudes*, founded in 2000, counted Brian Holmes and Bureau d'Etudes among its contributors.
- 32 For an English-language anthology of the *Wertkritiker*'s writings, see Neil Larsen, Mathias Nilges, Josh Robinson and Nicholas Brown (eds.): *Marxism and the Critique of Value*. Chicago 2014. For a critique of Operaismo, Negri and Hardt from the perspective of Wertkritik, see Anselm Jappe: *Die Abenteuer der Ware: Für eine neue Wertkritik*. Münster 2005, p. 235–40.
- 33 Marx had polemically and ironically noted that »in the circulation M-C-M both the money and the commodity function only as different modes of existence of value itself«, which »is constantly changing from one form into the other, without becoming lost in this movement; it thus becomes transformed into an automatic subject.« Karl Marx: *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Volume I [1867, 1873, 1883], trans. Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin 1976, p. 255. The notion has been taken up with considerable enthusiasm by Wertkritiker and associated authors. See for instance Hans-Georg Bensch and Frank Kuhne (eds.): *Das automatische Subjekt bei Marx*. Lüneburg 1998, and Jappe: »Die Abenteuer der Ware«, pp. 80–88. In recent art theory, see Kerstin Stakemeier: »Art as Capital – Art as Service – Art as Industry: Timing Art in Capitalism« In Beatrice von Bismarck et al. (eds.): *Timing: On the Temporal Dimension of Exhibiting*. Berlin: Sternberg Press 2014, pp.15-38.
- 34 Antonio Negri: »Starting Again With Marx« In: *Radical Philosophy*, December 2018, <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/starting-again-from-marx#fn2>.
- 35 Karl Marx: *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus. London 1992, p. 749.
- 36 David Graeber: »The Sadness of Post-Workerism« (2008), <https://libcom.org/library/sadness-post-workerism>.
- 37 See Silvia Federici: *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. New York: Autonomedia 2004, and *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. New York/Oakland: Common Notions/PM Press 2012. On the historical

Wages for Housework campaign in the 1970s, with which Federici was involved, see Louise Toupin: *Wages for Housework: A History of an International Feminist Movement, 1972-77*. London/Vancouver: Pluto Press/UBC Press 2012; for a contemporary theoretical elaboration, see Kerstin Stakemeier and Marina Vishmidt: *Reproducing Autonomy: Work, Money, Crisis and Contemporary Art*. London: Mute 2016.

- ³⁸ A version of this statement is quoted by Bini Adamczak as »Autonomie ist selbstbestimmte Abhängigkeit« In: *Beziehungsweise Revolution. 1917, 1968 und kommende*. Berlin: Suhrkamp 2017, p. 99; a variation, »self-determination is the right to choose your dependencies« is attributed to Vivian Zihlerl by Jonas Staal in »To Make a World, Part II: The Art of Creating a State«, in *e-flux journal* no. 60 (December 2014), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/to-make-a-world-part-ii-the-art-of-creating-a-state/>.

Stewart Martin

Commodity

A commodity is commonly understood to be anything that can be bought or sold, whether an object or service, natural or fabricated, made or appropriated for sale. Works of art can be considered commodities in all these ways. They are by definition made, not natural, but they can consist of appropriated nature. The aesthetic appreciation of nature can also be commodified to some degree, for example, purchasing a trip to a natural wonder. But art is not necessarily a commodity. It may be made without the intention or social context of being bought or sold. And even where it is a commodity, it may not be experienced as such. An artwork may be bought and then become available to others for free, for instance, in a museum. Of course, if one needs to buy a ticket to enter the museum, then the experience is conditioned by this supplementary commodity. Nonetheless, the activity of buying and selling can be distinguished radically from the activity of experiencing. Buying a book is not reading it. One can buy a book and never read it, and one can read it without regard to having bought it. The commodity may be a condition of art, but it can be so external and remote that it determines the experience of art to a vanishingly meagre degree. And yet, the condition remains and the extent of its effects can be difficult to discern. This has fuelled the suspicion that the experience of art is more profoundly, if obscurely, conditioned by its commodification.

Marx also understood commodities broadly as anything bought or sold, but his analysis of their significance and composition is altogether more specific. He insisted on their historical specificity as the dominant form in which wealth appears in capitalist societies, distinct from the forms of wealth and exchange in non-capitalist societies, such as plunder or barter. He emphasised the significance of money and monetary exchange in a free market for the constitution of commodities in capitalist societies. More decisively for industrial capitalism, he sought to demonstrate that the prices of commodities are determined by the value of the labour (or socially necessary labour time) invested in them, and that the profits within these prices derive from using wage labour to produce more value than it costs. These considerations inform his analysis of the commodity into a use-value or capacity to satisfy a need, and an exchange-value or capacity to be equated with the value of other commodities. Marx argued that the exchange-value between two different commodities is quantifiable not because of their use-values, since they are qualitatively different and unquantifiable, but rather because of the quantity of labour invested in them; not the specific kinds of labour invested in making the use-values, which are just as qualitatively different as the uses, but labour abstracted of all this specificity and measured according to the average time it takes to produce the commodity sold. If the commodity is not sold, the labour is rendered worthless. The market remains the ultimate judge of value. Hence, while Marx reveals how commodities on the market

are determined by the industrial exploitation of abstract labour, the value of this labour remains determined retroactively by the buying and selling of commodities.

Marx's analysis of commodities was dedicated to explaining industrial capitalism and says almost nothing about art, but he does offer an instructive reflection on artists as productive or unproductive workers. He says that Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* »in the way a silkworm produces silk, as the expression of his own nature«, and that, even though he then »sold the product for £5 and to that extent became a dealer in a commodity«, he did not thereby become a productive worker, that is, he did not produce capital for a capitalist; whereas »the Leipzig literary proletariat who produces books ... at the instructions of his publisher is roughly speaking a productive worker, in so far as his production is subsumed under capital and only takes place for the purpose of the latter's valorisation«. ¹ In other words, a work of art becomes a commodity once it is sold, whether or not it was produced with this intention, but it does not thereby become a form of capital unless it results from the sale of the artist's labour to a capitalist who is then able to organise it for the purpose of making a profit.

These remarks do not form part of Marx's principal theory of art as a form of ideology, namely, that art (together with philosophy, religion, politics and law) forms a superstructure that is built upon and determined by an economic base constituted by the forces and relation of production. The critical purpose of this theory was to argue that these superstructural forms are not autonomous and do not constitute the essence of humanity, but rather that they are determined by the production for human needs, thereby inverting the traditional hierarchy of human spirit and animal need and labour. Marx says nothing about the ideological character of *Paradise Lost* or the work of the Leipzig hack, presumably because their commodification is an economic consideration, although his theory of ideology indicates that this should determine them. But Marx took pains to point out that this determination was not a simple causal relation and allowed exceptions, as did Engels. ²

Despite Marx's conception of ideology as determined by production, he also recognised art as itself a form of production. He criticises the specialisation of artists in particular arts as a form of the division of labour. But he also laments how the artistic character of work is destroyed by the division of labour and suggests that art provides a model of non-alienated labour.

Marxist theories and histories of art display the influence of all these elements in Marx and many of the tensions between them. The theory of art as a form of ideology has dominated this tradition and Marx's qualifications of this theory infuse many of the controversies over its determinism. Marxists have often managed to integrate art's status as ideology, as labour and as commodity, but there are also differences and controversies over their emphasis or significance, and this is especially true of art's status as a commodity, which has often been neglected or marginalised.

The outstanding exception is Lukács. In his famous essay, »Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat«, he announces a radical reorientation: »the problem of commodities must not be considered in isolation or even regarded as the central problem in economics, but as the central, structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects«. ³ The implication is that the commodity is not merely a form of the economic base, but of the superstructure too; not merely a form of exchange, but also of ideology. Lukács found the clue to this approach in Marx's theory of the fetishism of commodi-

ties. Marx argued that the value of commodities derives from their production, but that this is obscured in their exchange on the market, where it appears to derive from the material properties or usefulness of a commodity relative to other commodities. The constitution of value within the social relations of production is hereby fetishized, assuming the fantastical form of a »social« relation between things. Lukács saw this fetishism or »reification« (literally, »making into a thing«) as structuring the social relations of capitalist society as a whole. It resulted in a general alienation, not merely an economic alienation, in which subjects are separated from their practical constitution of objects, leading to the formation of an independent and dominating realm of objectivity, a »second nature«, that subjects are then induced to passively contemplate.

Lukács is not concerned in this essay with art, but the implication is clear: that art too is structured by the commodity form. This approach can be detected in his writings on art, however, we do not find what we might have expected there, namely, Marx's analysis of commodities applied directly to works of art. Rather, we find its altogether more indirect application, mediated by the terms Lukács derives, such as the alienation of subjectivity from objectivity. These terms then infuse the ideological and formal analysis of the artwork. Lukács subsequently withdrew from what he came to see as his overly subjectivist conception of alienation, but the dialectical logic underpinning it remains evident, for instance, in his analysis of how the realist novel illuminates the total structure of capitalist society, and his criticisms of how expressionist or naturalist literature merely mirrors its surface, its »fetishized world«.⁴

Today we can observe a more explicit discourse on whether or how art is a commodity. This may not have been Lukács' intention, but, at least in retrospect, it appears to be a horizon opened by him. But it is also informed by other figures, notably figures also influenced by Lukács, for whom art's status as a commodity assumes a more explicit significance. Benjamin's writings on Baudelaire include reflections on how Baudelaire's poetry sought to both confront and compete within the literary market.⁵ Benjamin's *Arcades Project* was a study of 19th-century shopping precincts as a phantasmagoria of bourgeois consciousness, for which the fetishism of commodities was a methodological key. Adorno was in many ways more sympathetic to art's autonomy than Benjamin, but had his analysis of Baudelaire in view when he characterised art's purposelessness in conjunction with the dominance of exchange-value in the commodity as resulting in a kind of commodity fetishism.⁶ But Adorno does not exactly reduce art to a commodity or commodity fetish, and his economic analysis of art is very limited. Adorno's general social theory is less directly oriented towards fetishism and alienation than Lukács', and more to exchange-value or the principal of equivalence, whose historical constitution extended well beyond Marx's history of capitalist society. This inflects his conception of industrialisation and the »culture industry«, which does not strictly conform to Marx's theory of capitalist production.

A comprehensive history of the commodification of art has yet to be written, but a great deal of it, if not all, exists in parts or sketches. Arnold Hauser provides probably their most comprehensive compilation, offering important insights across his writings, not only in *The Social History of Art*. But, despite his own influence by Lukács, Hauser does not exactly conceive of the commodity as the central problem of art in capitalist society.

The origins of art's commodification are commonly traced to the Renaissance, but Hauser suggests they can be traced back as far as, but not earlier than, the Hellenic period, which indicates the presence of an art market in the strict sense of a free trade in art works that are exchanged for money on the basis of a more or less consistent demand and supplied by correspondingly organised production.⁷ The early Middle Ages then marks a collapse of this trade, which only resumes gradually with the Renaissance. By the 15th century there is evidence in Italy of detailed commercial terms for the commissioning of works of art, both of their subject-matter and materials, and of artistic labour, with higher prices for the work of renowned masters than their assistants.⁸ This is not a market for readymade products, but such a trade is beginning. Hauser draws attention to the emergence of a class of merchants in the Netherlands in the 15th century, specialising in the trade of art from studios in Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent and Brussels.⁹ This class presupposed a more or less consistent demand and supply of art, a market, in which personal commissioning was replaced by impersonal buying and selling of works from the stock of these dealers. This commodification had a profound effect on the experience and production of art, introducing many phenomena we can still see today. Buyers began to experience works of art as readymade items, amongst which they could choose according to their preference or taste, but which were not made to their instructions. Artists began to make works independently from their buyers and without knowing the specific context for which their works were destined; indeed, without knowing whether their works would, in fact, be bought. Artists had made art for money before, but this had been mediated by their social relation to the commissioner; now they made art for an impersonal market and so more directly for money. Hauser observes how this market led to the specialisation of artists in different genres to meet demand, and to the impoverishment of artists as speculative production and copies proliferated.¹⁰ Of course, the dealer now became the new personal relation for buyer and artist, but his actions were also determined by the impersonality of the market which he, in a sense, now personified.

The scope of this market was initially limited. Hauser draws attention to the persistent independence of artists from dealers in France and Italy and the continuing power of princes and the church in commissioning and appropriating artworks, meaning that many were never exchanged through a market. The period from the Reformation to the French Revolution broadened this scope, as the authority of the church and nobility, and their collections of art, were dismantled. With the economic and political hegemony of the bourgeoisie, it enters a new era in which works of art circulate more freely as commodities than ever before.

If the bourgeois period presents a culmination in the commodification of art, it also signals a decisive protest. With romanticism, the freedom of the artist and of art assumed an unprecedented status, which was opposed to the impersonality of the market and the mechanisation of industrialisation. Art's commodification is identified as the mortal threat to this freedom. This protest resounds through the development of modern art. It is invoked repeatedly and remains urgent to this very day. But it involves some deep contradictions. The freedom of artists is evidently fuelled by the ambivalent freedoms conferred by the market's dismantling of traditional forms of authority. The market for art imposed impersonal regulations on artists, but also liberated them from the personal regulation of commissions and patrons, as well as the workshops and guilds that had

developed to serve them. The compulsion to make art for an unknown buyer also provided the conditions for art to be made freely, as an end in itself by a sovereign artist. The protest at art's commodification therefore reveals a protest at the artists' own conditions of existence, exposed in their tortuous predicament of needing to sell or starve. This tragedy of the romantic artist is then, for some, condemned as idealistic, to be repeated as comedy or farce. More cynically, this protest could function as a strategy to raise the artist's status and, thereby, the price of their works, as Benjamin observed of Baudelaire. For Hauser, romanticism's attempt to withdraw from art's commodification marked a withdrawal from the material and practical conditions of the world as such.¹¹ One might add that this enabled art to be seen as an other-worldly religion.

Art's commodification as such does not conclude the issue of how it forms a part of capitalist society. As Marx indicated, the commodification of art, even where it is exchanged through a free market for money, does not produce capital unless its profit is produced by labour employed by a proprietor or capitalist. An individual may sell a work of art that s/he produced in a free market for money, rendering it a commodity as a form of commercial or bourgeois society. A merchant may buy these works and sell them, rendering them commodities as a form of mercantile capitalism. But these commodities are in neither case a form of industrial capitalism, since neither are produced 'industrially' for profit, that is, neither involve the employment and organisation of labour for the purpose of extracting more value for the employer than they cost him to make. The Lukácsian orientation to the commodity as such tends to abstract from these important distinctions, but it also offers a more fundamental critique of capitalist society as such.

Industrialisation presents a profound transformation of the arts. Many are subsumed by it, becoming more or less unexceptional forms of proletarianized labour and industrial capitalism. Others remained independent and continue to be so today. In the smallest enterprises there is some degree of ambiguity as to where individual production ends and industrial production begins, and, despite what Marx suggests, the mere employment of wage labour is not always considered decisive. Many of the decisive features of industrial capitalism, especially the development of machinery and its effects on labour, are not decisive to small enterprises employing a few wage labourers in the arts or elsewhere. Arts that profit directly from the personal imprint of the artist, such as painting or sculpture or their later manifestations, form exceptional or monopoly enterprises that, even when they include wage labour, tend to suspend its exploitation as the source of their profits.¹² Still, even those arts that could be preserved from mass production or proletarianization were subjected to derivative forms of it. Thus, paintings by individuals can be sold as prints made by wage labourers who have become increasingly unskilled as print technologies have become more automated. In this sense, all the arts have been effectively subsumed by industrialisation.

But there is a more subterranean transformation at stake here, in which the very idea of art shifts, gravitating away from the arts that were industrialised and towards the arts that could resist it. These non-industrial arts, or their non-industrial qualities at least, especially the artist's unique touch, could then be found in the past, generating a sense of their enduring resilience and value. But this conceals their modernity, their emergence in reaction to industrialisation. This shift is also a legacy of romanticism and one that proved comparatively effective and enduring. The protest against art's commodification

may have failed, but this very failure, the commodification of free art, was ironically successful in enabling artists to evade industrial capitalism.

Of course, socialist regimes and even some capitalist regimes established state institutions or oversaw the establishment of private institutions in the 20th century, often built on earlier initiatives, that have provided support for the arts outside the market, such as public galleries, theatres, universities and so on. Increased free time from work in some wealthier societies has also enabled amateurism to spread beyond the narrow confines of earlier periods, although its status still tends to be overshadowed by the sphere of professionalism.

The emergence of so-called »post-industrial« societies in the latter part of the 20th century suggests a new era, but its diagnosis remains contentious, especially the notion of post-industrial capitalism. Industrialisation remains a fact of life for many within these societies, and the movement of industries offshore clearly does not reduce their significance for capitalism globally, or even within the de-industrialised regions insofar as capital continues to be accumulated there. But even if one focuses on these de-industrialised regions, the character of their capitalism is ambivalent. Automation, de- and re-skilling, unemployment and precariousness, are all conspicuous features of industrial capitalism since the 19th century, as is the importance of financialisation and the general commercialisation of social life. This may have intensified in some respects, but its apparent novelty is largely an effect of the neoliberal dismantling of the state protections and social limits to capitalism instituted earlier in the 20th century. However, the ideological horizon of neoliberalism has not been a return to industrial capitalism, but rather to small businesses and individual entrepreneurialism, that is, a *petit bourgeois* society that would scarcely enable the production of capital in Marx's terms. This, at least, has been the veil cast over this period, which has seen a return to 19th-century levels of inequality, albeit fuelled less by producing value and more by appropriating it through privatisation, debt and rent. One contention has been that the production of value within post-industrial capitalism also assumes a more appropriative mode. Rather than capitalists employing and organising labour, workers are left to organise themselves, to produce their own commodities, as goods or services, or even as their own skills or labour-capacity, the capitalists then appropriating profit from these commodities, either through debts advanced on their enterprises, purchasing copyrights to lucrative goods, or employing labour below the cost of its production or reproduction. A similar strategy is discerned in relation to social activities never intended as work, such as selling advertising on websites made popular and thereby profitable by their users. None of these forms correspond to Marx's conception of industrial capitalism, since their value is not produced by labour employed by a capitalist. They appear rather to be forms of simple commodity exchange, that is, forms of commercial or bourgeois society – not even that in the case of websites. But this exchange is often unequal. This suggests a form of appropriation more characteristic of merchant capitalism. However, there is also a sense in which capitalists are not simply buying cheap and selling dear, but of organising conditions in which this is possible. Labour is organised not directly, but indirectly. This suggests not merely mercantilism, but a quasi-productive or quasi-industrial form of capitalism.

Whether or not these developments result in new forms of art's commodification is difficult to discern, if only because art has long since been subjected to this complex of

simple, mercantile and industrial or quasi-industrial commodification. The exorbitant prices in the market for some works of visual art testifies to the wealth of the new rich, but this is not unprecedented, nor is the treatment of art as an asset as such. What is new is the global scale of this market and, more significantly to the form of art's commodification, the extent to which it has become a market for investments anticipating or speculating on rising prices and future returns. However, this market is not always open or free, with carefully managed trade to support high prices.

A more implicit and problematic contention is the proposition that the post-industrial subject, precarious and flexible, self-organising and entrepreneurial, is comparable to an artist.¹³ This presents an extraordinary reversal or inflection of romanticism's protest against industrialisation, as the qualities that distinguished the artist from both proletarian and capitalist are transformed into the qualities required by everyone in the post-industrial age. Not least of these would be the romantics' ambivalence to commodification: the semblance of independence that proved so profitable. The theory of this post-industrial condition does not presuppose a corresponding development of art beyond romanticism, but the relatively limited and artisanal skills constituting the romantics' commodities do not dispose of the general capacities of this post-industrial subject. They correspond rather more to the radically expanded range of artistic capacities that became established by the 1970s, contemporaneously with the supposed emergence of the post-industrial subject. Indeed, since this time, the artist as such has often appeared explicitly as an entrepreneur.

¹ Karl Marx: »Results of the Immediate Process of Production« In: *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. B. Fowkes. Harmondsworth 1990, p. 1044.

² See Engels letter to Bloch, 21 September 1890.

³ Georg Lukács: »Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat« In: *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. R. Livingstone. Cambridge, Massachusetts 1971, p. 83.

⁴ Georg Lukács: »Realism in the Balance«, trans. R. Livingstone. In: *Aesthetics and Politics*. London 1977, pp. 28-59.

⁵ See Walter Benjamin: »The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire«, trans. H. Zohn. In *Selected Writings. vol. 4, 1938-1940*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 2003, pp. 3-92.

⁶ See Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. R. Hullott-Kentor. London and New York 2004.

⁷ Arnold Hauser: »The Art Trade« In: *The Sociology of Art*, trans K. J. Northcott. Oxon and New York 2011, p. 509.

⁸ Michael Baxandall provides an outstanding study of this in his *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*. Oxford (second edition) 1988.

⁹ Hauser 2011 (as note 7), p. 511. See also Arnold Hauser: »The Baroque of the Protestant Bourgeoisie« In: *The Social History of Art, vol. 2, Renaissance, Mannerism and Baroque*, trans. S. Godman. London 1962, pp. 191-208. Hauser's insights are supported by numerous later studies, amongst the more recent being Filip Vermeulen: *Painting for the Market. Commercialization of Art in Antwerp's Golden Age*. Turnhout 2003.

¹⁰ Hauser 1962 (as note 9), pp. 203-4.

¹¹ Arnold Hauser: *The Philosophy of Art History*. Cleveland 1963, pp. 336-7.

- ¹² On the limits to industrial capitalism in the commodification of the visual arts, see Dave Beech: *Art and Value. Art's Economic Exceptionalism in Classical, Neoclassical and Marxist Economics*. Leiden and Boston 2015.
- ¹³ See for instance Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello: *The New Spirit in Capitalism*, trans. G. Elliott. London and New York 2005.

Kerstin Stakemeier

Critique

»Get rid of the habit, which depends, fundamentally, on the abstraction of response from its real situation and circumstances.«¹ The habit that Raymond Williams proposes to break, is »criticism and ›authoritative‹ judgment as apparently general and natural processes«.² For in its execution as judgement criticism reinstates the systemic order framing whatever it is that is criticized. To him criticism fundamentally halts material processes. It is genuinely general. Williams himself however does not work through what would follow from the materialization which he anticipates in his 1976 *Keywords* entry on »criticism«. He articulates a scepticism of its »elevation to ›judgment‹, and to an apparently general process«, whereas what criticism *should* encompass is a more »definite practice«³, a more relational commitment to matter(s).

The call for such an enhanced materialism however can ultimately not be answered by criticism itself, or, to use its less culturalist, and more systemic name, by critique.⁴ Such definite commitment to matter(s) would result in critique loosing itself to its processes: Criticism gaining, as Williams envisions, »active and complex relations with its whole situation and context«⁵ becomes something else, it turns into commitment, into a charge, it becomes a liability. Where critique charges its own material grounds it cannot but disable its systemic legitimacy: self-critique turns into commitment, into a material process of self-expropriation. Beyond the critical singularisation and isolation of objects and subjects (read: judgement) that inevitably reinstates their systemic functionality, lie, their »situation and context«: the social entanglements and tendentious affinities forming the core of their possible re-reception and the metabolisms and missed forms of usage still buried in the processes of labour that shaped them. The subject of critique surrendering to its implication into the material processes of what in this operation ultimately ceases to be its object becomes itself charged – not only in cases of a somehow mimetic relation, but also in commitments to dissent. Whereas within critique it is ultimately its subject that is manufactured as an agent of autonomy, that subject's own resumption within a process of commitment lets it appear as a liability. A processing of autonomy turns into a process of self-externalization: the forms of one's own dependencies, one's affinities to what allows for being subjected to act as a subject, become critical (read: questionable). Autonomy becomes perceivable as a »definite praxis«, a form of (self-) subjection.

In the installations of work that the artist Henrike Naumann has been generating over the past years the subject of critique is being subjected by being built into an interior. In a complex of works entitled *2000* (2018) (Fig. 1-3)⁶ Naumann has arranged pieces of furniture iconic for life in Germany since the late 1980s in different venues, a museum, a gallery and a couple of group shows. But the varnished monsters she installs are not the



Fig. 1: Henrike Naumann, Das Reich, 2018, mixed media installation, exhibition view Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach

icons of the design of the time, but the serialized, cheaply manufactured, and industrially standardized copies of what had figured as a novelty in design years earlier. Naumann stages the mass produced derivatives, the de-authored designs that populated the living quarters of every household from middle class downwards, inevitably patterning the youth cultures, offices and everyday culture. She finds her artistic forms in a realm of contemporary life whose aesthetic choices are as omnipresent as they are charged and dependent: Naumann produces from modern culture's industrial ruins of design-turned-folklorism, from aesthetic forms on the other side of avant-gardism and autonomy, from designs that furnished lives caught in a state of posteriority. Turning to the interior as an unideal means of building up interiority, of furnishing individuation, Naumann subjects artistic formalism to the mundane limitations of what Lu Märten in 1903 called »the

whole life-work of a human«.⁷ Her artistic productions appear »not only in the order of their origin, but according to the *dependence* of their origination«⁸. Märten had proposed to break down modern art's formalism according to the labour of its formation, and Naumann does just that: Depending where her work has been exhibited she has used bedsits, wall units, sanitary objects, home accessories or mascots that take up the specific regional culminations of design's parochial fittings. And she inserts her video works into the televisions, screens and information boards of this scenery. Naumann lets art itself appear as posterior. In her videos coarsely edited footage, adapted with technical means of generic availability, is laid out in a register that demonstrates the life-work of another form of »autonomization«, one that exists beyond critique: in her re-edits of youtube videos self-produced by subjects of parochial aggression like the »Reichsbürger«, or in fictitious home videos of the »National Socialist Underground« members' adolescence in Zwickau filmed by Naumann, critical processes of subjective autonomization are replaced with tales of regionalist self-seclusion. Within the folklorisms of design's serialized ruins that once also framed my own adolescence Naumann sets the stage for letting right-wing esotericism, self-made religious conversions, and militarized nostalgias surface as autonomy's everyday inversion. Here, critique as a mode of social conduct offers no release, as it abandons such political and cultural aggression as merely »unprogressive«, dependent. Naumann mixes these narrations with those of the institutions that framed this time, the period of the GDR's annexation in the 1990s, like the »Treuehandanstalt«. She disallows the possibility of distance from my own upbringing in



Fig. 2: Henrike Naumann, Rolf, 2018, mixed media installation, exhibition view Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach

small towns somewhere in Germany's West, among this furniture and the Western counterpart of these people – people that lock into the aggressive security of bigotry, racism, misogyny, and into historical forms of a life made German, the life of fascism. If I understand myself as being untainted by this life my own progressiveness is just critical, but certainly not in any way committed, not a liability to its continued existence.

Critique thus might identify its objects alongside their systemic value or the lack thereof but it has to deny itself a shared praxis with them that might obscure a stabilized mutual (re)identification. Its form is predetermined by the presumption that both the subject and the object of critique are discernible as sensible units in their own right. However, the forms that a commitment takes that debases critique, that swerve allusions to critique's ideals in favour of working through its implicated powers, pose no simple alternative. Commitment offers not an alternative route but rather engages, as Naumann does, with the very same social horizon that critique faces: only it lowers this horizon into the subject of critique herself. In assembling figures of administration, figures of provincialism, figures of design, figures of youth culture, ... »not only in the order of their origin, but according to the *dependence* of their origination«, Naumann commits to all forms of »life-work« as critique's inseparable material. She lets art become a liability to the critique that Williams addresses, that judges by isolating its objects: For it is this



Fig. 3: Henrike Naumann, Fun 2000, 2018, mixed media installation, exhibition view Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach

isolation of properties that characterizes figures of aggression just as much as those of critique.

Commitments take shape as critique turns against itself, not in an act of self-criticism that isolates previous blind spots in a process of defensive re-stabilization, but in a process of re-identifying itself along the lines of its material inadequacy to the »life-work« it cleaves through. Commitment imagines a »life-work« on the other side of discernible properties: a commitment taking shape from within critique that turns into a liability for critique. It does not allow me to isolate the work I want seen as my critique from the work of its isolation. And thus it can lastly not prolong what it commits to because in contrast to critique it unleashes an unideal(istic) praxis, the stirring of a shared generative degeneration of properties. In Naumann's case the subjects of her video works appear as (a horror of) ideal characters: their self-isolation is stable. And it is not firstly *their* prolonged existence that Naumann puts into doubt here, but our own that cannot but come to perceive itself as co-existing within the »dependence of their origination«. Where a critique of critique still expands (on) its capacity for proprietorship, for isolating *its* object, commitment expands on what isolates this capacity from its »life-work«. As such it is a contemporary work of de-valuation, a labour of internalizing what was sorted out and committing to the forms of self-degeneration it implies.

Williams's »criticism« leads into such questions as it presses for the necessary contemporaneity of the »definite praxis« he envisages against the hereditary acculturation of

criticism's judgements within European bourgeois culture: The one manifest among others in Denis Diderot's genre making art criticism of the Paris Salons in the mid seventeenth hundreds.⁹ In Diderot's writings, and in those of others from the same period and continent such as I. Kant¹⁰ or G.E. Lessing¹¹, critique was instituted as *the* public form of reasoning, of the reasoning of what *was* (the) public. In Diderot's words, critique became »the tribunal of truth«¹², the popular textual form of *man's* civilisation. In exactly this function critique has since helped (us) to (re)inforce, even if »critically«, what Diderot called the »mœurs«¹³, the morals of a European culture in perpetual nationalization, one whose German present populates Naumann's works: stabilized by the contemporaneous birth of the bourgeois subject¹⁴ as (public) economic minimum unit and the institutionalization of that unit's juridically safeguarded (private) interiority as the (only) source of (national) culture. In Naumann's sceneries bourgeois interiority returns as parochial isolationism, demonstrating that Diderot's »tribunal« is not just what William's terms criticism's »abstraction«: a »habit« to »get rid of«, it is, and here criticism cannot stop short in self-criticism, a tribunal of (un)assigned humanity.

Critique is built into a history of emancipation as selective interiority, discerning, in the process of »subsequent refashionings of self-consciousness«¹⁵ in Europe in the 18th and 19th century, to quote Denise Ferreira da Silva, a »*stage of interiority* (that) ... is the force that guides the production of human knowledge and culture.«¹⁶ The identification of this developmental state enables its dis-identification from what she calls a prior »*stage of exteriority*: The mode through which scientific knowledge describes the setting of natural phenomena«,¹⁷ »which transformed the exteriority (in that) the racial refigures as a scientific device into a substantive (preconceptual, prehistorical) marker of the outsideness of the others of Europe«,¹⁸ of a life void of interiority. Ferreira da Silva marks interiority *as* isolationism and authors like Frank Wilderson and Saidiya Hartman have characterized its result as »a punitive ontology of race«.¹⁹ While most invocations of ontology (not only in recent years) have attempted to find a fundamental ontology beyond the epistemologies of this modern world, positions like the above mentioned offer no ontology beyond the present but the present *as* ontology within which critique is lastly but a defensive reassurance of that ontological divide. Writers such as Wilderson²⁰ and Hartman, but also Jared Sexton²¹ or Joy James²² have thereby consistently brought into focus an understanding of ontology that is specifically predicated upon an understanding of »Blackness« by way of what Orlando Patterson termed its »social death«²³, its being *unpublic* in plain sight. To quote Sexton':

»Of course, race does exist, in some sense, as a reliable social indicator of life chances and as a traceable chain of significations, but its political ontology exceeds the terms of sociological investigation and the operations of the symbolic order: it is, to try another phrasing, a ›division of species‹ (Fanon 1963) effected and maintained by the technologies of violence and sexuality that underwrite the social formation, not a discriminatory manipulation of already existing bodily marks (Guillaumin 1995).«²⁴

Wilderson, Hartman and Sexton all introduce the modern emancipation of *man* and *his* dependence on property forms that gave birth to critique as public behavior, as based on an ontology of anti-black expropriation – an expropriation of interior and exterior life. In other words, where the figure of interiority birthing critique is just being critically re-evaluated, where it secures its properties via self-criticism, instead of committing to

processes of self-expropriation, it exists in an ongoing agreement with the ontology that Ferreira da Silva, Wilderson, Patterson, Hartman, James and many other have demonstrated as that of »black social death«²⁵.

In this perspective modern critique's colonial angle could easily rest on its being built from/for/on that interiority of the acculturated European man vis-à-vis the exteriority of lives-that-are-not-his alone.²⁶ But it need not, because in critique's subsequent role as »the tribunal of truth« it perpetually distinguished the aforementioned public from the historical appearances of its other, the unacculturated, the untrue, and thereby emancipated itself into a highly generative power of colonializing acculturation in its very own right. Participation in critique's tribunals comes to those who prove their culture in its forms: like the argumentation you are reading now. A text that is, even though writing towards commitment's bond to self-degeneration, legitimized throughout by its critical use of authoritative citations, leaning inevitably towards what Maurice Blanchot refuted in »The Writing of the Disaster« as »the correct criticism of the System (that) does not consist (...) in finding fault with it, or in interpreting it insufficiently (...), but rather in rendering it invincible, invulnerable to criticism or, as they say, inevitable.«²⁷ Within the systemic refutation of critique the danger of eliminating the traces of its acculturations become painfully pertinent, thus my attempt to self-expropriate its properties via lineages of commitment, thus the insistence of internalizing the degrading present of our »life-work«.

However, in recent years other deborderings of critique, ones less authorial, have emerged as the genre's horizon. While it seems that the critical idioms of systemic modern acculturation have been ageing instead of actualizing throughout the last decades, they have not only been side-lined into defensive seclusion by the widespread rise of artistic variations of that aggressive provinciality that Naumann lets visually reside in her installations,²⁸ but also the value of critique itself appears to have drastically decreased. The financialized crisis of globalizing capital at the end of the 2000s introduced an era of perpetual austerity in which to this very day no further exploitation of labour offers a horizon in which immanent ›progress‹ of capitalist (re)production was restored. The modern public that critique calls its home has been in limbo, de-liberalized and rendered historic by a regime of accumulation built on derivative trades, on bets on the futures,²⁹ within which the actuality of critique appears to have become posterior. And throughout the last decade, repeated complaints about the esoteric limitations, the milieu-specific predictabilities, and the lack of purchase of critique have been notably prominent in art and social theory alike. But only rarely have these complaints issued in any shift in critical commitment, which rather than systematically safeguarding what critique has come to be, could map out why it might be that critique itself attests to its own desintegration. How to deal with critique within the horizon – not only of its systemic and historical origination by the racializing and capitalizing »mœurs« of (unbroken) modern power – but also within the current actualizations of this regime besides critique:

- the replacement of critique by the public and institutional resurgence of openly aggressive figures of political and cultural privilege that do not argue for the brutalisms of an ever expanded ›critical‹ inclusions, but for the horrors of definite social exclusions

- critique's becoming redundant within a financialized capitalization that sidelines human (re)production as a systemically minor matter and consequently realizes the devaluation of lives deemed decapitalized

Aruna D'Souza's much read 2018 *Whitewalling: Art, Race & Protest in 3 Acts*,³⁰ answers to the first of these two points in recalling three instances in which critique turned into protest, into forms of practical engagement that challenged the institutions of safeguarded cultural interiority in a specific time and place, namely New York City, between 1969 and 2017. The words critique and criticism hardly appear in D'Souza book, because it is »moments of reckoning« that she lays out, exemplary interventions (mostly) by artists into an art public. The fact that this specific section of the post-war public sphere not only bases its modes of critique on the modern racialization of culture but furthermore insists – most literally in D'Souza's »Act 1« *Open Casket, Whitney Biennial, 2017* – on the general availability of figures of »social death« to ensure the »freedom« of artistic expression, is what is scandalized here. D'Souza's other two acts are *The Nigger Drawings, Artist Space, 1979* and *Harlem on My Mind, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1969*. In both cases it is the questionable »freedom of speech«³¹ invoked by modern artists, audiences and critics alike, that is scrutinized for its idiomatic function in securing what one could call a »liberal« public. »Liberal« in the sense that Williams in his *Keywords* introduces the term, as »a doctrine of possessive individualism«,³² the freedom of possession, the freedom of an entitlement to possess. D'Souza is not calling for expropriation but wants these possessions redistributed. She narrates histories of their momentary reattribution, and thus her focus is thus not that of what Blanchot calls a »correct criticism«, but that of reengaging »a difficult conversation«,³³ one which in New York City has in recent years brought forth forms of organizing that push for drastic shifts within the institutionalized scene of contemporary art.

With a more systemic and less pragmatic line of argumentation Sabeth Buchmann and Isabelle Graw took on the repercussions of the second point in their recent essay »The Critique of Art Criticism«³⁴ (2019). In it the two authors attempt an actualization of those »gestures of self-repudiation which strike ... (them) as constitutive of art criticism«³⁵, to engage in the labour of refuting Blanchot's »correct criticism« on its own grounds. Such systematic contentions with criticism's currencies have been constitutive for the magazine *Texte zur Kunst* since its beginnings in the early 1990s³⁶ and Buchmann and Graw delineate an ever renewed struggle with the changing implications of turning self-repudiation from a gesture into a praxis.³⁷ In 2019, this leads them to renew a discussion that in the German context has been largely sidelined: the claim that »art criticism is »a medium of the reflection on social discrimination«.«³⁸ And it is. But this registers not only a capacity but also a limitation as (art) criticism is also a medium that allows for systemic racialization to appear *as* »social discrimination«, instead of, as Sexton writes in allusion to Fanon, a systemic praxis engendering »a division of species«. Buchmann and Graw do try to save critique from its modern constitution, with decidedly positioning the magazine within its trenches, within the ongoing dispute between »identity-political criteriology and ... formal aesthetics.«³⁹ In radicalizing recent interventions into critique's discourse by authors like Luc Boltanski,⁴⁰ Cornelia Kopetsch⁴¹ and others, they pinpoint the possessive nature of our social mediations, identities and forms, as the prior origination of all contemporary struggles, concluding that

»the critique of capitalism ... for anti-discriminatory measures«⁴² is absolutely irrevocable. If, however, Buchmann's and Graw's attestation that criticism's historical ascent as a »tribunal of truth« is systematically weakened by a »neoliberal regime in which the market's value's reign supreme«⁴³ where to be deepened through the perspective of writers like Ferreira da Silva, Sexton, Wilderson or Hartman, the rejection of neoliberal value would inevitably resurface as that of liberal critique itself. That is, to understand this weakening as simply the coming of age of a public form whose self-defence is always more of the same liberalism that led to the illiberal degeneration it now falls pray to. Its identities might not be capable of reformation.

Hal Foster's 2015 *Bad New Days. Art, Criticism, Emergency* is in many ways an exemplary attempt to propose critique's resurrection as the only possible confrontation of the present situation. And he does so via limiting his focus to a panoramic conceptualization of the state of art and/as critique since the late 1980s. By way of introduction, Foster declares the »parochialism (North America and Western Europe *again?*)« of what follows to be a limitation in »descriptive range« he hopes »to make up for in Conceptual understanding«⁴⁴. In this, he excuses an ontological foreclosure that enables him to understand his argumentation as conceptually systemic, rather than folkloristically attached to a modernism whose parochialism *is* systemic.⁴⁵ Within this self-assigned realm of conceptual limitation he turns to contemporary figures of illiberal degeneration in order to reinstate criticism. In his words this is an »avant-garde that ... is immanent in a caustic way. Far from heroic, it does not pretend that it can break absolutely with the old order or found a new one; instead it seeks to trace fractures that already exist within the given order«.⁴⁶ Structuring this avant-garde of debilitation Foster presents a system of critical terms, »abject«, »archival«, »mimetic«, »precarious« and »post-critical«, that repeats a historic (read modern) register in a state of disintegration, and institutes the formalisms of that disintegration as today's avant-garde. Even if for Foster the »parochialism« of his project does lie in *not* subsuming the »rest of the world« (once again) under this registry of modern(ist) criticality, the fact that he does not apply his incessant re-adaptation of critical categories imported from the now »fractured« idealist aesthetics of colonial Europe to what he deems beyond its scope has its merits: it replaces a dynamism of expansive colonialism (e.g. expanding to make all modern), with allegedly critical figures that are the registers of a degenerative coloniality (e.g. collecting the remains of modernism within reach). Being »caustic« here figures as a contemporary state of enhanced criticality, not as entitlement to a perspective that refuses unwaveringly to imply itself in understanding that »the public sphere is atrophied.«⁴⁷ Foster reiterates instead that »criticism is essential to the public sphere ... In some ways criticism is this sphere in operation«⁴⁸, a view he shares with his 18th century precursors, Diderot and Kant. Foster's proposition is to reinvigorate this deserted agora with »new forms of citizenship«⁴⁹: thus returning to expansion he suggests the subsumption of those systematically excluded (here, »the undocumented«) under the very national terms of political life that put their humanity into question. In the same way in which the existence of millions of undocumented people exposed to the economic, political and cultural brutalisms enacted by the modern nation state could today lead to questioning the concept of citizenship rather than pushing for its critical extension, the impossibility of registering un-modern, or in Foster's terms »unparochial« artistic workings in critical terms might

lead to questioning critique itself, rather than simply extending that which is deemed modern.

In the preface to his 1781 *Critique of Pure Reason* Immanuel Kant famously states that »our age is, in every sense of the word, the age of criticism, and everything must submit to it.«⁵⁰ Imagining ourselves in Kant's times today arguably characterizes not only the numerous attempts to once again reanimate European (read: colonial and national) ideas of emancipation as an ideal to aspire to, but it also perfectly outlines the zombie-like existence of the self-fashioned subjects of such an endeavour within our present. To engage in critique claims the momentous self-publicization of one's proprietorial interiority within the horizon of the modern public: a political space that colonialized, gendered and capitalized itself into being the political and artistic subject of a history that today finds itself in a state of illiberal degeneration. Even Theodor W. Adorno – to end with the parochial figure whose writing shaped my own capacity for intellectual authorization – focussing on his own civilization in an essay titled »Kritik«⁵¹ which he published in the mid 1960s, observes »full bourgeois emancipation in Germany never was achieved or only in a phase in which its precondition, the liberalism of scattered entrepreneurship was hollowed out.«⁵² Adorno here speaks of the times after the military defeat of National Socialism, of a German bourgeoisie whose emancipation was an (enforced) re-education within a society that had brutally illiberalized not only its social and cultural but also its economic life. If bourgeois emancipation was grounded within the liberal institution of a colonial and gendered public of proprietors, German National Socialism had attempted to naturalize that property by literally eliminating all who appeared systemically external to it. Critique was superfluous because national civilization here was not the public horizon of emancipation, but a biological assertion of *Gemeinschaft*. Adorno saw Kant's horizon collapse in real time. In 2019 however, Adorno's sentence reads differently: while it was liberalism, not emancipation (read: Kritik) that reinstated itself, the two had, as Adorno remarks, never been dissociable in the first place. What Fereirra da Silva calls the »stage of exteriority« and the »stage of interiority« become, once instituted, indistinguishable. They perpetuate one another and critique's public, modern role has been nothing less than to autonomize, secure and acculturate the colonizing »stage of interiority«. The generative character of artistic work like that of Henrike Naumann is that it demonstrates this intolerable conflation *as* our »life-work«. And while my own neatly educated ways of trying to accommodate this conflation into my thinking are shaped by an Adornian »Negative Dialectics«⁵³ that time and again comforts itself in »stages of *negative* interiority«, I keep trying to redirect my commitments into a variation of a motto the writer, painter and performer MYSTI once started a workshop with: »Critique is the opposite of Freedom.«⁵⁴

¹ Raymond Willams: *Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. London 1983, p. 86.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The latter being a closer approximation of the German word »Kritik«, the idealist origin of which will be discussed at a later point in this text.

- 5 Ibid.
- 6 See Naumann's webpage <http://www.henrikenumann.com/2000.html>.
- 7 Lu Märten: »Die künstlerischen Momente der Arbeit in alter und neuer Zeit« In: Lu Märten: *Formen für den Alltag. Schriften, Aufsätze, Vorträge*. Dresden 1982, p. 14 The German term is »Lebensarbeit«, which emphasizes the process of working as the work of life and not so much, as the English translation inevitably does, the result, which in German would rather be »Lebenswerk«.
- 8 Lu Märten: »Historisch-Materialistisches über Wesen und Veränderung der Künste. Eine pragmatische Einleitung (1921)« In: Märten 1982 (as note 7), p. 53
- 9 See Jean d'Alembert, Denis Diderot, Christian Denis: *L'Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers: 1751-1772 (1782)*. Paris 2013.
- 10 See Immanuel Kant: *Theoretische Philosophie*. Band 1: *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Frankfurt am Main 2004.
- 11 See Alfred Baeumler: *Das Irrationalitätsproblem in der Ästhetik und Logik des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zur Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Darmstadt 1976, p. 96-107.
- 12 Quoted in Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer (eds.): *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie Band 4, Kritik*. Berlin 1976, p. 1266.
- 13 Jean Seznec, Jean Adhémar (eds.): *Diderot, Salons, Vol. IV (Salon 1769)*. Oxford 1967, p. 65.
- 14 On the constitution of the political figure of the bourgeois see Cedric J. Robinson: *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Durham 2000, p. 197, 37.
- 15 Denise Ferreira da Silva: *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. Minneapolis 2007, p. xxxix.
- 16 Ibid., p. xxxviii.
- 17 Ibid., p. xvi.
- 18 Ibid., p. xxxvi.
- 19 Saidiya V. Hartman: *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. Oxford 1997, p. 189.
- 20 Frank B. Wilderson III: *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*. Durham 2010.
- 21 Jared Sexton: *Amalgamation Schemes. Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism*. Minneapolis 2008.
- 22 Joy James: *Restisting State Violence. Radicalism, Gender, and Race in U.S. Culture*. Minneapolis 1996.
- 23 See Orlando Patterson: *Slavery and Social Death*. Harvard 1982.
- 24 Sexton 2008 (as not 21), p. 11.
- 25 See Jared Sexton: »The Social Life of Social Death: On Afro-Pessimism and Black Optimism« In: *InTensions Journal*, Issue 5 (Fall/Winter 2011), passim.
- 26 Because the »punitive ontology of race« does not stand alone in its un-assigning humanity. The gendering of the modern bodies of national citizenship have rendered femininities unsound, racisms beyond anti-blackness have shaped regionalist conceptions of humanity as such, or, in other words, modern science itself would have to be discerned for the foundation of its truth claim within a construction of nature as what is de-humanized.
- 27 Maurice Blanchot: *The Writing of Disaster*. Lincoln 1986, p. 61.
- 28 If one looks at the recent resurgence of figures of political aggression as aesthetic means of a misunderstood criticality in contemporary art (for example, see the issue on *Immorality* the Austrian art magazine *Spike* published recently, Summer 2019, no 60) the question of how such a defense of privilege can be mistaken for critique also beats back to earlier generations of (white male) artists engaging in self-affirming forms of aesthetic bullying.

- 29 See Frank Engster's writing, e.g. »Status und Stellung des Finanzkapitals und Marx' Orthodoxie« (2016), »Zum Begriff des Geldes und des Finanzkapitals – Maß und Gemessenes der kapitalistischen Produktionsweise« (2015), on: <https://non.copyriot.com/>.
- 30 Aruna D'Souza: *Whitewalling: Art, Race & Protest in 3 Acts*. New York 2018.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 32 Willams 1983 (as note 1), p. 181.
- 33 D'Souza 2018 (as note 30), p. 12.
- 34 Sabeth Buchmann, Isabelle Graw: »The Critique of Art Criticism« In: *Texte zur Kunst*, March 2019, Issue 113, pp. 33-51.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 34
- 36 Which Isabelle Graw co-founded and is still the editor of and to which Sabeth Buchman has contributed since.
- 37 In her 2017 book *Studium, nicht Kritik*, Lucie Kolb discussed one of *Texte zur Kunst*'s precursors *A.N.Y.P.*, as well as the journals *The Fox* and *e-flux* as a form of textual study, proposing this concept as a practical alternative to that of critique (Vienna, 2017). For an overview of critical discussions in art criticism and/as social engagement see also Ines Kleesattel, Pablo Müller (eds.): *The Future is Unwritten. Position und Politik kunstkritischer Praxis*. Berlin/Zürich 2018.
- 38 Buchmann/Graw 2019 (as note 34), p. 48.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- 40 See Luc Boltanski: *On Critique. A Sociology of Emancipation*. Cambridge 2011.
- 41 See Cornelia Koppetsch: *Die Gesellschaft des Zorns: Rechtspopulismus im globalen Zeitalter*. Bielefeld 2019.
- 42 Buchmann/Graw 2019 (as note 34), p. 48.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 Hal Foster: *Bad New Days. Art, Criticism, Emergency*. London 2015, p. 2f.
- 45 And he goes to the trouble of discussing both Bruno Latour's and Jaques Rancière's contemporaneous dismissals of critique. See Foster 2015 (as note 44), p. 115ff. See Bruno Latour: »Has Critique run out of Steam?« In: *Critical Inquiry* 30 (winter 2004), pp. 225-47 and Jacques Rancière: *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. Cambridge 2009.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 123f.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- 50 Immanuel Kant: *Theoretische Philosophie*. Band 1: *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Frankfurt am Main 2004, p. xix.
- 51 Theodor W. Adorno: »Kritik« In: Gretel Adorno, Rolf Tiedemann (eds.): *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II. Eingriffe. Stichworte. Anhang, Gesammelte Schriften*. Bd. 10.2. Frankfurt am Main 1977, pp. 785-793.
- 52 *Ibid.*, p. 787.
- 53 Theodor W. Adorno: »Negative Dialektik« In: Gretel Adorno, Rolf Tiedemann (eds.): *Gesammelte Schriften, Negative Dialektik, Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*. Bd. 6. Frankfurt am Main 2003.
- 54 In MYSTI's case it was »Heterosexuality is the opposite of freedom«, which they prefixed to a workshop taught within a seminar on the concept of Critique at the Academy of Arts Nuremberg, summer term 2019.

Helmut Draxler

Ideology

Within the framework of the ›classical‹ understanding of ideology that has become popular ever since Karl Marx had roughly sketched it out in the 1840s, art can only be understood as part of the ideological superstructure. As such, art had to disappear under communism if everyone were to paint a little in the morning according to their needs and then go fishing in the afternoon. Marxist art and aesthetics – in the sense of a philosophy of art – cannot exist under these circumstances, since art and aesthetics necessarily presuppose the division of labour, specific competences and knowledge, and thus forms of inequality with regard to the distribution of needs. When Georg Lukács and Mikhail Lifschitz began to formulate a genuinely Marxist aesthetic in Moscow in the 1930s, this problem was quite clear to them. They could only solve it by daring to resort, on the one hand, to the idealistic understanding of art and, on the other hand, following Engels's and Lenin's example, by referring to a positive concept of ideology in the sense of a *Weltanschauung*. Only through this double operation could art actually – in Schiller's sense – be ›objective truth‹ and embody a gnoseological moment in which communism could recognize itself as such.¹

Both operations seem problematic from today's point of view – the idealistic inscription in a materialism and realism of art, as well as the positive reference to the concept of ideology in the sense of a *Weltanschauung* – since they make truth in a precarious way dependent on the idealism of a given *Weltanschauung*. However, I will try to defend both operations in what follows, albeit in a different way than Lukács and Lifschitz did in the 1930s. This requires first and foremost a discursive exploration of the concepts of art and ideology.

I

Within most modern theoretical conceptions, art and ideology seem either to be congruent – in the sense that art *is* ideology – or to be considered completely separate, with art here being given a specific form of truth that immunizes it against the ideological. Both positions, the vulgar-materialistic as well as the idealistic or truth-aesthetic one, eliminate the problem of how to conceive of the specific overlaps, the relations between the two concepts in terms of social history and of a history of ideas, and thus risk missing their actual political dimension.² So how can we think of the relationship between art and ideology if we start from the assumption that only in the form of this relationship does the actual explosive nature of both concepts emerge? This assumption implies thinking not only of art in terms of ideology, but also, conversely, of ideology in terms of art. This reciprocal determination seems to me to be important because neither of the terms in themselves seem capable of adequately describing the culturally ›frayed‹,³

socially differentiated, and mediatized present. However, by reconstructing their mutual determination, I would like to show that, despite being problematic when opposed, it is precisely their problematic interrelation that remains indispensable if we are to grasp their cultural and political significance.

A discursive connection between art and ideology can be asserted if we assume that the concept of art – as we have inherited it from the legacy of Idealism, can only be thought as an *ideal*. Art does not demarcate an area to be materially defined in any way, but rather indicates the horizon of an ultimately unattainable value. This is by no means only true for idealistic or aesthetic concepts of art, but also for the avant-garde and realism. For it is precisely in the avant-garde critique of bourgeois art that the ideality of this horizon of value becomes apparent, in relation to which bourgeois art does not suffice. Idealism does not correspond to the ideal because it claims to embody it, and any concrete claim can only falsify the ideal. Therefore, the ideal of the avant-garde cannot be realized categorically and it is this categorical impossibility that locates this ideal, for the most part, in the future. The same applies to realism. Its significant aesthetic and political claims can be understood constitutively only through a quantum of idealism. In other words, whenever we speak of art in the sense of a singular general term, we always carry its idealistic connotations with us.⁴ We can only truly assess the possibility of an anti-idealism if we no longer oppose idealism and anti-idealism, but grasp the historical and discursive necessity of working through these idealistic connotations.

If the concept of art thus implies idealization, the concept of ideology, conversely, represents an *anti-ideal*, the embodiment of falsehood, deception or lie. Long before the specific concept emerged and could be applied to the bourgeois capitalist culture of representation of the 19th century, notions of the categorically false, self-deceptive thinking, meaning and imagining were widespread. This prehistory is rooted, on the one hand, in monotheism and its differentiation from a false religion – that is, what Jan Assmann called the »Mosaic distinction«⁵ – and, on the other, in Plato's justification of philosophy as a doctrine of truth that differs categorically from sophism as an art of appearance and the production of false speech, opinion and imagination. Even modern empiricism remains dependent on such acts of demarcation. Francis Bacon, in his *Novum Organum* of 1620, seeks to overcome the *Idola Tribus, Specus, Fori, and Theatri* by discerning the illusions of human perception, individual development, communication, and conventionally or authoritarian prejudices. The constitutive function of the negative is thus decisive for pre-modern thought in its religious, philosophical-ontological, as well as epistemological ambitions. Every positive determination of truth can only be gained by strictly rejecting falsehood: *omnes determinatio est negatio*, as Spinoza calls it. The truth, the good, or the beautiful cannot be defined in themselves. Their determinations remain dependent on an act of pure rejection, on that from which they differ, and no abolition or dialectical integration of this difference is conceivable. The opposition between the material and the ideal, the visible and the invisible, the sensual and the intelligible, and the image and the concept are likewise aligned with this categorical difference. Idolatry and ideology are thus still closely bound together. The forms of relationship between these pairs of concepts, i.e., their mutual determination, are for the most part left out and one fails to grasp the dependence of a conceptual determination on its respective counter-concept.

Only within modernity does it become crucial to readjust the inner determination of both, the ideal and the anti-ideal, as well as in their relationship to one another. Neither the fact that art around 1800 – with Schiller, Schelling, and Hölderlin – could become an ideal, completely opposing the Platonic tradition, nor the emergence of the modern concept of ideology with its specific shifts in content, social reach, and argumentational logic is self-evident. The idealism of art lies above all in the fact that it is now considered to contain a specific form of truth that is superior to all reflection. With this specific form, art's ontological, epistemological, and political dimensions fall into one another. The concept of art as both singular and general detaches itself from any concrete embodiment, from any specific work or practice; it articulates itself as »split«, articulating itself through the difference between idea and realization, absolute truth and relative validity, art and life. The idealistic – in contrast to the *idealistic*⁶ – lies precisely in considering it possible to overcome this fundamental split: in Schiller's play, in Schelling's unconscious-setting action, in Schelling's and Hölderlin's intellectual intuition. This means that in idealism a difference between the concept of art and its possible embodiments is simultaneously summoned and concealed, called upon and made to disappear again. It is precisely not through the autonomy of authorship, of the work, or its reception that the ideal shifts into the ideological, but precisely that strictly secondary and truly idealistic operation through which difference is transformed into identity. The primary or *idealistic* operation of calling for a difference between the concept and the matter of art, on the contrary, seems to me to represent the lasting legacy of idealism. It is only from this foundational difference that it becomes meaningful to talk about art *in general*.

The guiding distinction characteristic of the modern concept of ideology is no longer located between thinking and sensuality, but within the category of the intelligible itself, as thinking and sensuality are ›thought‹ in each case. Likewise, falsity, whether it concerns thinking, meaning, or imagining cannot be conceived as a specific heretical group's erroneous claim to truth. Rather, it concerns a specific historical class, the bourgeoisie, whose horizon of consciousness is altogether ideologically shaped. The claim to power of the nobility, on the contrary, was and is always overtly blunt. The peasants and the workers also speak directly and straightforwardly. And even fascism does not deceive anyone about its true motives. They may all be trapped in a ›false consciousness‹ regarding their historical situation or position. Their speaking, however, is not ideological in the strictly modern sense, because they always say clearly and distinctly what they can and want to say. That is precisely what the bourgeois are not doing. They say one thing and mean another. Bourgeois ideology is not simply a false speech or a semblance that could be broken to reveal the truth; it is a highly ambiguous speech that should always beguile us all. The bourgeoisie speaks of freedom and self-determination, of individual emancipation and moral responsibility, of universal human rights and consistent climate protection, and yet means something completely different, namely first and foremost its own particular interests and privileges. Only this specifically bourgeois, indirect speaking is contradictory and ideological. However, it is not easy to measure it by its contradictions, because truth and falsehood are often inseparably interwoven in this speech.

Marx's concept of ideology, as he first formulates it, is not concerned with a horizon of total bourgeois delusion or with a fundamental principle of self-alienation inherent in every capitalist transaction, as he will later pose it in his analysis of the commodity form

or commodity fetishism; on the contrary, the concept is referred to the active form of reflection in the most progressive spirits of his time.⁷ The »ruling thoughts« – of Bruno Bauer, Max Stirner, or Ludwig Feuerbach – are ideological in the precise sense that they are nothing other than the »thoughts of the ruling class«. As the »ideological expression of the ruling material conditions« they are the »thoughts of their rule« par excellence. Therefore, a »critique of critical criticism« is required, as Marx suggests in the *Holy Family* of 1844/45, and this is also how the *German Ideology* of 1845/46 is to be understood. The critique of ideology sets itself radically apart from those upside down »images« of a thinking whose essence is merely ghostly and which proceeds without reference to »real reality« as in the camera obscura.⁸ All the more reason today for such a critique of critical critique, where the spirit of progressive critique often takes on the most sublime form of ideology.⁹

Hence, it is unmistakable that Marx's thought in *The German Ideology* remains informed by the Platonic opposition between truth and falsehood, the spiritual and the phenomenal. However, he inverts the relation between the intelligible and the sensible by turning ideas into the sign of the unreal and with the figure of the ruling class, he introduces a social category that does not exist in Platonism. This ruling class does not speak for itself directly, nor bluntly about its rule; rather, it delegates this speaking to a caste that, like the sophists, turns its speaking into a profession, in this case the modern, left-wing Hegelian intellectuals. The bourgeoisie endows these intellectuals with autonomy, which enables them to talk about the »most sacred interests of the spirit, the ›substance‹, self-confidence, ›criticism‹, the ›only one‹, and the ›true man‹«, and it is in this very autonomy that their speech conceals what bourgeois rule is really about, namely »protective tariffs, constitution, potato disease, banking, and railways«. One has, as it were, already fallen into the trap as soon as one even gets involved in the discourse.¹⁰

Is it possible to understand the discourse on art in a similar manner as ideology is understood within the discourse of left-wing Hegelianism? Undoubtedly one could understand the speech or discourse of individual artists as an expression of their class position, but what about their works or practices? How do they relate to their structural conditions, i.e., the market and institutions? And would such a concept of ideology ultimately concern the general concept of art as the ideal of a truth, or the idealistic claim of the concrete embodiment of such a truth? Here no simple derivation seems possible. Lukács's argument was that in the 19th-century realistic novel, despite the ideological limitations of individual authors – the reactionary confessions of Balzac or Dostoevsky, for example – an objective impulse for social movement was evident in their works.¹¹ This makes it clear that the differences between the authors and their readers, the artistic subjects and their works or practices, the works and their social conditions (markets and institutions: the productive forces of art), and finally between these conditions and the concept of art as such are indispensable prerequisites for being able to draw the distinction between ideal and ideological. These respective classifications always presuppose this difference, and for this reason it seems to make little sense to brand art as a whole or even particular areas such as contemporary art as ideological. Not only because this would deprive us of any specific and differentiating understanding of art works or practices, but especially for logical reasons that affect the understanding of ideology itself.

The concept of ideology can only be used meaningfully if it itself remains related to a certain ideal, a position of truth, that informs how the ideological is judged. This truth-

position is always already socially and culturally situated, i.e. inseparably linked with social and especially cultural inscriptions in the sense of the »ideological forms« such as law, morality or education, of which Louis Althusser speaks.¹² The problem of pure ideological critique is that it excludes both its own social positioning – that is, the very subject of a critique that »invokes« the interpellation of the subject by ideology – and that one area must always be excluded from the »ideological forms« in order to be able to denounce the ideology of the other areas. With Althusser it is science and partly politics, with Adorno art, that can break through the total delusional context of the others or the omnipresence and »eternity« of ideology in Althusser's terminology. The totalization of the structuralist concept of ideology therefore necessarily leads to an aporia;¹³ it must necessarily idealize single ideological forms in order to de-idealize the others. However, no concrete form of art (work or practice) or politics, science, law and even economy can be purely ideal or purely ideology. Each of these concrete forms require an ideological orientation to their respective general concept as an »ideological form«.¹⁴ They always share in both: only in this mixture or relationship can they become concrete and materially realize themselves. Theoretically, therefore, it can only be a matter of grasping the relationship between ideal and ideology and developing a differential understanding of the two concepts. There can be no fundamental exceptions here.¹⁵ Not only because this belongs to the conditions of life in capitalism, but because only from here can one talk meaningfully about ideology and ideal, but also about the various symbolic forms. This by no means implies a softening of the category of ideology; on the contrary, it demands a strong positioning in the force field of truth and falsehood.

II

But how can a critique of critical criticism, as Marx has attempted it, be distinguished from a mere critical critique or even critical art? Are we not all left-wing Hegelian intellectuals or sophists today? From which truth position can the claim of such a categorical difference be raised at all? The problem of anti-ideological critique inevitably arises at the moment when we recognize that the position of an absolute truth is itself questionable. For the historical-philosophical horizon of the industrial proletariat and its intrinsically necessary radical pauperization can hardly be thought of today as an indispensable precondition of any real emancipation in a productive way. Capitalist socialization no longer produces a uniform class whose consciousness is already prefabricated in its being, as it has been assumed in the long tradition of a strictly economist reading of the Marxian legacy.¹⁶ Rather, it produces diverse social formations between partial inclusion and radical exclusion, in which every form of counter-consciousness and resistance is always already divided. As a result, a position of truth cannot be directly derived from the social productivity of capital. Furthermore, sexism and racism are largely non-ideological forms of consciousness of domination and social privilege.¹⁷ This makes it clear that Marx's own positioning is also a radically contingent and speculative assertion, but one in which he is extremely committed. This means that the difference from sophistic left-wing Hegelianism can in fact only be claimed, not proven. The claim itself, the assertion of such a difference is necessary in order to identify the ideological as such, to name something as ideological. Yet, the assertion does not issue from the secure position of an absolutely given truth position, but only from the uncertainty of a *Weltan-*

schauung. If we do not understand by *Weltanschauung* a claustrophobically oppressive, closed system, but the horizon of a committed assertion, then this can definitely make sense.

Such a re-appropriation of the sense of *Weltanschauung* is all the more appropriate when capitalism and the bourgeois world today no longer need to be ›unmasked‹; if they still conceal their interests, it is only to a small extent, which is why they no longer truly need art or philosophical speculation in order to be able to legitimize themselves through ›substance and spirit‹. In the everyday life of the media, there is an unlimited boasting about »protective tariffs, constitution, potato disease, banking and railways.« Capitalism is depriving itself of its bourgeois identity; it is on its way to becoming a blunt or even naked system of rule. Classical and structuralist ideological critique are not enough in this situation. On the one hand, it requires a theory of ideology in order to work out what could still be understood as ideology in today's deeply mediatised intellectual, cultural and artistic forms;¹⁸ on the other hand, it requires an idea – even if it is the idea of communism¹⁹ – in order to be able to address the divisions that capitalism continually produces. Splitting, not veiling, has become the dominant principle of domination, mainly in two forms: On the one hand there is the liberal world that adheres to the fiction of being able to overcome or at least pacify the divisions it constantly produces within its own order – and in doing so consistently splits itself off from those who do not share this fiction; and on the other hand there is the authoritarian-nationalist world that welcomes divisions and wants them to aggravate in order to draw identity and partisan political benefits from them.

Whereas the ideological concealment of domination whether through thought, will, and action or its embodiment in habitus and everyday practice could easily be attacked,²⁰ such an attack seems to be more difficult with splitting, when it becomes the actually productive moment of domination. Reintegrating the individual products of division misses the point, because it assumes the respective identities that are in fact only the result of the process of division. Yet, it is equally erroneous to assume a fundamentally primordial and unsplit zone as if such a zone could be called upon as the horizon of a new totality in the future; for it is again only in the moment of fragmentation itself that the respective idea of totality becomes meaningful.²¹

For a position of truth, this means that it cannot be an objective or even absolute truth; rather, it must necessarily be articulated out of the products of division themselves. An absolute position of truth or the individual recourse to totality ultimately means nothing other than division as long as not all other humans share this position. Precisely for this reason, however, it requires an idea to be able to think splitting as a political and capitalist principle in the mode of critique and assertion. An assertion of truth in the sense of such an idea or positive ideology can therefore only be a contingent, differential or committed truth: as an indispensable prerequisite to be able to criticize something as ideology but also modern forms of domination that are founded in splitting, not in concealment.²² It can only be found in our own speculative horizon of motivation with regard to equality and justice as certain forms of moral, social and political civility or culture if we want to do without objective conditions.²³ However, all such forms are categorically neither true nor false, neither purely ideal nor purely ideological, but constitutively both: in this very context they develop as special symbolic forms: as art, science, politics or culture. It is only in such symbolic forms that the relationship

between ideal and ideological is at issue. The ideal cannot be divorced absolutely from the ideological; ideology is the intrinsic moment of every discourse on truth, not just its counterpart. Every truth tips into the ideological and only this contingent or event-related truth is ultimately ›objective‹.²⁴ For this reason, even the liberal idea of freedom of choice cannot be understood exclusively as an ideological deception, which we could oppose with a fundamentally different idea of freedom. Freedom measures itself only by the forms it could either take historically or as which it is at least conceivable; an absolutely different freedom, a freedom from all conditions and beyond all restrictions for others is not even conceivable. It cannot, therefore, give any truth-theoretical standard for what is given, however wrong that may be. The problem of liberal freedom does not consist in its false semblance, but in its constitutively split form, through which it radically suppresses the bondage that necessarily accompanies it.²⁵

With regard to art, this can only mean that neither purely positive nor strictly negative ideas are appropriate to it. Caught up in the logic of division, both easily tip into their opposite, or generally from their claim to truth into the untruth. Therefore, what is needed is a concept of art that tends to be as ideal as it is ideological, which can neither be the horizon of actually authentic speech nor the pure expression of an ultimately fatal bourgeois culture of distinction. In both cases, the distinction between good and bad art, for example, is eliminated. Accordingly, Wolfgang Fritz Haug has rightly claimed a kind of ›cultural distinction‹ against Bourdieu and Althusser,²⁶ but has also criticized Adorno's purely positive concept of art, which not only makes the notion of fascist art impossible, but tends to define culture as a split concept of art in general negatively. Any reference to art must therefore proceed from a more positive definition than Bourdieu and Althusser, but a more negative one than Adorno, in order to lay claim to ideological-theoretical relevance. The relativity and interrelationship of the symbolic categories – such as between art, politics, science, or religion – corresponds to the structural ambivalence of the respective propositions. Only if I take into account the potential for my own speech and judgment to become ideology can I meaningfully criticize the ideological speech and judgments of others. The questionability of my own truth position makes it at the same time necessary in order to be able to launch speech and judgment at all. Like Hegel's ›unhappy consciousness‹, only a discourse that is certain of its tendentious ideological function can assert a truth that is at once contingent, differentiated and committed.²⁷

Ideology and idealism are therefore by no means to be understood as negative determinations, against which we must mobilize a critical claim to truth. Rather, they represent positive preconditions on the basis of which we can make cultural, artistic, scientific, and ultimately political distinctions in the first place. The aim is not to overcome idealism or ideology; rather, we should address the differences of their peculiar evaluations solely from within themselves. Ideology and idealism are thus by no means ›eternal‹, but specific historical forms of symbolization. To thematize them as symbolic forms in this way not only situates and exposes any speaker in social and cultural terms; it also demands an authoritative or assertive, historical-genealogical and finally realistic component of every critique. Only in the double approach of assertion and critique, self-reflexivity and unconditional truth claim can the categorical proportionality of ideal and ideology be grasped and something other than ideal *or* ideology be fought for.

- 1 Georg Lukács: »Art and Objective Truth« In: Arthur D. Kahn, Ed. *Writer and Critic, and Other Essays*. London 1970, pp. 25-60. The essay was published for the first time in 1954 but was probably written in 1934; see: Daniel Göcht: *Mimesis – Subjektivität – Realismus: Eine kritisch-systematische Rekonstruktion der materialistischen Theorie der Kunst in Georg Lukács' Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen* (Lukács-Studien). Bielefeld 2017.
- 2 Vulgar-materialistically, I would name above all those approaches that think they have already solved the problem of art and can replace it with recourse to practice, materiality or media. More or less the entire, classically modern reflexion on art, both in Adorno and Lukács as well as in Heidegger and Gadamer, is characterized by idealist truth aesthetics.
- 3 Adorno calls the references between media and art genres frayed (»verfranst«), as they have become typical for art since the early 1960s. See: Theodor W. Adorno: »Die Kunst und die Künste« In: Theodor W. Adorno: *Ohne Leitbild. Parva Aesthetica*. Frankfurt am Main 1967, pp. 168-192.
- 4 Why not just talk about the arts? Because then we could either refer to historically defined areas without any specific claim to a common value or to the broad field of every imaginable cultural articulation. The discourse about the arts therefore presupposes art – as that unity of the arts, otherwise it would not even be possible to speak of the arts.
- 5 Jan Assmann: *Die mosaische Unterscheidung: oder der Preis des Monotheismus*. München 2003.
- 6 The Idealic – *das Idealische* – is the term mainly used by idealists like Friedrich Schiller and romanticists like Friedrich Schlegel in order to define the transgressive dimension of any practice.
- 7 Against the popular reading of Marx which I have mentioned at the beginning of this text, I am supporting here a very specific understanding of ideology and a renunciation of any concrete determination of communism.
- 8 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company*. Moscow 1956.
- 9 See: Slavoj Žižek: *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London and New York 1989.
- 10 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: »The German Ideology. Critique of Modern German Philosophy According to Its Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner, and of German Socialism According to Its Various Prophets« In: Marx-Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, especially the chapter: The Leipzig Council: Saint Bruno.
- 11 Georg Lukács: »Realism in the Balance« In: Vincent B. Leitch, Ed.: *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York 2001, pp. 1033-1058.
- 12 Louis Althusser: *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. London, New York 2010. Étienne Balibar: »Politics and Truth: The Vacillation of Ideology II« In: Étienne Balibar: *Masses, Classes, Ideas. Studies on Politics and Philosophy before and after Marx*. London and New York 1994, pp. 151-176.
- 13 See: Jan Rehmann: *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection*. Chicago 2013, p. 19.
- 14 In contrast, I prefer the term »symbolic form«, not strictly in the sense of Ernst Cassirer, but as intrinsically meaningful and structuring elements of the modern symbolic order. For this see: Helmut Draxler: *Abdrift des Wollens. Eine Theorie der Vermittlung*. Vienna and Berlin 2017.
- 15 Still Alain Badiou privileges certain symbolic forms by the ability to appear as scenes of truth events: Politics and science, art and love. See: Alain Badiou: *Manifesto for Philosophy*. New York 1999.

- 16 The last attempt in this direction might be the concept of the »multitude« by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, conceived as an opponent to capitalism that is produced by the social dynamics of capitalism itself. See: Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri: *Multitude. War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. London and New York 2005.
- 17 Sexism and racism only become ideological where they hide in anti-sexist or anti-racist rhetoric, for example, mostly with the »good« men or whites. For the right the problem does not arise because they have nothing to hide anyway, which is why criticism of their sexism and racism bounces off them notoriously.
- 18 For this see: Rehmann 2013 (as note 13).
- 19 Alain Badiou: »The Idea of Communism« In: Slavoj Žižek and Costas Douzinas (ed.): *The Idea of Communism*. London and New York 2010.
- 20 Thus those practical-everyday dimensions of ideology as they were elaborated by Antonio Gramsci and Pierre Bourdieu. On this see: Rehmann 2013 (as note 13), in particular Chapters 5 and 7.
- 21 This is the essential meaning of the psychoanalytic concept of splitting as elaborated by Melanie Klein, Ronald Fairbairn and Jacques Lacan. There is categorically no original or holistic-unsplit here. Splitting is the conditions of any psychic, social and symbolic articulation.
- 22 However, a »negative ontology of difference« does not necessarily have to be asserted. For this see: Alenka Zupancic: *What is Sex?* Cambridge, MA 2017.
- 23 For the concept of political civility see: Étienne Balibar: »Three Concepts of Politics: Emancipation, Transformation, Civility« In: Étienne Balibar: *Politics and the Other Scene*. London and New York 2002, pp. 1-39.
- 24 I am following in this argument Lacan's reading of the death drive as a constitutive aspect of any drive. It indicates, that there is no moment of pure truth, not even in the event, but also and always already untruth.
- 25 For a critic of the ideology of freedom of choice see: Frank Ruda: *Abolishing Freedom: A Plea for a Contemporary Use of Fatalism*. Lincoln, NE, and London 2016.
- 26 Wolfgang Fritz Haug: *Die kulturelle Unterscheidung. Elemente einer Philosophie des Kulturellen*. Hamburg 2011.
- 27 The notion of contingent truth was discussed primarily in the context of the northern renaissance with reference to Stoic and Sophist traditions. See: Toon van Houdt: »Word Histories, and Beyond: Towards a Conceptualization of Fraud and Deceit in Early Modern Times« In: Toon van Houdt, Jan L. De Jong (eds.): *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty. Principles and Strategies of Fraud and Deceit in the Early Modern Period*. Leiden, Boston 2002, p. 1-32; For Hannah Arendt »truth of facts« are necessarily contingent contrary to a »truth of reason«; see: Hannah Arendt: »Truth and Politics« In: Hannah Arendt: *Between Past and Future*. London 2006, p. 223-259.

Alex Potts

Labour

While labour plays a central role in Marx and historical materialism more generally, it has been an intermittent, relatively subsidiary concern within social histories of art, even more Marxist ones. This has partly to do with a broader cultural turn in the humanities over the past half century, and also with the impact of the Frankfurt School preoccupation with the politics of the commodity and the cultural conditions created by the increasingly pervasive commodification of material life in modern capitalist society. The situation has undergone some change in recent years, evident in a closer engagement with issues of political economy within critical cultural theory, and in changing priorities of art-historical study as the modernist and avant-garde allergy to social realism has subsided to create opportunities for more concerted consideration of the visual imaging of the material conditions of labour. The relatively low key status of labour as an issue, even in more critical forms of art history, also has to do with the nature of the materials of study – even in visual art and culture dealing deal explicitly with the changing aspect of the social fabric, labouring and the conditions of life amongst the working classes features at best sporadically and even then mostly in relatively marginal contexts.

This essay does not seek to contest this situation, but rather to focus attention on the considerable value of the insights offered by Marxist and Marxist inspired art histories that engage centrally with issues of labour. Broadly speaking, studies which foreground labour as a serious concern take two forms. Firstly, there are those examining formations of artistic labour and their relationship to prevailing constitutions of labour within society at large. Alternatively, there are studies examining the visual representation of the labour and condition of the working classes. These raise questions about the presence or absence of labour within the visual art and culture of a society and seek to understand the ways in which approaches to picturing labour might be responding to the condition of labour within the broader socio-economic nexus of world the artist inhabits. Partly as the result of the emphasis placed in critical forms of modern art history on avant-garde or proto-avant-garde experimentation with new modes of artistic production that might challenge or subvert dominant norms – that is with a »critical« artistic labour as gesturing against the workings of modern capitalism – the first current has been the dominant one.

First, a few preliminary comments on Marx's conceptualizing of labour as material process and as commodified source of profit. Like other European thinkers of his time responding to the conditions created by rapid industrialization, he envisioned labour or work as having a double aspect. Labour for him played a fundamental role in the provision of the material goods a society had at its disposal, while as a combination of »vital activity« and »free conscious activity«, it also defined »the species character of man«.

Nevertheless, labour as wage labour realized under the conditions of modern capitalist exploitation had become abstracted and alien for the labourer. While attacking Adam Smith for envisioning labour as in itself a curse that simply had to be endured, he endorsed Smith's verdict »that labour has always seemed repulsive, and forced on the worker from outside, in its historical forms of slave-labor, bond-labor and wage labor«. ¹ In *Capital* Marx offered an eloquent commentary on the potentially invigorating nature of collective work carried out on a co-operative rather than individual basis – for man »is at all events a social animal« – even as he insisted that under the aegis of capitalism, the formal co-operation involved when workers were engaged together on a task ceased to have any real meaning for them. ² His complex diagnosis of the historically changing conditions of labouring steers clear of the moralizing and often nostalgic laments common at the time about the inherently degrading character of the new forms of labour to which industrialization was subjecting the working classes.

Artistic Labour

Discussion of the nature of the labour involved in the conception and making of works of art, including works now considered art but produced in societies that did not envisage a category of art distinct from other kinds of fabricated object, has circulated around two key questions. What, if anything, distinguishes artistic production and the labour of the artist from production of luxury goods and artisanal labour? The second question relates more specifically to conditions in the modern period (roughly speaking from the late eighteenth century onwards). Is artistic production simply a form of capitalist commodity production for the market, or might artistic labour represent an alternative to labour operating under the regime of capitalist exploitation?

Such questions take on a different complexion depending on the historical situation being considered. Firstly, in studies of societies where a separate category of artistic production had not taken shape, the question arises as to whether the fabricators of those finely fashioned objects featuring images and decorative patterns possessing an expressive or symbolic value in excess of their merely utilitarian value were seen as having a special skill that set their workmanship apart from that of the common run of anonymous labourers. This question becomes more complex, and more amenable to systematic analysis, for early modern, pre-industrial societies, where a notion of the artist as having a status distinct from other artisans and manufacturers of luxury goods takes shape. A key issue, highlighted in the creation of academies of art in the early modern period, was the claim these academies and the related theoretical and critical literature on art made that the practice of art was not a trade or craft, and certainly not mere manual labour, but a liberal art like writing which required mental and imaginative insight. The formation of academies and other informal communities of independent artists and critics, theoreticians and patrons who made a case for the special status of art went in parallel with the growth (and increasing globalization) of a market in luxury commodities, and the gradual freeing of manufacture from the constraints of the guild system. The development was uneven, with for example the guild system continuing in many areas until the end of the eighteenth century. For the artist this new situation had a double aspect, partly freeing them from direct dependence on a patron, at the same time as subjecting them to the uncertainties of a free market and its unrelenting demand for sellable goods.

Art-historical studies of this kind have not necessarily been Marxist. A focus on the ways in which artistic production in the later early modern period of incipient consumerism became in effect painting for money, and on artists as economic agents producing goods for the market, could as easily be allied with an unproblematic history of the progress of modern capitalism as it could with a Marxist analysis of how artistic production became shaped, and disfigured, by distinctively capitalist relations of production. Equally, study of the growing distinctions made between artistic and other forms of commodity production need not engage with any finer grained analysis of the politics of labour. Still, Marxist art historians have made major contributions to these studies – early examples include Frederick Antal's work on the Florentine Renaissance and the English eighteenth century and Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art*.³

There is something of a break, though necessarily a far from clear cut one given the uneven development of modern capitalist systems of production, in the priorities guiding studies of early modern art from those on art of the modern period from the nineteenth century onwards once industrial production of material goods took off. These new economic conditions opened up the possibility that the art work could be conceived as representing the antitheses of a factory- or mechanically-produced commodity, with its value determined by the artist's individual touch and shaping of materials, and the artist's physical labour envisaged as free labour that escaped the more mechanical and monitored work routines of the wage labourer. Such factors fed into a notion of free artistic creativity as possibly being a model for what work might become in a truly liberated society, one which, in Marxist terms, would be guided by a social rather than market economy.

When such notions of artistic creativity had become normative, however, the terms in which a radical artistic practice might be conceived began to shift, privileging ones that would subvert a fetishizing of the artist's touch which had been taken to the point that artistic labour itself became an index of economic value. These new practices, broadly speaking conceptual in character, have been envisaged in Marxist terms as a deskilling. By incorporating non hands-on production processes characteristic of late industrial society they can be seen as exposing present-day mechanisms of commodity production as well as the bankruptcy of art world celebrations of the creativity of free artistic labour.⁴ Equally Marxist is recent analysis in technical economic terms of the constitution of artistic labour. This seeks to clarify the extent to which the modern artist either simply operates under the aegis of capitalism as wage labourer or capitalist, or is engaged in a mode of production that might be more hybrid, one exhibiting survivals of earlier artisanal or workshop modes, and generating forms of value not exhaustively defined by market determinations.⁵ Such focus on the political economy of artistic labour significantly represents a return to Marx.

Labour in Art

Given the relatively marginal occurrence of scenes of labouring within the pictorial worlds of most cultures, drawing attention to the significance of what scenes there are can betray a Marxist perspective distinct from that found in most mainstream art and cultural history. It is not entirely surprising that one of the first concerted studies of early depictions of industrial labour in English art is found in the book, *Art and the Industrial*

Revolution, by a self-avowed Marxist sociologist and art historian, Francis Klingender; nor that the influential analysis of the social significance of previously largely ignored representations of agricultural labour in British landscape painting, *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, was by a literary scholar and cultural historian John Barrell whose outlook had been shaped by the Marxist turn in postwar British literary and historical studies.⁶

Forms of visual imaging which do depict scenes of everyday life as distinct from religious and mythological depictions or other widely practiced genres such as landscape and portraiture generally feature leisure and sociability rather than labour, even in work representing lower or working-class life. There are nevertheless moments in the history of art and visual culture of significant take-up of labouring as a theme, notably for example with representations of labours of the seasons in medieval art and also some North European art from the outset of the early modern period,⁷ and also in the scenes of tilling and weaving found in Chinese art and visual culture starting in the Song dynasty in the early second millennium.⁸

In the seventeenth century when Dutch art established itself as the leading paradigm for picturing everyday life in early modern European art, the social scope of scenes of lower-class life, largely devised as comic entertainment for aristocratic and wealthy middle class patrons, underwent a significant change. The scenes of agricultural labour which had occurred previously largely disappeared. The lower classes are almost exclusively shown engaged in leisure activities, carousing in taverns, or taking part in festivities and other informal and domestic social gatherings – free of subjection to labour. In so much as labour manifests itself, it is almost entirely by way of female domestic labour – child care, home spinning, and service in wealthy households. The world of commerce and manufacture and agricultural production on which the surplus wealth of the Netherlands was based, and which sustained the life style of the well-off featured widely in genre painting, are almost entirely absent, with the rare exception of the odd intimate scene of labour in an artisan's workshop.⁹

The impact of a politically charged preoccupation with labour during the early phases of industrialization initially made itself evident with the new scenes of agricultural labour appearing in the Realist art of the mid and late nineteenth century. These became an established genre, alongside social realist depictions of conditions of life amongst the working classes and the impoverished. The take-up of agricultural labour as a theme had its pastoral and nostalgic aspects, given the context of an increasingly industrialised and urban world. Nevertheless it also represented a response to widespread concern over the conditions under which labour was operating in a rapidly industrializing economy.¹⁰ Socialist and Marxist socio-economic critique played a role in this development, but it was also driven by a bourgeois entrepreneurial work ethic equally characteristic of the period.¹¹

Scenes of industry and industrial work, and occasionally industrial strife, began to enter into the pictorial world of high art, and to a greater degree visual culture generally, toward the end of the nineteenth century, leading to a more pervasive treatment of such themes in the twentieth century. The interwar period marked something of a high point in the currency of labour and industry in modern art and visual culture, some of it modernist, some more realist. Scenes of heavy industry and large-scale construction played a preponderant part, and for a time remained paradigmatic for people's image of industrial labour. Much of this art was not particularly radical or indeed Marxist in tenor. Even so

there were significant currents within it of critical realist and modernist experimentation amongst artists (and critics) on the left, seeking to expose the degradation of working conditions and working class life and the violent conflicts generated by industrial capitalism, as well as to offer visions of a radically revolutionised world of modern industry. Disentangling such complexities has been a significant concern amongst art and cultural historians of Marxist and left persuasion, even if their work has not specifically focused on issues of labour as such.¹²

While issues relating to labour ceased to play a significant role in the art of the post-war years of Cold War politics and expanding consumerism, subsequently there have been sporadic reversals of such concerns, including one in recent years informed by renewed political economic critique of capitalism and class inequality.¹³ One might see in this fluctuating artistic engagement with labour signs of larger combined and uneven development in the political economy of labour in the modern period which had its impact too on art historical studies. It is no accident that the major influx of Marxist thinking into art-historical studies associated with the formation of a social history of art coincided with the intensified class conflict and union (and student) activism of the late 1960s and 1970s. Much of this new work focused on the largely bourgeois class politics of the formally more innovative Realist and Impressionist painting of modern life then attracting most attention amongst art historians, work in which labouring and working class life played a peripheral role, with the exception of the radical early Realist depictions of rural life and labour in painting by Courbet and Millet produced during and in the immediate aftermath of the 1848 Revolution. The leading early social historians of art, such as T.J. Clark, Robert Herbert and Linda Nochlin, however, did at times deal in a systematic way with figurations of labour.¹⁴ In very recent years, social historical studies on modern art have been considerably broadening and recasting these earlier analyses of labour in art by bringing to bear a materialist and to some degree Marxist inspired concern with the political economy of work.¹⁵

What consequences might one draw for Marxist understandings of art from this complex and uneven engagement with issues of art and labour in both art itself and in art-historical studies? That the visible presence in art of the material realities of labour is simultaneously marginal and hugely significant, both seen and unseen, is of considerable note. Labour itself in the modern world is often bracketed from view even as it is everywhere apparent in the conditions of everyday life and the operations of the larger economy. To what extent is this distinctive to modern capitalist society, or also true of any class divided society? There is a further issue that the changing priorities of the picturing and performance of labouring in art bring into focus. The labouring featured in artistic representation at any historical moment changes, even as it often functions for the society in which it originates as the image of what labour is as a material practice. Most pertinently for us, the early and mid-twentieth century moment which foregrounded the imaging of heavy industrial labour has given rise to a lingering assumption that this is the characteristic form of real labour in the modern world. Recent scholarship, much of it Marxist in orientation, has been drawing attention to the broader social field in which capitalist exploitation of labour operates, often by way of wage labour, but also by exploiting the unpaid or informal labour on which society depends to sustain and reproduce itself.¹⁶ There are also persistent survivals of older forms of reciprocal labour relations which perform important functions in society and which are indirectly rather

than directly caught up in the nexus of capitalist exploitation. This situation not only has consequences for how Marxist art-historical study might envision the picturing of labour in visual art as well as conceptualizing the labour involved in the making of art. Labouring includes a much wider range of activities than the physical work required in the fabrication of material goods and works of art. Understanding how labour is being exploited by capital for profit in the present day world, and more generally how labouring has been exploited in different ways to serve the material interests and way of life of the upper classes, may require that we see what is and has been taking place on the factory and workshop floor; but it is equally necessary to extend our purview beyond this to formal and informal economy activity that is too easily dismissed as marginal or retardataire, even as it plays a key role in the economic nexus sustaining, and destroying, society.

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- 1 Karl Marx: *Selected Writings*. Oxford 1977, p. 82, 368.
 - 2 Karl Marx: *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1. New York 1977, pp. 444, 450-1.
 - 3 Frederick Antal: *Florentine Painting and its Social Background*. London 1947 and »The Moral Purpose of Hogarth's Art« In: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 15, 1952, pp. 169-197. Arnold Hauser: *The Social History of Art*. London and New York 1951.
 - 4 John Roberts: *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade*. London 2007.
 - 5 David Beech: *Art and Value: Art's Exceptionalism in Classical, Neoclassical ad Marxist Economics*. Leiden 2015.
 - 6 Francis D. Klingender: *Art and the Industrial Revolution*. London 1947. John Barrell: *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840*. Cambridge and New York 1980.
 - 7 Notable is the series of paintings by Pieter Breughel the Elder of labours of the months or seasons (c. 1565).
 - 8 Rosalyn Lee Hammers: *Pictures of Tilling and Weaving: Art, Labor and Technology in Song and Yuan China*. Hong Kong 2011.
 - 9 Even amongst Dutch genre paintings concerned with class and class distinction, there are only a few isolated instances of depictions lower class or artisanal labour. Roni Baer: *Class Distinctions. Dutch Painting in the Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer*. Boston 2015.
 - 10 Alex Potts: »Social Theory and the Realist Impulse in Nineteenth-Century Art« In: *Nonsite*, Issue 27, 2019.
 - 11 Tim Barringer: *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian England*. New Haven and London 2005.
 - 12 Andrew Hemingway: *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement, 1926-1956*. New Haven and London 2002. Terry Smith: *Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America*, Chicago 1997. Christina Kiaer: »Was Socialist Realism Forced Labour? The Case of Aleksandr Deineka in the 1930s« In: *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 28, 2005, pp. 321-345.
 - 13 Particularly notable is work by Allan Sekula and Harun Farocki.
 - 14 Robert L. Herbert: »City vs. Country: The Rural Image in French Painting from Millet to Gauguin« In: *Artforum*, Vol. 8, No. 6, 1970, pp. 44-55. T.J. Clark: »Millet« In: *The Absolute*

Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851. London 1973, pp. 72-98. Linda Nochlin: »Hail the Hero Worker« In: *Realism*. Harmondsworth 1971, pp. 111-137. Clark recently returned to such issues (»From Menzel to Burtynsky: Episodes from an Imagery of Capitalism« In: Malcolm Baker and Andrew Hemingway, eds.: *Art as Worldmaking*. Manchester 2018, pp. 198-210), as did Nochlin in her book on scenes of impoverishment in nineteenth century imaging of working-class life and labour (*Misère*. London 2018).

¹⁵ Marnin Young: *Realism in the Age of Impressionism: Painting and the Politics of Time*. New Haven and London 2015. Eckhart J. Gillen and Ulrike Lorenz, eds.: *Konstruktion der Welt: Kunst und Ökonomie 1919-1939*. Berlin 2018.

¹⁶ Andrea Komlosy: *Work: The Last 1,000 Years*. London and New York 2018.

Jenny Nachtigall

Life

»The starting point of art history remained form as art; the starting point of a study on the being of art that is founded on historical-materialism precedes and exceeds [art] – its starting point is not art alone, but form [...] as an expression of life.«¹

Lu Märten

After decades of insisting that we have to read the body as a text, that the unconscious is structured like a language, and that the artwork is a sign, today, it seems, the tide has turned. The political economy of capital and the political economy of signs gave way to a »political ecology of things«.² Within the critical vocabulary of the present everything is re-framed as living, evolving and relational. Frederic Jameson's demand – »Always historicize«³ – which after its proclamation at the beginning of the 1980s was frequently mobilised against post-structuralism's excessive sign infatuation, today fades from ear-shot as we are faced with a contemporary discourse teeming with the vitality of matter and things. We could think of this turn to vitality as a kind of meta-turn of a whole series of turns that ran their course over the last decade or so: to affect, to materiality, to ontology itself, the turn to the real and to ecology. All of which have been destined, it seems, to displace the primacy that history, economy and textuality once held as organizing concepts or tools to understand the social, the psychic or the bodily.

Marxism did not fare well in this shift. For the proponents of vitality Marxism epitomizes a theory of negativity and rationality that lacks a positive concept around which to organise and mobilise. For Jane Bennett, Marxism apparently thrives only on a demystification that presumes »that at the heart of any event or process lies a human agency that has illicitly been projected into things«.⁴ For others, along with post-structuralism, Marxism is said to reproduce the prerogative of the rational and the discursive over the bodily and affective that bespeaks a disembodiment that in itself is a symptom of domination.⁵

Both of these critiques are not entirely new. They can be traced to the form Deleuzianism took in the Anglophone humanities since the 1990s (rather than to the writings of Gilles Deleuze himself).⁶ It was certainly Deleuze's retrieval of once unfashionable or forgotten theories of, for example, empiricism, pragmatism and vitalism that intervened in the language-centred scene of deconstruction and structuralism by putting strong emphasis on the bodily, sensory and affective. What has been eradicated from the ubiquitous application of Deleuzianism in the last decades, though, is the »the necessary other side to the story, the forces of cohesion, encapsulation, and level-specific dynamics characteristic of living beings« without which any thinking of deterritorialization,

vitalist flows and intensities loses its meaning.⁷ This tendency to evacuate negativity and structure from today's dominant, new materialist mode of vitalism articulates itself not least in an aestheticized notion of vitality (or a vitalized notion of aesthetics). Artistic practices and aesthetic concepts consequently have been playing an exceptionally prominent role in the shift from textuality and historicity to vitality and ontology – or, if you will: from the old materialism to the new materialisms. From philosophers of vital materialism positing the creative agency of matter itself, to curators eagerly staging exhibitions that seek to exemplify art's privileged role as a medium of relationality between the human and the nonhuman, aesthetics looms large in the vitalist turn.⁸

How then, are we to understand the present turn to life and the role that art and aesthetics play therein? And what may Marxist Art History contribute to thinking the close link between vitality and aesthetics that characterizes present debates?

Admittedly, and evidently thanks to its Marxism and its history, for many advocates of new materialism Marxist art history may appear to be entirely outside of their discursive orbit, disparaged as an arcane relict from the (humanist) past, an area of niche specialisation practiced by now dead white men. However, it should not be relegated to such a position for reasons to do with the past as well as the present (and as will become apparent, for reasons perhaps not only to do with the men).

Let's start with the present. As a number of commentators (post-structuralist and Marxist) have noted the contemporary turn to life is a symptom of crisis. In the face of political agency stalling within the current destitution of the social and political struggles, the turn towards the productive, creative powers of life, is what Benjamin Noys calls an Ersatz-politics: a »place-holder for an absent, or failed politics« that seeks to recover a resistant moment within matter itself. Claire Colebrook further contends that the turn to life is a reaction formation in the sense that »Life appeared as the one overwhelming site of genuine thinking and redemption precisely at the point in history when the continuation of life was anything but certain.«⁹

If we look at this *symptomatic* character of the vitalist turn as a reaction to crisis (and not at the roots of the crisis, which manifestly differ), it actually does not appear so much as a turn but as a *return*: namely of vitalism ca. 1900. In its manifestations as cultural critique, historical vitalism too, either explicitly or implicitly, conceived of itself as an alternative to Marxism. As such, vitalism was not exactly a coherent movement of thought but rather a tendency traversing a variety of different intellectual fields in science, philosophy as well as art history in the years around 1900. Their (low) common denominator was the defence of »life« from exterior encroachment, which is to say from the nefarious effects of excessive rationality and mechanisation in »objective culture« (Georg Simmel), a mechanistic money-driven culture made by humans but increasingly alien to them. In its dominant cultural manifestations vitalism could be thus understood as a bourgeois theory of alienation, providing a perspective on society that centred on alienation's psychological and cultural effects rather than on the analysis and critique of its economic logic: it did not aim at redeeming experience in general, but *bourgeois* experience (the experience of a certain class). Premised on an understanding of capitalism as a kind of natural history, an evolution that is conceived as tragic, yet inevitable, from a vitalist perspective its consequences – namely alienation – could be deplored, but they could not be changed (they were, after all, perceived as tragic rather than historic). Hence the necessity of art: seeing its space of freedom dwindle, the bourgeois liberal

subject needed art to uphold the ideal of freedom that increasingly jarred with this subject's lived material existence.

In the 1920s and 30s, in the face of Europe's fascist turn, unorthodox Marxists like the philosopher Ernst Bloch and art historian Carl Einstein, in contrast to their more party-line affiliated comrades, took vitalist tendencies nonetheless extremely seriously. They did so not because of the coherence of vitalist arguments and promises, nor because vitalism was accurate in its analysis, but rather due to vitalism's affective appeal.¹⁰ Marxism, they argued, understated the cultural discontents and non-simultaneous desires that vitalist tendencies channelled (rather than the scientific or political frame that they provided).¹¹ The political urgency of Bloch's and Einstein's turn to vitalism was ultimately spurred by the success of the forces of reaction – in contrast to those of the Left – in mobilizing the lived experience of uneven development, of non-simultaneous desire and of myth.¹² As Einstein put it »society is determined not only by economic forces, but equally by social myth«, to which he, in contrast to the orthodox Marxists and bourgeois liberals, ascribes the »most powerful reality«. ¹³ However, Bloch's and Einstein's objections that simply criticising vitalism is not enough – precisely because the problems that it articulated were lived and felt – nevertheless failed to gain traction.¹⁴

While in post-war Germany vitalisms of every shade were almost completely politically disavowed as representing what Georg Lukács discredited as proto-fascist harbingers of a »destruction of reason«, ¹⁵ in France post-structuralist philosophers like Deleuze started to retrieve life philosophy from the waste bucket of discarded ideas. *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the two volumes of the infamous study on *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* that Deleuze co-authored with the dissident psychiatrist Félix Guattari could be in some respects at least understood as an attempt to bring the lessons of vitalism to bear on an analysis of contemporary capitalist culture and subjectivity.¹⁶ Like Bloch and Einstein in the 1930s (but also the circles around Georges Bataille in France), Deleuze and Guattari were acutely aware of how questions of affect and subjectivity remained a blind spot within Marxism. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that – in contrast to the schematic Deleuzianism that characterizes large parts of today's new materialisms – their return to vitalism was by no means anti-Marxist. As Jacques Donzelot argued, *Anti-Oedipus* was if anything a »hyper-Marxism« on account of the centrality of production within it.¹⁷ Desiring production, one of the book's core concepts, expands the Marxist understanding of production to include desire, which itself is not understood in a (narrowly defined) psychoanalytical sense as obeying certain psychic laws (e.g the Oedipus complex) but as (vitalistically) deborderd – or as they prefer to say deterritorialized – as a force that traverses individual as well as social and political bodies and structures. Unlike Henri Bergson's *élan vital*, desiring production is not conceived as a metaphysical force that animates all beings, but as historically grounded in the capitalist libidinal economy and its social systems.¹⁸ »In Deleuze and Guattari«, Donzelot contends, »desire then takes its place in the Marxist constellation of the productive forces. It is only repressed and regulated by that which regulates all production. [...] the problem is not to criticize power, nor to name it, but to perceive the active links it upholds with what is its own negation: desire.«¹⁹

With regard to the question of vitalism, it becomes clear then that there is no such thing as an uncontaminated or non-capitalist vitality to hold on to, whether we call this

vitality *élan vital*, desire, living labour, thing power (Bennett) – or indeed whether we see it materialised in art. In conceiving of vitality in aesthetic terms (or vice versa: of aesthetics in vitalist terms) new materialist approaches to vitalism tend to elide this fact. In so doing, they unwittingly import *less* Deleuze, and rather the idealist notion of aesthetics that Kantianism bequeathed to life philosophy. As Terry Eagleton has argued, the modern concept of aesthetics is itself the result of a transformation and indeed ossification of a long-standing discourse on aesthesis in the sense of a bodily sensorium into a specialised discourse about art.²⁰ The project of philosophical aesthetics in modernity was after all to cultivate, domesticate and train what was understood as the unruly pre-logical scene of the senses that threatened the (imagined) coherence of the subject. Kant's transcendental subject consequently purged »himself of the senses which endanger autonomy not only because they unavoidably entangle him in the world, but, specifically, because they make him passive [...] instead of active [...], susceptible, like ›Oriental voluptuaries‹ to sympathy and tears.«²¹ Aesthetic autonomy, in other words, was not allowed to go soft, but had to keep up the virile defence shield against the unruliness and vitality of the senses.

Although life philosophy appears to be opposed to such domestication and ordering, following Peter Gorsen, it is precisely the persistence of rationality and order that defines its contradictory core.²² When, for instance, Bergson likens life to the work of an »artist of genius« (which he vigorously distinguishes from the product of a worker), he appeals to intuition rather than logic, to becoming rather than being as the essence of vitality and the artwork as its model.²³ In approximating life to art, however, life is rendered artificial (and thus essentially dead). Georg Simmel, who contributed to popularising Bergson in the German-speaking context, pushed the vitalist aesthetic of life to its logical conclusion. Simmel's vitalist work from the 1920s that revolved pre-eminently around the antagonism between life and form,²⁴ rested on his earlier *Philosophy of Money* (1900), a book oriented towards the thinking of Max Weber rather than Karl Marx that attempted to »construct a new story beneath historical materialism«,²⁵ one that approached alienation from the perspective of the bourgeois subject and the standpoint of culture rather than from the view of labour or production. In his 1911 essay on the sculpture of Auguste Rodin, Simmel spelled out the consequences of this move. Here Simmel argued that art had a de-alienating potential in its ability to grant »repose from change and contradiction«; this repose, however, »was to be obtained not only by taking refuge in whatever represents the contrary of such agitation, but first and foremost in the most perfect stylization and the most intensified purity of the content of this reality.«²⁶ Art's task, in other words, was not to do away with alienation (which was a tragic fact to be accepted) but to render it aesthetic.

The formation of art history as a discipline, the school of formalism that came into prominence through the work of Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin and the sculptor Adolf von Hildebrand took shape in this same pre-war terrain of the so-called crisis of culture and also bore its mark.²⁷ Combining an »intuitive apprehension of the work of art with Wilhelm Dilthey's effort to make this phenomenological approach rigorous and insert it into a disciplinary framework«, for Wölfflin the new discipline's mission was understood as scientific, as well as profoundly pedagogic, and political. Seeking to establish art history as an autonomous *science of seeing*, the goal of Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* (1915), was in this sense not only a disciplinary endeavour geared to entrench-

ing the scientific study of art.²⁸ It was also a conduit for conveying spiritual value in order to oppose the compartmentalising effects of industrialisation, the increasing commercialisation of the visual sphere, and the expanding economisation of form as a fleeting figure of fashion.²⁹ And yet Wölfflin's desire for a unified life projected onto art as one of the last bastions of style was riven by a paradox: it contributed to the very objectification of art as an object isolated from its social surrounding, and thus to the collapse of unified style into a fragmented figure of fashion. As a kind of gated community in which an idealised equilibrium was kept artificially intact, artistic form was sealed off from its exterior and from its anterior, and thus from life, resulting in a fetishisation that was capitalist to the core.

What unites different efforts, past and present, of redeeming life via aesthetics is consequently the paradox of life's negation. Following Alastair Hunt and Stephanie Youngblood the »illusion of order and meaning« that aesthetics provides, »assumes a superiority in relation to the life it intends to organize. In fact, if the excesses of life achieve coherence and thus value through the organizing principles of art, this redemption of life is achieved only through life's negation.«³⁰ Abstracted from its lived materiality, life, as Peter Gorsen already contended, thus becomes precisely something thing-like, something dead.³¹

If it is this deadly abstract life that still haunts contemporary vitalism's aestheticized notions of life – again projected onto art as its bearer – the work of heterodox Marxist art historians like Lu Märten offers us the tools of approaching life through its lived materiality, through aesthesis rather than aesthetics.³² A self-taught heterodox art historian, writer, feminist and theoretician, and one of the first and most perceptive writers on Proletkult tendencies and Berlin Dada (she was a friend of Hannah Höch), Märten was a prolific and polemic figure. Although working on a materialist aesthetics and history of form already in the 1910s and 20s, unlike her famous male colleagues Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht, she remained an outsider in both the Weimar discourse on art and culture, and in Marxist theory, living precariously from one job as editor, journalist or part-time librarian to the next. A figure whose perspective jarred with both academic art history as well as the orthodox Leninist Marxism that prevailed in the Leftist intelligentsia at the time, in the late 1920s her work figured centrally in the Prague circle around Devětsil (it was in particular Bedřich Václavěk who developed her ideas further) and had a brief renaissance in the Marxist aesthetics of 1970s and 80s Germany (notably in Peter Gorsen's writing).³³

Märten's major work *Wesen und Veränderungen der Formen/Künste* (1924) (»Being and Transformation of the Forms/Arts«), originally commissioned by the Russian State Publishing House, was a comprehensive attempt to formulate a materialist aesthetics and history of form (rather than art), drawing on ethnology, the arts and crafts tradition, life philosophy and Marx's method, amongst others. *Wesen und Veränderungen* was premised on an understanding of art as a residual phenomenon, »a remainder of the originary capacity to form that evolved out of work« as collective form-giving praxis. By developing a social genealogy of the different arts (painting, sculpture, poetry etc.) as derived from use, Märten conceived of form as the vitality immanent to social relations: the »shape« of an object, which for her included »the material and plastic forms as much as the intellectual or abstract forms«, was defined by its social use, by its function in everyday life. It is precisely this fundamental vitality and sociality of form that neither bour-

geois art history nor communist cultural politics, following Märten, were able to recognize. They confined art within an aesthetic formalism or a representational realism that stripped it from any relation to life. For her, bourgeois and communist conceptions of art were caught in the same bourgeois ideals, which included the notion of a proletarian or collective art. As »a luxury concept of labour – a class concept«, she argued, any art is by necessity bourgeois.³⁴ The historical process of form's isolation from its social embeddedness into its fetishized manifestations as art was grounded in the class-based divisions into manual and intellectual labour within the capitalist mode of production and was not to be redeemed through proletarian or collective art – which Märten conceived of as a contradiction in terms.³⁵

A few decades later, writing from the perspective of ravaged post-World War II Europe, Theodor W. Adorno was thinking about a similar problem of art's contradictory – or for him rather: dialectical – relation to the social. In his *Aesthetic Theory* (written from the late 1950s but published posthumously in 1970) this problem can be found *in nuce* in the famous one-liner »the absolute artwork week meets the absolute commodity«. For Adorno this convergence was grounded in the understanding of art as »mimesis of the hardened and alienated« that posits an abstraction equalling that of the commodity.³⁶ In so doing, art dialectically asserts its own autonomy, and thus its social position towards society as one of distance as a prerequisite of critique. Hence, in contrast to the tragic dimension that defined the work of philosophers like Simmel and art historians like Wölfflin in the heyday of pre-war Weimar cultural critique, Adorno's negative dialectics fractured the image of art as a remedy for the bourgeois psyche's alienation. This position, however, nonetheless left art paralysed: The artwork materialises contradictions, but, functioning as a mode of mute critique, it remains unable to mobilize them.

For Adorno the dramatization of contradictions is a historical-philosophical figure that confines art to a representational function immanent to capitalist society, one not of reconciliation but of critique.

For Märten, it was neither nor. Her anthropologically inflected materialism was not guided by a (Hegelian) philosophy of history that based art's (political, social or psychological) function in a tragic or dialectic relation to reality.³⁷ Märten was adamant about understanding art as a material practice bound to lived experience rather than the manifestation of a concept or a philosophy: »Art is not to be understood as the expression of an idea, whether it is a political [idea] or any other«, she insisted.³⁸ For Marxist and/or vitalist understandings of life (and art as its bearer) this seemingly simple statement has serious ramifications: Neither can art serve as a corrective of life or as embodiment of life's vitality, nor can vitality be conceived of aesthetically: doing so reduces art to an idea (of life or its corrective, of the revolution, or any other), which is idealist much more than it is materialist. A 1931 polemic on Marxist Aesthetics between Märten and the orthodox communist historian Karl August Wittfogel revolved precisely around this problem. Märten dismissed Wittfogel's Leninist views of art as crypto-Kantian/Hegelian, as an idealism in disguise. Drawing instead on Marx's methodological remarks on art and contradiction from the introduction to the *Critique of Political Economy*, she countered with the following:

»Marx said: ›The difficulty resides only in the general understanding of these contradictions (those of art), as soon as they are specified, they are explained.‹ How does one specify them? In representing them, their material facts, not the philosophy

about them. Do we have to look up the entire Hegel, in order to – tied to Hegel – dare the jump to a Marxist aesthetics, or should we analyse the material facts of so-called art history in a Marxist manner?»³⁹

»Marxist manner« meant here to attend not so much to (art) objects as expressions of ideologies but to the processes and premises of their making: to technique, material, colours and shape in relation to economic and social realities. Art/form, Märten maintained, does not mirror or express the economic or social straightforwardly but is pervaded by them in a much more complex way.⁴⁰

Märten never did develop any full-fledged theoretical system or method with non-ambiguous postulates and concepts, however. Her writing tends to be convoluted, polemic, and sometimes contradictory. Her neglect in the historiography of Marxist aesthetics is owing arguably not least to this lack of systematicity, to the inconsistency of her work's historical-philosophical grounding. Although she did analyse the differentiation of the different arts in relation to the social division of labour in bourgeois society (not unlike Adorno in his *In Search of Wagner*), this relation did not, in the last instance, determine her views on the social functions of art/form. Regarding the capitalised constrictions of form into art as only one, historically contingent, mode of form's being, for her there were others before and there might be others to be collectively brought about in the future (she discerned traces of »collective vitalities«⁴¹ in film but also, in part at least, in the sensuous materiality of Proletkult productions). Although many of the premises that guided Märten's work, and in particular her largely modern, iconic understanding of labour as a lens onto form appears by now dated, arguably her non-disciplinary thinking on the vitality and sociality of form is not. Not least because it puts emphasis on how the writing of art history has political stakes, should itself be understood as a living, changing form (rather than the application of previously established methodological protocols). Hence one could argue that what Märten loses in systematicity, she gains in manoeuvring space for thinking the possibilities of art/form before and beyond its implicit or explicit capital-centric determinations, beyond reconciliation and beyond critique.⁴²

¹ Lu Märten: *Wesen und Veränderung der Formen/Künste. Resultate historisch-materialistischer Untersuchungen*. Frankfurt a.M. 1924, p. 10.

² See Jane Bennett: *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC 2010.

³ See Frederic Jameson: *The Political Unconscious*. Ithaca, N.Y. 1981.

⁴ See Bennett 2010 (as footnote 2), p. xiv ff. See also Svenja Bromberg's critique »The Anti-Political Aesthetics of Objects and Worlds Beyond« In: *Mutamute*, July 2013, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/anti-political-aesthetics-objects-and-worlds-beyond> (retrieved 18.3.2019).

⁵ See Claire Colebrook: »Not Symbiosis, Not Now: Why Anthropogenic Change Is Not Really Human« In: *The Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 34 (2), 2012, p. 193.

⁶ On this argument see Alexander Galloway's response to »A Questionnaire on Materialism« In: *October*, 155, Winter 2016, p. 45.

⁷ See N. Katherine Hayles: *Unthought. The Power of Cognitive Nonconscious*. London/Chicago 2017, p. 71f.

- ⁸ For curatorial initiatives on vitality, relationality, and ecology see for instance Nicolas Bourriaud: »Notes for ›The Great Acceleration‹ (Taipei Biennial 2014)« In: *Seismopolite. Journal for Art and Politics*, <http://www.seismopolite.com/nicolas-bourriaud-notes-for-the-great-acceleration-taipei-biennial-september-13-january-4> (retrieved: 26.4.2019) and the Serpentine Gallery's project »General Ecology«, <https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/exhibitions-events/general-ecology> (retrieved: 26.4.2019).
- ⁹ Colebrook 2012 (as footnote 5), p. 192.
- ¹⁰ See Ernst Bloch: *Heritage of Our Times* (1935). Cambridge/UK 1991.
- ¹¹ A significant figure that I could not taken into account due to spatial constrictions is George Sorel. On (the problems) of Sorel's fusion of Marx and Bergson see for instance Malcolm Vout and Lawrence Wide: »Social and Myth. The Case of Sorel and Bergson« In: *Radical Philosophy*, issue 46, Summer 1987, pp. 2-7 and Mark Antliff: »Bad Anarchism: Aestheticized Mythmaking and the Legacy of Georges Sorel« In: *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, No. 2, 2011, pp. 155-187.
- ¹² Bloch 1935 (as footnote 10), p. 112.
- ¹³ Carl Einstein: »Georges Braque« (manuscript, early 1930s). In: Carl Einstein: *Werke*. vol. 3, Berlin 1996, p. 280. On Einstein and vitalism see Jenny Nachtigall: »Vitalism/Living Form« In: Anselm Franke, Tom Holert (ed.): *Neolithic Childhood. Art in a False Present*. Berlin 2018.
- ¹⁴ Georg Lukács: *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*. Vol. 2. *Irrationalismus und Imperialismus*. Darmstadt 1973.
- ¹⁵ On the development from Lukács's vitalist tendencies in the pre-war years to the rejection of (his) romantic anti-capitalism in favour of a more orthodox Marxism see Michael Löwy: *Georg Lukács. From Romanticism to Bolshevism* (1979). London 2018 and Paul Breines: »Marxism, Romanticism, and the Case of Georg Lukács: Notes on Some Recent Sources and Situations« In: *Studies in Romanticism*, Vol. 16, No. 4, Fall, 1977, pp. 473-489.
- ¹⁶ See Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari: *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, vol. 1 (1972). London/ New York 2004 and Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, vol. 2 (1980). London/New York 2004.
- ¹⁷ Jacques Donzelot: »An Antisociology« (1972), trans. Mark Seem. In: *Semiotext(e)*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1977, p. 35.
- ¹⁸ On the latter and on the relation between psychoanalysis and Marxism see Samo Tomšič: *The Capitalist Unconscious: Marx and Lacan*. London 2015 and *The Labour of Enjoyment. Towards a Critique of Libidinal Economy*. Berlin 2019.
- ¹⁹ Donzelot 1977 (as footnote 17), p. 35, p. 37. It is also through this lens that Deleuze and Guattari understood the affective appeal of fascist tendencies as a collective seizing of desire, and their persistence rather than their return in the post-war era. See Félix Guattari: »Everybody wants to be a Fascist« In: *Semiotext(e)*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1977, pp. 87-98.
- ²⁰ Terry Eagleton: *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. London 1990, p. 11.
- ²¹ Susan Buck-Morss: »Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered«. In: *October*, Vol. 62, Autumn, 1992, p. 9.
- ²² See Peter Gorsen: *Zur Phänomenologie des Bewusstseinsstroms: Bergson, Dilthey, Husserl, Simmel und die lebensphilosophischen Antinomien*. Bonn 1966.
- ²³ See Henri Bergson: »Creative Evolution« (1907). In: *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*. Ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey. New York 2002, p. 197.
- ²⁴ See Georg Simmel: *Lebensanschauung. Vier Metaphysische Kapitel*. Munich 1918.

- 25 Georg Simmel: *The Philosophy of Money*. Trans. T. Bottomore and D. Frisby. London 2004, p. 54.
- 26 Georg Simmel: »Rodin (mit einer Vorbemerkung über Meunier)« (1911). In: *Georg Simmel, Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 14. Ed. Rüdiger Kramme and Otthein Rammstedt. Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 347 (my emphasis). Translation taken from Todd Cronan: »Georg Simmel's Timeless Impressionism« In: *New German Critique* 106, Winter 2009, p. 87.
- 27 See Frederic J. Schwartz: »Fashion. Concepts of Style in Wölfflin and Adorno« In: Frederic J. Schwartz. *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-Century Germany*. New Haven 2005, pp. 1-35.
- 28 Evonne Levy: »Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* (1915-2015). A Prolegomenon on its Second Century« In: Heinrich Wölfflin: *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Early Modern Art*. Trans. Jonathan Blower, ed. Evonne Levy, Tristan Weddingen. Los Angeles 2015, p. 20.
- 29 See Daniel Adler: »Painterly Politics: Wölfflin, Formalism and German Academic Culture, 1885-1915« In: *Art History* 27, 2004, pp. 431-456, and Mark Jarzombek: »De-Scribing the Language of Looking: Wölfflin and the History of Aesthetic Experientialism« In: *Assemblage* 23, 1994, pp. 28-69.
- 30 Alastair Hunt, Stephanie Youngblood: »Introduction. Against Life« In: Alastair Hunt, Stephanie Youngblood (ed.): *Against Life*. Evanston, Illinois 2016.
- 31 See Gorsen 1966 (like footnote 22), pp. 118, 181.
- 32 In her attention to an embodied sense of materiality and actuality, Märten's project could be seen – in part at least – to resonate with a tendency that Molly Nesbit identified as pragmatism in the history of art. Developing in the years from 1930 to 1970 as a dialogue between French and US American idioms (e.g. between the vitalism of Henri Focillon and its reworking in George Kubler's work on the shapes of time, between John Dewey's *Art as Experience* and the Marxist art history of Meyer Schapiro), it was animated by a sense of art's porosity towards the lived experiences of the social. See Molly Nesbit: *The Pragmatism in the History of Art*. Pittsburgh/New York 2013.
- 33 The most comprehensive study on Märten to date remains Chryssoula Kambas: *Die Werkstatt als Utopia: Lu Märten's literarische Arbeit und Formästhetik seit 1900*. Tübingen 1988. See also Peter Gorsen: »Konstruktionen der Weiblichen Kultur« In: Gisliind Nabakowski, Helke Sander and Peter Gorsen: *Frauen in der Kunst*. Vol. 2. Frankfurt am Main 1980 and the 1973 special issue of the magazine *alternative* 89 on Märten, titled »Materialistische Literaturtheorie VI. Lu Märten's Kunsttheorie zwischen marxischem Arbeitsbegriff und sozialdemokratischer Technikgläubigkeit«. One of the few existing articles on Märten in English is Martin I. Gaughan: »Lu Märten and Question of a Marxist Aesthetic in 1920s Germany« In: Warren Carter, Barnaby Haran and Frederic J. Schwartz (eds.): *Renew Marxist Art History*. London 2014, pp. 283-295. Märten's methodological outlook figured centrally in Kerstin Stakemeier: *Entgrenzter Formalismus. Verfahren einer antimodernen Ästhetik*. Berlin 2017, and in my PhD *Beyond Modernism. Berlin Dada and Form as Contradiction*. University College London. London 2016.
- 34 Märten 1924 (as footnote 1), p. 209.
- 35 See Lu Märten: »Kunst und Proletariat« (1925). In: Lu Märten: *Formen für den Alltag. Schriften Aufsätze, Vorträge*. Dresden 1982, p. 115 and Lu Märten: »Historisch-Materialistisches über Wesen und Veränderung der Künste. Eine pragmatische Einleitung« (1921). In: Lu Märten: *Formen für den Alltag. Schriften Aufsätze, Vorträge*. Dresden 1982, p. 60.
- 36 Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory* (1970). London 1997, p. 21.

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- ³⁷ On Adorno's historical-philosophical grounding of art see Juliane Rebentisch: *Aesthetics of Installation*. Berlin 2012, p. 127ff.
- ³⁸ Märten 1949 (as footnote 1), p. 36.
- ³⁹ Lu Märten: »Zur Frage einer marxistischen Ästhetik« (1931). In: *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, issue 3, April 1971, p. 58.
- ⁴⁰ Märten 1921 (as footnote 35), p. 48.
- ⁴¹ Märten 1924 (as footnote 1), p. 211.
- ⁴² For the notion of capitalcentrism I am drawing on Avery F. Gordon's preface to Cedric Robinson: *An Anthropology of Marxism* (2001). London 2019, p. xxvii.

Marina Vishmidt

Mediation

»The gesture is the exhibition of a mediality: it is the process of making a means visible as such.«
Giorgio Agamben: *Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics*

»We now consume the very form of communication along with its content.«
Fredric Jameson: *Aesthetics of Singularity*

Introduction

Any attempt to trace the connotations, contexts and shades of reference that accrue to a term as historically and semantically dense as ›mediation‹ in the present moment will to an extent find itself offering a diagnosis of that moment. Perhaps more than many, this is a term especially open to large-scale cognitive mapping, as a critical category which is all about the means – technological, economic, social and political – we both use and that use us in order to gain a purchase on contemporary life, with art, past and present, included. ›Mediation‹ trails a vast congeries of relevant terms in its wake: translation, articulation, transparency, subjectivity, objectivity – even ›culture‹, in all its discursive registers, may be seen as a kind of mediation. The question then may not be so much about determining the heuristic borders of the concept in order to delineate, however provisionally, what mediation is, as to operate speculatively enough with the categories of analysis to be able to, at least provisionally, what it isn't.

The following essay will thus undertake to perform one possible instance of such a mapping, through the philosophical vectors and disciplinary sites that can be brought into focus with the category of mediation – gesture, means, *and* end, all at once. By the conclusion, we should be able to gauge how this most relational and transversal of terms is also freighted with specific legacies that persist into debates within and about the contemporary debates. Keeping in mind that the objective of the text is to describe the ways in which mediation can be a productive term in the vocabulary of left art history and theory, three chief approaches will be outlined: mediation as it emerged in speculative idealism and was taken up by historical materialism (*Vermittlung*); mediation as a problematic in modernist aesthetics, as in the ›revealing the device‹ of Bertolt Brecht or post-Althusserian ›apparatus theory‹ in cinema studies; and current propositions in (media) theory and philosophy which propose to dispense with mediation in favour of immanence and ›flat ontologies‹. The stakes of this analysis, as already hinted, will be both synchronic in its charting and diachronic in its genealogical impulse, even if this kind of

distinction is to be wielded sceptically, unable as it is to manifest the degree to which such a horizontal and vertical axis founders in the entangled histories of subject and object as intellectual points of departure which the thought of ›mediation‹ – or, as Agamben points to it more expansively, ›means‹ – both indexes and expresses. Consequently, we can attend to the thread that connects the three registers of mediation which will form the principal focus here: mediation in the sense that it refers to a practice or layer of signification able to create channels for dialogue, as in ›conflict mediation‹, and to question its own intermediate status, such as the divide between secondary ›means‹ and primary ›ends‹ at the crux of most Western philosophical ethics from Immanuel Kant onwards. A ›means‹ that is ›visible as such‹, just like the collapse between the form and content of communication Jameson discerns, signals the upending of these hierarchies of value, albeit without a definitive outcome that could be secured in advance.

Further, the purported collapse of the subject-object dialectic that has historically been used to stage the question of mediation has eventuated not only in the pre-critical axioms of object-oriented theory, but in concepts such as ›intra-action‹ and ›entanglement‹ which locates agency always ›in between‹ entities. Such a radicalization of the epistemic politics put forward by feminist philosophers of science such as Donna Haraway foregrounds mediation as constitutive in a way that profoundly interrogates the received structure of that concept. Equally significant is the challenge posed by black feminist philosophical (Sylvia Wynter, Denise Ferreira da Silva) and political ecological (Katherine Yusoff) approaches which respectively query the figure of the human and the climate as naturalised mediations of a global modernity that has grounded centuries of genocidal accumulation and extraction.

Dialectical Mediation

In the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, G.F.W. Hegel sets out a relatively explicit sketch of the role mediation was to play in the philosophy and social theory over the next two centuries that took dialectical thought as its point of departure. Immediate experience seems primary, but it is incommunicable – »impotent abstract immediacy« – and therefore not true. It is only when the alienation of the self from itself occurs that knowledge, of inner life or the world, becomes possible. Thus the route from the unreal to the real, the actualization of the subject, can be characterised as mediation: »[...] the living substance is the being that is in truth *subject*, or, what amounts to the same thing, it is in truth actual only insofar as it is the movement of self-positing, or, that it is the mediation of itself and its becoming-other-to-itself.«¹ Later in the book, the notion of ›determinate negation‹ emerges to describe the steps that comprise the process of going from unreflected immediacy towards a greater dimension of reflexivity and specificity, a process which can as often seem disorienting and destructive as empowering or expansive. In fact, just as with Gilles Deleuze's emphasis on disruption as constitutive of reflection in *Difference and Repetition*, »something in the world forces us to think«,² Hegel notes that it is death that pushes the subject beyond its immediate horizons onto the onerous road of actualisation. Thus, dialectically, death is the first impetus to explore life, beyond the infinite, yet limiting, sensuous particularity of the immediate surround. Reality dawns through the medium of otherness from self, and immediacy turns out to be always already mediated:

»[...] a *this* as an *I* and a *this* as an *object*, precipitates all at once out of pure being. If we reflect on this difference, it turns out that neither the one nor the other is only *immediately* within sensuous-certainty; rather, both are *mediated*. I have certainty *through* an other, namely, the item, and this likewise is within certainty *through* an other, namely, through the I.«³

Finally, Hegel can be said to anticipate Karl Marx's methodological note at the start of the *Grundrisse* half a century later, where the dialectical method is described as a recursive itinerary from the simple abstract to the rich concrete.⁴ He explains how the concreteness of sensuous-certainty, the immediate, can seem replete with data whereas actually it is impoverished, since it can only express its being, its suchness, and not a connection to anything else, that is, ›meaning‹ or a totality, a concrete universal, which can only be the work of mediation. The methodological implications of the speculative dialectic, with its emphasis on transience and transformation, for social critique and revolutionary politics did in a number of ways hinge on the place of mediation, even if as with other Hegelian concepts, Marx sought to give it a greater grounding in historical and material conditions. In Marx's critique of political economy, mediation played a diagnostic role, allowing the researcher or activist to develop practical experience of antagonism and contradiction into a scientific, thus transmissible, body of research by determining the multiple mediations – social, historical, biological – of any social phenomenon. This was different from what would later be termed ›complexity‹ as the concept of mediation deals with determinate social wholes, stratified by power dynamics, ideologies and institutions, and includes the observer in its field as a historical and thus in their own right multiply mediated social agent. Mediation thus comes to name both the social determination of any object or event, and the logical movement that enmeshes concepts in these social determinations. So production and consumption have an *immediate* identity at one level of abstraction; at a more complex or practical level, each is mediated by the other in specific (determinate) ways. However, there are specific mediations which come to take a more prominent role in Marx's analysis, and the main one is money, or exchange. As a hallmark of capitalist society in a way that production and consumption are not, exchange is an »all-sided mediation«, guaranteeing the universality of alienated social relations through the formal means of general equivalence (the erst-while ›invisible hand‹ of the market, now perhaps the ›invisible algorithm‹), the cash nexus which both encrypts and articulates the dependencies of a type of social life organised *objectively* through the capitalist mode of production and *subjectively* through the fiction of liberal personhood.⁵ Labour time takes the form of money, is objectified in and is mediated by money, in order to circulate, evoking Hegel's thesis of actualization through becoming other to a given immediate form. The mediation that is exchange – exchange value, money – is what makes labour *social* labour. However, money is always a *vanishing* mediator, disappearing and naturalising itself in commodity circulation. Until we come to the axiom of financialisation, M-M', for Marx money is a universal mediation in capitalist social life which is both always present and never there: »money appears only fleetingly, or, its substance consists only in this constant appearance as disappearance, as this vehicle of mediation.«⁶ Here the crucial dimension of mediation as *social form* comes into view.

Materialising Mediation

As Raymond Williams notes in his *Keywords* definition, mediation is a polyvalent term which has at least three registers informing its contemporary uses: mediation in the sense of intercession or reconciliation; mediation as the diversion of direct communication or experience into indirect or mystifying channels (mediation as ideology in its more reductive sense); and, perhaps most trenchant for this context, mediation as form.⁷ This final sense is the one that has the most bearing on critical and materialist aesthetic theory, and Williams quotes Theodor W. Adorno to this effect, with his suggestion that artworks do not encounter mediation in relation to a viewer, but are themselves mediated from the start, that is to say, in their production.⁸ Artworks, in common with all other objects in a given social formation, are mediated by social relations but cannot simply be rendered or translated back into those relations. They cannot be explained away as an abstraction of those relations, because it is through the intervention of form that they become autonomous of those relations and it is form again that connects the artwork back to social relations, even if it's through their seeming negation. Williams' reference to Adorno's argument shows *in nuce* how the concept of mediation in cultural theory has been used to do two, apparently opposed, things. Mediation is both internalised by the artwork or cultural object, and mediation is also the link to the outside world that situates the artwork in a world of significations and institutions. Of course the philosophical cornerstones of the Western aesthetic tradition, Hegel, Kant, or Friedrich Schiller, already placed the aesthetic as a mediation between reason and sensibility, or, between reason and ethics (reflective, non-conceptual judgment as the bridge between pure and practical reason).⁹

The legacy of Romantic or speculative aesthetics of Frankfurt School authors such as Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer or Herbert Marcuse continued to define understandings of how the social was mediated in the aesthetic, particularly in the mid-20th century and the late modernism of the ›neo-avant garde‹. This, coupled with Marx's emphasis on money as a universal mediation, the ›concrete universal‹ of social relations fetishized through the commodity and abstract labour, allows us to see how mediation served the political aesthetics of 20th century modernism as a pivot towards the ›real‹. The ›real‹ served both as the strategic exposure of means that would eliminate illusionist bourgeois aesthetics, as in the estrangement effect and as an illusionism that would later be swept aside in the appeal to (orchestrated) direct experience, as in participatory theatrical, dance and art practices from the 1950s onwards. Social mediation was what stood to be revealed through the specific agency of art, which, for Adorno, lay in the artwork's material-objective dimensions of ›technique‹ and ›construction‹.¹⁰ At the same time, this ability to sensually or corporeally register social mediation also gave art the task of advancing the eradication or politicisation of mediation within the social realm. This evokes Marx's project in the critique of political economy, to disclose the specifically mediated nature of that which seems to have been always there (money, the commodity, abstract social labour) – an operation that might nowadays fall under the heading of ›problematizing‹. On the other hand, though not wholly unrelated, one way for art to dispense with the social apparatus of mediation was to dissolve into it, in the sense that critical media and post-media practices undertook to do by working with technologies of mass visibility and communication such as television or the internet from the 1960s

onwards, in line with ongoing tendencies of appropriating and circulating in mass culture familiar from Pop and Conceptual art.

Who Needs Mediation?

As art historians such as Josephine Berry (2018) and Claire Bishop (2012) have described, the trajectory of contemporary art that sought to renew the relationship between artwork/artist and viewer through process, performativity and an expanded notion of site and body was often one that sought to dispense with *mediation* in favour of *participation*. However, and especially in the present moment, cultural anxieties around mediation need to be accounted for more comprehensively, given the prevalence of digital technologies in society which enables levels of surveillance, commerce and representation unprecedented in their reach and immanence, just as the earlier, and still extant, forms of mass media were deemed to be on track to enfold and transform planetary social life in their image (McLuhan). For all the infrastructural heft of the invariably *networked* form these technologies take, there is the evident contradiction that they strive to efface themselves, in ›pure‹ sociality, ›pure‹ commerce – the elevation of the user experience is one where the mediation of hardware and software is pushed offstage as far as possible, a tendency reaching its vanishing point in the ever-bruited Internet of Things. Frictionless exchange signals a horror of mediation and a preference for the naturalisation and internalisation of all the imperatives of capital accumulation that networked technologies invariably reflect and promote, even if these imperatives cannot be said to ›fully‹ determine their development or use. Capital always strives to control, and, ideally, eliminate barriers to circulation, including human labour, and with the emergence of ›smart‹ applications which scale up from the household to the urban form, data capitalism illustrates how this old imperative can be made to look like the future in terms as resonant as ›planetary computation‹ and ›the stack‹. What all these have in common is the desire to ›surpass‹ a means/ends distinction by collapsing infrastructure and policy, or, technology and culture.

Yet this cultural logic does not have a prescribed politics, and it is particularly its distrust for established authority (such as banks or state agencies) that makes a number of contemporary projects in the erasure of mediation, such as decentralised currencies and accounting tools such as blockchain, able to magnetise projects across the political spectrum. Here we might also consider earlier debates on the political implications of an equivocal approach to the triumph of the commodity in political and social space, as in Adorno and Benjamin's correspondence on identification with exchange and the politics of mimesis vis-à-vis industrial culture, not least its exacerbation in Fascism. Revisiting those discussions, however, would require us to revise their stakes. Departing from Georg Lukács' influential notion of ›second‹ nature (the reified social relations mediated by the commodity form), Benjamin proposed that there is a ›first technology‹, which is instrumental, crafted by humans to dominate the forces of nature, and a ›second technology‹, which is open to historical needs and which would be rather a means of reconciliation between humanity and nature. Central to the notion of second technology as a space of development for human social and affective capacities is the notion of mimesis as a mediating *Spielraum* between human and non-human nature.¹¹ We can thus see that for Benjamin, as for Adorno, there is the imprint of the ›aesthetic forces of production‹,

which denote at the same time the role of technology in artistic form and the historically mediated development of the senses. Interesting in this light would be recent artistic and epistemic projects such as those pursued by Susan Schuppli and others who work broadly in the field of ›forensic aesthetics‹. Schuppli's notion of a ›geo-photo-graphic‹ era posits a self-mediating nature which can register and communicate the effects of its modification by techno-science through aesthetic means, such as indexing contamination through photo-sensitive surfaces.¹²

The agency of other-than-human matter evokes the tenets of theoretical movements such as ›new materialism‹ – a label that tends to attribute more homogeneity than is warranted. This seems to be premised on the jettisoning of mediating concepts such as language, subjectivity, economy and so forth, in favour of direct experience, in a tendency that Benjamin Noys has called ›affirmationism‹, dispensing with the supposedly rote ›negativity‹ of critique.¹³ More trenchantly, however, projects that position themselves obliquely to legacies of the critical in Western philosophy and strive to close the distance between language, discourse, or mediation and the material, as noted already in the Introduction, can also be inscribed within those legacies insofar as feminist theories of science such as Haraway's sought to ›de-naturalize‹ the nature/culture distinction, as well as reflecting process philosophy's scepticism about the gap between epistemology and ontology. Karen Barad's notion of the performativity of matter explicitly takes up those deconstructive and feminist paradigms and deploys them as a description of quantum reality which attends to scientific accuracy and ethical complexity at once. This is a perspective which, as Rebekah Sheldon notes, ›is emphatically *relational*. It begins from the assumption that ideas and things do not occupy separate ontological orders but instead are co-constituents in the production of the real.«¹⁴

The imbrication of matter with concepts acts as an anchoring point for feminist new materialism, and this underlines the embrace of relational paradigms more broadly in the order of ›network‹, ›assemblage‹, ›apparatus‹, ›*dispositif*‹ and, perhaps most currently influential, ›affect‹, with their emphasis on post-subject and post-human dynamics of resonance between different ontologies, scales, and materialities. These pose distinct challenges to the dialectical architecture of mediation – challenges which are evident in the ascendancy of these paradigms in social theory since the 1980s, and earlier in places other than the Anglophone academy. The influence of phenomenology and structuralism, in all their diverse and contested iterations, would also be a crucial part of this story.

Conclusion

For an entry on mediation written for an art history publication, this essay has shown less than a full immersion within art-historical debates. Likewise, there has not been much invocation of the various tendencies in the media philosophy which has provided such a notable analytic paradigm in the constellation of post- or non-dialectical approaches to mediation in social theory, from the Alfred North Whitehead-influenced work of Mark B.N. Hansen or Luciana Parisi to German media theory which posits the ›autonomy‹ of media, as in the work of Friedrich Kittler or the more ›cultural scientific‹ approach of Wolfgang Ernst or Bernhard Siegert, with theorists such as Vilem Flusser, Jussi Parikka or Matthew Fuller developing inventive combinations in (new) materialist

media philosophy between and around these emphases, often in dialogue with software studies, anthropology and geology. Returning to the first epigraph, at stake here could be the relation between *mediality* and *mediation*, which could be provisionally termed that which draws attention to its own materiality and that which draws attention to how systemic social relations – social materiality – register in how differently situated human subjects build relations to the world around them; relations whose most universal feature is exploitation and dispossession.

One salient thread closer to art history, however, that can be mentioned is the concept of ›re-mediation‹ – how technological change displaces and re-contextualises the aesthetic and productive habits of one medium in another. The emergence of ›intermediality‹ and ›media-specificity‹ as critical categories in the work of theorists such as Juliane Rebentisch and Kerstin Stakemeier attends to this shift from medium or genre to media as a baseline condition for reflexive art production since the post-war (or ›contemporary‹) period. The latter develops this further into ›digitality‹ as the name for how a general technological mediation that orients the conditions of capitalist social life, from financial markets to industrial production and social infrastructure, suffuses contemporary art as a »lever to establish [...] a somatic sense of technological matter, to expand a sense of timely machinic affect, and an expanded sense of reproduction.«¹⁵ This focus on the materiality of mediation would foreground the problematic of how analysis grounded in the subject-object dialectic of a fragmented society pervaded by the various mediations earlier outlined (money, labour, technology, but equally, race, gender, and other forms of social value) can be maintained in a conjuncture when the political and ethical stakes all seem lined up against the use of mediation, and in favour of a plenum of inclusion that may offer new possibilities for ethical life. Conversely, arguments can still be made for the pertinence of mediation, and the attendant tension of critique, within an infrastructural project that looks at the form-determination of cultural production from the ground up. This could entail addressing the devalorisation of classed, gendered and racialized lives as always inscribed in the apparatus of art and education in a capitalist society which is predicated on divisions of labour, resources and power. Art, a form of violence insofar as it provides an alibi to class society, but also violent insofar as it is formed, according to Adorno, traverses all varieties of emancipatory striving in the spaces of cultural mediation, and it is the way this violence is mediated that opens up or closes down possibilities for transformation. The question would then be whether relationality as a de-hierarchising performative ethics for all matter can ›matter‹ in a society whose destruction of itself and the biophysical systems it relies on is predicated irretrievably on steep, rather than flat, ontologies of being and having. The analytic of mediation, with its focus on both the violence and necessity of social abstraction, offers a standpoint of imbrication but with the additional element of determinacy which views social reality, once again, from the standpoint of its transformability.

¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated and edited by Terry Pinkard. Cambridge 2018, p. 12.

² Gilles Deleuze: *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton. London 2001, p. 139.

- 3 Hegel 2018 (as note 1), p. 61.
- 4 Karl Marx: *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*. Translated by Martin Nicolaus. London 1973, pp. 100-1.
- 5 This is made explicit in critical legal studies that deal with the correlation between self-ownership and territorial concepts of property. Brenna Bhandar, for example, suggests Stuart Hall's ›articulation‹ as an efficient concept for exploring social and historical mediation in this field rather than what she sees as the ›positivist‹ equivalence drawn between commodity form and the juridical individual made by theorists such as Evgeny Pashukanis. Brenna Bhandar: *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership*, Durham, NC and London 2018, p. 12.
- 6 Marx 1973 (as note 4), p. 209.
- 7 Raymond Williams: *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New Edition, New York 2015, pp. 152-4.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 154. This notion of the artwork echoes the notion of the Concept outlined in Hegel's aesthetics. The Concept is a ›concrete and mediated unity‹ or ›totality‹ of specific differences. Hegel's idea here is more one of fusion than of articulation, i.e. aspects which can exist independently in the abstract in practice exist in the unity of a specific object, such as ›glistening‹ and gold. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Volume One. Translated by T. M. Knox. Oxford 1988, p. 108.
- 9 ›But this breach, to which the spirit proceeds, it is also able to heal. It generates out of itself works of fine art as the first reconciling middle term between pure thought and what is merely external, sensuous, and transient, between nature and finite reality and the infinite freedom of conceptual thinking.« *Ibid.*, p. 8. Schiller suggests that aesthetic education is a mediating force between Reason and Nature: ›The beautiful is thus pronounced to be the mutual formation of the rational and the sensuous, and this formation to be the genuinely actual.« Cited in Hegel 1988 (as note 8), p. 62.
- 10 Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor. London and New York 2013, p. 305 and elsewhere.
- 11 Walter Benjamin: ›The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: second version‹ In: *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, 1935-1938*. Volume Three. Translated by Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, et. al. Cambridge, MA and London 2006, pp. 107-108. Also Walter Benjamin: ›To the Planetarium‹ In: *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings 1913-1926*. Volume One. Cambridge, MA and London 1996, pp. 486-7.
- 12 She notes that ›When we take seriously the premise that anthropogenic environments are documenting their own damaged condition [...] and that their mode of expression or method of narration includes an aesthetic dimension that operates according to certain image-making practices [...] then we assign a new status to the image as not merely a device for mirroring surface effects, but as a productive agent in generating new knowledge.« Susan Schuppli, ›Dirty Pictures‹ In: Mirna Belina (ed.): *Living Earth: Field Notes from the Dark Ecology Project, 2014-16*. Amsterdam 2016, p. 200. See on this point also Adorno: ›Mediate nature, the truth content of art, takes shape, immediately, as the opposite of nature.« Adorno 2013 (as note 10), pp. 77-8.
- 13 Benjamin Noys: ›Skimming the surface: critiquing anti-critique‹ *Journal for Cultural Research*, Volume 21, Issue 4, 2017, pp. 295-308.
- 14 Rebekah Sheldon, ›Form/Matter/Chora: Object-Oriented Ontology and Feminist New Materialism‹ In: Richard Grusin (ed.): *The Nonhuman Turn*. Minneapolis 2015; pp. 193-222: p. 196.

- ¹⁵ Kerstin Stakemeier and Marina Vishmidt: *Reproducing Autonomy: Work, Crisis, and Contemporary Art*. London 2016, p. 97.

Rose-Anne Gush

Negation

The *Dictionary of Untranslatables* (2014) edited by Barbara Cassin, posits ›negation‹ in two ways: first as something that is not, a non-being, a process of depletion such as anxiety or malaise, and second, a complete gesture that *negates*, abstracts, denies, erases, obliterates.¹ Negation bears a simultaneous weight and weightlessness. *Aufheben* (to sublimate; to abolish) contains a double meaning: to preserve, maintain, *and* to halt and end.² *Aufhebung* (sublation; abolition) is described by Philippe Büttgen as the ›carrying out of a ›synthesis‹ while retaining the best part of the ›thesis‹ and ›antithesis‹ and at the same time, ›opening‹ onto broader perspectives‹, that we call the ›speculative‹.³ This term, coined by G. W. F. Hegel designates the basis of dialectical thinking, of which negation was and remains a central tenet.

In these catastrophic and crisis-ridden times, the question of comprehending what role, or historical burden art bears, is renewed. Art circulates in commercial galleries, national museums, international art fairs and biennales, as luxury assets, as institutional ›soft power‹ and as commodities used to clean the image of oil corporations, insurance companies, or arms dealers. Yet, art also emerges outside of these spaces, or in ways resistant to these functions. Recent committed art has both turned inward, renewing figurative painting, and hermetic poetry, and it has externalised itself, addressing representations, reproductions and repudiations of violence. In their struggles to bring the violence and injustices of the world to its surface, artists have withdrawn their works from exhibitions, called for institutional boycotts, joined strikes and protested reactionary, racist tendencies in galleries.⁴ Methods differ, but art continues to trace the contours of society, producing its fullest account so as not to leave society unscathed.

The history of artistic negations invoked in this essay spreads across the twentieth-century to the present, beginning with the formal and political innovations of the interwar (or, as Peter Bürger coined them, the historical avant-gardes). After the rise and fall of fascism (which eradicated radical art and erased its memory), and coterminous with the latter half of the twentieth-century's anti-colonial, civil rights, and feminist struggles, art sought out the techniques of the avant-garde. The notion of ›negation‹ in art history and theory invokes a struggle over history and temporality, the persistence or overthrow of Modernism, and art's relation to use-value, the commodity, race and gender. The concept of negation both places us at a cliff edge and sprawls out in front of us, it is the abyss and the mediation of emancipatory horizons. The history of art's potential to exceed its limits, is the history of its negations.

A recent tendency in studies of negation in art theory, or negative, critical theories of art, returns to philosophical, materialist theorisations of art found in the work of The-

odor W. Adorno. In this essay, I will explore the strained legacy of Adorno's theorisations of art and determinate negation, from his time to today.

Negation in Art History and Theory I

In his essay »Critical and Traditional Theory« (1937), foundational to the Frankfurt School of critical theory, Max Horkheimer described the purpose of the former, as »formulating the negative« to critique capitalist society.⁵ The aim of critical theory was the immanent critique of society, ideology and perpetual injustice, while also recognising the tensions and contradictions latent within their social context, to show what fore-closed or prevented social transformation.

Adorno wrote *Minima Moralia* during the 1940s, it was published in 1951. In one aphorism titled »Art Object« Adorno highlights the relation between the domestic and the sublime by describing art as proximate to *both* human power over nature (meaning the instrumental use of external nature in industry/monopoly capitalism), and kitsch, mass produced commodities. As art nears both, the distance between manifestations of the sublime, and trash, decreases.⁶ Here, it is with the figure of discarded household commodities that Adorno identifies a logic. Trash expresses that »men [sic] have succeeded in reproducing from within themselves a piece of what otherwise imprisons them in toil, and in symbolically breaking the compulsion of adaptation by themselves creating what they have feared.«⁷ As the subject transforms nature in labour, they also transform themselves. In the domination of their own nature for the sake of an instrumental culture, they reproduce within themselves the kind of objectivity belonging to the mechanistic and brutal laws of capital. For Adorno, this logic is echoed in artworks, which try to avoid it by claiming a false hermeticism, »imagining themselves pure self, unrelated to any model.«⁸

In the analogue of the human and the artwork, what is celebrated as freedom from nature, remains an instrumentalised, false freedom. Artworks, always internally contradictory, contain the Kantian notion of »purposefulness without a purpose«, existing for themselves, while also remaining artificial, or made. Adorno writes, »by following, however indirectly, the existing pattern of material production and ›making‹ its objects, art as akin to production cannot escape the question ›what for?‹ which it aims to negate.«⁹ Art seeks to negate use, but is inscribed in it by virtue of its social fact: it is born out of capitalist society. As the distinction between the mode of production of artefacts and the production of mass-produced commodities dissolves, artworks cease to ask the question, ›what for?‹. For Adorno, art's attempted negation is weakened and strained.

An answer to the problem given in this aphorism lies in art's *conflict* with ›taste‹. Taste, understood by Adorno as a kind of culinary hedonism, maintains the contradiction »between the made and the apparent not-having-become.«¹⁰ In conflict with the softness of hedonistic taste, artworks push this contradiction to its most extreme point realising themselves in their self-destruction, in their attempted negation of use.

In his lectures on *Aesthetics* from 1958-59 Adorno demands that art gives form to both his (and our) historical situation, determined by alienation, *and* in his words, it »give a voice to suppressed, mutilated nature.«¹¹ Because accessing this suppressed nature, an analogue for Kantian being in itself would mean the opposite of alienation, he invokes a contradiction. Art partially shows itself as used, mutilated nature, but only nega-

tively. By »measuring and confronting every phenomenon with what it claims to be, we can arrive at its untruth and, by negation, if we want, also its truth«. ¹² This notion plays out across Adorno's writings on art. In *Aesthetic Theory* (1970) he writes, »[t]he image of nature survives because its complete negation in the artifact – negation that rescues this image – is necessarily blind to what exists beyond bourgeois society, its labour, and its commodities«. ¹³ Adorno did not want to dissolve art, or sublimate it into the revolution, his aim was rather to salvage, or redeem its semblance [*Schein*]. He writes, »Artworks have no truth without determinate negation«. ¹⁴ It is only through determinate negation that art's truth appears. Yet, it is partially this claim to truth made vulgar, that for many, renders Adorno's thought obsolete.

Negation in Art History and Theory II – the Avant-Gardes 1970s – 1990s

From Adorno's theorisation of art's attempted negation of the ›what for?‹, I want to shift the discussion to consequent theorisations of its affirmation of the ›for what?‹. In his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, published two decades after *Minima Moralia* and just four years after *Aesthetic Theory*, in part written in answer to Adorno, Peter Bürger argues that the first ›historical‹ avant-garde is a partial effort to negate the autonomy of art. ¹⁵

Here, autonomy is historical. Insisting on a degree of non-synchronicity to his periodisation, Bürger's understanding of history is schematic: transformations in art are directly transposed onto changes in social organisation. Sacral art (associated with faith), is superseded by courtly art, which glorifies courtly and aristocratic society. Courtly art is succeeded by bourgeois art. When successful in adopting notions of value authorised by the aristocracy, bourgeois art objectifies the self-understanding of the bourgeois class. While courtly art was still tied to the »praxis of life«, with its claim to aestheticism bourgeois art severs itself from life-praxis. In Bürger's view, this severance, or »apartness« becomes the content of humanist bourgeois aestheticism (or autonomous art), to be overcome. ¹⁶ Like Adorno, for Bürger – with differing emphases – it is art's separation from the »praxis of life«, (life, determined by exchange), that most decisively characterises the autonomy of bourgeois art. ¹⁷ For Bürger, the »European avant-garde movements [...] attack [...] the status of art in bourgeois society«, they attack art's institutions, the structural mode of its production and reception, not its style; they demand that art's social function becomes practical. ¹⁸ Bürger writes: »[t]he avant-gardistes proposed the sublation of art – sublation in the Hegelian sense of the term: art was not to be simply destroyed, but transferred to the praxis of life where it would be preserved, albeit in a changed form«. ¹⁹ For Bürger, the avant-gardes attempted to found a new life praxis, rooted in art; art became the new site of preservation, in the Hegelian sense.

For Bürger, when the gap between art and life was first interrogated, the historical avant-garde had the force of history on its side, while the neo-avant-garde, described as a weakened repetition, culminated in the culture industry inaugurating »the false elimination of the distance between art and life«. ²⁰ The first negation also modified the work of art by means of an internal negation within the category of individual creation, exemplified by Marcel Duchamp's infamous *Fountain*, which he signed pseudonymously »R. Mutt« (1917). Bürger names the gesture of the readymade, or »act of nomination« as Thierry de Duve has described it, a »manifestation«, where meaning is congealed both in its facticity as a mass-produced object, and an ostensibly signed, exhibited art object.

The early reception of Bürger's theory is controversial. In West Germany, it was read as a return to Adorno's theorisation of the avant-garde as advanced art (against Lukács's assertion that the avant-garde refers to decadence), or as a critique of the avant-garde.²¹ Bürger responded to his critics, arguing for the efficacy of theory against opinion, defending Marx's method described in the *Grundrisse*, and his own method of immanent, dialectical criticism. He justifies his analysis of the »institution art/literature«, which he deems the radical break from Adorno (and Lukács). In the English language response, Benjamin Buchloh criticized the rigidity of Bürger's periodisation, identifying contemptuousness towards art that both foreshadowed and followed the historic avant-garde. Buchloh reads Bürger's position as symptomatic of the politicisation within the humanities in 1960s West Germany, which attacked methodological failures of »authoritarian humanism« inherited in art and literary scholarship, and attempted to read and recover the histories of the twentieth-century avant-garde, wiped out by the fascists.²² Buchloh's critique of Bürger is most scathing on his theorisation of the failure of the avant-garde to destroy the institution of art, claiming that it leads to »esthetic passivism«, contributing to »a vulgarised notion of postmodernism«. ²³ In failing to account for the unevenness of the history of the avant-garde, which includes an array of differing positions and practices, Bürger's position ends up as ›original‹ followed by false copy. Rejecting Bürger's claims to negation, but seeking a more actively political theory against Bürger's »esthetic anomie«, and apologism for »*post-histoire*«, Buchloh opts for a definition of the avant-garde »as a continually renewed struggle over the definition of cultural meaning«, which seeks to strategically re-invent itself against the dogmatic presence of the culture industry.²⁴ Yet, this self-renewing, affirmative avant-garde leaves open the question as to how art should relate to institutions.

With Buchloh's review in mind, Hal Foster's seminal essay for the journal *October*, »What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?« (1994) furthers this definitive path away from Bürger's theorisation of ›negation‹. ›Negation‹ is displaced by ›return‹, meaning a reflexive process of working through.²⁵ Foster describes two returns that take place in late 1950s art practice, relating to the Dada of Duchamp's readymades, and the structures or counter-reliefs of Russian Constructivism. Also calling into question Bürger's arguments around periodisation, Foster asks, »did Duchamp *appear* as Duchamp?«²⁶ Foster invokes a temporal delay in the realisation of Duchamp: one only understands Duchamp after the work is settled. Bürger fails to understand the avant-garde as this »retroactive effect«, born into the world through discourse, which also spans epochs of institutional reception. For Foster, Bürger's dismissal of the »neo-avant-garde«, and his vulgar historicism, leads to him condemning »contemporary art to the status of the belated, the redundant, the repetitious«. ²⁷ Bürger's failure to recognise the »ambitious« art of his time is, »a potentially fatal flaw of any historian-theorist of art«. ²⁸

Against the notion that the neo-avant-garde falls into the culture industry's false reconciliation between art and life, Foster theorises the neo-avant-garde as relating to the historical avant-garde by means of a »temporal *exchange*«, a »complex relation of anticipation and reconstruction« which John Roberts has appropriately described as ahistorical.²⁹ Against Bürger's theorisation of the failure of the neo-avant-garde, Foster argues that it was the first movement to »comprehend« the historical avant-garde. Yet, I would suggest that Bürger was also part of this gain. Against a notion of the early avant-garde's negation of autonomous art, Foster argues that Duchamp neither abstractly negates the

categories of art, nor enacts a reconciliation with life, rather he maintains a »perpetual testing of the conventions of both«.³⁰ Foster displaces Bürger's attempted determinate negation with the psychoanalytic model of repression, bearing its symptom: the compulsion to repeat, leaving the question open as to what kind of repetition is invoked. Following this, we find the Freudian notion of ›*Nachträglichkeit*‹, afterwardness, or deferred meaning, where negation and its related sublation, abolition, emancipation, is obliterated. ›*Nachträglichkeit*‹ implies a temporal theory of *continual* »protension and retension«, a »constant relay of reconstructed past and anticipated future«.³¹ For Foster, it is a process of working on and through its own partially repressed past that the neo-avant-garde initiates. Roberts argues that the content of Foster's ›*Nachträglichkeit*‹ is »based on the reworking in a liberal democratic context dominated by the museum and the mass media« the breakthroughs, cognitive and epistemological, that the early avant-garde pursued, thus forming a »pluralizing cultural resistance«.³² Published in the mid-1990s, after the official failure of state socialism, further revelations of the horrors of Stalinism, in the face of »the end of history«, and the globalisation proper of capital, Foster's text abandons art's negative yet entangled relation to capitalism. Though he seeks to correct Bürger's dialectic, Foster overshoots; the neo-avant-garde swaps »grand *oppositions*« for »subtle *displacements*«, endless repetitions spinning off into infinity; art theory diagnoses art as the powerless symptom of history played out as Roberts notes, in the safe space of the »capitalist art institution«.³³

Negation in Art History and Theory III – New Questions Today

After the shift away from negation, but in a wider sense from Marxist concepts of materialism in the 1980s and 1990s, the catastrophic consequences of the financial crisis of 2008 made visible a series of returns and openings within dialectical thinking, not least in art history and theory. The scale of the crisis made the messiness and contradictions within society increasingly stark, renewing the urgency for Marxists to turn away from a purely cultural, or structural understanding of the world, and grapple with the wider fields of political economy, work, ecology, class composition, and impoverishment striated along the lines of race and gender. During the past two decades, but most presciently after 2008, authors such as Stewart Martin, Gail Day, Marina Vishmidt and Kerstin Stakemeier, and Hannah Black have refocussed the debate on dialectical thinking and negation at the level of the social.

In 2000 Stewart Martin published »Autonomy and Anti-Art: Adorno's Concept of Avant-Garde Art«. Diverging from Foster and Buchloh, and insisting that Bürger misunderstood Adorno's theory of avant-garde art, Martin zooms in on the category of the ›new‹ in Adorno's work.³⁴ As a »utopian impulse«, the new points to »the site of the constitution of art's autonomy through the determinate negation of tradition«.³⁵ Martin considers the newness of contemporary art against a parody of the new which relies on the authority of tradition. Here, art must exceed itself and »self-negate« as art, to remain within the concept of art.³⁶ Rather than producing a linear history, the determinate negation of the new produces a retrospective reconstruction of the past, not a projection of the future.³⁷

If Martin invokes the ›new‹ in Adorno's oeuvre to reconsider dialectics in the early twenty-first century, in *Dialectical Passions: Negation in Postwar Art Theory* (2011),

Gail Day pursues both the »persistence and renewal of resistance« in practice and theory. The politics of *Dialectical Passions* explores the »space between a radicalised approach to dialectics and Left-oriented nihilism«, confronting art history's responses to the New Left.³⁸ In her traversal of art and architectural history and theory during the post-1980s, Day is concerned with an assertion that in the late twentieth-century all value claims became suspicious, and social and historical thinking became »forces for relativism«. ³⁹ Thus, Day renews a thorough interrogation of what she deems the prehistory of this collapse, as she simultaneously perceives negative art practices that critically engage the onslaught of neoliberalism in the early to mid-2000s.

This work, far too committed and nuanced to neatly summarise, is useful in showing *how* »negation« is used as part of a routine language concerning debates about modernity and avant-gardism, as per Adorno and Bürger, and more broadly. Day traces different inflections of negation from Duchamp/Dada, to the Futurists, to Gustav Metzger's »auto destructive art«, Eva Hesse's claim to make a »nonwork«, Ad Reinhardt's lists of denials, Robert Smithson's pursuit of »entropic process«, to Barbara Rose's description of Minimal Art as a »negative art of denial and renunciation«. ⁴⁰ The list could go on, and does. Yet this form of negative articulation, or what T. J. Clark describes as »practices of negation« in art, as Day warns, should not be reconciled with »negative thought«.

Tracing the legacy of »negation« in the work of T. J. Clark (a figure set apart, in my study), Day shows how his notion of negation affirms his theory of modernism. Contra theories of negation as rupture or retroactive revealing of truth content that we have seen so far, for Clark, in the work of Goya, Beethoven or Géricault, art becomes negation. ⁴¹ Day writes, »[n]egation here indicates both the crisis of value and a stance against the establishment«. ⁴² Via Clark, Day proposes that »negation is cast »primarily as a process of the medium,« as specific and internal to artistic practice«. ⁴³ Through processes of decomposition, medium is pushed to its limits, neither in processes of »controlled self-cleansing« nor in a »plenitudinous dialectic of artistic discovery of medium«, but rather as »a whole strategy of release, exacerbation, emptying, and self-splitting«. ⁴⁴ And yet, here, negative value is held at the social level. Contra Adorno's negative utopianism, it must find completion in the world. *Dialectical Passions* also explores the place of symbol and allegory in relation especially, to the journal *October*, and the political ramifications or impotence therein of both »fragmentation« and »appropriation«, as well as debates concerning social abstraction. ⁴⁵

In *Reproducing Autonomy: Work, Money, Crisis and Contemporary Art* (2016) co-authored by Marina Vishmidt and Kerstin Stakemeier, negation is reconsidered through autonomy's relation to reproduction, re-inflecting politics through a different metric. I will mainly focus on the third and only co-written chapter which articulates three critical models for *rethinking* autonomy and reproduction, and in turn negation, in the post-crash conjuncture. Vishmidt's and Stakemeier's models focus on the influence of Italian Marxist feminism on recent theories of social reproduction, the history of artistic dematerialisation, and, they formulate an expanded, negative concept of reproduction, against the dominant, affirmative concept of reproductive care.

Drawing on the campaign that went under the slogan »wages against housework«, where autonomist Marxist feminists in Italy during the 1970s argued that if all activity was waged, exploitation and capitalism would become impossible, Vishmidt and Stake-meier claim that Marxist feminism's relevance lies in its strategy of severing »the link

between work and nature as a function of gender, reinventing the natural as social labour.⁴⁶ This severance and reinvention drives their thinking on »how the separation of art from use value can exceed art's traditional positioning of critical negativity to the existing and unfold something more like a determinate, or emancipatory, level of negation.«⁴⁷ By seeking the new in reproduction, they go beyond the sedimentation of artistic autonomy as a reinstated traditionalism functioning as a given in the institution of art. In this sense, they remain loyal to autonomy as historically determined.

What does reproduction mean, and how does art behave as a form of, or analogue to, social reproduction? In Vishmidt's analysis of contemporary capitalism and contemporary art, art functions institutionally as a social palliative; art increasingly takes on the role of social services or maintenance work, as capitalism in the West has subsumed creativity.⁴⁸ If Vishmidt and Stakemeier remove its useful aspects such as »the maintenance of life«, they diagnose art and social reproduction as functioning both to reproduce systematically the »capitalist totality (Adorno)« and as called upon in its »socially reproductive role [...] by the state and capital.«⁴⁹ Gleaning from communication theory's proposition that because of transformations in class composition, affirmation of Fordist models of class struggle are no longer tenable, Vishmidt and Stakemeier look to housework and sociality as sites of unproductive labour, unlimited in their capacity for reproduction. Characterised by measurelessness, housework serves as an analogue to art, specifically: »the entropic limitless ›activity‹, that in late 20th Century art emerges as a sovereign form.«⁵⁰ We see that feminism is aligned with the emergence of the ›entropic‹ in art. Considering Lee Lozano's *Drop Out Piece* (begun 1970) and *General Strike Piece* (begun 1969) they argue that art engages in non-art.⁵¹ As Lozano stops making, Charlotte Posenenske and Lygia Clarke withdraw from the artworld to *do something else*. For Vishmidt and Stakemeier this implies that reproduction can function as a category of solidarity within art.⁵² They claim that in finding the »outside« of their work, these artists reject its institutionalised role as reproducer of bourgeois life; the works move within different »reproductive mediations« such as sociology, the study of labour and industry, social work or therapy, modes to organise life differently. Vishmidt and Stakemeier move the emphasis from respective ›returns‹ to, or departures from, the early avant-garde, to focus on works that *withdraw* from the institution of art, realising their negative relation to the reproduction of capital on the level of the social.⁵³

Vishmidt and Stakemeier attempt to recast determinate negation through reproduction, shifting the emphasis from production to reproduction on a systemic level. Entropic non-reproduction, antisociality (»preservative, somatic, sexual and psychological qualities of their serially singular appearances«), gendered reproductive labour and artistic labour, forms valued for their valuelessness and uselessness, come to be negatively revealed as measures.⁵⁴

Hannah Black's essay »Fractal Freedoms« published in 2016, the same year as *Reproducing Autonomy*, unfolds a brief history of art's negations and negations within the history of art, through the reproductive logics and histories of race and gender. This essay returns us to the notion of unrealised freedom in Adorno's »Art Object« and it also attempts to follow the structures of the object world by way of its unfreedoms.⁵⁵ Turning to a scene of artistic negation, namely Kazimir Malevich's 1915 Suprematist painting titled *Cherniy kvadrat (Black Square)* often understood as zero-degree painting, painting's entrance into abstraction, Black describes a racist annotation inscribed on its

frame, found by researchers in 2015.⁵⁶ Black argues that »the art historical rupture of the Black Square, this radical gesture, turns out to rest, like so much of the history of modernism on the illegibility of blackness«, the illegibility that also haunts histories of white feminism. She writes that »[t]he painting masquerades as the negation of representation, but in light of the joke about darkness, negation itself becomes representation; what is represented is the nothingness of certain subjects, which indicates a certain nothingness in subjectivity itself.«⁵⁷ Black's exploration of unfreedom tears apart notions of freedom resting on idealisms such as will-power, which fail to think their historical determinations. Malevich tried to find freedom by hiding in the square, escaping into an inner exile, imagining that his square wasn't already replicable and his freedom already embroiled in history's brutal abstractions, abstractions, that like the fractals referred to in the title of Black's essay, repeat infinitely. For Black, the *Black Square*, a form of self-nominalisation, begins to appear as the »hiding place [...] for the exhaustion of Europe«.⁵⁸

All these thinkers recognise the necessity to overcome the dominant political quietism by returning to the movement of dialectics, showing us how negation figures in art theory today. Martin abjures us to think the new, but in a relatively mechanistic way. Day invokes political commitment cautioning against social abstraction. Vishmidt and Stakemeier attempt *to think the new* by following the subject entangled within the structures of the contradictory object world, as the object of reproduction and sociality. They recast the political efficacy of art in its negative relation to capital. Black turns to Malevich, naming representation the carrier of such brutal negations as privation, as freedom's unfreedom, and appealing for a negative politics of abolition over liberal inclusion. Negation is required because of the need to break the auto-reproducing structures that dominate us, and not merely change our thinking. Art can be a place that shows what is possible.

¹ »Negation« In: Barbara Cassin and others, ed.: *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*. Princeton 2014. pp. 705–6.

² Philippe Büttgen: »Aufheben, Aufhebung« In: Cassin and others 2014 (as note 1, p. 71).

³ Ibid.

⁴ See Hannah Black, Ciarán Finlayson, and Tobi Haslett: »The Tear Gas Biennial« In: *ArtForum*, 2019 <<https://www.artforum.com/slant/a-statement-from-hannah-black-ciaran-finlayson-and-tobi-haslett-on-warren-kanders-and-the-2019-whitney-biennial-80328>> [accessed 9 October 2019]; »Why Boycott the Zabłudowicz Art Trust? E-Flux Conversations« <<https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/why-boycott-the-zabludowicz-art-trust/2885>> [accessed 9 October 2019]; Larne Abse Gogarty: »The Art Right« In: *Art Monthly*, 2017 <<https://www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/article/the-art-right-by-larne-abse-gogarty-april-2017>> [accessed 9 October 2019].

⁵ Max Horkheimer: »Critical and Traditional Theory« In: *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, trans. by Matthew J. O'Connell and others. New York 2002, p. 242.

⁶ Theodor W. Adorno: *Minima Moralia: Reflections on Damaged Life*. Trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott. London and New York 2005, p. 225.

⁷ Ibid., p. 255.

- 8 Ibid., p. 255.
- 9 Ibid., p. 226.
- 10 Ibid., p. 226.
- 11 Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetics*. Trans. by Wieland Hoban. Cambridge 2018, pp. 77-78.
- 12 Ibid., p. 78.
- 13 Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory*. Trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor. London 2014, p. 94.
- 14 Adorno, cited in Stefan Müller-Doohm: *Adorno: A Biography*. Trans. by Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge 2009, p. 472.
- 15 Though Bürger does not cite him in these passages, Walter Benjamin sketches this history in »The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility« first published in 1935.
- 16 Peter Bürger: *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Trans. by Michael Shaw. Minneapolis 1984, p. 48.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 48-49.
- 18 Ibid., p. 49.
- 19 Ibid., p. 49.
- 20 Ibid., p. 50.
- 21 See responses to Bürger's text collected in the volume: »*Theorie der Avantgarde*«. *Antworten auf Peter Bürgers Bestimmung von Kunst und bürgerlicher Gesellschaft*, ed., W. M. Lüdke. Frankfurt 1976. Bürger's counter response was first published in 1979 and functions as the introduction to the English translation of *Theory of the Avant-Garde* published in 1984.
- 22 Benjamin Buchloh: »Theorising the Avant-Garde« In: *Art in America*, November 1984, p. 20.
- 23 Ibid., p. 21.
- 24 Ibid., p. 21.
- 25 Hal Foster: »What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?« In: *October*, 70, 1994, p. 8.
- 26 Ibid., p. 11.
- 27 Ibid., p. 13.
- 28 Ibid., p. 14.
- 29 Ibid., p. 14; John Roberts: »Avant-Gardes after Avant-Gardism« In: *Chto Delat*, Issue #17, nd <<https://chtodelat.org/b8-newspapers/12-57/avant-gardes-after-avant-gardism/>> [Accessed 10 September 2019].
- 30 Foster 1994 (as note 25), p. 18.
- 31 Ibid, p. 30.
- 32 Roberts nd (as note 29).
- 33 Foster 1994 (as note 25), p. 26; Roberts nd (as note 29).
- 34 Stewart Martin: »Autonomy and Anti-Art: Adorno's Concept of Avant-Garde Art« In: *Constellations*, 7.2, 2000, p. 197.
- 35 Ibid., p. 198.
- 36 Ibid., p. 204.
- 37 Ibid., p. 204. Martin claims that if art's autonomy is itself constituted by its »transgression as anti-art«, if contemporary art transgresses art's autonomy it will institute a critical autonomy. This, for Martin, is the defence against the traditionalist notion of autonomy as »purified of anti-art«. But, we are left with a question as to whether transgression is equivalent to determinate negation? In his seminal »Critique of Relational Aesthetics« (2007), Martin diagnoses Nicholas Bourriaud's notion of relational art as a »simple negation« of commodified relations, thus falling into instrumentalised, and ideologically infused relations, and falling flat on its promise of liberated relations between persons. Stewart Martin: »Critique of Relational Aesthetics« In: *Third Text*, 21.4, 2007, p. 376.
- 38 Gail Day: *Dialectical Passions: Negation in Postwar Art Theory*. New York 2011, p. 3.

- 39 Ibid., p. 13.
- 40 Clark cited *ibid.*, p. 6.
- 41 Clark cited *ibid.*, p. 32.
- 42 Ibid., p. 32.
- 43 Ibid., p. 37.
- 44 Ibid., p. 37.
- 45 Ibid., p. 179.
- 46 Marina Vishmidt and Kerstin Stakemeier: *Reproducing Autonomy, Work, Money, Crisis and Contemporary Art*. London 2016, p. 66.
- 47 Ibid., p. 66.
- 48 Ibid., p. 39.
- 49 Ibid., p. 67.
- 50 Ibid., p. 67. Robert Smithson's work serves as a paradigmatic example of the entropic in art.
- 51 Ibid., p. 70.
- 52 Ibid., p. 70.
- 53 Ibid., p. 73.
- 54 Sometimes, determinate negation is rendered equivalent to anti-sociality, and the implications of this are not raised. I wonder if it is one of the productive contradictions which arise from a book containing two mostly shared but sometimes divergent positions.
- 55 Hannah Black: »Fractal Freedoms« In: *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 41 (2016) <<https://doi.org/10.1086/687082>> [accessed 8 October 2019].
- 56 See Carey Dunne, »Art Historians Find Racist Joke Hidden Under Malevich's Black Square« In: *Hyperallergic*, 2015 <<https://hyperallergic.com/253361/art-historian-finds-racist-joke-hidden-under-malevichs-black-square/>> [accessed 8 October 2019].
- 57 Black 2016 (as note 55).
- 58 Ibid.

Alan Wallach

Patron

Without the word patron and the associated patronage and patronize, the history of art as we now understand it is virtually inconceivable. In the twentieth century, Heinrich Wölfflin, Henri Focillon, and other idealist art historians published formalist histories in which art evolves by itself without patrons or patronage or, for that matter, without named artists.¹ These reified histories may have been of help to connoisseurs in defining historical styles, but as histories of art they elided historical context. Today, any history of art that purports to account for the genesis of a given work or group of works of art must take into consideration patronage or explain why, under certain historical circumstances, the term is absent.

A patron can be defined as a person whose role is the oversight, protection, or sponsorship of another person.² Patronage signifies the action of a patron or a group of patrons using money or influence to advance the interests of a person or group or cause. The verb patronize means to extend patronage to an individual, group, organization, etc. While patron, patronage, and patronize are usually neutral or positive terms, the adjective patronizing carries a strongly negative charge. To be patronizing is to be ostentatiously condescending towards a person or object.³

Patron, patronage, and patronize derive from the Latin *patronus*. In ancient Rome, the relationship between a *patronus* (patron) and *cliens* (client) involved mutual obligations defined by law.⁴ A patron acted as his client's protector, sponsor, or benefactor, lending the client money, using his influence to secure for the client a priesthood, a political office, etc. The client in turn was expected to provide the *patronus* with services as needed (political support, military service, ransom, etc.). The term for patronage was *clientela*. *Patrocinium* denoted the protection the *patronus* offered. The relationship between *patronus* and *cliens* was hierarchical although in some instances *patronus* and *cliens* might occupy the same social rank. While the patron-client relationship evolved over the course of Roman history, it remained an essential structural feature of Roman society extending from the consuls or emperor at the top of the social hierarchy to the plebeians at the bottom.

Patron came into English via Latin and French. A patron was a tutelary saint of a church (twelfth century) a master of a serf or client (1282), a saint as in »patron saint« (1615). Later meanings include master of a house (1611), master of a slave (1671), and employer (1812).⁵ Today patron along with patronage and patronize describe certain types of relationships between individuals and groups in the arts, politics, government, corporate bureaucracies, journalism, academia, religious organizations, and charities.

Since antiquity, patronage of what today we would call the fine arts has been the prerogative of the state, members of the upper classes, the church, and other religious or-

ganizations.⁶ To maintain and enhance their power, rulers commission artists to carve statues, build and decorate monuments, etc. The imperial state orders triumphal arches to celebrate its military victories and its civilizing mission. Merchants commission portraits to advance their families' social status and dynastic pretensions. Reputation laundering is a frequent motive. The Medici, today renowned as patrons of Michelangelo and other Renaissance masters, used arts patronage as part of their campaign to eliminate the taint of usury that had clung to the family name. Henry Clay Frick, a robber baron notorious for ordering the bloody suppression of the 1892 Homestead Steel Strike, is now primarily remembered as the founder of the opulent New York City old master art collection that bears his name. Corporate CEOs and their spouses patronize artists, donate money to arts organizations, sit on the boards of art museums, which usually require a substantial annual donation for membership, and thus acquire the honorific, »patron of the arts«.

Arts patronage also serves as a weapon in the competition between classes and class fractions: priestly caste versus royalty, secular versus monastic clergy, a nascent bourgeoisie versus an aristocracy, etc. And just as a dominant or would-be dominant class equates its particular interests with the interests of society as a whole, so patrons and their allies almost automatically attribute altruistic motives to even the most self-serving acts of patronage. Indeed, since Gaius Maecenas (c. 70-8 BC), a member of the Roman upper class who supported the »Augustan« poets Horace and Virgil and won a reputation as a generous and enlightened patron, patronage of the arts has often been surrounded with an aura of benevolence.⁷

The forms patronage takes vary according to social and historical circumstance. In the West, in the Medieval and early modern period, patrons along with the rest of society considered artists craftsmen. As craftsmen, artists usually belonged to guilds which set standards and prices. A patron or group of patrons commissioned an artist to carry out a job. A written contract specified price, subject matter, size, materials, completion date, etc. In other words, patron and artist regarded the work of art as a commodity like any other.⁸ However, beginning in the fourteenth century, artists began to acquire a new identity. In the *Purgatorio* (early fourteenth century), Dante observed that the painter Cimabue once enjoyed great fame but had been eclipsed by Giotto.⁹ By the fifteenth century artists were arguing that painting, sculpture, and architecture belonged to the liberal, not the mechanical arts.¹⁰ When in the mid-sixteenth century Giorgio Vasari wrote his *Lives of the Artists* and his biography of »the divine« Michelangelo, relations between patron and artist were in flux due to the breakdown of the guild system, the rise of art academies, and the expansion of art markets in northern and southern Europe. As Francis Haskell points out in his magisterial *Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque*, artists who had acquired a measure of renown often exerted a greater degree of control over their commissions.¹¹ Still, it remained the artists' job to anticipate the ideological needs of their patrons (in addition to commissioning an artist, patrons, in the role of patron-collectors, increasingly bought already completed works from out of the artists' studios). Royalty, members of the nobility, and the church, especially the papacy, commissioned such artists as Tintoretto, Rubens, and Bernini, who with the help of dozens of assistants, produced work on a truly industrial scale (e.g., Rubens' Marie de' Medici cycle, now at the Louvre).



Fig. 1: Gustave Courbet, Bonjour Monsieur Courbet, 1854, Musée Fabre, Montpellier

By the eighteenth century, artists had begun to chafe against the limits of traditional patronage. Although patron and patronage might retain a positive valuation for some, for artists the terms stood for a limiting and oppressive relationship, a remnant of feudalism in a world of increasingly capitalist economic and social relations. Artists and writers railed against patronage. In a 1755 letter to Lord Chesterfield, Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), poet, essayist, playwright, and lexicographer, defined a patron as »one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help.«¹² Johnson also altered a line in the second edition of his poem, »The Vanity of Human Wishes« (1749) from »There mark what Ills the Scholar's Life assail,/ Toil, Envy, Want, the Garret, and the Jail« to »Toil, Envy, Want, the Patron, and the Jail,« an alteration cited a century later by the American journalist, essayist, and poet, William Cullen Bryant, in his »Funeral Oration« for the landscapist Thomas Cole.¹³

Influenced by the Enlightenment and the political revolutions of the eighteenth century, artists rebelled against patronage. The doctrine of artistic freedom took hold – the idea that artists should be free to paint or sculpt or design as they pleased. Still, most

artists were obliged to cater to their patrons' needs or to rely on the art market, or some combination of the two. Yet both patrons and the art market often failed to provide artists, even artists who today enjoy worldwide renown, with a living (Van Gogh is the classic example). In Gustave Courbet's *Bonjour Monsieur Courbet* (1854) also known as *The Meeting* (Fig. 1), the artist portrays himself as independent and unbowed in his encounter with his patron, Alfred Bruyas. The contrast between Courbet and Bruyas' servant Calas, who stands a few steps behind his master, holding his master's overcoat, and deferentially bending his head, is unmistakable. It underscores the distance between a feudal relationship and the relationship, as Courbet imagined it, between the modern artist and his patron, who in the painting confront each other as equals.¹⁴

Bonjour Monsieur Courbet represented the romantic ideal. The reality, even for Courbet, was different. Today many of the older forms of patronage persist side-by-side with the art market and its institutions: the salon, the biennial, galleries and gallerists, the latter often acting as surrogates for wealthy patrons and collectors. Fine arts patronage remains the prerogative of the state, the upper classes, the institutions they control (e.g., the art museum), and affluent religious groups. And while in theory artists enjoy the freedom to create as they please, in reality they remain dependent on patronage, the art market, and in many parts of the world (e.g., China, Russia, and Cuba) the approval of the state and its censors.

¹ I refer here to Wölfflin's notorious »Kunstgeschichte ohne Namen« (art history without names). See also, for example, Henri Focillon: *The Life of Forms in Art*. Charles Beecher Hogan trans. New York 1989; orig. publ. 1942. For a discussion of a number of formalist art-historical schemes, see Meyer Schapiro: »Style« In: *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society*, Selected Papers vol. 4. New York 1994, pp. 51-102.

² I have relied on the *Oxford English Dictionary* online (hereafter OED) for the definitions and etymology of patron, patronage, patronize, and patronizing. In recent usage patron has also served as a synonym for art collector. See John Ott: *Manufacturing the Modern Patron in Victorian California*. Farnham, Surrey 2014.

³ For the patronizing attitude so often encountered among collectors and other artworld figures, see Pierre Bourdieu: *Distinction*. Richard Nice trans. Cambridge, Massachusetts 1984; and Bourdieu and Alain Darbel: *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman trans. Stanford 1990; orig. publ. 1966.

⁴ For the discussion of the Roman origins of patron and patronage, I have relied in part on »Patronage in Ancient Rome« In: Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patronage_in_ancient_Rome. For a brief but useful discussion of Roman patronage, see Koenraad Verboven: »Friendship among the Romans« In: Michael Peachin ed.: *Social Relations in the Roman World*. Oxford 2011, pp. 412-413 et passim. It is worth noting that *patronus* is related to *pater* (father).

⁵ OED.

⁶ For patronage per se, Wikipedia offers a useful rundown: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patronage>.

⁷ In Italian *mecenate*, derived from the name Maecenas, is equivalent to the English patron.

⁸ See Bruce Cole: *The Renaissance Artist at Work: From Pisano to Titian*. New York 1983.

⁹ *Purgatorio* 11, 94-96. See <https://www.mappingdante.com/purgatorio/>.

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- ¹⁰ See, for example, Richard Krautheimer in collaboration with Trude Hess Krautheimer: *Ghiberti*. Princeton 1956, passim.
- ¹¹ Francis Haskell: *Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque*. New York 1971, pp. 3-23 et passim.
- ¹² Cited in Michael Rosenthal: *Constable*. London 1987, p. 203; Johnson, *Letters*, no. 56. See »Letter to Chesterfield« In: Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_to_Chesterfield.
- ¹³ See <https://quotes.yourdictionary.com/author/quote/556531>; William Cullen Bryant: »On the Life of Thomas Cole: A funeral oration delivered before the National Academy of Design, New York, May 4, 1848« In: Catskill Archive, <http://www.catskillarchive.com/cole/wcb.htm>.
- ¹⁴ The best analysis of the painting is to be found in T.J. Clark: *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the Second French Republic, 1848-1851*. Greenwich, Connecticut 1973, pp. 156-160.

Avigail Moss

Period

»If periodizing is conventional, it is not entirely arbitrary or useless. As historical classification, it is an instrument in ordering the historical objects as a continuous system in time and space, with groupings and divisions which bring out more clearly the significant similarities and differences, and which permit us to see a line of development; it also permits correlation with other historical objects and events similarly ordered in time and space, and thereby contributes to explanation.«¹
Meyer Schapiro

With its root in ancient Greek, *περίοδος* (*períodos*) meaning »circuit«, »period of time«, as well as »path around«, the word »period« carries temporal and spatial valences and alludes to things both finite and recursive.² Proximal words include »epoch«, »horizon«, »paradigm«, and »episteme«: terms evoking geologic deep time, spatial limits, but also Thomas Kuhn's and Michel Foucault's respective interventions in the sciences. Another definition – for human menstruation – resonates with our own biology.

In Raymond Williams' *Keywords* (1976, 1983, 2015), »period« has no entry of its own but appears enfolded within an entry for the term »generation«, itself an addition to Williams' revised volume of 1983. Expanding *Keywords* at a moment of political and economic retrenchment in the 1980s, Williams added »generation« (and, by extension, »period«) in consultation with Daniel Bell, a sociologist whose *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (1960) taxonomized generational disillusionment with post-industrial society: a premise tested in the promising upheavals of 1968. By indexing »period« to »generation«, Williams registered how stretches of time and cultural groups might be meaningfully and synchronically aligned. In his *Marxism and Literature* (1977) he had already introduced his own tripartite classification for what he called »epochal analysis«, in which a »dominant« culture (in this case, late capitalism) continuously clashed with »residual« and »emergent« forms, like the idea of rural community, or self-organized working-class life. Culture in Williams's epochal analysis emerged according to no simple timeline, but was a transformative process, marked by struggle.

Scholars in the historical disciplines have defined periods by international or interecine conflicts, technological shifts, scientific developments, and social and political transformations. Conventional art historians pin individual artistic developments to intrinsic timelines: mapping a single artist's oeuvre through shifts in method or medium.

Period also denotes extrinsic developments: the emergence of style and iconography, as in the gothic's efflorescence from the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries. Such periodizations are never fully dominant. As art historian Meyer Schapiro states in an article published in the 1970 inaugural edition of *New Literary History*, artists and artworks may seem to exist »out of time« or »out of place« of stylistic or affiliative concatenations: as shifters or hinges to other temporalities. Schapiro says that a periodization »must be vague in its boundaries« while also grasping the »basic datum and axis of reference ... the irreversible order of single works located in time and space.«³ Herein lies period's provocation, one that Williams also registered: for every proposed container, chronometric or otherwise, some remainder appears to erode or even crash through its borders.

Time weighs heavily upon art institutional structures. Reactionary periodizations appear in universities in the context of disciplinary hiring decisions and course distributions. Museum practices are similarly implicated. Collections organized by period and geography may adhere to imperial ideologies, if occasionally mitigated by interventionist curatorial or artistic projects (Institutional Critique's fading salve). Still, proposals to decouple museum programming from period scaffolding can lead to conceptually pseudomorphic exhibitions. In the city where I live, Los Angeles, plans are underway to reconfigure the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's physical and intellectual infrastructure by 2023 (Fig. 1, 2). Museum Director, Michael Govan, and site architect, Peter Zumthor want to arrange LACMA's encyclopedic collections according to decontextualized temporary »theme« exhibitions, eschewing consistent period or geographic arrangements.⁴ In 2000, curator Okwui Enwezor showed how the Tate Modern's own ahistorical, anti-periodizing »theme« programming exposed the systemic racism, sexism, and classism never far from the surface in the encyclopedic collection's presumptive structures: a cautionary tale.⁵ For LACMA, it is clear that museum director and architect invite what art historian Hal Foster has referred to as »[...] a consumer-touristic culture of art sampling« that admits »post-historical [defaults]« in at the museum's back door.⁶

In short, the placeholder term »period« plays a vital role in art scholarship and stewardship, for too often reactionary timelines win out due to ambivalence, willfulness, or both. The question persists: to what end is a temporal schema being put, and why? How have art historians developed tools that further dialectical and materialist narratives around cultural expressions in time? In what follows, I present instances of radical periodizing in art history since the Enlightenment: a survey by no means exhaustive and, it must be said, tempered by its own teleology. My exploration ends in the late twentieth century, when an interminable *presentness* or contemporaneity appeared to foreclose the possibility for art-historical periodizations, and I briefly touch on how these concerns might abut discourses around environmental and social crisis and collapse.

Of stadial histories and struggle

Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550, enlarged 1568) is often cited as the locus for art historical thinking in Western Europe, and reflexively, its colonial dependencies. Vasari framed periods around anecdotal biographies of Renaissance artists and was the first writer to portray an art system's social structure. But for a radical conception of period, one must turn to the German Enlightenment art historian, Johann Joachim Winckelmann. In his widely-read, *History of the*



Fig. 1: Atelier Peter Zumthor & Partner: Illustration of the plan for the new LACMA

Art of Antiquity (1764), Winckelmann constructed the first art-historical system tracing temporal periods, proposing that artifacts be read as keys to a culture's political and social life-world. While lacking incontrovertible empirical data, Winckelmann developed a stadial framework for the Etruscan, Greek, and Roman eras. He posited a narrative structure outlining their beginning, development, decadence and decline, using extant texts and archeological artifacts. Read widely in the nineteenth century by professionals in new fields like archeology, but also by intellectuals and philosophers like G.F.W. Hegel and later in 1837 by the young Karl Marx, Winckelmann's work provided one foundation for apprehending symbolic cultural expressions as survivals in the present on something approaching their own terms. Hegel and Marx would devise similar concepts of history, with Marx in his »Preface« to *A Critique of Political Economy* (1859) describing human eras as marked by ever-revolutionizing modes of production: from primitive communism, to slave societies, to feudalism, to capitalism's bourgeois world order, which would be ruptured by a fifth stage of socialist revolution. These conceptions of historical progress stemmed from ideas of stadial development based upon modes of subsistence and private property already explored by John Locke, David Hume, and Adam Smith.⁷ But as Alex Potts has shown, Winckelmann's project revealed how it might be possible to turn to idealized cultural constructions – in this case the Greek ideal, figured as a kind of »childhood« of civic society – to envision harmonious relationships between human beings developing in progressive societies to come.⁸ Yet Winckelmann also worried about the efficacy of constructing such idealizations upon what were essentially fragments.

In the nineteenth century, Romantic scholars rejected temporalizations predicated upon classical inheritances. In the British context, the polymathic art critic John Ruskin and the poet, designer, and socialist, William Morris bypassed the Renaissance and upheld the Medieval Gothic as a moral and ethical source for ideas of organic



Fig. 2: Atelier Peter Zumthor & Partner: Illustration of the plan for the new LACMA

community and noble labor. In their selective temporalities, they sought to alleviate industrial society's ills. By the latter nineteenth century art historians Aloïs Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin, produced structural and formal analyses of artifacts in which stylistic change unfolded through immanent artistic development. In his book *Late Roman Art Industry* (*Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, 1901) Riegl proposed that a *Kunstwollen*, or »artistic will« governed a culture's artistic production. Cultures or even epochs expressed themselves through form in the ornamental and applied arts.⁹ Heinrich Wölfflin also followed a historicist line from his advisor, the cultural historian, Jacob Burckhardt. In *Principles of Art History* (1915), Wölfflin's »art history without names« developed immanently and teleologically through history in binary pairs appearing at alternating periods in time, with the interplay between the Classic and the Baroque as repeating organizing motif. While their projects were predicated on historicist periodizations, Riegl's and Wölfflin's works eliminated contextual social, economic, and material data, a tension which later registered in art historian Erwin Panofsky's exploration of »symbolic form« that distilled a culture's common »spirit« or *Weltanschauung*. This latter concept extended from philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey's sense of shared cognitive experiences.¹⁰

Radical scholars in the twentieth century valued these nineteenth-century projects, but also disagreed with how they evaded objective social data in favor of superindividual principles. Scholars of the Frankfurt School like Theodor Adorno admired Riegl's work for »[freeing] aesthetic experience from timeless abstract norms«, although expressing reservations about its essentialisms.¹¹ One of Heinrich Wölfflin's erstwhile students, German cultural critic, Walter Benjamin, repudiated his former teacher, but appreciated how Riegl reinstated marginalized cultures or epochs previously deemed »decadent« into the history of art.¹²

Synchronicity Troubles

In 1932 German philosopher Ernst Bloch introduced the notion of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* or »non-contemporaneity« (variously translated as »non-simultaneity« or »non-synchronicity«) to describe disaffected populations' distinct and antagonistic temporal experiences in post-Wilhelmine capitalist Germany. For Bloch, groups like peasants, youths, and the bourgeoisie represented vulnerable anti-capitalist subjectivities stagnating within the modernizing nation, and therefore susceptible to National Socialist ideologies. Bloch potentially took this term, »non-contemporaneity« from the art historian and Nazi-sympathizer, Wilhelm Pinder, who in 1926 challenged both Wölfflin's and Riegl's earlier assertions of linear time and historical progress, arguing instead for a periodization pinned to the experiences of particular generations.¹³ Bloch translated »non-contemporaneity« from a reactionary and biologically essentialist term to a Marxist frame, exhorting the Left to awaken to these temporal contradictions in the present, while casting glances backwards to history. Like Raymond Williams' later conception of »dominant« »residual« and »emergent« cultures, Bloch accepted the that current economic forces and the relations of production ultimately determined historical experience, but that this historical experience was hardly uniform. Bloch's example also demonstrated latent uses for even the most conservative of temporal theories.

During the Second World War, Modernism as a periodizing term found new urgency for scholars on the Left. Used by nineteenth-century French critic Charles Baudelaire in 1864 to refer to the »transient, the fleeting, the contingent« in urban society, for twentieth-century critics, Modernism described art's self-contained formalist evolution.¹⁴ In his 1939 article published in *Partisan Review*, »Avant-Garde and Kitsch«, critic Clement Greenberg proposed paradoxically that Modernism developed independently from societal determinations, but also stemmed from a European tradition beginning with the revolutions of 1848, in which advanced artists operated in and against bourgeois society relative to transformations in monopoly capitalism. Greenberg's text was an anti-capitalist response to the fascist threats to culture in Europe, and Modernism in this sense was defined as an emancipatory aesthetic and political concept as well as periodizing mode.¹⁵

After the Second World War, social historians of art largely abstained from building sweeping periodizations, focusing instead on individual institutions, movements, and works. In his *Philosophy of Art History* (1959), Hungarian art historian Arnold Hauser also criticized Wölfflin's Hegelian method and morally-coded characterizations of historical epochs. Hauser thought these characterizations submitted individuals to organicist principles of growth borrowed from the natural sciences that Hauser viewed as strictly ahistorical. Citing philosopher Henri Bergson, sociologist Georg Simmel, and particularly the Vienna School art historian, Max Dvořák, Hauser instead argued for a renewed sociological investment in the psychic life of the individual producer. Hauser underscored that it was important to bring a full arsenal of historical data to bear upon interpretation relative to the artist's institutional contexts. Nonetheless, he was wary of hanging periodizing determinants on factors like Marx's conception of the impact of productive forces, or class war between economic subjects. Periods were not to be delineated by preconceived laws, and seeming recursions were to be interpreted on their own terms.

In the 1970s and 1980s, an academic mandate, the »new art history«, emerged in Anglo-American scholarship. Following the works of Hauser, and British art historians Francis Klingender and John Berger, scholars such as Linda Nochlin, O. K. Werckmeister, and T. J. Clark rejected formalist analyses of Modernism as it had been envisioned in undialectical Marxist sociologism and in mandarin iconographic, stylistic, and connoisseurial scholarship. Nochlin, in her essay, »Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?« (1971) highlighted how institutions – museum, gallery and art historical establishment – drove canonical periodizations. In *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (1972), non-Marxist art historian Michael Baxandall also introduced his analytic, »the period eye«, which triangulated readings of a society's visual culture to produce causal reconstructions of social experience, but which rarely foregrounded ideological factors or class analysis. As such, this method is notable for its psychologism, and for its endurance in mainstream »social histories of art« and visual culture studies.¹⁶

In 1984, literary critic Fredric Jameson deployed the term »Postmodernism« to describe an epoch delineated in economist Ernst Mandel's *Late Capitalism* (1973). While the term was first used in 1930s Hispanic literary studies, Mandel's interpretation described the period from 1945 to the 1970s as marked by the liquification of capital across global markets, the expansion of international corporations aided by changing communications technology, working class struggle, and mass consumerism. Jameson's interpretation of Postmodernism in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) foregrounds a »periodizing hypothesis« of capitalism, described by its violent and alienating effects where people were sundered from historical deep time and inherited traditions, effects which also obscured class conflict. He saw this hypothesis best embodied in the arts, particularly painting, and especially in the built environment. Postmodernism as a cultural style presented a parasitic and eclectic form of pastiche emanating from consumerism, exemplified by the city of Las Vegas's vertiginous architectural spaces and illuminated surfaces – a point Jameson took from the architect, Robert Venturi, but which was also inspired by Jean Baudrillard's commentary on simulacra and Henri Lefebvre's preoccupation with urban space.¹⁷

Later scholars revised and expanded Jameson's interventions. In particular, postmodernism showed how modernism as a period concept occupied contested terrain, relative to geographic disparities. Following the impact of postcolonial theory and analyses of decolonization from the 1980s onwards, scholars have also looked at how Western art historical periodizations were displaced to former colonies as administrative tools for usurpation and control. In her 1992 paper, »When Was Modernism in Indian Art?«, published in her book, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (2000), curator Geeta Kapur expanded the Marxist concept of uneven development to describe how Modernism in Indian art followed nonsynchronous developments from the modernist narratives in Euro-American discourse.

Sundering the Interminable Now Time

Since the 1970s, art historians have debated whether »the contemporary« is a useful periodizing descriptor. A scholar writing on the present is necessarily in a blind spot, at the center of a maelstrom of furiously-evolving artistic and cultural production, which

renders the scholar journalist or publicist.¹⁸ Temporal short-hands present themselves in the form of three general periodizations, each belying distinct underlying political commitments. The first is the chronologically-expansive »Art since 1945«, which marks World War Two's conclusion and America's dominance on the capitalist world stage. Notably, it excludes art produced in socialist states from 1945 to 1990 and valorizes painterly abstraction: a triumphalist narrative perpetuated by the Museum of Modern Art in New York and linked to Cold War antagonisms. These historic dynamics have been described by art historians, Max Kozloff, Serge Guibault, and Michael Leja. A second contemporary periodization, »Art after 1989«, pins the contemporary to the extinguishing of »actually existing socialism«, the rise of political and economic neoliberalism, the extension of capitalism into China, and the globalization of biennial exhibitions. It is often discussed as the moment when autonomous art gained full incorporation within the culture industry. A third periodization charts the contemporary from the early 1960s, at a moment when new practices (Minimalism, Conceptual Art, and Performance) challenged hegemonic medium-specificity. This third periodizing frame – promoted for example by philosopher Peter Osborne in his book, *Anywhere Or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (2013) – underscores how artists have increasingly worked internationally, enabled by shifting communications and transport infrastructure. This frame also coincides with global anti-imperialist national liberation struggles.

Recent conversations around temporality in the humanities and sciences have also sought to link non-human systems to art and architectural practices. Twentieth-century German scholar Aby Warburg's description of objects or images as having an »afterlife« or *Nachleben* has been adapted by research programs under monikers like the »new materialism«, object-oriented-ontology (OOO), and Actor-Network-Theory (ANT). Scholars working under these banners ascribe particular agency to non-human objects or systems: efforts that lead to anachronistic or anachronic presentations that sidestep materialist histories and periodizations in attempts to capture anonymously or multiply-authored forms like ritual objects or – perhaps appropriately – architectural spaces. These frameworks also converge in analyses of ecological crisis and collapse, evinced by the growing number of working groups, exhibitions, and conferences on ecological aesthetics and the »Anthropocene«.¹⁹ Coined in 2000 by atmospheric scientist Paul Crutzen and biologist Eugene Stoerme, the term (from ancient Greek, »anthropos« for »human being«) describes the effect that human activity has wrought on the earth's atmosphere from the end of the eighteenth century, roughly coinciding with the industrial revolution. The term itself may soon be recognized as an official temporal unit in the stratigraphic record, and its ubiquity in the humanities, social sciences, and particularly the arts marks a general sense of urgency for moving toward something like a planetary history.

However, as Marxist scholars have shown – e.g. Joel Kovel and Michael Löwy's »Eco-Socialist Manifesto« (2001), along with work by Andreas Malm, and Jason Moore – this term obscures and generalizes the origins of our ongoing environmental catastrophe by eliding its prime causes, the transnational state policies and the corporations acting according to the logics of global capital.²⁰ Malm's studies on the history of fossil fuel and on the anti-historical frameworks described above offer lessons for art historians in the present, that in eschewing precise periodizations and historical analysis, one risks running aground on obfuscations. A radical interpretation of »period«

acknowledges that temporal developments will always be nonlinear, fragmentary, inconsistent, or contradictory. Anachronisms and survivals open seductive doorways to ahistorical methodologies that may center on reified objects endowed with subjective agency. But the challenge is to keep the historical and materialist sense of these discontinuities in sight.

- 1 Meyer Shapiro: »Criteria of Periodization in the History of European Art« In: *New Literary History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, A Symposium on Periods (Winter 1970), pp. 113-125.
- 2 »period, n., adj., and adv.« OED Online. Oxford (Accessed 09/15/2018).
- 3 Schapiro (as note 1), pp. 113-114.
- 4 Critics Christopher Knight and Joseph Giovannini excoriate the plans here www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-zumthor-lacma-letter-20190709-story.html and here <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/lacma-suicide-by-architecture/> and here <https://la.cur-bed.com/2019/4/8/18300919/lacma-redesign-peter-zumthor-wilshire>.
- 5 Okwui Enwezor: »The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition« In: eds. Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, Nancy Condee: *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*. Durham 2008, pp. 207-232.
- 6 »Roundtable: The Predicament of Contemporary Art« In: *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*. Ed. Hal Foster et al., New York 2004, p. 679.
- 7 Ronald Meek: *Social Science and The Ignoble Savage*. Cambridge 1976; See also Andrew Hemingway: *Landscape Between Ideology and the Aesthetic*. Leiden and Boston 2017, pp. 55-62.
- 8 Johann Joachim Winckelmann: *History of the Art of Antiquity*. Los Angeles 2006; Alex Potts: *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History*. New Haven 1994, p. 21.
- 9 Alois Riegl: *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament* (1893); *Late Roman Art Industry* (1901).
- 10 Andrew Hemingway: »Introduction: Capitalism, Nationalism, and the Romantic *Weltanschauung*« In: Andrew Hemingway and Allan Wallach (eds.): *Transatlantic Romanticism: British and American Art and Literature, 1790-1860*. Amherst 2015, 1-25.
- 11 Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory*. London 1997, p. 60.
- 12 Michael Gubser: »Conclusion« In: *Time's Visible Surface: Alois Riegl and the Discourse on History and Temporality in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*. Detroit 2006, pp. 202-217.
- 13 Ernst Bloch: »Non-Contemporaneity And Obligation To Its Dialectic« In: *Heritage of Our Times*. Ann Arbor 1991, pp. 97-145; Fredric Schwartz: »Ernst Bloch and Wilhelm Pinder: Out of Sync« In: *Grey Room*, Spring 2001, pp. 54-89.
- 14 Charles Baudelaire: »The Painter of Modern Life« In: *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. London 1964, pp. 1-35.
- 15 Clement Greenberg: »Avant-Garde and Kitsch« In: *Art and Culture*. Boston 1961, pp. 3-21; Neil Davidson: »Uneven and Combined Development: Between Capitalist Modernity and Modernism« In: *Cultures of Uneven and Combined Development*, ed. James Christie and Nesrin Degirmencioglu. Leiden and Boston 2019, pp. 167-198.
- 16 Perry Anderson: »Components of the National Culture« In: *English Questions*. London 1992, p. 83.
- 17 See also Perry Anderson: *The Origins of Postmodernity*. London 1999, p. 51.
- 18 Christopher Wood: *A History of Art History*. New Jersey 2019. p. 388.

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- ¹⁹ One example among many is Berlin's Haus der Kulturen der Welt's ongoing »Anthropocene Curriculum«, <https://www.anthropocene-curriculum.org/>.
- ²⁰ Jason W. Moore: *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. London 2015; Andreas Malm: *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*. London 2016, and *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World*. London 2018.

Paul B. Jaskot

Political Economy

The Problem

Political economy as a term is not unknown to the field of art history although, for the most part, it remains at the margins and is most often invoked in its merely descriptive form. In this sense, it has been a useful way of summarizing how art – especially public art and public institutions of art – can be economically and ideologically explained by ties to political patrons and uses.¹ But for Marxism, political economy is something sharper and more analytic. Political economy is not merely an explanatory term, but rather one at the center of any critical project. It is not by chance that Marx's subtitle for *Capital*, Vol. I is »A Critique of Political Economy«. He subsumes in this subtitle his goal of excavating the workings of the economic system as it develops in relation to society as a whole, a goal that relies on understanding the division of labor and social relationships essential for the working of capitalism. Such a comprehensive agenda both explains the production of the social body in its totality as well as exposes to critique its contradictions and social violence.

Marxist art historians who pick up on this inflection of political economy analyze works of art to examine further the foundational and systemic reality of society's inequalities, in the broadest sense. Crucial, here, is the emphasis on those two words: foundational and systemic. A critique of political economy forces us to take these terms as central to Marxist art history, not as mere context or background. The political economy of Marxist art history presses on the social wound to unmask and highlight the pain essential to the thriving of capitalism. Such a political economy is ambitious in its scale of analysis, encompassing as it does the subject of how power works systemically and art's contribution to this process.

Understanding political economy in Marxist art history starts with the term's usage as it arose in the 18th Century and was further elaborated by Marx in his critique. From there, we can lay out three major areas of political economy in Marxist art history. These can be roughly summarized as: the ideological obfuscation of political economy; the systemic character of political economy; and the critical/political engagement with political economy. Marxist art history has made important contributions to all of these.

Yet the following is meant not merely as a summary but rather as a call for all art historians to place political economic questions as central to our concerns. Too often, either the seduction of the aesthetic or the propensity for favoring resistance in art history have pushed questions of political economy to the background of an argument or presented its domain as a concatenation of relatively abstract forces against which artists work. This propensity has been marked even in Marxist art history, especially that of the post-

World War II period. The complexity of analyzing political economy, however, stands at the center of Marx's critique. Developing that tradition further can only help us confront more trenchantly and radically the ever-changing, ever-the-same waves of capital's power.

Fundamentals: Political Economy from Smith to Hegel to Marx

The starting point for any history of political economy must be Adam Smith's *Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations* (1776). While there were other and earlier deployments of the term, Smith articulated the basis of its modern usage, which attempts to understand the apparent *separation* of the private economy as it functions in relation to the public, the state, and the larger social whole. In Smith's analysis, this untethering of the economy from the sovereign power of the state posits opportunities especially in relation to the economy's ability to regulate itself and, by extension, its potential for unforeseen profits once it is let loose. Politics and the state do not disappear in this account, as Smith makes clear in the opening of Book IV:

»Political economy, considered as a branch of science of the statesman or the legislature, proposes two distinct objects: first, to provide a plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people, or more properly to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves; and secondly, to supply the state or commonwealth with a revenue sufficient for the public services.«²

Note that, in both cases it is the economy that remains the central subject as it is served by and serves the state. Of course, Smith's interest, as a philosopher, was not in a political stance per se, but rather in explaining how individual private (economic) interests might have social (political) consequences completely unintended and, indeed, beyond the understanding of single actors. In this regard, Smith was not a proponent of free enterprise and commerce, but rather trying to understand what he saw as the separation of the morality of politics from the effects of commercial society. His emphasis on the workings of the economy thus allowed for the analytical development of such concepts as the »invisible hand« of the market that articulated the advantages that may come from a private marketplace. Nevertheless, his conception never addressed fully the moral consequences of the political inequality upon which such an understanding of the economy was based.³

As Susan Buck-Morss has noted, the initial theorizations of political economy depended on its capacity to render the economy *visible* as an identifiable part of the social whole, or, more bluntly, as capital. And yet, the visibility of the economy is itself an issue, as it exists systemically on such a broad and complex plane that it cannot be easily grasped. Its visible-but-incomprehensible nature encourages individuals both to collapse their individual point of view into their own much smaller world (hence, allowing modern subjects to confuse self-interest with social good) as well as easing the way for those describing the system to employ and naturalize the »invisible hand«. Notably for art history, such illusions also required experts in representation. At the same time as Smith's theorizing came the development of powerful modern graphic methods of visualizing that showed seeming correlations between aspects of profit, growth, social characteristics, or history itself simply by placing them in proximity to each other, as exemplified by William Playfair and others.⁴

Hegel elaborated on and exacerbated Smith's distinction between civil society and political or public society, putting them in two distinct spheres that were in real tension. For Hegel, such tension could only be resolved through a higher order politics, that is the sovereign state (in his case, Prussia).⁵ Such a move became fodder for Marx as he turned Hegel on his head, arguing that only the economically productive subject (the proletariat) could resolve the tensions inevitable between the divergent public and private interest in capitalism.⁶ For Marx, the move beyond political economy rested on understanding the relations of production and control over the means of production, which in turn led to an understanding of the systemic nature of capital, its contradictions, and its ultimate critique. The relational essence of society rested on such fundamental elements of capitalism as the institution of private property, the division of labor, and endemic periodic crises.

The relational basis of Marx's thinking – encompassing both a focus on the economic as well as capacity to think systemically of society as a whole – can be traced throughout his works. Perhaps one of the clearest examples would be in his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859):

»In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material forces of production. 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.... 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 between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.«⁷

Such a base/superstructure model would become ossified in later Marxist thinkers and roundly criticized as a result. Yet, in this text and elsewhere in Marx the material and the ideological are always in relation to one another, and that relation (indeed, the »fight«) is a dynamic conflictual one. And it is through this relationship that political economy is established in the social whole. In this sense, while Marx saw political economy itself as a fundamentally flawed philosophical construct, his work nevertheless rests on a critical perception of the relationship of the political and economic, as this citation makes clear. Political economy for Marx is thus both subject *to* critique and a subject *of* critique, and both of these positions are represented in art history. The tension between considering political economy as a philosophical conception of the world and political economy as a subject to be imbedded in a social scientific critique of the world has been a tension fundamental to Marxism that has led to a productive variation of approaches and interests for Marxist art history.

The Ideological Obfuscation of Political Economy

Probably the most prominent role for political economy as a component of Marxist art history is represented by scholars interested in how artists attempt to mask the nature of property, divisions of labor, and surplus value. For these art historians, important here is

not just analyzing art in terms of one or two historical conditions but rather seeing it as part of the complex matrix of relationships pointed to in Marx's statements on political economy and the social whole. An especially good example of this tendency can be found in the scholarship of the 1970s and 1980s on British landscape painting of the 18th and early 19th centuries – a moment when capital's processes of primitive accumulation and technological development were in full view through enclosure of the countryside and burgeoning industrialization.⁸ A number of critical art historians drew on the new social history from below associated with E.P. Thompson and E.J. Hobsbawm to reinterpret the work of artists such as Constable and Turner as embedded in a political economy that was not merely reflected in their work but determining of both its form and iconography. Art here plays a social and distinct role in the active and dynamic relationship between a projected ideological stability and political economic crises.⁹

Such an approach is not specific to capitalist political economies. Oliver Sukrow, for example, has shown how analyzing landscape relationally in terms of ideology and the economy under East Bloc Communism gives an equally compelling critique of the function of art within political economy. Here too, the ideological work done by industrial landscapes of artists like Bernard Kretzschmar in the German Democratic Republic point to the instability of painting that attempts to contain conflict even while it exists within contradictions of labor, property, and the state.¹⁰ For this to be effective, Marxist art historians cannot rely on a mere background projection of political economic forces, but must effectively master these historical processes at a broad scale in order to parse the critical or reactionary role of art. Sukrow, as with many other Marxist art historians who take up this thread of political economy, tends to be on the more philosophical end of Marxism in his emphasis on how analyzing cultural representation helps us to critically understand a comprehensive social whole in which ideology and political economy are not a mere antinomy but rather inherent in the very fabric of that social whole itself.¹¹

The Systemic Character of Political Economy

This relational art history has an important corollary in the work that addresses political economy systemically. These Marxist art histories center their analysis in the production of social relationships themselves, inevitably showing an interest in cultural production as a corollary of (capitalist) production. Here the work of art is part of an economic system of property, divisions of labor, manipulation of resources, and capital that especially favors architectural histories. For Marx, of course, production is always dialectically related to labor and capital. He is clear that the greater, more complex and intensive the object of production, the more the worker is alienated and dehumanized, and this is our most effective site of critique. »The worker puts his life into the object, and his life then belongs no longer to himself but to the object. The greater his activity, therefore, the less he possesses. What is embodied in the product of his labor is no longer his own. The greater this product is, therefore, the more he is diminished.«¹² Within this logic, it becomes clear that the more intensive the product of labor that in turn produces more complex divisions of labor the more productive is that labor for capital and the more alienated the worker. Architecture, within the visual arts, embodies that com-

plexity of labor and intensity of capital that characterize the systemic breadth of political economy.

Such a conclusion has especially been the case with specifically politically charged areas of the discipline, for example, the study of architecture in National Socialist Germany. Berthold Hinz, one of the prime representatives of the leftist body of art historians arising out of the social crisis in the late 1960s, articulated a broad critique of modern continuities with fascist politics in his book *Art in the Third Reich*. In the chapter on depictions of architecture, however, he quite clearly turned to a more political economic critique, specifically discussing the way architecture functioned as a projection of ideology in Nazi Germany that obscured militarist, oligarchic, and nationalist concentrations of power and oppression.¹³ This critical approach to the broader philosophical aesthetic positioning of architecture in the Nazi state is in contrast to more recent Marxist art history on the topic that tends towards the social scientific. This scholarship grounds fascist architecture in specific systemic and institutional conditions and practices. My own work on the dynamic relationship between policies of oppression and the productive use of forced-labor as they intersected with state architectural priorities has taken that approach to the critique of political economy.¹⁴ In both cases, though, the contribution of architecture to the systemic nature of the regime has been the central analytic thrust of Marxist work.

It must be said, though, that such a systemic analysis is rarely theorized beyond citation of Marx and other Marxists themselves.¹⁵ A powerful exception has been the extraordinary work of Manfredo Tafuri, especially *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (1976). Tafuri locates the development of the historical avant-garde between the anguish of capitalism and the reassurance of ideology.

»Attacking the subject of architectural ideology from this point of view means trying to explain why the apparently most functional proposals [e.g., Wagner and Taut's housing estates] for the reorganization of this sector of capitalist development have had to suffer the most humiliating frustrations – why they can be presented even today as purely objective proposals devoid of any class connotation, or as mere »alternatives«, or even as points of direct clash between intellectuals and capital.«¹⁶

Such dialectical and unrelenting thinking guides Tafuri's whole project as he explodes the ideological projections of the avant-garde by employing a materialist analysis of capitalism's developing use of built and urban form. For Tafuri, architecture is engaged in such systemic production, and he insists that any architectural critique must also be a political economic one at the scale of the system itself. Tafuri's systemic approach has a more recent corollary for more materialist Marxist and Marxist-inspired art historians who have taken the real estate industry and developers as their central subject of investigation, which has led to some provocative critiques.¹⁷

The Critical/Political Engagement with Political Economy

Tafuri knew that his work was more than a contribution to understanding the past, worthy as that may be. Writing in the context of the global crises of capital in the 1970s, Tafuri aimed his text at exposing institutional complacency about the seemingly autonomous role of art as much as he hoped to contribute to the critique of capital in all its forms by providing it with a cultural weapon. More recently, for contemporary Marxist

art historians, the political economy of the artworld itself is the central subject of critical historical investigation. Engaging political economy in this specifically political way means turning our gaze to the globalization of capitalism since the 1970s as well as the political economic crises increasingly exacerbated by movement of peoples, goods, and capital. Such a new, non-localized »Empire«, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri would have it, is a centrifugal force that is, nevertheless, also countered by centripetal organization of knowledge and systems of production and exchange that remain provincial in their character (i.e., bound in a particular part of Hardt and Negri's political economic network).¹⁸ Such a dynamic of different scales of activity includes systemically, of course, the artworld as well. Exemplary art-historical work that takes this dynamic as its main subject include Chin Tao Wu's exploration of the corporate sponsorship of art and Gregory Sholette's work on analyzing contemporary political economy in order to theorize a point of artistic resistance.¹⁹

Contemporary leftist and Marxist engagements such as these come together in moments and locations of intense pressure in the global political economy. The Gulf Labor Project, for example, has taken on the massive influx of capital into real estate, architecture, and art collecting in the Gulf states as a main target. Pointing to both the ideological function of art to mystify social relations (in the form of art museums, for example) as well as its direct role in systemic inequality (above all in large-scale architectural sites that exploit labor almost at the level of outright servitude, making clear the most extreme lengths to which capital may go to create surplus value out of work), this collective of cultural activists shows the power still and always in a political economic critique.²⁰

Conclusion

As the last example shows, the analysis and critique of political economy is as active as the crises of capitalism. Still, many in the Gulf Labor Project, while influenced by Marx and perhaps claiming a relation to the Marxist tradition, would most likely not describe themselves as Marxist cultural historians first and foremost. This is of course part of the general challenge posed by the dissolution of the left especially since the 1980s. With capitalism, there will always be a need for the foundational and systemic critique of political economy because of the inherent inequality it produces. Whether Marxist art history remains useful in this critique depends on its ability to develop its critical apparatus from the deep thinking of the tradition but also in the new directions that the crises of capital require. Do we have an art historical response, for example, to the profound recent analysis by Nancy MacLean of the localization of power over economic institutions, relations of labor, and the flow of capital through the extreme right as has happened in the U.S. and elsewhere?²¹ Of course, asking the contemporary question should always send us back to the materialist history that Marx himself saw as crucial in order to derive our cultural conclusions. It can only be in the comprehensive and necessarily collective intellectual endeavor – that, Janus-faced, looks backward and forward – that we can formulate anew the Marxist art historical analysis which makes a systemic and foundational critique of political economy its central goal.

- 1 See, for example, the majority of essays in Julie F. Codell (ed.): *The Political Economy of Art*. Madison, NJ 2008.
- 2 Adam Smith: *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Vol. 1. Dublin 1793, p. 419.
- 3 See, in this regard, Susan Gallagher's contextualization of Smith's thought within the parameters of 18th-century aristocratic rule in Susan E. Gallagher: *The Rule of the Rich? Adam Smith's Argument against Political Power*. University Park 1998, esp. 13-14, 69-100. See, also, the excellent summary of political economy in Tom Bottomore (ed.): »Political Economy« In: *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Hoboken 1983, pp. 375-78.
- 4 Susan Buck-Morss: »Envisioning Capital: Political Economy on Display« In: *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 21, no. 2, Winter 1995, pp. 434-67. See, also, the now-classic text on the origin of modern graphics in Edward R. Tufte: *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*. Cheshire 1983. Notably, the ideological role of visualizing quantitative information and its central use to legitimize capitalism then and now is of much interest to the current debates in Digital Humanities, an area of potential critical scholarship that Marxist art history has been slow to perceive.
- 5 Buck-Morss 1995 (as note 4), pp. 130-34.
- 6 Note Marx's neat summary of his indebtedness to but dialectical turn from Hegel in »Postface to the Second Edition [1873]«, *Capital*, vol. 1. New York 1976, pp. 102-103. Gillian Rose argued that Marx had effectively misunderstood important aspects of Hegel that emphasized seemingly abstract antinomies of the latter that rested on misreading his conception of a comprehensive view of actuality. See, in particular, Gillian Rose: *Hegel Contra Sociology*. London 1981, pp. 215-20.
- 7 Karl Marx: »Preface,« *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 1859. Excerpted and reprinted in Eugen Kamenka (ed.): *The Portable Karl Marx*. New York 1983, pp. 159-60.
- 8 See Marx's discussion in *Capital* (as note 6), pp. 884-95.
- 9 See the summary of this moment as well as an extended critical analysis of the question of ideology in Marxist art history in Andrew Hemingway: *Landscape between Ideology and the Aesthetic*. Leiden 2017, pp. 1-37.
- 10 Oliver Sukrow, »Subversive Landscapes: The Symbolic Representation of Socialist Landscapes in the Visual Arts of the German Democratic Republic« In: *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2017, pp. 96-141.
- 11 Rose 1981 (as note 6), pp. 2, 217-20.
- 12 Karl Marx: »Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts.« In: T.B. Bottomore (ed.): *Karl Marx: Early Writings*. New York 1963, p. 122.
- 13 Berthold Hinz: *Art in the Third Reich*. Oxford 1979.
- 14 Paul B. Jaskot: *Architecture of Oppression: The SS, Forced Labor and the Nazi Monumental Building Economy*. London 2000. See also Paul B. Jaskot: »Building the Nazi Economy: Adam Tooze and a Cultural Critique of Hitler's Plans for War« In: *Historical Materialism*, vol. 22, nos. 3-4, 2014, pp. 312-29.
- 15 For this, David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre have played particularly important roles.
- 16 Manfredo Tafuri: *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*. Cambridge, Mass. 1976, p. 2. On Tafuri, see the excellent work by Gail Day: *Dialectical Passions: Negation in Postwar Theory*. New York 2011.
- 17 See, for examples, Daniel M. Abramson: *Obsolescence: An Architectural History*. Chicago 2016; Sara Stevens: *Developing Expertise: Architecture and Real Estate in Metropolitan America*. New Haven 2016.

- ¹⁸ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri: *Empire*. Cambridge, Mass. 2000. Notably, of course, when Hardt and Negri were writing the centrifugal power of capital seemed all consuming. They had not as yet seen its centripetal and provincializing forces evident in the current wave of right-wing nationalism that cannot manage the current crises in the social whole.
- ¹⁹ Gregory Sholette: *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*. New York 2011; Chin-tao Wu: *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Interventions since the 1980s*. Brooklyn 2003.
- ²⁰ Andrew Ross (ed.): *The Gulf: High Culture/Hard Labor*. New York 2015.
- ²¹ Nancy MacLean: *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*. New York 2017.

Maggie Gray

Popular

Popular has been a knotty keyword for Marxist art history, one about which several crucial debates have revolved. As Williams noted, its meaning has meandered from ›belonging to the people‹, to ›low‹ or ›inferior‹, to ›well-liked‹, and back again. Amidst that it has swung between ideas of something deriving from the grassroots (with democratic overtones), and manipulation from above (with a more ominous tenor). As Stuart Hall observed in »Notes on Deconstructing the Popular« (1981) this is compounded by the question of who ›the people‹ includes and excludes, and in what antagonistic relations they are mobilised.

Popular draws into play its antitheses – ›of the elite‹, ›elevated‹, ›esoteric‹. It therefore has a vexed relationship with art, threatening to unseat it as a discrete category, haunting it as malignant, maligned other. With respect to culture, in Williams' expanded sense of ›whole way of life‹, it sits in a set of complex, uneven historical dynamics. Popular culture is a distinctly modern category, the nexus of (to use another Williams formulation) the residual ›folk‹ cultures it dislocates, a dominant ›mass‹ culture colonised by the commodity form, and emergent alternative forms it incorporates. It is thus closely entwined with lived social relations of subordination and resistance.

Popular in Marxist art history

Marxist art historians were among the first to take popular culture seriously as an object of study, motivated by antipathy to bourgeois art history (its rarefied canon, its aloof formalism, its effacement of class conflict), an impetus to break down reified disciplinary barriers (to link with sociology, philosophy, social history), a concern to identify culture's ideological role in modulating social antagonisms, and a desire to engage with attempts to subvert cultural forms and sketch utopian possibilities for what an art belonging to the broad masses of people could be. Drawing from diverse strands of Marxist theory (notably rich discussions of culture, ideology and aesthetics within ›Western Marxism‹), Marxist art history has explored early modern popular art, the mass-produced culture of industrial capitalism, fascist mass media, everyday cultural practices of the working class and other subordinate groups, and interconnections of ›high‹ art with the broader visual and material culture of its day. It has drawn attention to appropriations of popular forms by radical political movements and leftist attempts to instate a people's art.

However, Marxist art history has also faced criticism for failing to adequately engage with the Popular, and much significant Marxist inquiry has taken place outside the discipline, at its borders (with film studies, literary studies, design history), in transdisciplinary or extramural contexts. Thus perhaps the most impactful Marxist contributions to

understanding of popular culture have come from cultural studies, as pioneered by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). Institutionalisation of the schism between art history and cultural studies has restricted dialogue between them, and dialectical thinking about art and the Popular. Cultural studies has disregarded the nuances of ongoing debates about art's autonomy and arguably lost sight of ways to attend to the politics of sensuous form, while trailing a partial postmodernist account of modernism (reduced to T. S. Eliot-meets-Clement Greenberg esoterica) that ignores left modernism's deep entanglement with popular culture. Conversely, art history's critique of its own ideological role in maintaining the canons, privileged spaces and institutionalisation of knowledge that determine its object, has been curtailed by a narrow focus on a series of culturally consecrated works, also restricting its account of the social and cultural field in which art operates.

A flattened postmodern historiography that brands reductive ›base-superstructure‹ economism onto the Marxist theory of culture wholesale, while appropriating Marxist cultural theorists defanged of their politics, still inflects textbooks on popular culture. John Storey's *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (2018), for example, tends to separate Marxists into good Pop-Culture-populist and bad Mass-Culture-pessimist flavours.¹ Thompson, Benjamin and Gramsci are fêted for a democratic regard for the agency of the cultural consumer that made them available for combination with feminism, poststructuralism and Lacanian psychoanalysis (a medley that effaced both the differences between these conceptual systems, and Marxist-feminist traditions). The remainder of the Frankfurt School, by contrast, are cast as a left-wing variation of Leavisite elitism that moralistically disdains the culture of other people, treating them as cultural ›dupes‹. This neglects the seriousness with which Adorno took the media forms offered by the culture industry, but above all its dialectical relationship with an art only critical negatively, by virtue of its radical alienation from a rationalised, administered society that produces both. Eliding what holding art and the Popular together within a social totality offers has arguably contributed to the impasse of postmodernist approaches to popular culture – frozen in affirmation of the given, a pessimistic populism.

Picking up the threads of how Marxist art history intervened in debates about the Popular, hidden from this attenuated historiography, can potentially help transcend the dead-end polarisation of art and popular culture it reproduces.

Popular in the Social History of Art

Concern with the Popular was a significant element of attempts by the first wave of Marxist art historians to develop a ›social history of art‹, notably in the work of Frederick Antal, Arnold Hauser, and Francis Klingender based in Britain. With a sociologically-informed insistence that artistic production is ›bound up with the whole of life, an activity rooted in practice‹,² these thinkers looked to the popular culture of everyday life. They considered a wider range of forms, addressed to a broader audience, than an art history framed by conservative notions of quality and value had admitted. Following in the footsteps of Marxist writers actively involved in publishing popular graphic art, notably Eduard Fuchs, they particularly explored caricature, including the work of Goya, Daumier, and above all Hogarth, who Klingender and Antal produced monographs on.³

Both sought to analyse connections between the visual style of Hogarth's works and the values and attitudes of the progressive bourgeoisie, in ways that tied the Popular to highly politicised interwar debates about realism and modernism that had played out within the Popular Front. Klingender, who rejected modernist abstraction as remote from material social conditions (clashing with Herbert Read in the Artists' International Association), took the more orthodox Marxist view that Hogarth's realism enabled him to reflect the broader interests of the English people, engaging with a substratum of popular art embedded in everyday reality. Antal, who had a less reductionist approach to style and ideology, made a more complex assessment, identifying a range of different stylistic modes intermingling within Hogarth's work (including a painterliness that anticipated Impressionism), representing conflicting outlooks. Within this, he identified more irrational and symbolic aspects as articulating a ›popular‹ worldview. Both presented an essentialist idea of the Popular as a continuous, authentic culture from below.

It was Hauser who produced the most developed commentary on the Popular of this wave of Marxist art history, in *The Philosophy of Art History* (1958). In the section ›Educational Strata in the History of Art‹ he distinguishes between folk art, popular art and ›sophisticated‹ art. Folk art is stylised and crude, used for adornment and play by an uneducated rural community, made and consumed collectively, in fluid, creative ways. Popular art is narrative and emotional, made for the amusement and diversion of a semi-educated urban public by skilled professionals. Its consumption, while democratised, is passive, with mass reproduction of uniform products allowing less scope for transformation. Sophisticated art is serious, formally innovative, created as personal expression to satisfy individual taste – the only one whose consumption involves aesthetic judgement.

Hauser's text is elusive and contradictory. It deploys certain traditional concepts (excellence, the disinterestedness of aesthetic appreciation), and prejudices (e.g. infantilising peasants and the working class – who have the same childish love of pictures as simple and immediate). But it also arrives at a number of insights significant to subsequent work on popular culture and engages critically with the legacy of nationalistic and mythologising 18th and 19th century folkloristics which had echoes in bucolic strains of 1950s British culture.

Hauser argues that the stratification of art publics only arrives in the modern period – ›folk art‹ presupposes a separate elite culture, whereas earlier art appealed across classes. He therefore rejects nationalistic constructions of a harmonious ›communal culture‹ or unitary national psyche, mobilised by fascism. He equally criticises the romantic ideal of folk art as instinctive expression of a collective unconscious, arguing it is rather a set of materials adapted and reinterpreted by individuals, not so different from the ›conscious and experimental art-production of the educated‹.⁴ Nor was folk art the remnants of a ›primitive‹ culture impervious to external influence – an idea steeped in reactionary nostalgia for an imaginary past untainted by social upheaval.

As John Roberts argues in ›Arnold Hauser, Adorno, Lukács and the Ideal Spectator‹ in *Marxism and the History of Art: From William Morris to the New Left* (2006), Hauser also anticipated some of the concerns of cultural studies. While not collapsing them into one another, he rejected an absolute division between high art and folk or popular culture, seeing them as interacting dialectically within a larger cultural framework. Elite art was similarly shaped by public taste, and could be equally banal and formulaic. Folk and

popular art included works of individual talent and could appropriate high culture in discerning and creative ways. The boundaries between them were fluid, »cultural goods ›rise‹ as well as ›sink‹,⁵ or, as Hall would later put it, they go up and down »the cultural escalator«. Hauser also took Riegl to task for the fact »he only takes account of conditions of production and does not pay sufficient attention to the circumstances of consumption«,⁶ attuned, by contrast, to how those to whom a work is addressed put it to use. Arguments for the activity involved in the creation and consumption of folk and popular art, and Hauser's larger insistence on the agency of »acting, thinking, feeling and working human beings« in concrete historical situations,⁷ had resonances with the New Left social history that paved the way for cultural studies, notably E. P. Thompson's Marxist humanist emphasis on how people become conscious of, and actively fight out, class antagonism on the grounds of culture as a ›whole way of struggle‹.

Hauser equally cautioned against rejecting technological developments accompanying democratisation of culture. Citing Benjamin, he argues that the loss of aura through mechanical reproduction doesn't of necessity mean a loss of quality – work designed for print or film can have both artistic and commercial value, even if pressures of mass production have imposed standardisation and limited creativity. Hauser notes that the culture industry exploits artificial wants, educates people in conformity, offers escapist wish-fulfilment in compensation for the emotional repression of everyday life. However, he opposes Dwight McDonald's claim that for culture to be salvaged, either exploitation or democracy must be removed. Hauser contends that cultural democratisation makes accessible »fields of life which [the majority] never came in contact with before«, opening space for opposition as much as subordination.⁸ Hauser thus restages both Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the culture industry, and Benjamin's exploration of the transformative possibilities of appropriating modern media technologies. He equally gestures towards Hall's rendering of popular culture as an adversarial domain, which would draw on Gramsci's construction of struggles for hegemony as including points of resistance and moments of supersession. Unlike Hall, however, Hauser maintained a tension between popular culture and the specific truth claims of art. As a new wave of Marxist art history developed in tandem with Hall's direction of the CCCS, this disposition of art and the Popular tended to dissipate.

Popular in New Left Art History

New Left Marxist art history, spurred by the international student movement, women's liberation and anti-imperialist insurgence, turned more to Frankfurt School critical theory than the earlier social history of art, although it recovered much of this work and maintained important continuities with it. Ideology became even more central, including subjecting art history itself to rigorous castigation for its complicity with capitalism and the state, market and museum. Partly in response to the expanded understanding of culture emerging from cultural studies, it pushed further into the Popular, drawing in a wider range of cultural practices and forms – an engagement that exposed some of its fault lines.

For Otto Karl Werckmeister, who rejected the Frankfurt School's claims for the aesthetic, the totalising ideological critique of art incorporated diverse cultural material from Krautrock to anime. Indeed, with the market-driven erasure of cultural borderlines,

less elevated forms like comic books – specifically the bleak cyberpunk bande dessinée of Enki Bilal – spoke more profoundly of the contradictions of neoliberal capitalist democracy, and its neurotic, brutalising »Citadel Culture«, than the random objects found in galleries (while also satirically dissecting the psychopathology of Soviet Communism). Conversely, for T. J. Clark, who upheld the cognitive value and disruptive possibilities of art, this involved looking to historical moments (like France 1848) where it mobilised a popular audience and engaged with political struggle waged through popular media. For others, renouncing an exalted canon, not just contesting its interpretation, was central to Marxist art history as a political project. As detailed by Steve Edwards in »Adrian Rifkin, or from Art History in Ruins to a Lost Object«, which introduces the collection of essays and articles *Communards and Other Cultural Histories* (2016), Rifkin saw the rejection of art as a privileged category as key to Marxism's attack (in alliance with feminism) on art history's regressive social function.

Questions of whether Marxism would renew or revolutionise art history became acute as a milder social history of art was institutionalised. The answer for many was to decamp to cultural studies or film studies, entrenching a split between the historicisation and political critique of art, and the theorising of popular culture.⁹ This has meant the ongoing contribution of New Left Marxist art historians to study of the Popular has been overlooked, as demonstrated by the example of David Kunzle.

Kunzle was closely involved with Marxist art history in the US, working alongside Werckmeister and Clark at UCLA. His work has received less historiographical attention, perhaps because it remained rooted in in-depth historical inquiry (informed by the earlier social history of art, citing Antal, Hauser, Schapiro and Raphael), and made few expansive theoretical claims. Yet Kunzle's work added nuance to understanding of relations between popular media, ideologies and class; engaged with the Frankfurt School on the commodification of popular forms and how new technologies shaped them; and made important connections between Marxism, feminism and anti-imperialism.

Foundational to comics studies, the first volume of Kunzle's *History of the Comic Strip* (1973), the outcome of a PhD supervised by Ernst Gombrich, deployed traditional art historical methods of iconographic analysis – although an insistence that comics were, by definition, »topical moral narratives«, tied them to precise socio-historical circumstances. His work was radicalised through an encounter with Marxism and the social movements that galvanised the New Left. The conclusion of *The Early Comic Strip* analogised the political role of 17th century broadsheets and posters opposing the Vietnam war. In 1971 Kunzle curated an exhibition of such posters, later collaborating with Carol Wells and Nguyen Ngoc Dung on *Decade of Protest: Political Posters from the United States, Vietnam, and Cuba, 1965-1975* (1975). In this anti-imperialist vein, his work was particularly animated by an ongoing interest in the arts of Latin American popular movements, writing on Cuban graphics and comics affiliated with the Popular Unity government in Chile, where he travelled in 1973. This trip brought him into contact with Ariel Dorfman, co-author with Armand Mattelart of a stinging critique of the relationship between Disney comics and US imperialism, *How to Read Donald Duck* (1971), written as part of their involvement in the Allende revolution. This book, which he translated into English, opened his eyes to what the rigorous, impassioned and imaginative Marxist analysis of cultural material could be.

A further key element of Kunzle's work was drawing feminist debates into Marxist study of popular culture, registering the core feminist presence in US New Left Marxist art history. *Fashion and Fetishism* (1982) contested the view of the corset as wholly symptomatic of women's historical oppression, exploring (male and female) tight-lacing as resistance to fashion-enforced gender roles and the repression of female sexuality, with important correspondences to class relations and antagonisms. Feminism equally informed his comics scholarship. Instigating the rediscovery of Marie Duval as illustrator of Ally Sloper, he took the *History Workshop Journal* to task for a 1983 article ascribing authorship of her work to her husband.

By the 1990 publication of the second volume of his comics history, Kunzle explicitly identified with a social history of art that had »tainted« the discipline with »questions of ideology and sociopolitical contexts of production and reception«. ¹⁰ But this was not art »as defined by our vanguard social art historians« – aligning instead with those who saw critical urgency in addressing non-canonical forms that profaned the discipline.

Kunzle sustained Hauser and Antal's sociological approach, exploring in detail how conditions of artistic production, distribution and consumption shaped comics' historical development, and how they expressed the outlook of specific classes and class fractions, and frequently (especially in the broadsheet tradition) progressive politics. However, he rejected the tendency, found in Antal's work, that read the Popular in stylistic terms, in what is crude, naïve, and reminiscent of peasant art. Like Hauser, Kunzle distinguished popular from folk art, as the work of skilled professionals for an urban audience. For Kunzle, the way comics conveyed ideologies had complex relations to form and content, format and medium, and social modes of consumption. They appealed to a heterogeneous readership that crossed classes, generations and genders. The audience of late 19th century comic magazines straddled the lower-middle and upper-working class. The comic strip was therefore a site of ideological conflict, both between and within classes, combining conservative, liberal and radical tendencies. As such, it didn't just reflect but actively produced ideologies, for example asserting the alienation of this audience from traditional notions of useful, humble toil – encapsulated in inveterate shyster, Sloper. A more complicated picture of how ideologies evolve, conflict and intersect, and how popular forms develop to articulate them, emerges.

While detailing their production and consumption, Kunzle also took comics' form seriously, making connections between the two that engaged with critical theory. The second volume paid particular attention to the comic strip's commodification. The comic magazine was a format adapted to the hectic working lives of its readers, quickly absorbed and thrown away rather than mulled over. Rationalised production shaped the strips themselves, fixed schedules necessitating repetition and standardisation – artist as »caricature-producing machine« meant »constant rehashing of tired formulae«. ¹¹ This alienation found expression in violent treatment of the body – flattened, stretched and twisted – which Kunzle connected to Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis of Donald Duck cartoons as exemplifying the culture industry's inculcation of sado-masochistic acclimation to capitalism.

However, this disordering distortion of the body and sensory perception was also a source of fascination for cartoonists, who, in dialogue with painting, photography, and early film, created a visual language of movement and fragmentation with potential to unmask and convulse industrial reality. Kunzle therefore also saw the comic as opening

up space for a critical, subversive aesthetics – a key example being the work of Duval, cast as one of few figures in late 19th century Britain to develop the comic strip artistically. Kunzle reads in her experimental treatment of image and story, her disintegrated narratives and vibrating, exploding forms, an insurrectionary disrespect for academic norms that anticipates modernism. In some ways Kunzle thus sits between Werckmeister's ideology critique and the Clarkean defence of art, while locating both in the Popular.

Another of Kunzle's contributions to Marxist art history has been to examine how the structural necessity of neo-colonialism to capitalism finds cultural inscription, inspired by Dorfman and Matterlart. They excoriated Disney comics for the way their presentation of an exoticised, primitivised Latin America as abundant playground offered ideological justification for its systematic dispossession. In his introduction to *How to Read Donald Duck*, Kunzle linked this to the exploitation of those who produced these stories of endless leisure: »Like the natives and the nephews in the comics, Disney workers must surrender to the millionaire Uncle Scrooge McDisney their treasures – the surplus value of their physical and mental resources«. ¹² But Kunzle also identified a degree of artistic agency, demonstrating greater distance from the base-superstructure reductionism that, combined with a focus on the comics as »texts« informed by Althusserian structuralism and Barthesian semiology, shaped the original book. He argued freelancer Carl Barks brought elements of satire and social realism into his comics that troubled imperialist certainties.

Althusser influenced both art history and cultural studies in the late 1970s, but Kunzle's historical excavation of clashing, shifting ideologies, not neatly reducible to class, put him at odds with structuralism (which disdained his kind of empirical historical inquiry). Structuralist ideas of how texts construct subjects also didn't square with his explorations of lived cultural practices, notably the ambivalence of corsetry and resistant uses and pleasures of tight-lacing. A dynamic model of ideology and agency aligned Kunzle further with the Gramscian pole of cultural theory. Hegemony was a concept he consistently deployed in analysis not only of US cultural imperialism, but attempts to develop counter-hegemonic popular cultures. This included examining Dorfman and Matterlart's own comics for government-affiliated publisher Quimantú, part of a larger Chilean cultural front incorporating street art, film and song – comics which navigated thorny questions of how to transform popular media. (Kunzle identified how they both critiqued neo-colonialism and reproduced sexism – exposing the tensions within constructions of »the people«).

Despite negotiating key questions of Marxist art history and cultural theory, in comics studies the Marxist foundations of Kunzle's work are rarely mentioned. But the importance of recovering both what Marxist art history urges for the study of popular culture (examining its political economy, attending to form, unravelling ideologies as they are shaped by class, race, colonialism, gender, sexuality), *and* the importance of the study of popular culture to any Marxist understanding of art, seem clear.

Questions raised about the Popular in art history and cultural studies – about how ideologies circulate culturally, how commodification conditions the making, sharing and use of cultural forms, how new technologies transform cultural experience, about the critical value and utopian charge of the aesthetic – remain unresolved. They are today compounded by a new set of historical circumstances – neoliberal globalisation and its

crises; climate breakdown; digital labour and algorithmic administration; precarity and automation – that demand critique and offer up positions from which to imagine social organisation, art and popular culture differently.

Like the moment of '68, the left-wing popular movements that emerged in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and their cultural manifestations have opened opportunities to experiment with new counter-popular cultures, to conceive alternative models of cultural production, and to develop new forms of social solidarity and understandings of interwoven structures of oppression.¹³ Marxist art history, critically engaged with the Popular, should have something to offer.

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- 1 This latest edition noticeably includes a new section on »Class and Class Struggle«: class, fundamental to the »founding fathers of cultural studies«, then made »somewhat unfashionable« as a category by postmodernism, has been forced back into view in the wake of the 2008 financial crash – »suddenly very visible as a lived identity« and with a »new explanatory power« (which Marxists would argue never went away).
 - 2 Arnold Hauser: *The Philosophy of Art History*. Cleveland & New York 1963. p. 282.
 - 3 Fuchs wrote extensively on caricature (part of the past's »shabby working clothes« disregarded by an art historical tradition focused only on its »splendid festive gowns«), including work on its impact in the 1848 revolutions, the representation of war, women and Jews, and erotic content. As editor, collector and historian he theorised and championed the powerful role graphic satire could play in political agitation and education, as a means of disseminating oppositional perspectives and fostering class identification.
 - 4 Hauser 1963 (as note 2), p. 288.
 - 5 Hauser 1963 (as note 2), p. 299.
 - 6 Hauser 1963 (as note 2), p. 289.
 - 7 Hauser 1963 (as note 2), p. 197.
 - 8 Hauser 1963 (as note 2), p. 339.
 - 9 See John Roberts: »Art History's Furies«. In: Warren Carter, Barnaby Haran and Frederic J. Schwartz: *ReNew Marxist Art History*. London 2013, pp. 32-47.
 - 10 David Kunzle: *The History of the Comic Strip: The Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford 1990, p. xix.
 - 11 Kunzle 1990 (as note 10), p. 16.
 - 12 David Kunzle: »Introduction to the English Edition«. In: Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart: *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*. New York 1991, pp. 11-23, p. 19.
 - 13 In the UK context, forms of antagonistic working class popular culture have had a significant crossover with the struggle of the Left within the Labour Party – for example, grime and hip-hop artists, politicised by neoliberal austerity and institutional racism, such as AJ Tracey, Novelist, Akala and Stormzy, played a key part in Labour's 2017 general election campaign and voter registration drives via social media. Memes circulating online, with echoes of Situationist détournement, also played a role in mobilising popular support, particularly among younger people. More broadly, interest in the 1960s and 70s counterculture has informed discussions – under the banner of Mark Fisher's term »Acid Communism« – over how to constitute an experimental, speculative, political popular culture that contests capitalist realism while avoiding recuperation into arid, individualist consumerism (a process to which grime itself, like earlier music subcultures studied by the CCCS, has been subjected). The Left's cap-

ture of the Labour leadership has opened space from which to reimagine cultural production and organisation, and contest the concentration of cultural power and means, for example off the back of the 2017 *Alternative Models of Ownership* report. At the same time, the challenges and limitations of Corbynism, notably failings in consistently acknowledging and proactively opposing anti-Semitism in the movement and challenging attempts to downplay it, have highlighted the need for broad-based, grassroots political education. There is substantial debate within and beyond Corbynism about how to avoid reproducing the reductive construction of ›the people‹ laden with racist and imperialist connotations deployed by resurgent right-wing nationalist populism. This includes efforts to develop a counter-hegemonic articulation of what Hall termed a »popular-democratic cultural force«, one that figures ›the people‹ as a contingent, heterogeneous category, and centres race and migration (and the leadership of contemporary labour struggles by migrant workers) in the face of myths of ›the white working class‹. As Hall argues, popular culture, as a site of both containment and resistance, is one area where constructions of ›the people‹ as a collective agency are actively worked and reworked.

Frederic J. Schwartz

Public Sphere

The notion of the public sphere is indispensable for the materialist analysis of society, but as a category it is underused. There are good reasons for this. As a concept it is difficult to define and to translate from its formulations; and as an historical object of study, it difficult to locate and describe.

»Public sphere« is the usual translation of the German word *Öffentlichkeit*, whose meanings are more fluid and varied than the English term. It is cognate with the English »openness«. The adjective *öffentlich* can be reliably rendered as »public«, but the substantive form has meanings that vary from »publicity« in general to *a* specific public, or *the* public, or indeed just »publicness«. Thus politicians worry about what the *Öffentlichkeit* will think of a policy at the same time as the law enshrines the *Öffentlichkeitsprinzip*, the guarantee of public access to most legislative and legal proceedings. But as »publicity« it refers to the generation or manipulation of public attention, and *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* is the German term for »public relations«. It is thus far more flexible and capacious a concept than that of the »public sphere«, which implies, unhelpfully, a specific and contained social locus or zone.

»Public opinion« has been the topic of research in many contexts, but the widespread use of *Öffentlichkeit* as a term of historical analysis can be dated from Jürgen Habermas's habilitation *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* of 1962.¹ He defines it, most briefly, as »a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed«, a space to which »access is guaranteed to all citizens«. ² There private individuals enter into discussion and relate, according to Habermas's ideal type, in a very specific way. When they gather as a public, citizens exchange views in a way that requires them to address concerns shared by all in this realm: the views expressed and conclusions drawn thus transcend individual interests and constitute legitimate views about the common good. Social status and rank are bracketed out: all members of the public are equal, and what is decisive is not the status of the speaker or writer but only the persuasiveness of the argument. The public sphere is thus the arena for the »public use of reason«. A potential for what Habermas later termed »communicative rationality« in civil society, the public sphere mediates between private citizens, with their individual interests and legally protected spaces, and the state; it allows for consensus about the commonweal that goes beyond the mere quest for private advantage and serves as an effective check on state power.

The public sphere that Habermas describes and whose fate he traces is the bourgeois or liberal one that emerged in late 17th and 18th-century western Europe and continued, by and large, to function there, in slightly different forms, through the middle of the 19th century. It is an historical development – and achievement – which depended on the

post-feudal distinction between private and public that developed in the absolutist period. Citizens were guaranteed the private realm of the οἶκος – the household based on family bonds and the economic activity originally centred on it. The absolutist state that guaranteed public order (and demanded public obedience) also held a monopoly on public representation: its public sphere was a representative one displaying the power and prerogatives of those who ruled. Various measures such as control of the press and public assembly prevented challenges to this monopoly. The public emerged, however, out of the development of bourgeois forms of sociability: Habermas's example is the press that grew out of the English »moral weeklies« and the coffee houses where they were read, in which literary and artistic judgements were debated by equals free to prevail by the better argument. As in Kant's third critique, judgements of taste created a model by which the personal or subjective might productively posit a negotiable claim for the universal. It is this »literary public sphere« that provided the form for, and evolved into, the various institutions of a public sphere as an effective political force: the press, clubs, voluntary associations, societies of all sorts.

The bourgeois public sphere emerged out of a transformation of the relation between the state and a developing social class, and it was itself subject to further transformation. For Habermas, mass politics and the commercialisation of the press opened audiences beyond the bourgeoisie and led to a breakdown of the distinction between public and private on which the public sphere was predicated, and ultimately to its decline as an inclusive site for the public use of reason. The form taken by economic interests soon exceeded the model provided by the private household and assumed the status and forms of public bureaucracies. Instead of an essentially artisanal press that served as a largely transparent medium for the exchange of views, increasingly capitalised newspapers and publishers had their own interests that were represented by these publications. Similarly, political parties became public institutions: instead of sites of debate, they grew to be large, bureaucratic organisations that represented competing interest groups and overlapped with the state rather than confronting it. With the ascendancy of bourgeois political power, however uneven and halting, the personnel of the private realm – of industry, the press, the parties – became in principle indistinguishable from that of the state. Public discussion of interests no longer sought a common good but instead negotiated between interest groups. Institutions of democratic exchange – parliaments – were reduced to the announcement of private accommodations negotiated elsewhere, not the site for debate but instead merely for assent. From the late nineteenth century, the state increasingly established forms of direct intervention into the private life of citizens as it assumed the role of guarantor of public welfare and simultaneously the medium by which competing interests were brokered. Finally, with the development of mass literacy along with new printing technology and new media such as film, radio and television, the culture-debating public around which the public sphere proper originally coalesced has been turned into a culture-consuming public; indeed, Habermas's account echoes in argument and often tone the »culture industry« thesis of Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944/1947).³

The main immanent critique of Habermas's theory is that it confuses an historical category with a normative one. This seems unfair: Habermas argues that the category itself emerged historically and referred to actual developments in bourgeois sociation, yet he is equally clear that the reality of what was called the public sphere both 1) failed

to live up to its own ideals; and 2) soon deteriorated as a potential site for the public use of reason – indeed, this was its »structural transformation«. It is as a concept *both* normative and historical: the normative aspect of the (ultimately ideological) claims of an enlightened bourgeoisie thus gives leverage by which to analyse the fate of spaces in which a reasoning public could form. Furthermore, such objections fail to acknowledge the conceptual achievement of Habermas's definition as an historical category. This can be gauged by the impressive variety of sources used by Habermas, the interdisciplinary nature of his enquiry: he draws on political and constitutional history, legal theory, literary and art history, philosophy, the history of the press and social history as well as the sociological and marketing research of his time. He attempts to define an object of study that eludes the grasp of scholars working within single disciplinary parameters, for the public sphere is an entity that is not identical with any particular medium, institution, class or state form. Publicness happens *between* these traditional objects of historical research, and a public sphere of the kind Habermas elevates to a norm, one that is the site of the public use of reason, develops on an unstable and shifting terrain defined by a large variety of forces with seemingly separate histories. As a space between such forces and institutions, the public sphere is as much a process, or the conditions of possibility for it, as the fluid locations within which it takes place. Whether Habermas's account of the rise of the liberal public sphere is historically accurate or not is, to a certain extent, beside the point: the development of a model for mapping the social spaces of representation and effects in relation to institutions, media, social and economic developments with their own histories sets a complex and productive challenge to historiography, criticism, social theory and political practice.

If Habermas looked to the Enlightenment, the concept of the public sphere itself was a product of the early Federal Republic of Germany. The issues of public opinion and debate were at the centre of political and academic discussions in the 1950s and early 1960s. The constitutional challenges of the new state, specifically balancing the right of free speech and the potentials of an emerging system of new media against the background of the Fascist past, were of course ever present. At the same time, new empirical methods of public opinion research dominated sociology and prompted intense methodological and thematic questioning as such projects were used to gauge political policy and study consumer behaviour. Political scientists such as Wilhelm Hennis launched a critique of positivist notions of public opinion,⁴ while historians such as Reinhart Koselleck and Hanno Kesting studied the same historical terrain as Habermas while coming to very different conclusions. Under the unofficial tutelage of Carl Schmitt, Koselleck and Kesting saw the emergence of a bourgeois public in a dystopian light: Koselleck's *Kritik und Krise* and Kesting's *Geschichtsphilosophie und Weltbürgerkrieg* saw the new public spaces of discussion of the eighteenth century as a zone of political goals that were out of control, fatally divorced from the practice of responsible politics and leading to destructive philosophies of history, from the French Revolution to the brutal realities of institutionalised Marxism-Leninism.⁵ Only Habermas – emerging but also departing from the work of the Frankfurt School, itself now exploring empirical research in cooperation with industry – was able to describe a fragile utopia of reasoned debate. Habermas's work must be seen as a response to these other accounts of the potential of the spaces of public representations. The contemporary concerns of managed public opinion and the debates over the legacy of the bourgeois Enlightenment shed

considerable light on the specific balance of historical argument and normative concepts that lies at the core of *Structural Transformation*.

Critiques of Habermas are legion. Many argue with the historical account set out in *Structural Transformation*. More interesting, however, are those that take seriously the norm of inclusive and wide-ranging, reasoned and representative public debate but take issue with Habermas's model based on an idealisation of the *bourgeois* public sphere. These mostly focus on the exclusions that constituted the liberal public sphere Habermas describes and use it to call into question the model he develops. The critiques articulated from the positions of feminism and queer theory and from a Marxist perspective are among the most productive. Both point out that Habermas's identification of a single, inclusive public sphere is fundamentally flawed: to take the bourgeois public sphere as *the* public sphere obscures the fact that publics were always plural and function in a conflictual relation to each other: that the bourgeois public sphere was dominant represents, in fact, a fundamental problem, restricting the realm of public debate along lines of class and gender and silencing or ignoring views from beyond the circles that are able to present their own interests as the interests of society in general.

Nancy Fraser's critique of 1989, the year of the translation of *Structural Transformation* into English, has been one of the most influential.⁶ Fraser makes four main points. Her first is that access to the public sphere is never free. Differences of social status cannot be »bracketed«: the protocols by which the public sphere operates (such as urbanity, articulate expression, markers of education and property) serve to limit access to a relatively homogenous group of (specifically) men. Indeed, the lip-service paid to open access is particularly pernicious, implying that competing interests and basic inequalities can be transcended, as opposed to accepting them as a fundamental problem. The public sphere in its liberal guise acts as a form of control and exclusion of the subaltern (women, the unpropertied, racial and ethnic minorities); rather than a norm of rational debate, it is fundamentally ideological, justifying the hegemony of a group with specific interests. Second, she argues that the desire for a single public sphere prevents the articulation of particular and legitimate voices; the existence of a variety of conflicting public spheres is the only way that social inequalities can be articulated and addressed, and social identities formed and enacted. Third, Fraser challenges Habermas's distinction between private and public and his exclusion of private interests from the public sphere. Can a public sphere function for the »common good« when matters of domestic, personal and sexual life are disqualified from mention as »private«, as are employment conditions in private industry? Can social inequalities be addressed when issues of private property in a capitalist economy are not considered »public«? Finally, Fraser argues for a continuum between civil society and the state, seeing in the state a »strong« public space in which decisions can be taken and the »weak« publics of non-governmental forums as the site of opinion formation.

From the perspective of queer theory, Michael Warner develops Fraser's stress on the multiplicity of public spheres to explore the nature of publics as a cultural form.⁷ His attention to the dynamics of discursive group formation and differentiation, based on the study of identity politics, is subtle, making the point that public spheres do not exist until they are constituted: the creation of a public lies in an open mode of address that constitutes a »we«: that publics must be interpellated, speculatively and experimentally. Publics are self-organised relations between strangers, and any one person can belong to

more than one. Reliant upon and governed by media, publics are nonetheless not identical with them; they are what he calls a performative form of »poetic world-making«: »Run it up the flagpole and see who salutes. Put on a show and see who shows up.«⁸

Yet most of the criticisms, alterations and extensions of Habermas's models, for which Fraser and Warner here stand, were anticipated in the most ambitious critique of Habermas's notion of the public sphere to date, one that comes from a Marxist perspective and takes up the challenge of *Structural Transformation* by attempting to rework it for the present. But the reception of this work – *Public Sphere and Experience* by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (1972) – has been halting and incomplete.⁹ This is not entirely surprising, for its arguments emerge unevenly through the main text, footnotes and a series of appendices; its terminology seems antiquated, reflecting a moment of the New Left and resisting moves that might label it post-Marxist; and its publication in English took more than twenty years (I am not aware of any other translations). Yet in its complexity, scope and philosophical ambition, it remains extraordinarily fruitful.

Negt and Kluge's first move is to reject any notion of a single public sphere, drawing a picture of multiple and mutually exclusive publics. They allow for the vestigial existence of the liberal-model bourgeois public sphere but argue that this has been taken over by what they term the »public sphere of production«, which encompasses private and semi-public organs of news and information as well as what Horkheimer and Adorno called »culture industry« and the public relations of large corporations, political parties and bureaucratic organisations. (One could do worse than think here of »spectacle«, a concept which has some roots in common with these formulations, namely Lukacs's theory of reification from *History and Class Consciousness* of 1923.¹⁰) Finally, they posit the – or a – »proletarian public sphere«, a realm of representations and communication that would serve non-bourgeois interests. They are aware of the anachronistic flavour of the concept but clearly wish to preserve the unity of the subaltern groups united by oppression and exclusion; the term »proletarian« thus serves to combat, *avant la lettre*, the fragmentation of resistance to which identity politics can succumb. Elsewhere they refer to a »counterpublic sphere« (*Gegenöffentlichkeit*).

Negt and Kluge also redefine what *happens* in the proletarian public sphere, their model of an effective public; they redefine its work. If for Habermas the public sphere was the site of rational debate and consensus, for Negt and Kluge »the public sphere possesses use-value when social experience organizes itself within it.«¹¹ At issue is whether the public sphere offers adequate information and context for a subject to make sense of her own experiences and situation, whether she can understand her position and the experiences it generates in the light of the social totality. What is striking is the move from *reason* to *experience*: Negt and Kluge specifically consider the subjective, the personal and indeed the physical as the stuff of the public sphere. They are explicit in opening their concerns to the realm of the hermeneutic: elsewhere they define a public sphere itself as a »horizon of experience«, by which they mean the totality of information and experience by which a subject can piece together knowledge of the world. This necessarily does away with the distinction between public and private: precisely the quotidian worlds of »childrearing, factory work, and watching television«¹² represent experiences whose nature and causes need explanation, but whose »contextualisation« is systematically blocked by the public sphere of production and its programmatic obscuring of a large horizon of experience. Negt and Kluge thus resuscitate the emphatic no-

tions of experience developed by Walter Benjamin and Adorno; they revive the notion of totality asserted by Marx and Lukacs; and in line with the project of Critical Theory they reinvest culture with stakes that are cognitive: at issue is not consensus, but knowledge.

This is necessarily schematic, but the rewards of Negt and Kluge's account lie in the detailed descriptions of a variety of experiences and historical episodes as well as its attention to the complex dialectic between different public spheres, particularly in the Federal Republic of the post-war period. And in terms of the book's present uses, it is interesting to see how Negt and Kluge anticipate recent approaches to the politics of affect. Precisely emotions and physical experiences of pain, pleasure and exhaustion are experiences to be both explained and exploited in the public sphere. Like Ernst Bloch, they trawl historical experience for heterodox moments of resistance; their account of the compensatory role of proletarian fantasy is particularly striking, as is their description of mass demonstrations as »sensuously tangible solidarity«. ¹³ Indeed, the last words of the book (albeit in the final footnote) again reorient our sense of the materials to be considered as constituting this realm: »Proletarian public sphere is the name for a process of collective social production whose object is coherent human sensuousness.« ¹⁴ Perhaps a visual turn can also be seen in *Public Sphere and Experience*: rejecting Habermas's circumscription of the public to discourse and reason, Negt and Kluge write of the public sphere as »an aggregate of appearances that have completely diverse characteristics and origins«. ¹⁵ Negt and Kluge address these aspects of the visual, the somatic and indeed the vitalistic in greater depth in their subsequent joint-authored project, *History and Obstinacy* (1981). ¹⁶ *Public Sphere and Experience*, in any case, remains a monument, an idiosyncratic inventory of the historical and philosophical implications of the spaces of public representation.

In the discipline of art history, the concept of the public sphere has had some resonance. Indeed, a special issue of the *Art Journal* devoted to an exploration of the art-historical potential of Fredric Jameson's idea of a »political unconscious« contained as many references to Habermas and his model of publicity as to Jameson. ¹⁷ But most uses of the concept of the public draw primarily on Habermas's *historical* account and focus on an overlap of their objects of study with the spaces and projects of bourgeois publicness explored in the first half of *Structural Transformation*. ¹⁸ Few, if any, art historians have grappled with issues of the visual in the light of Habermas's historiographical innovation and the various projects of exploring the complexities of publicness as represented by Negt and Kluge. Not many scholars have taken up this challenge, but those who do work in fields such as film studies, queer theory and anthropology. ¹⁹

¹ Jürgen Habermas: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Thomas Burger and Frederic Lawrence. Cambridge, MA 1989. Original ed.: *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. Neuwied 1962.

² Jürgen Habermas: »The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article«. Trans. S. Lennox and F. Lennox. *New German Critique*, no. 3, 1974, p. 49. Originally published as »Öffentlichkeit«.

- In: E. Fraenkel and K.D. Bracher (eds): *Fischer Lexikon Staat und Politik*. Frankfurt a.M. 1964.
- 3 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno: *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Trans. E. Jephcott. Stanford 2002. Original ed.: *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Amsterdam 1947.
 - 4 See Stephan Schlak: *Wilhelm Hennis. Szenen einer Ideengeschichte der Bundesrepublik*. Munich 2008, chap. 2.
 - 5 Reinhart Koselleck: *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*. Cambridge, MA 1988. Original ed.: *Kritik und Krise: Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt*. Freiburg 1959; Hanno Kesting: *Geschichtsphilosophie und Weltbürgerkrieg: Deutungen der Geschichte von der Französischen Revolution bis zum Ost-West-Konflikt*. Heidelberg 1959; also Kesting: *Öffentlichkeit und Propaganda: Zur Theorie der öffentlichen Meinung*. Aachen 1966.
 - 6 Nancy Fraser: »Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy«. In: Craig Calhoun (ed.): *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA 1992.
 - 7 Michael Warner: *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York 2002.
 - 8 *Ibid.*, p. 114.
 - 9 Oskar Negt, Alexander Kluge: *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*. Trans. P. Labany, J. O. Daniel and A. Oksiloff. Minneapolis 1993. Original ed.: *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung: Zur Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarischer Öffentlichkeit*. Frankfurt a.M. 1972.
 - 10 Guy Debord: *La société du spectacle*. Paris 1967.
 - 11 Negt and Kluge 1993 (as note 9), p. 3.
 - 12 Negt and Kluge 1993 (as note 9), p. xliii.
 - 13 »Sinnlich faßbare Solidarität«: Negt and Kluge 1993 (as note 9), p. 38 (trans. modified).
 - 14 Negt and Kluge 1993 (as note 9), p. 297 (trans. modified).
 - 15 Negt and Kluge 1993 (as note 9), p. 13 (trans. modified).
 - 16 Oskar Negt, Alexander Kluge: *Geschichte und Eignesinn*. Frankfurt a.M. 1981. The English translation is considerably abbreviated but also includes new material: Alexander Kluge, Oskar Negt: *History and Obstinacy*. Ed. Devin Fore; trans. Richard Langston et al. New York 2014.
 - 17 Linda Nochlin (ed.): »The Political Unconscious in Nineteenth-Century Art« In: *Art Journal*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1987.
 - 18 See Thomas E. Crow: *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*. New Haven 1985; David H. Solkin: *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England*. New Haven 1993. Solkin invokes Habermas's Structural Transformation directly; Crow does not.
 - 19 See, for example, Miriam Hansen: »Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?« In: *New German Critique*, no. 29, 1983; Warner 2002 (as note 7); William Mazzarella: *Censorium: Cinema and the Open Edge of Mass Publicity*. Durham, NC 2013.

James A. van Dyke

Style

The concept of style has a long and complex history. It originated in the rules of rhetorical communication in ancient Rome that provided the foundation for normative academic art theory and discourse until the middle of the eighteenth century, when both older ideas of individual style reemerged and the historicizing conception of style as the expression of particular nations and periods developed. In the aftermath of that shift, art historians since the late nineteenth century have typically defined style as the significant visual, technical, and material properties or traits that are perceived by a viewer to be shared by a set of works of art and other types of visual and material culture, and that thus permit the viewer to make arguments and reach conclusions about their relationships to each other. Stylistic analysis has been used taxonomically, to determine what groups or individuals made and used a particular set of objects, and where and when they did so. Style, understood as something inherent to the objects in which it is perceived, has also been interpreted as a form of meaningful cultural expression, related to the belief and value systems of a set of object's maker or makers and users.¹

The concept of style played a crucial role in the establishment of art history as an academic discipline. In particular, it was fundamental to the work of such important art historians as Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin, for whom stylistic analysis constituted the rational foundation of art history as an empirical science. Its centrality was still evident between 1962 and 1968, when James Ackerman and Ernst Gombrich wrote important articles on the subject; Ackerman made particularly strong claims for the importance of the concept of style in art history, asserting that the structure it provided was a precondition for historical writing.² Yet by that time serious doubts had begun to emerge in the work of George Kubler.³ The skepticism has grown ever since. Even when used circumspectly, commentators have suggested, stylistic classification and analysis imposes an ostensibly objective, yet in fact highly selective, artificial, idealizing order – static, homogenizing, reifying, even oppressive – on the incessant, boundless flow of art's history and the irreducible specificity of individual artistic acts and intentions, on the quiddities of real artistic objects. The truth of interpretations of the meanings of style, some add, are based on assumptions that cannot be adjudicated on the basis of stylistic evidence. Finally, a normative aspect, establishing cultural hierarchies and market values, is inherent to the concept of style. The concept of style and the practice of stylistic analysis still has its defenders and continues to be employed, but it is safe to say that style is no longer a central, decisive component of art historical scholarship and methodological reflection, »except as a historiographical relic«.⁴

The Marxist critique of the concept of style

Style, Daniel Hartley has argued, played a perceptible role in some of Marx's writing, and is a major concern in the work of leading twenty- and twenty-first century literary scholars and critics in the Marxist tradition such as Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, and Fredric Jameson.⁵ However, one looks in vain for »style« in dictionaries and encyclopedias of Marxist thought, suggesting that it has been less than a fundamental or key concept in Marxist thought. Hence, it is unsurprising that the concept's most recent, serious, extended critical reevaluations in art history have been published by important non-Marxist scholars such as Kubler, Svetlana Alpers, Richard Wollheim, Willibald Sauerländer, Whitney Davis, and Jaś Elsner. (Robert S. Nelson and Richard Schiff might be added to that list, insofar as they decided not to commission an essay on style for the first edition of their *Critical Terms for Art History*.)⁶ Not to be forgotten, however, is the work of Marxist art historians. Of particular note are Frederick Antal's *Florentine Painting and its Social Background* of 1947, Meyer Schapiro's long article on style of 1953, the extensive section on style in Arnold Hauser's *The Philosophy of Art History* of 1958 and *Sociology of Art* of 1974, Nicos Hadjinicolaou's *Art History and Class Struggle* of 1973, Andrew Hemingway's work since 1992 on Marxist art history and aesthetics, and Fredric Schwartz's article of 1996 on style in the thinking of Heinrich Wölfflin and Theodor W. Adorno.⁷

From the outset, sophisticated scholars such as Schapiro and Hauser were sensitive to many of the problems with the concept of style noted above. Schapiro, for instance, challenged the normative use of stylistic categories, namely classicism and naturalism, in his essay of 1953.⁸ Furthermore, it was clear to both Schapiro and Hauser that stylistic categories, as they were employed retrospectively by art historians, were always provisional, simplifying ways of organizing and understanding the shared properties of an array of historical objects. Early in his essay, for instance, Schapiro noted, in a way not unrelated to Kubler's critique of style nine years later, the continuous variability of the characteristics of style and their resistance to »systematic classification into perfectly distinct groups«.⁹ »Precise limits«, he continued, »are sometimes fixed by convention for simplicity in dealing with historical problems or in isolating a type.«¹⁰ Five years after Schapiro and four years before Kubler, Hauser suggested that stylistic categories were to a certain degree comparable to Max Weber's notion of the ideal type, while emphatically asserting their reality, on the one hand, and, on the other, challenging the idea that they were fixed and stable, logical or teleological. Style, he stated, was »rather a dynamic relational concept with continually varying content, so that it might almost be said to take on a new sense with each new work. ... The concept has nothing to do with the purposiveness of a world-plan or with participation of individuals in a supernatural reality. A style is no more than the result of many conscious and purposive achievements [...]«.¹¹ For such art historians, styles were synthetic yet never completely present or realized, always mutable categories that clarified broad patterns of cultural production and thus made ambitious forms of historical analysis possible. Without them, Hauser suggested, art history could do no more than recount the lives of individual artists.¹²

Hauser's rejection, in this passage dating from 1958, of Hegelian thought in art history points to the crux of the Marxist critique of the concept of style as it had developed since the 1890s. Over and over again, early- and mid-twentieth-century Marxist art his-

torians positioned themselves, directly or indirectly, against both formalism and developmental models – a mysterious »Kunstwollen« ultimately driving art from the haptic to the optic or inexorable cycles defined by five binary formal oppositions – proposed by art historians such as Riegl and Wölfflin. As early as 1933, twelve years before Wölfflin's death, Max Raphael wrote that stylistic art history – conceived as an immanent process – constituted the principle area of inquiry of the institutionalized history of art, and had to be overcome by a materialist sociology of art.¹³ In 1947, Antal stated that established accounts of style, which treated artistic development as a purely formal phenomenon in a historical vacuum, could not satisfactorily explain the co-existence of dramatically different styles of painting in one place and time.¹⁴ Schapiro devoted a long section of his critical survey of stylistic art history to »organic conceptions of style« that employed either cyclical or evolutionary models of development; this section included his remarks on Wölfflin's and Riegl's work. While he admired Wölfflin's generalizing rigor, he pointed out the inability of such theoreticians to link their models to »the unique historical style and its varied developments.«¹⁵ Riegl's explanations of stylistic change, he noted, were »vague and often fantastic.«¹⁶ Hauser's extensive remarks on the historical dialectics of style were situated in a chapter that took aim at Wölfflin's theory of an »art history without names« as an idealist fantasy that ignored the social realities of cultural production, while also dismissing Riegl's notion of period stylistic uniformity as »pure fiction.«¹⁷ (He thought that Dvořák's theory of continuous stylistic evolution was better, but that it also »stylized« history by ignoring the basic fact that traditions never developed smoothly or continuously.) In 1973, Nicos Hadjinicolaou referred to Wölfflin pejoratively as a formalist and asserted that his work had fostered an impoverished kind of art history. Riegl and his followers, he continued, transformed art history into a »branch of theology.«¹⁸ Either unaware of or uninterested in the work of Schapiro and critical of Hauser, Hadjinicolaou asserted that the only art historian correctly to understand style was Antal, despite the older man's avoidance of an unequivocally Marxist terminology and problematic theoretical position. What distinguished Antal from the others was his definition of style as a combination of formal elements and subject matter, and, most importantly, his determination to relate style to class structure. Ultimately, however, Hadjinicolaou sought to replace the concept of style, for the most part, with that of »idéologie imagée«, translated problematically in the English edition as »visual ideology.«¹⁹ He did so in order to challenge the common association of style with norms of aesthetic value and to stress the function of a work within the overall ideology of a social class.

Marxist stylistic interpretation

Despite the critique of prominent proponents and models of stylistic art history, the application of the concept of style itself remained an important part of Marxist art historical writing from the 1930s until the early 1970s. In 1937, Milton Brown characterized the explanation of »form or style«, not just iconography, in terms of determining social conditions as »the crucial point in all Marxist discussions of culture.«²⁰ Schapiro described it as »an essential object of investigation« for art historians.²¹ Hauser defined the work of art as »a nodal point of several different causal lines,« including psychological, sociological, and stylistic conditions, and stated, like Schapiro, that the concept of style

was »central and fundamental to art history«. ²² Even Hadjinicolaou admitted that the concept of style had »some use«, given the relative autonomy of art as a practice with its own specific elements, and he continued to employ it as a supplement to his reconceptualization of art as »visual ideology«. ²³ For these art historians, style was thus not simply a »word to avoid«, as it was for Kubler in 1979. ²⁴ They did not question the existence of style ontologically, accepting that it provided useful information about what and how material works of art were made. Rather, they criticized the substantial empirical shortcomings and theoretical flaws of extant art-historical interpretations of the stylistic properties perceived to establish meaningful relationships between works of art. Schapiro and other early Marxist art historians sought to turn the concept of style, and the discipline of art history more generally, on their heads, as Marx had done to Hegelian philosophy during the previous century. They aimed to establish a theory of style based on fundamental Marxist principles, derived from Marx's own writings insofar as they were known, about the social function of culture.

To do so, they focused on specific cases that challenged the most important established theories of style and stylistic change. Relying most implicitly on the available writings of Marx on the relationship between the economic base and cultural superstructure, they conceived of style both as an ideological marker or expression of (ruling) class identity and as a visible or tangible symptom of the social crises, conflicts, and transformations that determined its forms; the general assumption was that broad categories of style reflected fundamental social, economic, and political categories and developments. In order to make those cases, they devoted themselves almost as much to framing epochal histories as to their analyses of form and iconography. For Max Raphael, writing in 1933, the »organized individualism« of Picasso's Cubism straightforwardly »correspond[ed] to the transition from free-enterprise to monopoly capitalism«. ²⁵ At almost the same time, Antal, confronted in the National Gallery in London by the very different paintings of Masaccio and Gentile da Fabriano, began his work on style as the expression of the »outlook« of fractions of the developing middle class in early capitalist society. Seven years later, on the cusp of world war, Schapiro, drawn like Antal to the problem of local stylistic heterogeneity, published his study of eleventh-century Mozarabic and Romanesque art at the monastery in the Spanish town of Silos, an extraordinary example of extended formal, stylistic, and iconographic analysis linked to expansive Marxist historical synthesis. Much as Antal had for painting in Florence, Schapiro made the case that the two co-existent styles – and the subjects that were depicted with them – embodied the difference between competing social groups at a time of economic and social change, political struggle, and cultural transformation. ²⁶ Two decades later, Hauser took a different approach in his monumental study of Mannerism. Heterogeneity was not the issue, but rather the reconsideration of a style that, as Schapiro had noted, had been marginalized by Wölfflin. In keeping with the theoretical position on style formation as a dialectic between independent individual action and its determining social structures, Hauser devoted the core of the book to the analysis of the work of individual artists, categorized by locality and period. However, before that came nine chapters on the economic developments, social transformations, and cultural upheavals of the early sixteenth century. Though he thought that any sociology of art that viewed art »as a direct reflection of economic and social conditions« was naïve, Hauser sought to establish Mannerism as a whole as the rebelliously anti-classical visual expression of epochal

crisis and alienation, linked proleptically in the book's final section to Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Surrealism, whose modernism had made his reassessment of Mannerism possible.²⁷

As Jutta Held, Norbert Schneider, and others have noted, signs of serious theoretical engagement with the concept of style largely disappear from Marxist art history after the appearance of Hadjinicolaou's ambivalent discussion in 1973, though it continued to figure prominently in cultural studies.²⁸ Hebdige's book on the function of style in British youth subcultures, rooted in Barthes' Marxist semiotics, immediately comes to mind.²⁹ In the work of the Marxist art historians who came to the fore after 1968, however, one rarely finds more than occasional, matter-of-fact references to an artist's personal style or the way in which style was invoked, for instance, in the politicized debates of eighteenth-century Parisian art critics. One might say that the task was no longer to develop a materialist critique of formalist stylistic history but rather, driven by the writing of Lukács, Althusser, and Debord in particular, to engage through the study of the ideology of representation in a materialist critique of Panofskyian iconology. T.J. Clark, for instance, lamented the lack of an English translation of Riegl's work in 1974 and in 1984 was a great admirer of Meyer Schapiro's analysis of the modernity of Impressionist painting, but the concept of style did not explicitly structure his conjunctural form of the social history of art.³⁰ In his evocative outline of the social history of art, which prefaced his 1973 book on Courbet, Clark instead unequivocally stated his opposition to the reflection theory that he ascribed to the totalizing epochal accounts of his Marxist predecessors.³¹ By the early 1980s, the influence of Adorno's aesthetic theory, in which style figured as an aesthetic form of social domination in opposition to the negation offered by the great work of art, had become explicit in Clark's thinking.³² Despite his sharp critique of Clark's later work, O.K. Werckmeister's radical art history similarly eschewed the epochal generalizations of earlier Marxists in favor of the analysis of specific cases in the political history of art that aimed to demystify the affirmative culture of art history that legitimates liberal capitalist democracy. Style has not occupied a privileged position in his radical art history, nor has it been the subject of any of his writing on Marxism, art, and art history, with the exception of a few pages in an essay of 1971 on Adorno's negative aesthetics.³³ Recent edited volumes have not discussed style in any serious way, although one author associated it with under-theorized, pro-Stalinist scholarship in post-war Britain.³⁴ One rare exception to this tendency was Friedrich Möbius's defense in the 1980s of stylistic analysis as a way to think in terms of totality.³⁵ A second is Andrew Hemingway's theoretical and historical writing about the concept of style. He describes period style as an amalgam of material, form, and content that signified to a critical public a painting's position in the field of artistic production, and characterizes individual style as a function of the distinct class identities and political ideologies of contemporaneous painters in early-nineteenth-century Britain. For Hemingway, the concept of style foregrounds the social construction of meaning in form, and the ways in which formal properties themselves are ideological in nature.³⁶

Hemingway's work notwithstanding, one understands, upon surveying the recent direction of art history in general and of Marxist art history in particular, the basis for Frederic Schwartz's assertion – very much in alignment with the views of the important skeptics listed at the outset – that the concept of style is in its terminal phase or already dead, that it »is not adequate to our thinking about visual form and representation to-

day.«³⁷ Moving far beyond Schapiro's systematically critical yet deeply invested discussion of style concluding in the hope for a general Marxist theory of the concept, Schwartz suggests that the concept is no longer, or no longer primarily, a useful tool for structuring art historical research and argument, for generating knowledge. Instead, it is itself an artifact to be subjected to a rich and fascinating historical analysis that exposes its own discursive, ideological function in the early twentieth century, as educated German intellectuals such as Wölfflin responded with repugnance to modern mass culture, and in particular to fashion, conceived as the antithesis of style. Schwartz critically historicizes the concept of style as it has been employed, and in the process confirms Alan Wallach's image of Meyer Schapiro's essay on style as falling into an intellectual void, finding little resonance in subsequent Marxist efforts to relate the aesthetic, the artistic, and the social.³⁸ Schwartz's article is, to use his metaphors, another nail in the coffin of stylistic art history. Yet as long as Marxist scholarship continues to address practically the way in which artists define themselves and communicate with and relate to each other and their viewers, the way in which art and other objects contribute to the formation of necessarily collective social groups, identities, values, and hierarchies, and the way in which ideology is embodied visually through not only the »what« but also the constitutive »how« of representation, the concept of style as a means of understanding the sensuous articulation of cultural traditions and social relationships will continue to do work. Perhaps no longer as a key term but as one factor among others, it needs to be taken realistically into account.

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- 1 On the history of the concept of style in general, see: Willibald Sauerländer: »From Stilus to Style: Reflections on the Fate of a Notion« In: *Art History*, vol. 6, 1983, pp. 253-70; and Rainer Rosenberg, Wolfgang Brückle, Hans-Georg Soeffner and Jürgen Raab: »Stil« In: Karlheinz Barck, et al. (ed.): *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*. Stuttgart 2003, vol. 5, pp. 641-702.
 - 2 James Ackerman: »A Theory of Style« In: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 20, 1962, pp. 227-37; Ernst Gombrich: »Style« In: *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 15, 1968, reprinted in: Donald Preziosi (ed.): *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, Oxford 1998, pp. 150-63. Furthermore, the prominent critic Susan Sontag wrote on style in 1965. In that essay, she asserted »what is inevitable in a work of art is the style«. See Susan Sontag: »On Style« In: Susan Sontag: *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York 1982, pp. 15-36.
 - 3 George Kubler: *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*. New Haven 1962. As early as 1921, Ludwig Coellen criticized the purely empirical use of style by art historians without an adequate definition and theory: »Infolgedessen sind alle ihre Konstruktionen höchst unsicher und schwankend.« See Ludwig Coellen: *Der Stil in der bildenden Kunst: Allgemeine Stiltheorie und Geschichtliche Studien dazu*. Traisa-Darmstadt 1921, p. 1.
 - 4 Andrew Hemingway: »Introduction: Capitalism, Nationalism, and the Romantic Weltanschauung« In: Andrew Hemingway and Alan Wallach (ed.): *Transatlantic Romanticism: British and American Art and Literature, 1790-1860*. Amherst 2015, p. 1. Recent discussions on the continued utility of the concept of style include: Richard Neer: »Connoisseurship and the Stakes of Style« In: *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 32, 2005, pp. 1-26; Caecilie Weissert (ed.): *Stil in der Kunstgeschichte: Neue Wege der Forschung*. Darmstadt 2009; Eva Schürmann: »Stil als Artikulation einer Haltung« In: Stefan Deines, Jasper Liptow, and Martin Sel (ed.): *Kunst und Erfah-*

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 - 18 Hadjinicolaou 1978 (as note 7), pp. 89-90.
 - 19 Andrew Hemingway: *Landscape between Ideology and the Aesthetic: Marxist Essays on British Art and Art Theory, 1750-1850*. Chicago 2017, p. 15.

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- 21 Schapiro 1953 (as note 7), p. 287.
- 22 Hauser 1985 (as note 7), pp. 13, 207.
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- 37 Schwartz 1999 (as note 7), p. 3.
- 38 Alan Wallach: »Meyer Schapiro's Essay on Style: Falling into the Void« In: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 55, 1997, pp. 11-15.

Ciarán Finlayson

Uneven and Combined Development

»That [art's] We is, however, not socially univocal, that it is hardly that of a determinate class or social positions, has its origin perhaps in the fact that to this day art in the emphatic sense has only existed as bourgeois art; according to Trotsky's thesis, no proletarian art is conceivable, only socialist art.«

Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*¹

Calls for the renewal of Uneven and Combined Development (U&CD) as a concept and a method have been ongoing for the past two decades. It's gotten to the point where the editors of a new anthology, *Cultures of Uneven and Combined Development: From International Relations to World Literature* (2019) have declared the era of its insurgency over. The primary contribution to Marxism of its recent revival has been to allow historical studies to side-step the older transition debates (through innovations by contemporary Trotskyists like Jairus Banaji)² and transcend the false opposition of »internal« (class struggle) and »external« (trade relations) determinants of national historical movement. As a result of its prominent status in the fields of international relations, political geography, and historical sociology, it has become possible to think about a general application of U&CD to the study of cultures, expanding what Leon Trotsky had foreseen as the possible applications of his concept. Where it was once a Trotskyist tool for analyzing political possibility in a modernizing periphery, today it speaks to the fundamental unity of cultures around the world, where unevenness, can now be understood not as evidence of the »incompleteness« of either capitalism or modernization, but as the expression of a necessary underdevelopment produced by an already unified system.

While the term's origins in Trotsky's writing on history suggest its irreducible relationship to the question of proletarian revolution, this survey of its initial use, its second life in the social sciences, and its subsequent adoption by the humanities, will explore the possibilities and challenges its political content offers for the study of art and its historical development. Though it is not yet a critical term for the field, with the globalization of the exhibition form (the biennial) and the discipline (>global art history<) the methodological stakes of U&CD for Marxist art history will continue to grow.

From »Permanent Revolution« to »Uneven Development« and »Combined Development«

The unitary term »uneven and combined development« did not originate with Leon Trotsky but its idea is basically Trotskyist. The relationship of the phrase to the politics it was historically meant to advance is given concisely in the title of Michael Löwy's important monograph *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: The Theory of Permanent Revolution* (1981), the first three chapters of which expound, nearly exclusively, upon the subtitled phrase. The twin concepts of uneven development and combined development arose, for Trotsky, as tools for explaining the unprecedented occurrence of proletarian revolutions in »peripheral« regions, the need to understand both the revolution he was helping to lead in Russia, and its implications for insurgent workers' movements around the world, especially those outside of Europe. Was the situation in Russia unique, or had it revealed something about historical processes that would require new theoretical labor to understand?

Löwy summarizes U&CD as an address to three dialectically related problems. First, that of the possibility of proletarian revolution in essentially agrarian societies; second, whether it is possible for those nations to break from the historical path of Western Europe and skip over bourgeois-democratic revolution on the road to socialism; and third, whether these uninterrupted and permanent revolutionary processes might be extended not only internationally, but on a world scale.³ These primarily methodological innovations in historical materialism derived from the experience of the 1905 Russian Revolution and were first articulated by Trotsky as a theory of »permanent revolution« in his 1906 book *Results and Prospects*. There, by bringing the particular facts of Russian history into relation with the »general tendencies of capitalist development«⁴ Trotsky reintroduced the dialectical category of totality to political analysis, giving him insight beyond both the ostensibly national economic determinants of revolutionary possibility, and the purported necessity for the proletariat to form tactical alliances with either the bourgeoisie or the peasantry before establishing its own democratic dictatorship.

In 1929, Trotsky would extend these theories out from the Russian context in *Permanent Revolution*, which would demolish the Stalinist doctrine of »socialism in one country«⁵ and use the occasion of the Second Chinese Revolution (the Northern Expedition, 1926-28) to assert their general validity for the analysis of revolutionary situations in colonial and semi-colonial countries. Shortly thereafter, in his *History of the Russian Revolution* (1930), he would give these ideas on internationalism and imperialism their most general social theoretical articulation as the formalized concepts »uneven development« and »combined development«. For Löwy, this provides nothing less than »a new understanding of human history«, where »with the appearance of capitalism as a world system, world history becomes a (contradictory) concrete *totality* and the conditions of socio-economic development undergo a qualitative change«.⁶ The reality of the global development of capitalism was matched, after the experience of 1917, by the possibility of world revolution; the new world system demanded new analyses of historical processes, and the theories of uneven and combined development were the application of historical materialist method to this new, unprecedented, situation.

In the first chapter of Trotsky's *History*, Russia is »condemned by nature itself to a long backwardness«, but draws variously on the social and technological advances of

neighboring Europe and Asia until capitalism arises to break the previously cyclical structure of its history. Ushering in a qualitatively new era of human development, capitalism »prepares and in a certain sense, realizes the universality and permanence of man's development«. Where the preface to the first volume of *Capital* had argued that advanced countries set the model of development for all others, Trotsky reversed the formulation, theorizing a »privilege of historical backwardness«⁷ where the imposition of external social forms and technologies on backward, imperialistically subjugated nations enabled those countries to skip all intermediate stages and, under the right conditions, to become the most politically and economically advanced. Though lawful, relation between the national particular and the capitalist universal is dialectical and cannot be determined mechanistically from the outside. National development acquires a »planless, complex, and combined character«.⁸

From Trotskyist »Law« to Social Scientific »Theory«

U&CD was substantially developed by Trotsky's American follower George Novack, who, in the 1950s, joined the two related laws in a single term, the »law of uneven and combined development,« and elevated this into »one of the most fundamental laws of human history«.⁹ Transhistorical and transdisciplinary, Novack's investigation dates back over 2,500 years and argues that this law is evident in the »process of growth in nature« as well as in Hegel, Marx and Engels, Kautsky, Luxemburg, Plekhanov, and Lenin, though Trotsky is identified as the »formulator of the law«.¹⁰

This is the model from which Anglophone social scientists, primarily in the subfields of Political Geography, Historical Sociology, and International Relations, sought to rescue the concept in the 1980s. Neil Smith famously severed the two halves of Novack's unified law in his landmark text *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*, which took the titular concept and attributed its first mature analysis to Lenin's *Development of Capitalism in Russia and Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. In Smith's reworking, Trotsky's version was both too sweeping and too narrow;¹¹ its law-like quality was overblown and ultimately of limited social scientific use because it was made subsidiary to the concept of permanent revolution – reduced to being merely political, shorn of its previous and rightful »economic and geographical content.«¹² Smith purified and domesticated the concept, downgrading it to merely a »theory« while reinvesting it with explanatory power beyond the »lowest common denominator«¹³ metaphysics it had become after philosophers like Ernst Mandel and Louis Althusser (via Mao) had overstretched it. The theory of »uneven development« here no longer refers to the economic growth of nations, but to the growth of capitalism itself; it is »the geographical expression of the more fundamental contradiction between use value and exchange value.«¹⁴ A parallel shift occurred in International Relations, where the term was imported as a challenge to both Realism and World Systems theory. The ensuing debates over whether the term had »transhistorical« relevance, or was only applicable to the era of capitalist accumulation, aimed at answering the question »How is it possible to internally relate the modern state system and geopolitical competition to capitalism without reducing the former to an effect of the latter?«¹⁵

Marxism After Postcolonialism

Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature (2015)

While most attempts to bring U&CD to bear on art history have drawn upon Smith's theoretically refined yet politically reduced use of the concept,¹⁶ the most successful attempts to adapt it to the humanities and develop its specific disciplinary implications have taken place in literary studies. In 2015 the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) consolidated the sporadic appearances of the term in the humanities in their collection *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (2015), which found the concept well-suited to address recent debates on the crisis facing comparative literature. They hoped to revive the category world literature by pursuing the cultural implication of Trotsky's formulation of combined development as an »amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms« in pursuit of a materialist basis for comparative work adequate to the era of global culture. Building upon recent interventions in the discipline by Pascale Casanova and Franco Moretti, they argue, with Moretti, that the world system is »one, and uneven,« and that »world literature« is the proper term for the literature of this system, denoting not an object of study but a problem that demands new methods, namely, a Trotskyist study of »the imposition of capitalism on cultures and societies hitherto un- or only sectorially capitalized« – where the productive forces and social relations of capitalism do not replace traditions, but combine with them.¹⁷ »World literature« then, is the field of comparative literature »remade after the critique of Eurocentrism and multiculturalism«, confronting a unified world, departing from »incommensurability«, »difference«, and the dismissals of totality that had been favored by decades of postcolonial, postmodern and poststructuralist literary theory.

This global but singular *modernity* coheres through the geographic and temporal expansion of the latter term. They apply Harry Harootunian's historical argument about modernism, that it is in no way reducible to the spread of Western culture, to artistic modernism, which can now shed its historical concern with this-or-that formal innovation and encompass the past two hundred years of global literature.¹⁸ Drawing on Fredric Jameson's infamous 1986 essay »Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism«, they argue that reckoning with »combined unevenness« transforms the objects and the methods of study, and demands »comparison, not of the individual texts, which are formally and culturally very different from each other, but of the concrete situations from which such texts spring and to which they constitute distinct responses«. ¹⁹ U&CD thus emerges as a useful and provocative thought-figure capable of unifying a large number of the most pressing concerns of Marxist comparative literature after the discipline's thoroughgoing critique, allowing it to incorporate analysis of imperialism without giving credence to what have been found to be the more egregious unmaterialist »clash of civilizations« arguments that sometimes attend postcolonial theory-informed critiques of Eurocentrism.²⁰

Cultures of Uneven and Combined Development (2019)

Cultures of Uneven and Combined Development, a more recent attempt to adapt U&CD to the humanities, embraces the term's bagginess. The editors, James Christie and Nesrin Degirmencioglu write that U&CD is »both form and content at the same time«, simultaneously lived and conceptual.²¹ They insist that the task of applying U&CD to culture, after its revival in the social sciences, is not to give it determined meaning but to draw upon the fact that its identity »has always been highly fragmented, fiercely contested and has resisted clear or singular definition«.²² Christie and Degirmencioglu believe U&CD can mediate between the competing poles of Marxist comparative literature, Moretti's world-systems approach and Jameson's mode of production analysis, reconciling them as two »complementary theories that could be contained within the conceptual framework of U&CD«.²³

Rather than argue for its direct political utility, or for its general theoretical validity, Christie and Degirmencioglu emphasize its usefulness for approaching culture after neoliberal globalization in the 1970s. Other than a suggestive moment in their introduction to the volume, where the »backwardness« of art (evidenced in its institutional crises) is given as evidence of a new U&CD, the concept is applied primarily to the disciplinary study of art, rather than to the art itself, or its historical development.

The one art-historical essay in the volume, a study of Alan Sekula by Gail Day and Steve Edwards, offers more precise disciplinary and historical reasons for the term's recuperation. Historically, in the new phase of capitalism, in which mega-cities in the semi-periphery became of central importance to the world economy, a global approach to contemporary art inspired by Trotsky and spurred by postcolonial critique could attend to the process by which »capital subsumes pre-existing and non-capitalist social forms and remolds them according to the forces of accumulation, internalizing the contradictions and unevenness, simultaneously resynchronizing and redifferentiating cultures, societies and economies«.²⁴ Intellectually, recent developments in the study of Marx's writing on colonialism and temporality made it possible to transcend the familiar charges of economism and Eurocentrism that have plagued Marxist approaches to history and culture.

Global Artistic Modernity after Modernism

To date, the most substantial attempt to adapt U&CD into a critical term for the humanities has been Jameson's *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present*, which elevated U&CD into »nothing less than a template for any consideration of modern culture«²⁵ for not only identifying the co-presence of social and cultural elements from different eras in the same historical temporality – but showing them to be structurally unified and »governed by a socio-historical logic of combination«²⁶. There, Jameson credits Clement Greenberg with »having invented the ideology of modernism full-blown and out of whole cloth«.²⁷ This ideology, he says, grew out of Greenberg's early Trotskyism and his increasing disillusionment with Stalinism that turned, eventually, into a general suspicion of bourgeois society and of politics as such. On this reading, Greenbergian formalism, retains a »Marxian model« of artistic development, but is free from political commitments.²⁸

Jameson reads the history of modernism as an »ideology« through U&CD, by claiming, first, that artistic modernism »corresponds to a situation of incomplete modernization«²⁹ in which the old and new regimes are lived simultaneously in day-to-day life – making the experience of »unevenness« and »combination« the condition of artistic revolution; second, by giving comparative accounts of the uneven development of this ideology as embodied by its various national ideologues; and third, by constructing a »multi-temporal and multilinear« account of the ideology's history that is, he argues, irreducible to any model of cultural influence or cultural imperialism where it arose, in each instance as a »specific and unique national-literary task«,³⁰ structured by »an inescapable and irreversible dynamic of the development of capitalism as such.«³¹ After Jameson's demonstration that critical reflection on American painting all but produced late modernist ideology and the full-throated idea of artistic autonomy, the task, for those who wish to build on his transformation of U&CD, remains to relate these observations to the historical development of art itself.

The movement of U&CD from law to theory, from political program to a disciplinary intervention, has led to the current state where, all at once, it is being revived as a sociological category encompassing two centuries of global cultural production, a periodizing category explaining the development of art in the past, and an interpretive category illuminating a strain of politically-minded work in the present. The argument advanced in various ways above, that U&CD has unique purchase today, now that we live in the era of capital's full transnationalization, is compelling but is hampered by the unclear and contradictory ways U&CD remains yoked to artistic modernism, which is treated either as an essentially historical category (Jameson) or expanded to be purely chronological (WReC). In the first case, it has says little to say about the present, and in the second it says much about social conditions today but little about art itself, leaving unclear what U&CD entails beyond the argument that all regional practices are thoroughly mediated by the global culture of capitalism. Given these shaky theoretical foundations, it is unsurprising that its use in art history has been limited to describing how works of art grapple with the phenomena of global trade and urban planning, etc. As the term migrates from social science to literature to art, in it's emphatic (generic) sense, its forced to encounter the gap between the time of historical modernism, and the qualitatively different shape historical time takes in our own era, where artistic production and circulation are characterized by ›contemporary art‹.

Today, artistic modernism has a constitutive but only partial hold on the present, and the contemporary presents another way of registering global modernity as »the transnational globalization of processes of capital accumulation and exchange«³² Whereas the modernist project was emphatically critical, future-oriented, and identified with the negation of tradition and of bourgeois society, contemporary art poses no coherent image of the future, or program for overcoming the present, it »fixes and enfolds«³³ the interminably revolutionary logic that artistic modernism celebrated. But so far, the attempt to import U&CD and renew artistic modernism's concepts, has neglected to combine its endeavor with modernism's most critical tasks. The effort to broaden the scope of modernism has resulted in de-linking it from that art's constitutively antagonistic relation to bourgeois society and culture. While at present it would be anachronistic to speak of ›advanced art‹, or to give any socially totalizing account of art's development, U&CD, if taken up in its emphatically political, Trotskyist, sense, promises to contribute

to a materialist method for a global art history that would not only give account of art's recent immanent and sociological transformations, but theorize anew the possibilities of artistic permanent revolution and genuine social negativity under conditions of transnational capital.

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- 1 Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory*. London 2004, p. 221.
 - 2 See Jairus Banaji: *Theory as History. Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation*. Leiden and Boston 2010.
 - 3 Michael Löwy: *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: The Theory of Permanent Revolution*. Chicago 2010, p. 2.
 - 4 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
 - 5 *Ibid.*, p. 81.
 - 6 *Ibid.*, p. 87.
 - 7 *Ibid.*
 - 8 *Ibid.*
 - 9 George Novack: *Understanding History*. Chippendale, New South Wales 2002, p 75.
 - 10 Novack 2002 (as note 9), p. 77.
 - 11 Neil Smith: *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*. Atlanta 2008, p. 5.
 - 12 Smith 2008 (as note 11), p. 6.
 - 13 *Ibid.*, p. 113.
 - 14 *Ibid.*
 - 15 Jamie C. Allinson and Alexander Anievas, »The uses and misuses of uneven and combined development: an anatomy of a concept« In: *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 22, p. 48.
 - 16 See Rosalyn Deutsche: »Uneven Development« In *October*, vol. 47, 1988, pp. 3-52, which applies the term to a critical assessment of New York City's public art projects in relation to urban planning and investment.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
 - 19 Frederick Jameson: »Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism« In *Social Text*, vol. 15. Durham, North Carolina 1987, pp. 65-88, quoted in Warwick Research Collective 2015 (as note 16), p. 22.
 - 20 For the WReC, Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* is exemplary in its tendency to treat »imperialism as a political dispensation [of the West] rather than as a process of accumulation on a world scale, under conditions of capitalist monopoly«. Warwick Research Collective 2015 (as note 16), p. 31.
 - 21 James Christie and Nesrin Degirmencioglu: »Why Cultures of Uneven and Combined Development?« In: James Christie and Nesrin Degirmencioglu (eds.): *Cultures of Uneven and Combined Development: From International Relations to World Literature*. Leiden and Boston 2019, p. 15.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, p 14.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
 - 24 Gail Day and Steve Edwards: »Differential Time and Aesthetic Form: Uneven and Combined Capitalism in the Work of Allan Sekula« In: Christie and Degirmencioglu 2019 (as note 21), p. 259.

- ²⁵ Warwick Research Collective 2015 (as note 16), p. 11.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ²⁷ Fredric Jameson: *A Singular Modernity*. London and New York 2012, p. 169.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 180.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.
- ³² Peter Osborne: *The Postconceptual Condition*. Brooklyn and London 2017, p. 26.
- ³³ Peter Osborne: *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*. Brooklyn and London 2013, p. 24.

Dave Beech

Value

Value – overlapping with and diverging from *valeur* (French) and *Wert* (German) – originally denoted strength, wellness and high regard. Occupying a minor place within those classical and medieval discourses of truth, virtue and the good life that referred instead to merit, rank and quality, the prominence of the term and the proliferation of its definitions are modern. Marxism is prominent within modern debates on value but the significance of Marxist conceptions of value can be assessed only if we situate them within the contested and contingent events that constitute the history of discourses and practices of value.

The appeal of the specific conception of value within Marxist orthodoxy is that it provides unrivalled clarity in the explanation of what constitutes the capitalist mode of production and therefore how capitalism can be superseded. In fact, it could be argued that the Marxist concept of value and the social process of value production is decisive in differentiating the Marxist analysis of capitalism from all other intellectual traditions. However, Marxist art historians have tended to play down the specific Marxist conception of value as part of the critique of vulgar economic reductivism. Therefore, although I will return to Marxist value theory, the bulk of this entry will chart the spread of alternative conceptions of value that have intersected with Marxist art history and Marxist aesthetic theory more generally.

The appeal of a looser definition of value or a diverse range of different kinds of value within heterodox Marxism is that it extends the range of Marxist inquiry and facilitates the alignment of Marxism with other intellectual traditions. Marxism has no monopoly on conceptions of value. So, it is vital to recognise both the disputes within the conceptual constellation of value and the various critiques of value as a concept. For instance, Paul Gilroy is correct to highlight »the racial signs from which the discourse of cultural value was constructed«¹ and justification persists for Simone de Beauvoir's argument that »Male activities, creating values, has constituted existence itself as a value [and this] has prevailed over Nature and Woman.«²

It is possible to combine orthodox and heterodox Marxist theories of value with the political critique of value methodologically by approaching the concept of value historically. More than a history of ideas, these disputes over value have taken place within the totality of struggles and conflicts that constitute a changing world system of conflictual social forces and contested structures. The history of debates about value is simultaneously a cryptic narrative of social history and contributes to social history itself when and if ideological struggles over what value is or what should be valued have been integral to deciding between various courses of action. The first benefit of a history of value as a concept, however, is to denaturalise the term.

Value is a specifically modern term. However, the narrative of its modernity is false if it follows a narrow origin myth of the economic concept of value.³ While it is plausible to argue that the term value »was introduced into philosophy in the nineteenth-century from political economy«,⁴ the velocity of the idea of value which propelled it into the idiolect of classical political economy also needs to be explained. Value becomes a prominent term within economics only in the wake of the »brilliant flowering of mathematics«⁵ in the seventeenth century.

The rise of the economic theory of value and the hegemony of the capitalist mode of production are important elements in the social history of the idea of value, but it is not the case that economics is concerned with value in the literal meaning of the word and all other references to value are metaphorical extrapolations from it. The dominance of the economic definition of value in the constellation of ideas of value has to be inserted into the longer historical investigation into the shared source of value in mathematics. Rather than following a linear path towards the modern economic theory of value, the history of value is characterised by a swelling of the number of meanings expressed with the word value at the threshold of modernity, when the word is extracted from the common lexicon to become a key term within economics, sociology, ethics, politics, aesthetics, anthropology and so on.

Economic conceptions of value borrowed from the development of modern calculus in the seventeenth century by Isaac Newton and Gottfried Leibniz. What John von Neumann called »the greatest technical advance in exact thinking« established a vogue for the term value.⁶ So, shortly after the unfavourable reception of Newton's *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* at the Royal Society in the late C17th, William Petty published his *Political Arithmetic* using the term »value« in the same way as authors of early economic texts in the mid-seventeenth century, such as Thomas Munn, but now with much more frequency.⁷

Between the last third of the seventeenth century and the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in 1776, three trends are evident. Writers such as Bernard Mandeville, Richard Steele and Joseph Addison use the word sparingly to refer to a non-economic regard for something (for example, »to value the Soul above the Body«). Other writers such as Francis Hutcheson and Jean-Jacques Rousseau use terms such as »merit«, »useful« and »of benefit« in the places where »value« will later seem a natural fit. Only a minority, including John Locke, William Petty, Daniel Defoe and James Steuart, use the word »value« in an economic sense, often in the phrase »the value of«. Josiah Child, for instance, who was the most widely-read of the economic writers of his day, refers to value primarily in the repetition of the phrase »the value of land« but also speaks about the value of goods, the value of money, the value of commodities and the value of imports and exports.⁸

The economic theory of value developed in parallel with other distinctly modern conceptions of value. As subjectivity became a central concern for modern thought, value was reconceived as an expression of individual inclination. Kant argued that »if the world consisted entirely of lifeless beings or even in part of living but nonrational beings, then the existence of such a world would have no value at all, because there would exist in it no being that has the slightest concept of a value«. ⁹ From Kant onwards »aesthetic value« had to be explained in terms of the individual's power of judgement. Jerome Stolnitz is correct to note the reorientation of the aesthetic from the objective qual-

ities of objects (order, balance, symmetry, variety) to the subjective feelings of pleasure, but we can also acknowledge, here, that it is only in modernity that these subjective judgements are assigned the word value.¹⁰

At the same time another definition of value was developed. In the Introduction to *The Principles of Morals and Legislation* published in 1789, Jeremy Bentham proposed a method of governance modelled on the precision of mathematics and mechanics applied to units of hedonic experience in which »the value of a pleasure or pain« varied according to their »intensity, its duration, its certainty or uncertainty [and] propinquity or remoteness«. The labels given to Bentham's method, namely the »felicific calculus« or the »hedonic calculus«, signify that value is a term used in a mathematical but non-economic sense.¹¹ After reading Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, Bentham adopted the economic concept of value in his discussion of usury. Although Bentham returned to his earlier definition of value in his later writings on morality, his embrace of the economic concept of value belongs to a new chapter in the history of value.

Economics joined the vogue for value and transformed it into an ideology but it did not reduce the concept of value to economic value. Instead, Smith argued that »the word value ... has two different meanings« and divided value into two general categories: value in use and value in exchange. This was important for two reasons. First, the discipline of economics was established by policing the border between »exchange value« and »use value«, the former being subject to the laws of supply and demand, the latter not. And second, it served to explain the divergence of use value and exchange value as exemplified in the diamond-water paradox (namely that things with the greatest value in use, such as water, have little or no exchange value, whereas those things that with the greatest exchange value, such as diamonds, tend to have little or no use value).

Transposing this line of inquiry, Marx argued that the commodity has a »two-fold nature«. ¹² Every exchange value is also a use value and vice versa. Here, it should be pointed out that use value does not refer to fixed or proper uses of a thing. The use value of a bottle of water, for instance, is not only to quench a thirst but also, potentially, to wash sticky hands, revive a bee with a sugar solution, dilute water-colour paint, put out a small fire or, following the artist Dean Hughes, to create small puddles on dry streets to make a Mancunian feel at home.

By internalizing the distinction between use value and exchange value within the commodity itself, Marx could register the contradictions of capitalism insofar as use value and exchange value constantly confront one another. David Harvey illustrates the point in an analysis of housing: »As a use value, the house provides shelter; it is a place where people can build a home and an affective life; it is a site of daily and biological reproduction«, however, in advanced capitalism »housing is built speculatively as a commodity to be sold on the market [and therefore] the aim of the producers is to procure exchange values not use values. The creation of use values for others is a means to that end«. ¹³

The twofold nature of the house – as home and real estate – produces difficulties. The tension between use value and exchange value shows itself when, for instance, the house becomes »a form of saving, a repository of exchange value«¹⁴ for the owner and consequently home improvements vacillate between improving the use value for the occupants and preserving or increasing the value of the property for future resale. Moreover, the use value of housing is negated during an economic recession if perfectly good houses

are left unoccupied due to a lack of effective market demand, or when the raw materials for building houses are left idle, or unprofitable buildings are knocked down to clear the path for more lucrative speculation.

The social and theoretical conflict between exchange value and use value is evident in a range of debates on value that also highlight other tensions. Oscar Wilde's witticism criticising those who »know the price of everything and the value of nothing«, depends for its effect on the objective dominance of exchange value over all use values in capitalism combined with the anti-capitalist conviction that non-economic values trump exchange value spiritually, aesthetically or morally. Kant's affirmation of the uselessness (or purposelessness) of the beautiful in art and nature, despite the apparent opposition of use-value and »aesthetic value«, actually distinguishes between different kinds of use-value. That is to say, rejecting the instrumentalization of art (i.e. its use for purposes – and values – deemed to be external to it), Kant's conception of the purposelessness of the aesthetic is, from an economic point of view, a type of use-value as opposed to an exchange-value. This is underlined by the fact that Kant distinguished art from handicraft by asserting that it is not remunerative or mercenary.¹⁵

Subjective or culturally specific values are preserved within the social sciences, in part, by explicitly contrasting the economic theory of value with a spectrum of non-economic values. For instance, the anthropologist Christopher Gregory insists on a methodological restriction of the term value to refer only to the sense given to the word by economists, explaining that one cannot talk about value at all in a gift economy but only of goods being »ranked«. Other anthropologists, including Marilyn Strathern, Nancy Munn and Jane Fajans, have developed rival solutions to the same problem. Such thinking is not entirely foreign to economics itself. For example, the Keynesian economist Richard Musgrave coined the term »merit want« in the 1950s to address the lack of fit between »public value« and »market value«.

Max Weber divided social life into several value spheres (political, economic, religious, aesthetic, erotic, and intellectual, or, in Marxist terms, economic value and five variants of use value). Weber's spheres divide into those which conform to »instrumental rationality« and those that are determined by a form of »value rationality«. This corresponds in part with Durkheim's sociology of values, specifically his remark that »social life alone is made up of values: religious, moral, legal, economic, artistic«. However, instead of the Durkheimian conviction that »social life is fashioned from values, and the values are properties added to things by human consciences«, Weber subscribed to a notion of value closer to Saussure's concept of how value is attributed to things not by thought but by semiotic structures.

A different definition of value altogether entered the social sciences at the same time as the spectrum of values was first differentiated. Weber and Durkheim both highlighted the need to weed out value from the methodologies of sociology in favour of facts. This principle is also prominent in economics, congealed in the doctrinal distinction between normative and positive economics promoted by Milton Friedman. David Hume, who is conventionally credited with first identifying the error of deriving a »value« from a »fact«, contrasted »is« with »ought«¹⁶ and therefore never used the word value in this way. The fact/value problem is formulated only in the twentieth century by Hilary Putnam in his important essay the »collapse of the fact/value dichotomy«¹⁷ which drew out

a thread running through the writings of John Dewey, W.V. Quine, G.E. Moore which persisted subsequently in the work of Amartya Sen, Isaiah Berlin, and Roy Bhaskar.

There is another acute problem of value in philosophy. The Nietzschean »transvaluation of values« and his genealogical critique of moral thinking as an investigation into »the value of values« takes issue with the Enlightenment tradition exemplified by Kant. Here, critical thinking suspends the affirmation of value without diverging from the Kantian definition of the term. Heidegger, too, bracketed off Kant's conception of value when he asked: »What does value mean ontologically?« In one strand of this skepticism towards this Enlightenment conception of value, Rosi Braidotti calls for the cancellation of »humanist values« in a political project based on a »normatively neutral« reconfiguration of the human/animal relation »to be explored as an open experiment, not as a foregone moral conclusion about allegedly universal values or qualities.«¹⁸

David Graeber's critical survey of conceptions of value in anthropology argues that, since the 1960s, theories have oscillated between »a warmed-over economism that makes »value« simply the measure of individual desire«¹⁹ and variants on the Saussurean definition of value as a semiotic or structural effect. Alongside these major tendencies, however, the literature also contains several minor uses of the term value. The anthropological theory of »regimes of value« or »value arenas« is exemplified in the work of Arjun Appadurai. Graeber acknowledges the breadth of conceptions of value as follows: »there are all sorts of domains – ranging from housework to hobbies, political action, personal projects of any sort – where ... one hears about »values« in the plural sense: family values, religious virtues, the aesthetic values of art, and so on.«²⁰

Walter Benjamin's concepts of »cult value« and »exhibition value« and Peter Bürger's concepts of »shock value« and »protest value« are examples of values which have been attached to art with the specific intention of establishing a critical relationship between art and bourgeois society. Benjamin also claimed that culture itself »paved the way for empathy with exchange value«²¹ and Adorno and Horkheimer said the products of the culture industry – songs, movies, photos, fashions, etc – are shaped by exchange-value as commodities even in their physical properties through processes of standardization, regulation and branding.²²

Both economic value and the Romantic anti-capitalist affirmation of aesthetic and moral values were rejected by Daniel Bell's proposal that the production of surplus value through the extraction of surplus labour belongs to the industrial mode of production whereas the post-industrial society is better understood in terms of an information theory of value. Jean Baudrillard followed suit in his nihilist theory of »sign value«.²³ Today, also, the classical Marxist labour theory of value is confronted with affirmations of value production beyond waged labour in feminist, autonomist, accelerationist and post-work theories which extend the terrain of value into the realms of domestic reproduction, consumption and leisure.

Theorists of technological capitalism argue that »genteel forms of Western Marxist thinking taught in universities ... are not good at understanding how the *forces of production* actually work«²⁴ and advocates of social reproduction theory argue it »gives a fuller picture of production and reproduction than Marx's political economic theory does.«²⁵ For Marxism, the point is not to replace Marxist value theory with a range of rival theories of value but to understand capitalism to be a complex lattice-work of different patterns of exploitation and oppression. Capitalism is not a self-sufficient system

but preys on forms of noncapitalist activity without which capitalism could not sustain itself. Not only has capitalism been dependent, historically, on colonialism, slavery, child labour and the oppression of women, but capitalist accumulation is impossible without countless hours of unpaid work, unprofitable production and unrecognised labour.

In the sociology of art²⁶ and within the Adornian strand of Western Marxist aesthetic philosophy, the commodification of art is assumed if only »to avoid asserting its autonomy in a conservative or mythical form.«²⁷ Identifying artworks with the exchange-value of commodities flushes out the implicit politics of the assertion that the »arts are our storehouse of recorded values«²⁸ because they »record the most important judgments we possess as to the values of experience.«²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu is critical of the class basis of the »pure« gaze, but nonetheless confirms that »The artist's life-style is always a challenge thrown at the bourgeois life-style, which it seeks to condemn as unreal and even absurd, by a sort of practical demonstration of the emptiness of the values and powers it pursues.«³⁰ Adrian Rifkin has taken issue with art history as a discipline by observing that it restricts itself to »objects whose culturally ascribed value demands that they have their own history.«³¹

My book *Art and Value*, situates itself at the tip of the confrontation between an apparently sentimental defence of art against capitalism and a seemingly realistic and critical insistence that art can no longer be a space apart from the workings of capitalism. My argument rejects both the commodification thesis and the autonomy thesis in favour of an analysis of art's economic exceptionalism. Methodologically, this means claims about art's relationship to capitalism must be tested economically not in its circulation but in art's specific social relations of production, thus shifting the burden of proof from sociological effects to economic conditions. In brief, art's relationship to the capitalist mode of production turns on art's relationship to capital not revenue.

Contemporary Marxist value theory, from Moishe Postone to the Endnotes group and *Théorie Communiste*, distances itself from the traditional left by declaring that capitalism is not superseded with the redistribution of wealth, decommmodification, the workers' state, the abolition of money or the collective ownership of the means of production but only with the supersession of value production. For Marx, value corresponds to the socially necessary labour time required to reproduce a commodity. Or, as Michael Heinrich explains, »Only labor-time expended under the average existing conditions of production as well as for the satisfaction of monetary social demand constitutes value.«³²

Marx's labour theory of value is a theory of labour as it functions within the capitalist mode of production. »Only with capitalism – that is, only when commodity-exchange becomes the primary and indeed universal medium of social interaction through the commodification of labour-power – does value become the defining principle of social reproduction.«³³ Diane Elson's argument that Marx developed a »value theory of labour«³⁴, therefore, is only true of his labour theory of value not his ontology of labour more generally. The point is, it is a mistake to think that (all) labour is the source of value but it is essential to recognize that value production radically transforms the social relations and concrete character of labour.

The supersession of value production, which is essential to the abolition of capitalism, must be distinguished from the eradication of labour more generally (which comprises the social production of material wealth). Although, under capitalism, economic

value appears primarily in the form of material wealth (as commodities and money) while, at the same time, material wealth appears within this system in the form of economic value, the argument that all values have an economic value is an ideological factor in the reproduction of the existing social order. This is why Marxist value theory, while insisting on a specific conception of value must also recognise that economic value is not the unaccentuated root or plain meaning of value from which the diverse range of concepts of value are derived.

In tracing the outline of the principal paths in the history of the modern concept of value, my intention has not been to replace the specific Marxist theory of value with a relativist jumble of ideas about value but to recognise the significance of the struggle over value and values. Rather than assuming that value is not assigned a specific modern meaning, it is more promising, I would argue, to acknowledge that value becomes one of the signs of the modern insofar as quantities, qualities, principles and prejudices are recast as rival forms of value. Truth value, intrinsic value, ethical value, aesthetic value, exchange-value, use-value, value spheres, the value-laden, family values and sign-value all indicate not only a range of rival meanings but also the extent of the terrain that value came to occupy since its rather narrower patterns of use before modernity. As such, if it is true that economics launched the concept of value into the lexicon of philosophy (and sociology, anthropology, art criticism etc.), then it contributed to the multiplication of categories of use value.

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- 1 Paul Gilroy: *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso 1999, p. 8.
 - 2 Simone de Beauviour: *The Second Sex*. Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Maloveny-Chevallier. London: Vintage Books 2009 (1949), p. 77.
 - 3 For an example of this, see A.C. Pigou: »review: The Theory of Value before Adam Smith. by Hannah Robie Sewall« In: *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 47 September 1902, pp. 374-375.
 - 4 C.G. Shaw: »The Theory of Value and Its Place in the History of Ethics« In: *International Journal of Ethics* 11, no. 3, April 1901, p. 309.
 - 5 I.I. Rubin: *A History of Economic Thought*. Translated by Donald Filtzer. London: Ink Links 1989, p. 68.
 - 6 John von Neumann: »The Mathematician« In: *The Neumann Compendium*. Edited by F. Bródy and T. Vámos. Salem: World Scientific Publishing 1995, p. 620.
 - 7 William Petty: *Political Arithmetic*. London, Robert Clavel, 1690. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/petty/>. Accessed 14 Sept 2019.
 - 8 Josiah Child: *A New Discourse of Trade*. London, T. Sowle, 1698. <https://archive.org/details/anewdiscoursetr00chilgoog/page/n4>. Accessed 14 Sept 2019.
 - 9 Immanuel Kant: *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Translated by Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000, p. 315.
 - 10 Jerome Stolnitz: »Beauty«: Some Stages in the History of an Idea« In: *Journal of the History of Ideas*. Volume 22, Number 2, 1961, pp. 185-204.
 - 11 Jeremy Bentham: *A Fragment on Government and an Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Edited by Wilfrid Harrison. Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1948, pp. 151-154.

- ¹² Karl Marx: *Capital: The Critique of Political Economy Volume I*. Translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, edited by Frederick Engels. London: Lawrence and Wishart 1954 (1867), p. 48.
- ¹³ David Harvey: *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014, p. 17.
- ¹⁴ Ibid, p. 19.
- ¹⁵ Immanuel Kant: *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Translated by s. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett 1987, p. 171.
- ¹⁶ David Hume: *A Treatise on Human Nature*. London: Penguin 1985 (1739-40), p. 521.
- ¹⁷ Hilary Putnam: *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 2002.
- ¹⁸ Rosi Braidotti: *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press 2013, p. 80.
- ¹⁹ David Graeber: *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. New York: Palgrave 2001, p. 46.
- ²⁰ Graeber 2001 (as note 19), p. 56.
- ²¹ Walter Benjamin: »Reply« In: *Aesthetics and Politics*. Edited by Fredric Jameson. London: Verso 2002 (1977), p. 140.
- ²² Theodor Adorno: *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. Edited by J.M. Bernstein. London: Routledge 1991.
- ²³ Jean Baudrillard: *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. Translated by Charles Levin. London: Verso 2019.
- ²⁴ McKenzie Wark: *Capital is Dead*. London: Verso 2019, p. 19.
- ²⁵ Nancy Holmstrom quoted in Tithi Bhattacharya: *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Representing Oppression*. London: Pluto Press 2017, p. 3.
- ²⁶ For example, Janet Wolff draws attention to »the extra-aesthetic elements involved in aesthetic judgement – the values of class, or the influence of political or moral ideals«. (Wolff: *The Social Production of Art*. London: Macmillan 1981, p. 7.)
- ²⁷ Stewart Martin: »The Absolute Artwork Meets the Absolute Commodity« In: *Radical Philosophy* 146, Nov/Dec 2007, p. 23.
- ²⁸ I. A. Richards: *Principles of Literary Criticism*. London: Routledge 1989 (1924), p. 22.
- ²⁹ Ibid, p. 23.
- ³⁰ Pierre Bourdieu: *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. London: Routledge 1992, p. 57.
- ³¹ Adrian Rifkin: *Communards and Other Cultural Histories*. Edited by Steve Edwards. Leiden: Brill 2016, p. 52.
- ³² Michael Heinrich: *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*. Translated by Alexander Locascio. New York: Monthly Review Press 2004, p. 51.
- ³³ Peter Hudis: *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*. Chicago: Haymarket Books 2013, p. 7.
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Ellen Spickernagel

Wilhelm Kuhnerts koloniales Tierbild

Wilhelm Kuhnert (1865-1926) wurde als Tiermaler im Dienst der Kolonialmacht Deutschland bekannt und einflussreich. Sein umfangreiches Oeuvre war in der Frankfurter Schirn 2018/19 in einer Retrospektive zu besichtigen.¹ Sie machte deutlich, dass vor allem seine zahllosen Illustrationen in populärwissenschaftlichen Werken das Tierbild breiter Bevölkerungskreise prägte. Die Ausstellung rückte die Gemälde, die bisher im Kunstbetrieb nicht beachtet wurden, in den Mittelpunkt, brüskierte aber die Besucher, da die gegenwärtig drängende Frage nach dem Zusammenhang von Kolonialismus und Tierdarstellung offen blieb. Im Folgenden werde ich anhand einiger Darstellungen afrikanischen Großwilds Kuhnerts koloniales Konzept erläutern.

I

Kuhnert erhielt eine akademische Ausbildung, und wie alle Tiermaler in dieser Epoche nutzte er zunächst den Zoo und übte sich in der Beobachtung und im Zeichnen der verschiedenartigen im Berliner Zoo ausgestellten Tierarten. Zwischen 1891 und 1912 unternahm er drei Expeditionen in die ehemalige Kolonie Deutsch-Ostafrika – heute Tansania – die 1884 gegründet und im Ersten Weltkrieg, wie auch die anderen Kolonien, aufgegeben werden musste. Er wurde Großwildjäger. Bedingung seiner künstlerischen Arbeit waren die gefährlichen Jagden, die er nur mit Hilfe zahlreicher einheimischer Helfer und mit der bürokratischen und logistischen Unterstützung der Kolonialverwaltung durchführen konnte. Der Profiteur Kuhnert war zugleich Akteur im Kampf der deutschen sog. Schutzmacht gegen die einheimische Bevölkerung. Er beteiligte sich am Maji-Maji-Krieg (1905-07), der mit mindestens 180.000 Toten, zerstörten Dörfern und Lebensgrundlagen endete.²

Einerseits trug er zur Unterwerfung und Ausbeutung der Bevölkerung und zum Raub der Natur bei, andererseits erhob er in seinen Schriften den überseeischen Besitz zu einer Art von Paradies: Hier seien unberührte Natur, überwältigend schöne Landschaften, großartige Tierwelten zu finden, mithin das, was Technik, Industrie, Urbanisierung in Deutschland bereits zerstört hätten. Wie andere Zivilisationskritiker beklagte er Jagd, Raubbau und technische Erschließung des Landes und damit den drohenden Verlust ursprünglicher afrikanischer Natur.³



Abb. 1: Wilhelm Kuhnert, Löwe, o. J., Forth Worth Zoological Association USA

II

Als Sujet bevorzugte er Löwen, Leoparden, Büffel, Elefanten, die gleiche Wahl trafen die anderen europäischen Großwildjäger, von denen er sich moralisierend absetzte: »Andere Leute schießen die Tiere auch ohne jeglichen höheren Zweck« (Abb.1, 2).⁴ Die seit altersher ebenso geschätzten wie gefürchteten Arten eigneten sich die Kolonialherren als Herrschaftszeichen an, wie es das Denkmal Heinrich von Wissmanns in Daressalam beispielhaft zeigt (1909).⁵ Die Statue des Gouverneurs von Ostafrika steht auf einem Sockel, während zu seinen Füßen ein Kolonialsoldat die Reichsflagge über einen erlegten Löwen ausbreitet. Besiegt ist der Afrika symbolisierende Löwe, in Verbindung mit dem für das Kolonialregime kämpfenden Askari stellt er die vollständige Unterwerfung des Landes und seiner Bevölkerung dar.

Kuhnerts Sujets waren nicht nur gefragte Jagdobjekte, lebend wurden sie unter der Kategorie »Kolonialwaren« in die zahlreichen im 19. Jahrhundert gegründeten europäischen Zoos geliefert.⁶ Die Jagdbeuten besaßen hohen wirtschaftlichen Wert, so zählten Elefantenzähne zu den Hauptausfuhrprodukten. Ein wichtiges Kolonialvorhaben war die Zurichtung von Wildtieren, ihre Zähmung, Züchtung und Kreuzung, z. B. wollte Kaiser Wilhelm II. Zebras für eine zukünftige koloniale Kavallerie zähmen.⁷ Dem Künstler lag an der kolonialen Schulung; in einem der populären Medien, den besonders bei Kindern beliebten Reklamesammelkarten, belehrte er anhand von Esel und Zebra über »Das Tier im Dienste des Menschen« (Abb.3).⁸

Wenn Kuhnert auch bescheinigt wurde, dass er ein treues Bild der afrikanischen Fauna male, so sind die Gemälde weniger das Ergebnis intensiven Studiums lebender als vielmehr erschossener oder in Fallen getöteter Modelle. Er erlegte mit Hilfe von zahlreichen Führern und Helfern die begehrten Tiere, darunter 17 Elefanten. Nach dem Jagen, Töten und Zerlegen des Körpers zeichnete er die ihn interessierenden Teile und gab dann das als Nahrung benötigte Fleisch für die Helfer frei. Auf der Grundlage dieser



Abb. 2: Wilhelm Kuhnert, *Elefant am Tümpel*, 1907, Privatbesitz

Zeichnungen und vor Ort angefertigter Landschaftsstudien entstanden im Berliner Atelier die Gemälde, die er aufgrund der hohen Nachfrage oft wiederholte bzw. variierte.

Auf einem Foto posiert der Maler zwischen Einheimischen, die Elefantenzähne präsentieren, während auf dem Boden liegende landschaftliche Ölstudien seinen eigenen Jagderfolg bezeugen (Abb. 4). Er grenzt seine zivilisatorische Leistung gegen die Kolonisierten ab, die doch nur durch deren Wissen und Jagdpraxis, Arbeit und Anstrengung während der Expeditionen zustande kam. Bernhard Gißibl spricht dem, was Kuhnert auf diese Weise produzierte, den Kunstcharakter ab. Statt autonomer Kunst erkennt er hier zu Recht eine »Kunst als Jagdtrophäe«.⁹

III

Die Anerkennung, die Kuhnerts Gemälde fanden, galt den im Stil des Naturalismus wiedergegebenen Motiven und der im Kontrast dazu impressionistisch anmutenden Steppe. Die retrospektive Manier, die, wie es hieß, Afrikas Fauna authentisch abbildete, und die maltechnische Qualität, mit der Volumen und Oberflächen der tierlichen Giganten, Haut, Fell und Federn, veranschaulicht waren, begründeten seinen Erfolg.

Kuhnerts Entwurf unterscheidet sich grundlegend von der visuellen Massenkultur der Epoche, in der das seit altersher bekannte Tierbild, das Gewalt und Bedrohung repräsentierte, eine bis dahin unvorstellbare Konjunktur erlebte, sei es in Plakaten von Zoos und Zirkusunternehmen, sei es in der anschwellenden Flut populärwissenschaftlicher Publikationen und anderer Bildmedien, die breiten Volksschichten die jeweiligen Stereotypen der aus den Kolonien stammenden Tiere vermittelten. Der Künstler baut keine Drohkulisse auf, er verschafft den kapitalen Tieren eine ganz andere Ausstrahlungskraft. Er



Abb. 3: Das Tier im Dienste des Menschen, Esel und Zebra. Stollwerck Sammelalbum 11, 1910

setzt sie monumental, gleichsam lebensgroß, ins Bild, oft in der anspruchsvollen Größe von Historienbildern – Büffel und Löwe messen mehr als drei Meter in der Breite – aber auch im mittleren Format. In der Regel steht ein einzelnes Tier in ruhiger Haltung in seinem Habitat, der Savanne. Durch Größe, Masse und Gewicht ist es allen anderen Spezies, menschlichen und nichtmenschlichen, überlegen, ohne dass sein Angriffspotential zum Ausbruch käme. So verharret der bildparallel ausgerichtete Löwe in verhaltener Anspannung, ist weder im Blick, noch in der Haltung auf uns gerichtet, eine leichte

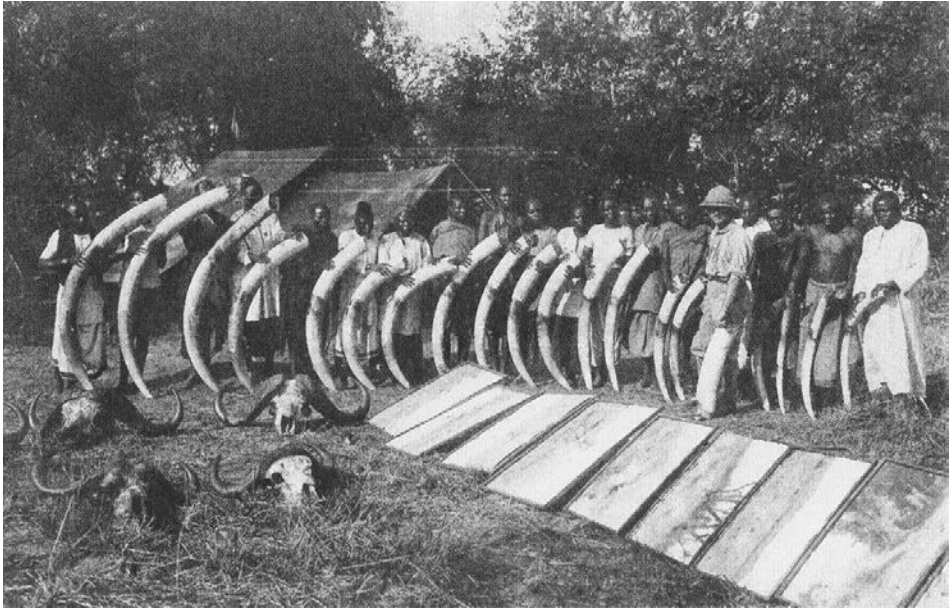


Abb. 4: Wilhelm Kuhnert mit Beute und Ölstudien, Deutsch-Ostafrika, 23.09.1911, Nachlass Wilhelm Kuhnert

Schrägstellung, eine vage Abwendung bewirken, dass kein Gefühl der Gefahr aufkommt (Abb. 1).

Der Hügel auf der linken Seite geht in seine Rückenlinie über und steigt über die Mähne an und setzt sich im fernen Gebirgszug fort. Die zwischen Gelb und Braun changierende, zugleich Fell und Steppe evozierende Farbgebung sowie der für Gras und Mähne gleiche Pinselduktus verstärken den Einklang zwischen Raubtier und Steppe.

Das oft wiederholte Kompositionsschema sieht ein Drittel der Bildfläche für die Umgebung vor. Warum erhält sie eine so beträchtliche Größe und setzt sich potentiell sogar jenseits der Bildgrenzen fort? Der flache trockene Boden, dem jeder Reiz exotischer Flora fehlt, zeigt keine Spuren anderer Lebewesen, einer Besiedlung oder menschlicher Geschichte und Kultur. Den Betrachtern wurde auf diese Weise die Bedeutung der Savanne nahegebracht, die darin lag, dass sie als »Urzustand der Natur« zum erweiterten Territorium Deutschlands zählte.

Das gleiche Konzept wendet der Maler auf den Elefanten an (Abb. 2). Vor der Folie des weitgespannten Himmels erhebt sich der »Elefant am Tümpel« über die Landschaft. Wie Löwe, Büffel, Tiger ist er zu gleichsam denkmalhafter Größe und Würde gesteigert. Er sprengt die Grenzen der tradierten Tiermalerei, die in der Rangliste der Gattungen einen unteren Platz einnahm, und gibt den Betrachtern eine andere Rolle vor. Sabine Wilke zieht die Kategorie des Erhabenen in der kolonialen Ästhetik heran, um das veränderte Verhältnis zwischen Bild und Betrachter zu beleuchten.¹⁰ Vor den übermächtigen animalischen Wesen erleben sie ihre eigene physische Begrenzung und können so die Gewissheit der menschlichen Überlegenheit nicht länger aufrechterhalten. Trotz des



Abb. 5: Wilhelm Kuhnerts Berliner Atelier, o. J., Nachlass Wilhelm Kuhnert

verunsicherten Status ermöglichen Vernunft und Moral, sich über das zu erheben, das Furcht und Schrecken einflößt. Das Erhabene, das Wilke in der Tradition der klassischen Ästhetik an angsteinflößenden Landschaftsbildern diskutiert, ist im kolonialen Zusammenhang auf die Tierwelt zu übertragen. Wie bedrohlich auch die gewaltigen Wesen wirken, der koloniale Betrachter war sich seiner Macht über die animalischen Kräfte sicher.

IV

Kuhnerts Gemälde waren in zeitgenössischen Kunstausstellungen nicht nennenswert vertreten, da er sich niemals die Farb- und Formsprache der Moderne aneignete und nicht deren Bruch mit dem traditionellen Tierbild vollzog.¹¹ Sein Feld waren die zahlreichen Kolonial- und Jagdausstellungen, die ein breites Publikum für die Kolonialmacht Deutschland begeistern sollten.¹² Die Ausstellung 1903 in Karlsruhe präsentierte 82 seiner Gemälde und Jagdtrophäen, ein Elefantenschädel war vor dem Großformat »Fliehende Elefanten« postiert. In diesem Kontext ließ sich das Ensemble, wie es die traditionelle Lesart nahe legte, nicht als Gegensatz zwischen Leben und Tod rezipieren, hier sollte das Publikum die koloniale Macht bewundern, die sich in der Kunst und der Trophäe gleichermaßen artikulierte. Auf der Weltausstellung 1904 in St. Louis, die auch als Werbefeldzug für den deutschen Kolonialismus fungierte, wurden Kuhnerts Artefakte ebenfalls einschlägig genutzt.¹³ Deutschland stellte einerseits mit Dampfmaschinen, Schiffskesseln, Lokomotiven, Schusswaffen etc. seine Spitzenstellung als Technik- und Industriemacht dar, andererseits repräsentierten Kaffee, Baumwolle, Öl, Nutzholzer,

Trophäen sowie Gemälde und Skizzen Kuhnerts den staatskolonialen Raub von Naturressourcen. Die beste Wirkung erreichten die künstlerischen Werke in Verbindung mit den vereinnahmten Gütern Afrikas.

Von hier aus erschließt sich eine weitere Dimension seines Konzepts. Es fand umso mehr Anklang, als es die Naturressource mit dem technisch-industriellen Fortschritt verband. Auch die Entwicklung Deutsch-Ostafrikas sollte durch Elektrizität, Dampfmaschinen, Schiffe und infrastrukturelle Maßnahmen vorangetrieben werden. Vor allem war der Bau von Eisenbahnen zur Stärkung der deutschen Machtposition zu forcieren – so forderte es ein deutscher Gouverneur.¹⁴ Die 1909 fertig gestellte Usambara-Bahn trug maßgeblich zur Beherrschung des afrikanischen Raums bei. Evident sind die Übereinstimmungen zwischen den überdimensionierten, schwergewichtigen Tiergestalten, deren Potential an Energie jederzeit ausbrechen könnte, und der stets einsatzbereiten mechanischen und elektrischen Kraft von Maschinen. Das koloniale Großwild wurde als unvergängliche Naturressource und zugleich als moderne Maschine konstruiert – ein Hybrid zwischen Natur und Technologie.

V

Wie zahlreiche Künstler der Epoche besaß Kuhnert ein repräsentatives Atelier, das, zum Ort der Kunst überhöht, zugleich Werkstatt, Verkaufsraum und Empfangssalon war (Abb. 5).¹⁵ Die mit Versatzstücken historischer Epochen und fremder Länder ausgestaffierten Künstlerateliers sollten Besucher und Käufer auf das jeweilige Fach, etwa Genre- oder Orientalmalerei, einstimmen und zum Bilderkauf animieren. Fotografien zeigen, dass der Kolonialmaler eine entsprechende Gestaltung wählte. Neben einigen seiner Bilder überschweben Jagdtrophäen, Skelette, Hörner, Präparate die Wände und breiten sich am Boden aus. Die seinen Gemälden und den Tierrelikten impliziten Gewaltakte schienen ihm zur Selbstdarstellung geeignet.

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- 1 Philipp Demandt, Ilka Voermann (Hg.): *König der Tiere. Wilhelm Kuhnert und das Bild von Afrika*. München 2018. – Vgl. Ellen Spickernagel: Rezension des Ausstellungskatalogs. In: *Sehepunkte* 18 (2018), Nr. 12, (15.12.2018), <http://www.sehepunkte.de/2018/12/32619.html>. Letzter Zugang 20.6.2019.
 - 2 Deutsches Historisches Museum (Hg.): *Deutscher Kolonialismus. Fragmente seiner Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Ausstellungskatalog. Darmstadt 2016, S. 184.
 - 3 Dazu umfassend Bernhard Gißibl: »Das kolonisierte Tier. Zur Ökologie der Kontaktzonen des deutschen Kolonialismus« In: *Werkstatt Geschichte*, Heft 56, 2010, S. 7-28. – Vgl. auch: Philipp Demandt: »Das Malen hier ist keine Leichtigkeit«. Wilhelm Kuhnert im Spiegel seiner Zeit und seiner Tagebücher« In: Demandt/Voermann 2018 (wie Anm. 1), S. 20-33.
 - 4 Zit. nach Bernhard Gißibl: »Kunst als Jagdtrophäe. Kolonialismus und imperiale Männlichkeit in der Kunst Wilhelm Kuhnerts« In: Demandt/Voermann 2018 (wie Anm. 1), S. 170.
 - 5 Deutsches Historisches Museum 2016 (wie Anm. 2), S. 188f.
 - 6 Eric Baratay, Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier: *Zoo. Von der Menagerie zum Tierpark*. Berlin 2000, S. 112.
 - 7 Gißibl 2010 (wie Anm. 3), S. 13.

- 8 Vgl. Miriam Österreich: »Wilde Tiere, präzise Ordnung. Reklamesammelkarten und die Vorstellung von Wildnis« In: Demandt/Voermann 2018 (wie Anm. 1), S. 226-231.
- 9 Wie Anm. 3.
- 10 Sabine Wilke: »Von der Kolonialfotografie zu Google Earth. Die Rolle des Erhabenen in der postkolonialen Ästhetik« In: Herbert Ürlings, Julia-Karin Patrut (Hg.): *Postkolonialismus und Kanon*. Bielefeld 2012, S. 157-179.
- 11 Zum Vergleich ist an Franz Marc (1880-1916) und seine Innovationen zu erinnern.
- 12 Ilka Vörmann macht auf diese, bisher nicht betonte, Rezeption der Werke Kuhnerts aufmerksam: »»Einer der hervorragendsten deutschen Darsteller der tropischen Tierwelt«. Bedeutung und Rezeption Wilhelm Kuhnerts« In: Demandt/Voermann 2018 (wie Anm. 1), S. 56-63.
- 13 Hermann Knauer: *Deutschland am Mississippi. Neue Eindrücke und Erlebnisse*. Berlin 1904, Nachdruck Paderborn 2011.
- 14 Joachim Zeller: *Koloniale Bilderwelten. Kolonialgeschichte auf frühen Reklamesammelbildern*. Augsburg 2010, S. 81.
- 15 Christine Hoh-Slodczyk: *Das Haus des Künstlers im 19. Jahrhundert*. München 1985. – Brigitte Langer: *Das Münchner Künstleratelier des Historismus*. Dachau 1992.

Andreas Hüneke

Überklebt – überlebt, überlebt – überklebt. Bücher in politischen Umbruchszeiten

Die radikalen gesellschaftlichen und ideologischen Umbrüche kurz vor der Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts führten unter anderem dazu, dass eine Anzahl von Publikationen unerwünschten Inhalts aus dem öffentlichen Diskurs ausgeschieden werden sollten. Das Fanal dazu bildete die von Joseph Goebbels propagandistisch inszenierte Bücherverbrennung am 10. Mai 1933. Natürlich gab es von den verbrannten Druckerzeugnissen noch andere Exemplare nicht nur in privaten Regalen sondern auch in Bibliotheken, wo der Zugang nach einem festgelegten System verhindert oder stark eingeschränkt wurde. Hinzu kamen Bücher, die während der NS-Jahre erschienen und zunächst der Zensur entgangen waren, aber früher oder später verboten und angeblich »eingestampft« wurden, wie etwa die Bücher mit Zeichnungen von Ernst Barlach oder Paul Klee, Otto Pankoks *Passion*, Emil Noldes *Jahre der Kämpfe*, Max Sauerlandts nach seinem Tod herausgebrachte Vorlesung *Die Kunst der letzten 30 Jahre*, Alois Schardts Monographie über Franz Marc oder Alfred Hentzens *Deutsche Bildhauer der Gegenwart*.¹ Von diesen Büchern werden bis heute erstaunlich viele Exemplare antiquarisch angeboten.

Nach 1945 sollte eine weitere Ausbreitung des nationalsozialistischen Gedankenguts möglichst verhindert werden, weshalb nun davon infizierte Publikationen verboten und teilweise auch ihre Auflagen vernichtet wurden, während Bibliotheksexemplare in den »Giftschrank« kamen. Das mag in der SBZ und der DDR konsequenter geschehen sein als im Westen. Zu den verbotenen Büchern gehörte natürlich an erster Stelle Adolf Hitlers *Mein Kampf*, das so gut wie in jedem Haushalt vorhanden gewesen war und das man nun möglichst rasch verschwinden ließ. In der DDR war nicht nur der Verkauf verboten, sondern auch der Besitz konnte durchaus gefährlich sein. Mitte der siebziger Jahre wurde ich in Halle von einer mir fremden Frau auf der Straße angesprochen, die irgendwie erfahren hatte, daß ich mich mit der NS-Zeit beschäftige, und mich fragte, was sie mit einem Exemplar des Buches machen könne, das sie im Haus ihrer Eltern gefunden hatte. Ich überwand meine anfängliche Sorge, es könne sich bei der Anfrage um eine von der Staatssicherheit geplante Falle handeln, und kaufte ihr das Buch ab. Denn ich wollte endlich wissen, was man aus dessen Lektüre bereits frühzeitig über Hitlers zukünftige Kunstpolitik hätte erfahren können, wenn man es aufmerksam gelesen hätte. Das allerdings nahmen wohl nur die wenigsten auf sich. In den zwanziger Jahren hielt man es nicht für wichtig genug, und dann begnügte man sich damit, es gegebenenfalls vorweisen zu können. Wenn man allerdings an die häufig geäußerte Meinung denkt, Hitler habe die moderne Kunst so fanatisch verfolgt, weil er in seiner Jugend von der Wiener Akademie abgelehnt wurde, so ist man erstaunt, was für eine geringe Rolle die bildende Kunst in dem Buche spielt. Selbst der angebliche Niedergang der Kultur allgemein, der

dem Bolschewismus und dem Judentum angelastet wird, nimmt einen relativ geringen Raum ein und wird überwiegend anhand der Literatur und des Theaters beschrieben. Eigentlich gibt es nur zwei Stellen, an denen sich die spätere NS-Kunstpolitik konkreter andeutet. So heißt es:

»Vor sechzig Jahren wäre eine Ausstellung von sogenannten dadaistischen ›Erlebnissen‹ als einfach unmöglich erschienen und die Veranstalter würden in das Narrenhaus gekommen sein, während sie heute sogar in Kunstverbänden präsidieren. Diese Seuche konnte damals nicht auftauchen, weil weder die öffentliche Meinung dies geduldet noch der Staat ruhig zugesehen hätte. Denn es ist Sache der Staatsleitung, zu verhindern, daß ein Volk dem geistigen Wahnsinn in die Arme getrieben wird. Bei diesem aber müßte eine derartige Entwicklung doch eines Tages enden. An dem Tage nämlich, an dem diese Art von Kunst wirklich der allgemeinen Auffassung entspräche, wäre eine der schwerwiegendsten Wandlungen der Menschheit eingetreten; die Rückentwicklung des menschlichen Gehirns hätte damit begonnen, das Ende aber vermöchte man sich kaum auszudenken.«²

Ein paar Seiten weiter geht es um die Rechtfertigungsversuche der Moderne als »inneres Erleben«, das Hitler den Künstlern sogar zugesteht: »Denn daran, daß auch dies ein inneres Erleben sein könnte, war ja gar nicht zu zweifeln, wohl aber daran, ob es angängig ist, der gesunden Welt die Halluzinationen von Geisteskranken oder Verbrechern vorzusetzen.«³ Den propagandistischen Wert der Polemik gegen die moderne Kunst scheint Hitler erst später erkannt zu haben.

Als wir Mitte der achtziger Jahre in Potsdam unsere heutige Wohnung bezogen, die vorher unter vier Mietern aufgeteilt gewesen war, entdeckte ich in einem der uns zugefallenen Verschläge im Keller unter dicken Schichten Kohlenstaub zwei sorgfältig in Packpapier verpackte und mit Bindfäden verschnürte Exemplare von *Mein Kampf*. Da war wohl einer der Vormieter der Meinung gewesen, es könne noch einmal von Nutzen sein, das Buch nicht »entsorgt« zu haben.

Zu den Bücherverboten gibt es bereits zahlreiche Untersuchungen, während eine andere Erscheinung im gleichen Zusammenhang noch kaum Aufmerksamkeit gefunden hat. Dabei handelt es sich um Publikationen, deren Inhalt an sich für wertvoll erachtet wurde, die aber unliebsame Textpassagen enthielten. Hier wurde gelegentlich zu der Lösung gegriffen, diese Passagen mit passend zugeschnittenem und in Handarbeit sorgfältig eingeleimtem Papier zu überkleben. Im weiteren Bereich der bildenden Kunst sind mir diesbezüglich drei Fälle bekannt, die ich hier erläutern will.

Das Machtgerangel zwischen Alfred Rosenberg, Goebbels und Bernhard Rust führte 1936 zu einer kunstpolitischen Verschärfung. Goebbels konnte seine anfangs zwar nicht liberale aber doch offenere Linie aufgrund der andauernden Beschwerden und Intrigen Rosenbergs nicht mehr beibehalten. Gleichzeitig hoffte er, durch ein radikales Vorgehen gegen »entartete« Kunst seinem Ziel der Herauslösung der Museen, der Kunstschulen und der Akademie der Künste aus dem Ressort des Erziehungsministers Rust und deren Unterstellung unter das Propagandaministerium näherzukommen. Und so wurden in der Ausstellung *Der Bolschewismus – Große antibolschewistische Schau* im November 1936 in München Werke von Willi Baumeister, Max Beckmann, George Grosz, Oswald Herzog, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Paul Klee und Paul Kleinschmidt aus dem Besitz der Berliner Nationalgalerie und des Städelmuseums in Frankfurt am Main angeprangert – noch als Leihgaben und nicht als beschlagnahmte Werke.⁴ Schon die Vorbereitungen

alarmierten Rust, der sich genötigt sah, selbst als Kunstverfolger in Erscheinung zu treten.

Soeben wurde die zweite Jubiläumsausstellung der Preußischen Akademie der Künste *Berliner Bildhauer von Schlüter bis zur Gegenwart* vorbereitet, nachdem aus Anlass des 150jährigen Bestehens der akademischen Ausstellungen im Frühjahr Gemälde gezeigt worden waren. Auf der Titelseite des Kataloges der Bildhauerausstellung (Abb. 1) ist Oktober/November 1936 als Ausstellungszeitraum angegeben, aber die Eröffnung wurde auf den 5. November verschoben, und wenige Tage vorher ließ Rust die vier Werke von Ernst Barlach, die zwei von Käthe Kollwitz und zwei weitere von Wilhelm Lehmbruck aus der Ausstellung entfernen. Der Bildhauer Fritz Klimsch erinnerte sich:

»Der Minister kam, um sich vor der Eröffnung die Ausstellung anzusehen. Als wir vor den Werken Barlachs, Lehmbrucks und der Käthe Kollwitz standen, stutzte Rust und schwieg. Ich sagte ihm, gerade als wir vor Barlach standen, daß doch gegen diese Werke nichts einzuwenden wäre; sie erinnerten an Reliefs der alten romanischen und gotischen Dome. Darauf Rust: ›Ja, aber der Name!‹«⁵

So wurden im Katalog die gesamten Einträge zu Barlach und Kollwitz und zwei Katalognummern bei Lehmbruck mit Zetteln überklebt (Abb. 2), auf denen irreführend »Zurückgezogen« aufgedruckt ist, denn eigentlich wurden die Exponate zurückgewiesen.⁶ Mit fünf Plastiken blieb Gerhard Marcks in der Ausstellung vertreten. In seiner Kurzbiographie wurde allerdings nicht erwähnt, dass er 1933 von seinem Lehramt in Halle entlassen worden war.⁷ In einem Zeitungsbericht heißt es über Rusts Eröffnungsrede zu der Ausstellung:

»Der Minister habe sich entschlossen, gewisse im Bereiche der Kunst bisher geduldete Werke dem Blick des Volkes zu entziehen. Diese Maßnahme werde man binnen kurzem über ganz Deutschland ausdehnen, so daß eine Säuberung der Museumsbestände erfolgt, die ein für allemal die Fragen nach wahrhaft deutscher Kunst verstummen lassen dürfte.«⁸

Doch Rust äußerte auch Skrupel: »Hier soll kein Künstler verfemt werden, und ich bin mir durchaus dessen bewußt, daß bei allen derartigen Maßnahmen immer auch starke Bedenken bestehen, auch bei mir, die immer vorhanden sind. Es ist eben immer ein zweischneidiges Schwert.«⁹ Außer der Schließung des Obergeschosses im Kronprinzenpalais, wo die Bestände der deutschen modernen Kunst der Nationalgalerie gezeigt wurden, hatte Rusts Ankündigung keine Folgen, so dass ihm der skrupellose Goebbels ein Dreivierteljahr später bei der »Säuberung« der Museen zuvorkommen konnte.

Von dem Katalog der Bildhauer-Ausstellung erschien eine zweite Auflage, in der nun als Zeitraum November/Dezember 1936 angegeben ist und im Verzeichnis »Nr. 5-7 zurückgezogen« (das waren die Barlach-Skulpturen) gedruckt wurde, das gleiche bei Nr. 86-87 (die Kollwitz-Plastiken) und erstaunlicherweise auch bei Nr. 96-99 (alle Lehmbruck-Plastiken).¹⁰ Rust hatte nur zwei Lehmbruck-Plastiken entfernen lassen. Möglicherweise haben aber daraufhin die Erben des Künstlers ihre Leihgaben tatsächlich zurückgezogen.¹¹ Auch wenn eine Reihe von Werken der in der ersten Auflage überklebten Künstler durch die Aktion »Entartete Kunst« verlorengegangen sind, so hat ihre Kunst doch überlebt und ist heute in zahlreichen Museen dem »Blick des Volkes« zugänglich.



Abb. 1: Katalogtitel, 1936

Bevor wir uns dem nächsten Überklebungsfall zuwenden, soll noch ein Blick in den Anzeigenteil des Ausstellungskataloges geworfen werden. Dort wirbt unter anderem die Galerie Ferdinand Möller für ihre »Ständige Ausstellung von Werken zeitgenössischer Meister und junger aufstrebender Talente«. Möller zeigte 1936/37 noch Ausstellungen von Emil Nolde und Oskar Schlemmer, beschränkte sich dann offiziell auf ältere Kunst, war aber ab 1938 auch an der »Verwertung« der in den Museen beschlagnahmten Werke der »Entarteten Kunst« beteiligt.¹² Eine andere Anzeige preist Gardinen, Dekorations- und Möbelstoffe, Deutsche und Orient-Teppiche, Läufer und Linoleum »Für das stilvoll und behaglich eingerichtete Heim« an. Die Anzeige wurde von der Berliner Firma Quantmeyer & Eicke aufgegeben, deren Mitarbeiter Josef Angerer zu einem der wichtigsten Kunsthändler für Hermann Göring wurde, für den er auch die zu seinen Gun-

ten aus dem Beschlagnahmegut der »Entarteten Kunst« herausgezogenen dreizehn Meisterwerke veräußern sollte. Die von Angerer nicht verkauften sechs Gemälde, darunter Franz Marcs *Turm der blauen Pferde*, sind bis heute verschollen.¹³ Und schließlich ist auf dem hinteren Innendeckel des Kataloges eine Annonce des Rembrandt-Verlags abgedruckt,¹⁴ mit der auf Bücher über Barlach, Georg Kolbe und Lehmbruck hingewiesen wurde, letzteres von dem 1933 in Duisburg entlassenen Museumsdirektor August Hoff, so wie auch ein Buch über mittelalterliche Kunst von dem in Lübeck entlassenen Carl Georg Heise aufgeführt ist.

Ein weiterer Autor ist Rolf Hetsch, der ab Herbst 1937 im Propagandaministerium zur Inventarisierung und dann zur Organisation der »Verwertung der Produkte entarteter Kunst« eingesetzt wurde, und der gleichzeitig Mitglied des Ernst Barlach-Nachlassgremiums war und in dessen Auftrag an einem Werkverzeichnis des Bildhauers arbeitete.¹⁵ Auch für Hentzens Buch über die deutschen Bildhauer der Gegenwart, in dem nicht nur Barlach, Kollwitz und Lehmbruck sondern auch ein weiteres Dutzend der 1937 von der Beschlagnahme betroffenen Bildhauer gewürdigt werden,¹⁶ wurde mit der Anzeige geworben, nicht aber für Scharchts Marc-Buch, das bereits im Mai 1936 in Zusammenhang mit der Berliner Marc-Gedächtnisausstellung verboten und eingezogen worden war.¹⁷ Der Katalog ist also insgesamt ein Zeugnis der diffusen kunstpolitischen Lage, wie sie noch 1936 bestand.

Zum 500jährigen Jubiläum der Erfindung des Buchdrucks 1940 brachte der Leipziger Geschichtspräsident Hermann Barge (1870-1941) im Reclam-Verlag eine *Geschichte*

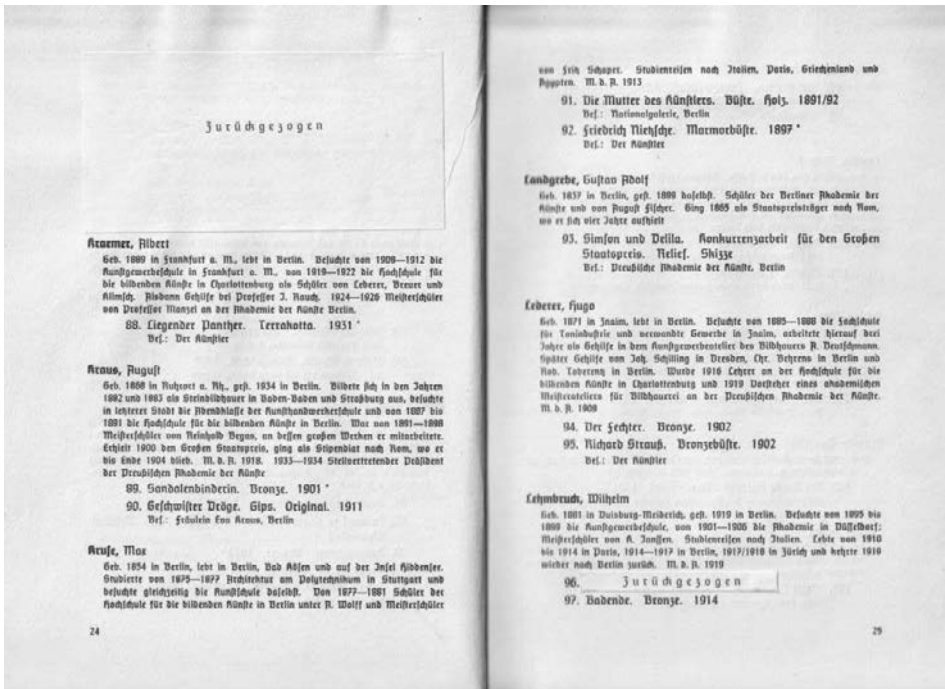


Abb. 2: Doppelseite des Akademiekataloges mit Überklebungen

der Buchdruckerkunst (Abb. 3) heraus. Die aufwendige Ausgabe mit hochwertigen Reproduktionen sollte natürlich 1945 nicht vom Markt ausgeschlossen werden, nur wegen der wenigen inzwischen überlebten Stellen. Und so wurden diese überklebt (Abb. 4). Das noch aus der arabischen Seitenzählung herausfallende Vorwort des Verfassers mit zwei im Kontrast zu Barges sonst eher nüchternem Stil panegyrischen Sätzen wurde sorgfältig herausgetrennt und der Ansatz zu dem nun fehlenden Blatt vorsichtig verleimt, so dass man es keinesfalls bemerkt, wenn man nicht danach sucht. Das Vorwort schließt folgendermaßen:

»Wir durchleben gegenwärtig eine Zeit, in der das deutsche Volk dank der überraschend geschichtlichen Größe seines Führers und der übermenschlichen Kampfleistungen seiner dem Heeresverband eingegliederten Söhne im Aufstieg zu ungeahnter Macht und Geltung begriffen ist. Möchte unser Werk zu seinem bescheidenen Teile daran erinnern, daß diesen gewaltigen kriegerischen Taten gleichgroße kulturelle Errungenschaften der Deutschen, wie eine solche die Erfindung der Buchdruckerkunst darstellt, ebenbürtig an die Seite treten!«¹⁸

Da nur dieses eine Blatt mit dem Vorwort römisch mit VII und VIII paginiert ist und bei den anderen Blättern des Vorspanns Seitenzahlen ganz fehlen, möchte man fast vermuten, es könne schon bei der Produktion einkalkuliert worden sein, dass es eines Tages notwendig würde, das Vorwort zu entfernen, und daß dann kein Hinweis darauf übrigbleiben sollte. Allerdings enthält das Buch im Kapitel über die Verlagsanstalten noch

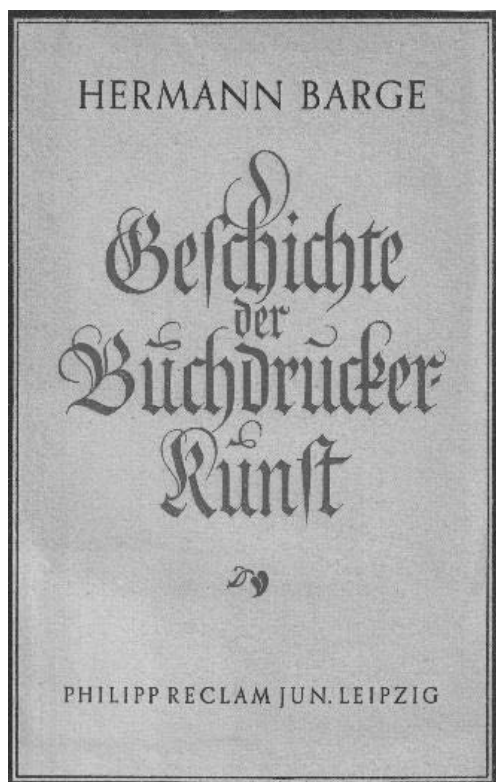


Abb. 3: Schutzumschlag des Buches von Hermann Barge, 1940

einen weiteren der NS-Regierung, wenn auch nicht derart überschwenglich, huldigenden Satz: »Die entscheidende Umwälzung, die das deutsche Volk durch den Sieg des Nationalsozialismus erlebte, führte dazu, daß das Bibliographische Institut mit der achten, seit 1936 erscheinenden und auf zehn Bände mit einem Register- und einem Atlasband berechneten Auflage von Meyers Lexikon, sich in den Dienst des neuen Reiches stellte.«¹⁹ Dieser Satz wurde ebenso überklebt wie die Angaben im gleichen Kapitel zu den ab 1945 nicht mehr existierenden Verlagen, die sich besonders mit NS-Schriften hervorgetan hatten.

Zu J. F. Lehmanns Verlag in München heißt es, er dürfe »nicht vergessen werden, sowohl nach seinen Leistungen auf medizinischem Gebiet als auch wegen seines Eintretens für die völkische Erneuerung und seiner Pionierarbeit für die Rassenkunde«.²⁰ 1890 als medizinischer Fachverlag gegründet, erschienen hier ab Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts zunehmend wehrkundliche Publikationen und in den 20er und 30er Jahren zahlreiche Schriften zur Rassen-

kunde und »Rassenhygiene« von Hans F. K. Günther und anderen Autoren. Der Verlag wurde 1945 von den Alliierten verboten, erhielt aber 1950 eine neue Lizenz und wurde erst 1979 aufgelöst. In dieser späten Periode wurden neben medizinischen Werken auch rechtspopulistische Schriften der Antimoderne verlegt, wie Kurt Ziesels *Das verlorene Gewissen. Hinter den Kulissen der Presse, der Literatur und ihrer Machtträger von heute* (1958) oder die Bücher Richard W. Eichlers *Könner, Künstler, Scharlatane* (1960), *Der gesteuerte Kunstverfall* (1962), *Die tätowierte Muse* (1965) und *Viel Gunst für schlechte Kunst* (1968). Eichler (1921-2014) gehörte, wie Ziesel, 1960 zu den Gründungsmitgliedern der Gesellschaft für freie Publizistik, die als größte rechtsextreme Kulturvereinigung Deutschlands gilt.²¹ Von 1950 bis 1973 arbeitete er als Lektor in Lehmanns Verlag. Der zweite Satz im Wikipedia-Artikel über Eichler, »Schon vor 1945 editierte er die Werke von F. K. Günther, Paul Schultze-Naumburg und Wolfgang Willrich«,²² dürfte allerdings auf einer missverstandenen Aussage beruhen, bei der es eigentlich um Lehmanns Verlag ging. Denn Eichler hat erst 1939 sein Abitur gemacht und war von 1940 bis 1945 im Kriegsdienst, während in Lehmanns Verlag tatsächlich außer den Schriften Hans F. K. Günthers auch Schultze-Naumburgs *Kunst und Rasse* (1928) und Willrichs *Säuberung des Kunsttempels. Eine kunstpolitische Kampfschrift zur*

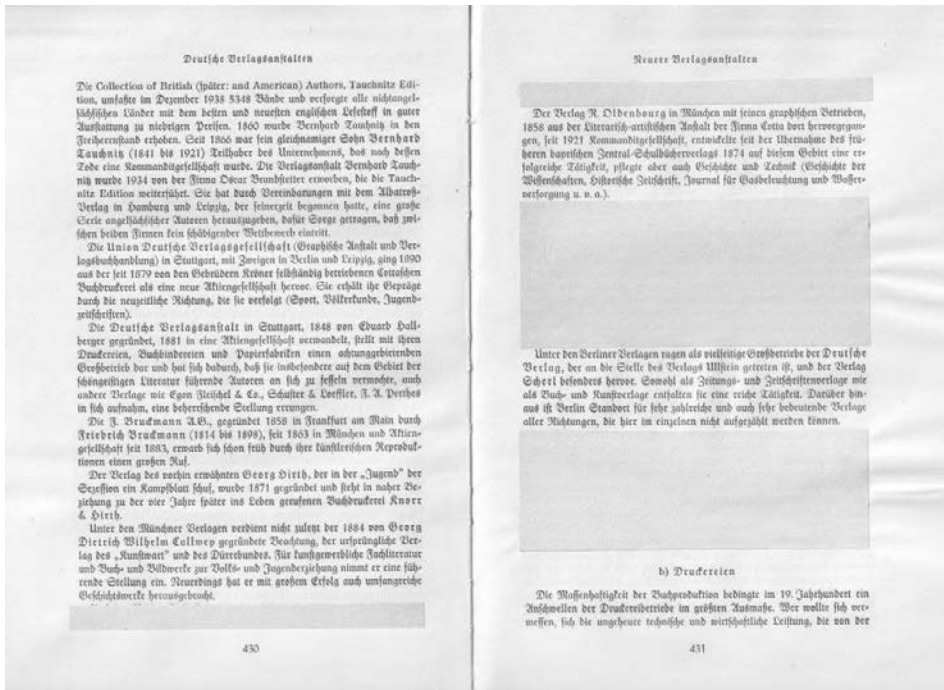


Abb. 4: Doppelseite des Buches von Hermann Barge mit Überklebungen

Gesundung deutscher Kunst im Geiste nordischer Art (1937) herausgebracht wurden. Außerdem erschienen in dem Verlag zur kulturellen Thematik auch Bücher wie *Der Kulturumsturz. Die Drohung des Untermenschen* des Amerikaners Lothrop Stoddard (1925) oder Richard Eichenauers *Musik und Rasse* (1932).

Die 1917 gegründete Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, von der Barge schreibt, sie sei »schon frühzeitig führend in der nationalen Bewegung«²³ verbindet sich vor allem mit dem Namen Wilhelm Stapels (1882-1954) und der ab 1919 von ihm herausgegebenen Zeitschrift *Deutsches Volkstum*. Stapel war völkisch eingestellt, Nationalist und bekennender Antisemit, das alles aber auf einer gewissen intellektuellen Basis, die offene Auseinandersetzungen mit anderen Meinungen zuließ. So bot er 1933 bei dem Streit um die deutsche Kunst zum Beispiel auch Max Sauerlandt, Paul Ferdinand Schmidt und Lothar Schreyer eine Plattform in seiner Zeitschrift.²⁴ Dem hatte er allerdings seine eigene Position vorangestellt.²⁵ In der Hanseatischen Verlagsanstalt erschienen schon früh die Werke von Ernst Jünger und Arthur Moeller van den Bruck. Während der NS-Zeit kamen hier neben Schriften Stapels wie *Die Kirche Christi und der Staat Hitlers* (1933) und *Die literarische Vorherrschaft der Juden in Deutschland 1918 bis 1933* (1937) unter anderem auch Georg Usadels *Zucht und Ordnung. Grundlagen einer nationalsozialistischen Ethik* (1935), Wilhelm Westeckers *Kultur im Dienst der Nation* (1936), Gustav Steinbörsers *Soldatentum und Kultur. Die Wiederherstellung des*

Soldaten (1936), Walter Abendroths *Deutsche Musik der Zeitenwende* (1937) und Walter Franks *Zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus* (1943) heraus.

Der dritte vollständig überklebte Verlag ist der Zentralverlag der NSDAP Franz Eher Nachf. in München, 1919 gegründet und seit Ende 1920 Eigentum der Partei. Barge bezeichnet ihn als »Sammelstätte des maßgebenden Teils des gesamten nationalsozialistischen Schrifttums« und »Spitze des Verlagswesens ganz Großdeutschlands.«²⁶ Die Auflagenhöhe des erfolgreichsten bei Eher herausgekommenen Buches – von Hitlers *Mein Kampf* hatte 1940 bereits die sechs Millionen überschritten. Alfred Rosenbergs *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*, das 1930 im ebenfalls von der NSDAP erworbenen Hoheneichen-Verlag in München erschien, der in den Eher-Verlag integriert wurde, erreichte bis 1942 insgesamt 194 Auflagen. Auch die wichtigsten NS-Zeitungen und -Zeitschriften: der *Völkische Beobachter*, der *Illustrierte Beobachter*, *Das Schwarze Korps*, *Der Angriff* und die von Hitler herausgegebenen *Nationalsozialistischen Monatshefte* kamen im Eher-Verlag heraus. Das Heft 43 der Monatshefte vom Oktober 1933 kann als nationalsozialistische Bilanz der Auseinandersetzungen um die deutsche Kunst vom Sommer des Jahres gesehen werden.²⁷ Es enthält unter anderem Hitlers Rede zur Kulturtagung der NSDAP vom September, die – wie auch spätere Reden Hitlers – außerdem als selbständige Publikation verlegt wurde. In derselben Aufmachung wurde 1934 auch Rosenbergs ebenfalls in den Auseinandersetzungen des Sommers 1933 wurzelnde Schrift *Revolution in der bildenden Kunst?* veröffentlicht.

Nur eine Überklebung war in einem anderen Kapitel von Barges Buch nötig. In dem Abschnitt über »Leipzig als Vorort des deutschen Buchhandels und Buchgewerbes« wurde der Satz getilgt: »Die Bedeutung Leipzigs als führende Stadt im Buchhandel kam auch darin zum Ausdruck, daß nach dem nationalsozialistischen Umbruch und der Eingliederung des Buchhandels in die Reichskulturkammer die Verwaltungsstelle der Gruppe Buchhandel in der Reichsschrifttumskammer hierher verlegt worden ist.«²⁸ Aber selbstverständlich sind bei einer so qualitätvollen Publikation auch im Namen- und Sachregister alle nun entfallenen Namen sorgfältig überklebt worden: Eher Nachf., Franz; Frank, Walter; Hitler, Adolf; Jünger, Ernst; Lehmann, J. F., und Moeller van den Bruck.²⁹

Bereits 1932 war als Heft 36 der von Gottfried Feder herausgegebenen Nationalsozialistischen Bibliothek im Eher-Verlag Schultze-Naumburgs *Kampf um die Kunst* erschienen. Er beschließt seinen Text mit den Sätzen: »Es besteht kein Zusammenhang zwischen dem echten Ausdruck des deutschen Volkes und jener Fratzen- und Larvenkunst, die man ihm aufgeschwätzt hat, und die nun wie ein böser quälender Traum über Deutschland liegt. Aber dieser böse quälende Traum muß ausgeträumt sein, es muß licht um uns werden und überall soll der Weckruf ertönen: Deutschland erwache!«³⁰ Dreizehn Jahre später war der ungleich böser und quälendere Traum der Herrschaft des Nationalsozialismus ausgeträumt. Der Eher-Verlag als nationalsozialistische Organisation wurde aufgrund des alliierten Kontrollratsgesetzes Nr. 2 vom 29.10.1945 verboten.

Johannes Jahns *Wörterbuch der Kunst* (Abb. 5) erschien erstmals 1940 im Kröner Verlag Stuttgart und zuletzt 2008 in dreizehnter Auflage im selben Verlag. Nach Jahns Tod 1976 hat von der 9. Auflage an Wolfgang Haubenreißer das Lexikon bearbeitet und herausgegeben. Nach dessen Tod 2004 besorgte Stefanie Lieb die 13. Auflage. Die meisten Stichworte der ersten Auflage sind noch erhalten. Einiges ist natürlich hinzugekommen, aber noch immer stammt tatsächlich die überwiegende Textmenge von

Johannes Jahn. Das Lexikon ist nach wie vor architekturlastig, hat allerdings nun eine Eigenschaft verloren, die für die frühen Auflagen konstituierend war, nämlich, ein ernsthaftes, gehaltvolles Kunstlexikon im Taschenformat zu sein.

Der 1892 geborene Johannes Jahn promovierte 1917 über den »Stil der Westfenster der Kathedrale zu Chartres«, wurde 1919 Volontär an der Gemäldegalerie Dresden und war ab 1920 am Kunsthistorischen Institut der Leipziger Universität tätig, zunächst als Assistent, nach seiner Habilitation mit »Beiträgen zur Kenntnis der ältesten Einblattdrucke« 1927 als Privatdozent. 1934 wurde er außerplanmäßiger außerordentlicher Professor, dann Professor mit Lehrauftrag, und erhielt schließlich 1956 einen Lehrstuhl. Von 1945 bis zu seiner Emeritierung 1962 war er außerdem Direktor des Museums der bildenden Künste in Leipzig, und von 1952 bis 1959 führte er auch Lehrveranstaltungen an der Hallenser Universität durch.³¹ Es ist eine anscheinend bruchlose Universitätskarriere von der

Weimarer Republik bis in die DDR. Aber in dem Internetverzeichnis der Leipziger Professoren ist der Satz zu lesen: »aufgrund der Verweigerung gegenüber nationalsozialistischen Ansichten blieb ihm ein weiterer Aufstieg an der Universität Leipzig bzw. ein Wechsel an eine andere Hochschule zunächst verwehrt.«³²

Jahn genoss in der DDR Verehrung als ein verhältnismäßig ideologiefreier Kunsthistoriker der alten Schule. Zu seinem 65. Geburtstag 1957 erschien im Seemann Verlag eine opulente Festschrift,³³ unter anderem mit Beiträgen von Hanns-Conon von der Gabelentz (1892-1977), Heinz Ladendorf (1909-1992), Edgar Lehmann (1909-1997), Heinrich Magirius (*1934), Henner Menz (1916-1975), Hans-Joachim Mrusek (1920-1994) und Werner Schmidt (1930-2010),³⁴ sowie einem Schriftenverzeichnis mit 199 Positionen.³⁵ Aber wie weit konnte man sich in einer solchen Position tatsächlich ideologiefrei halten? Auch Jahn hat gelegentlich Studienbewerber, die nicht den Vorzug hatten, Arbeiterkinder zu sein, zunächst zur Bewährung in die Produktion geschickt.

Zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus wurde in Leipzig fast ausschließlich ältere Kunstgeschichte gelehrt, und Jahn hat diesen Rahmen nie verlassen. Lediglich Theodor Hetzer (1890-1946) und Karl-Friedrich Suter (1884-1952) haben sich je einmal an die Darstellung von Entwicklungen bis in die Gegenwart gewagt. Sonst war es nur Hermann Beenken (1896-1952), der diese Herausforderung immer einmal wieder annahm.³⁶



Abb. 5: Schutzumschlag des Wörterbuchs der Kunst, 1940

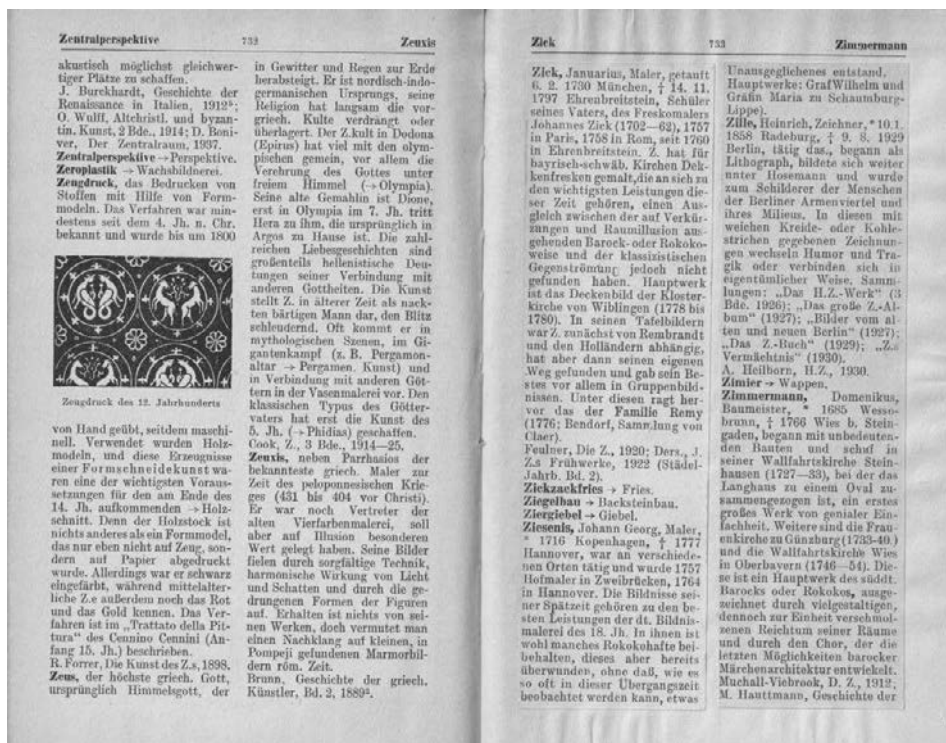


Abb. 6: Doppelseite des Wörterbuchs der Kunst mit Überklebungen

Jahns Schriftenverzeichnis enthält bis 1945 außer einer Reihe von Rezensionen nur relativ wenige Publikationen, die sich ebenfalls ausschließlich mit älterer Kunst befassen. Mit Hans Thoma (1839-1924) und Wilhelm Schulze-Rose (1872-1950) wagte er sich am nächsten an die Gegenwart heran.³⁷ Auch in dem Artikel »Die Entdeckung der deutschen Kunst« 1934 in der Zeitschrift *Kunst der Nation*, die aus der sogenannten kunstpolitischen Opposition des Jahres 1933 hervorgegangen war, von der der »deutsche« Expressionismus als vorbildlich für die kommende nationalsozialistische Kunst proklamiert wurde, und dem 1941 in der Zeitschrift *Das Reich* erschienenen Beitrag »Was wissen wir von deutscher Kunst?« bewegt sich Jahn ganz auf historischem Feld, ohne in den aktuellen Auseinandersetzungen Stellung zu beziehen.³⁸ Darum kam er im *Wörterbuch der Kunst* nicht ganz herum, und so wies die dritte Auflage von 1950 einige charakteristische Veränderungen auf.

Doch waren von der 1943 erschienenen zweiten Auflage offenbar 1945 noch so große Teile unverkauft geblieben, dass man sich bei der damaligen Material- und Produktionslage nicht leisten konnte, sie ins Altpapier zu geben, und eine Lösung finden musste, inzwischen anstößig gewordene Textteile zu entfernen. Es ist bemerkenswert, wie Jahn die Aufgabe löste, durch Entfernung, Kürzung, Erweiterung und Hinzufügung einzelner Stichworte mit möglichst wenigen Überklebungen die entstandenen Lücken bei richtiger alphabetischer Ordnung wieder zeilengenau zu schließen (Abb. 6).

Von besonderem Interesse sind zunächst einige Sachbegriffe. »Judenhut« und »Judensau«³⁹ sind Begriffe für historische Sachverhalte, die sachlich definiert werden: »Judenhut, der seit dem 12. Jh. den Juden als Abzeichen vorgeschriebene spitze Hut von gelber Farbe, zuweilen mit Knauf oder nach hinten gebogener Spitze.« »Judensau, antisemitische Darstellung des Mittelalters an Kapitellen, Konsolen, Chorgestühlen, auch als Einblattdruck, einen oder mehrere Juden zeigend, die einer Sau an den Zitzen saugen oder sich auf andere Weise mit ihr beschäftigen.« Sachlich ist gegen diese Erläuterung nichts einzuwenden, aber 1945 erschienen solche Stichworte, zumal in einem 1940 erstmals erschienenen Buch, angesichts des nun öffentlich gewordenen Völkermords an den Juden, doch unangebracht. In den ersten beiden Auflagen waren sie sicher ein Tribut an den herrschenden Antisemitismus, bei dem sich Jahn dennoch auf die neutrale Ebene zurückziehen konnte. Die Frage ist, ob dieser Tribut gezahlt werden musste, um die Veröffentlichung des Lexikons abzusichern, oder ob die Aufnahme der Stichworte im vorausgehenden Gehorsam geschah, was naheliegender ist, da es sich nicht um ganz zentrale, auch für ein Lexikon dieses Umfangs unverzichtbare Begriffe handelt.

Sie stehen allerdings an einer ungünstigen Stelle im Alphabet, an der keine große Auswahl an Eratzbegriffen zur Verfügung steht. So gelangte der dänische Maler des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts Jens Juel in das Lexikon, wo er auch in der aktuellen Ausgabe noch zu finden ist,⁴⁰ obwohl er – gewiss ein qualitätvoller Künstler – ebenfalls nicht von solcher Bedeutung ist, dass man das Lexikon bei seinem Fehlen kritisieren müsste.

Der Artikel zum Expressionismus ist heute vollständig neu konzipiert,⁴¹ weil Jahns Text noch ein zeitgebunden unklares Verständnis wiedergibt. So subsumiert er absolute bzw. abstrakte Malerei, Konstruktivismus, Kubismus, Futurismus und in der dritten Auflage auch Surrealismus darunter. An der kritischen Stelle schreibt er, dass der Expressionismus bei seinem Siegeszug nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg eine Wendung genommen habe, die in seinem Wesen ursprünglich nicht angelegt gewesen sei. In der überklebten Passage heißt es dann, der Expressionismus »begab sich in den Dienst der bes. vom bolschewistischen Rußland ausgehenden kulturzerstörenden Tendenzen. Daher haben sich damals auch vorwiegend jüdische Kunsthändler und Kunstkritiker für ihn eingesetzt, und die Literatur über ihn stammt zu einem erheblichen Teil von jüdischen Kunstschriftstellern.« Auch hier wurde die latent antisemitische Passage ersetzt, und zwar durch einen ins Positive gewandten Text. Aus den kulturzerstörenden wurden kulturkritische Tendenzen ohne Erwähnung des Bolschewismus, und dann folgt: »Durch seine antinaturalistische Haltung hat der Expressionismus wesentlich zum Verständnis nichtnaturalistischer Kunst beigetragen, z. B. der primitiven Kunst und gewisser Erscheinungen der Kunst des Mittelalters und des Manierismus.«⁴² Diese ganze Passage und die folgende: »In Deutschland begann der E. seine beherrschende Stellung schon seit etwa 1925 einzubüßen und ist seit 1933 als Entartungserscheinung der dt. Kultur völlig unterdrückt worden. Auch in anderen Ländern hat er heute seine Rolle weitgehend ausgespielt« entfiel in der dritten Auflage vollständig zugunsten des knappen Satzes, er »wurde im nazistischen Deutschland als »entartete Kunst« gebrandmarkt und unterdrückt und lebte nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg wieder auf.«⁴³ Bei den Wandlungen dieses Artikels sind deutliche ideologische Implikationen festzustellen, obwohl sich Jahn auch hier einer Polemik bewusst enthält. Der natürlich dem Lexikon-Genre gemäße ausgesprochen

sachliche Tonfall kann gleichwohl in dieser Zeit als Zeichen einer Distanz zu den gängigen Diffamierungsmustern gewertet werden.

Das *Wörterbuch der Kunst* liefert einen der wenigen zeitgenössischen Definitionsversuche für »Entartete Kunst«:

»Unter dieser Bezeichnung wird im Neuen Deutschland der größte Teil der expressionistischen Kunst zusammengefaßt. Die Merkmale der E.K. sind: keinerlei Verbundenheit mit der künstlerischen Überlieferung des dt. Volkes, mit seiner Weltanschauung und seinen Lebensinteressen; Drang zur Darstellung des rassistisch Minderwertigen, Ungesunden, Häßlichen, der sozialen Zersetzungserscheinungen und sonstiger Schattenseiten des menschlichen Lebens; Verzerrung des Naturvorbildes in Form und Farbe. Der Anteil der E.K. am dt. Gesamtschaffen ist zwar verhältnismäßig gering gewesen; doch ist sie bes. in dem Jahrzehnt nach dem Weltkriege von bestimmten, vorwiegend jüdischen Kreisen in den Vordergrund gestellt worden und hat auch vielfach Eingang in die dt. Museen gefunden. 1933 wurde sie als E.K. gebrandmarkt und aus den öffentlichen Sammlungen entfernt.«⁴⁴

Dass hier ausdrücklich der Expressionismus als »Entartete Kunst« bezeichnet wird, hängt wahrscheinlich in erster Linie mit Jahns Expressionismus-Verständnis zusammen, mag aber auch daran liegen, dass er sich auf das bezog, was in der gleichnamigen Münchner Ausstellung von 1937 augenscheinlich wurde: dass nämlich der Expressionismus besonders stark von den Diffamierungen und der Beschlagnahme in den Museen betroffen war, obwohl er bis dahin, und besonders 1933, von allen modernen Kunstrichtungen auch die meisten Verteidiger gefunden hatte.⁴⁵ Diesem Umstand mag wiederum Adolf Hitler Tribut gezollt haben, wenn er in allen seinen jährlichen Kulturreden gegen Kubismus, Futurismus, Dadaismus, gegen Stümper und Betrüger wettete, aber nicht ein einziges Mal den Expressionismus explizit erwähnt hat.⁴⁶ Die Diskussion um den Expressionismus ist selbst nach 1937 nicht völlig verstummt. So wurde 1940, im gleichen Jahr, in dem das *Wörterbuch der Kunst* erschien, dem Regisseur Hans H. Zerlett aus seinem Drehbuch für den Film *Venus vor Gericht* das Wort »Expressionismus« gestrichen. Zerlett verwendete in diesem Film als Ausstattung für eine jüdische Galerie des Jahres 1930 originale Kunstwerke aus dem 1937 beschlagnahmten Museumsbesitz. Auf die Streichung reagierte er mit den Sätzen: »Das Wort »Expressionismus« kann nur versehentlich stehen geblieben sein. Es ist leicht zu entfernen. (Dass Expressionismus noch keine entartete Kunst ist, ist mir seit längerer Zeit bekannt).«⁴⁷

Doch noch einmal zurück in das Jahr 1937. Auf einer Museumsleitertagung am 2. August wurden den Direktoren Richtlinien zur Erfassung der »Klassiker des Verfalls« und der »Epigonen des Verfalls« erteilt. In einem Mannheimer Protokoll heißt es: »Als Verfallskunst sind grundsätzlich alle Werke zu bezeichnen, die 1) dem deutschen Empfinden widersprechen (wie z. B. die Kriegsbilder von Dix), 2) auf eine Zerstörung der Form hinauslaufen, oder 3) kein handwerklich solides Können aufweisen.«⁴⁸ Hermann Schiebel, der Direktor der Kunstschule Burg Giebichenstein und zu dieser Zeit gleichzeitig des Moritzburgmuseums in Halle hat eine simple Variante dieser Definition überliefert: »Was ist bolschewistisch: Was das deutsche Gefühl beleidigt. Wer mit großem Pinsel umgeht, weil er mit kleinem nicht umgehen kann.«⁴⁹ Im Prinzip aber sind es die gleichen Kriterien, die auch Jahn in seinem Lexikonartikel genannt hat.

An dieser Stelle ist die ganze Buchseite überklebt, weil der Ersatzartikel über James Ensor einen geringeren Umfang hat, was durch kleine Ergänzungen bei mehreren

anderen Stichworten ausgeglichen werden musste. Das Stichwort »Ensor« blieb dem Lexikon zu Recht erhalten, aber der Text wurde vollständig neu gestaltet.⁵⁰ Das Stichwort »Entartete Kunst« ist in der aktuellen Ausgabe wiederaufgenommen worden,⁵¹ allerdings nur mit einem Verweis auf das Stichwort »Deutsche Kunst«, und dort findet sich lediglich der Satz: »Die Diktatur des Nationalsozialismus vergewaltigt ab den 1930ern das Bild einer D.K., indem nicht genehme Künstler als ›entartet‹ verunglimpft werden und stattdessen eine mittelmäßige ›Heimatkunst‹ als typisch ›dt.‹ deklariert wird.«⁵² Das muss selbstverständlich als völlig unzureichend eingeschätzt werden.

Ob man Arno Brekers Werke als mittelmäßige Heimatkunst bezeichnen kann, wage ich zu bezweifeln. In der 13. Auflage des Lexikons taucht Breker zwar auf,⁵³ aber nur mit einem Verweis auf das Stichwort »Nationalsozialistische Kunst«, das sich wiederum eigentlich nur auf die Malerei konzentriert.⁵⁴ Auf Breker kann man allenfalls den Halbsatz beziehen, dass die nationalsozialistische Kunst »die körperlichen Schönheitsideale der hellenist. Kunst« aufgegriffen habe, »um sie im Sinne der Rassen- und Kriegsideologie zum Heroisch-Harten zu pervertieren«. Von der dritten Auflage an fehlt Breker in allen noch von Jahn selbst betreuten Ausgaben. Der in der überklebten Fassung auf die Angaben zur Person folgende Satz »B. hat Denkmäler, Reliefs, Bildnisbüsten führender Männer der Gegenwart und bes. männliche Aktfiguren von kraftvoller Haltung geschaffen«, war in der zweiten Auflage durch die Aussage fortgesetzt worden, dass seine Werke »die völkischen Ideen des neuen Deutschland im Zusammenhang mit den Bauten des Staates verkörpern«. Ausdrücklich hingewiesen wurde auf das Reichssportfeld, das Propagandaministerium und die Neue Reichskanzlei.⁵⁵ In der ersten Auflage wurden noch die Porträts von Hitler, Goebbels, Rosenberg und Rust erwähnt.⁵⁶ Der durch die Kürzung entstandene Platz wurde auf der Überklebung durch einen witzigen Schlußsatz zum Braunschweiger Löwen (Abb. 7), dem vorausgehenden Stichwort, ausgeglichen: »Obwohl dieser Löwe von dem Körperbau eines solchen kaum etwas an sich hat, trägt er, trotzig zum Angriff aufgerichtet, im ganzen doch einen wirklich löwenhaften Charakter zur Schau.«⁵⁷ In der dritten Auflage ist dieser Satz natürlich wieder weggefallen.⁵⁸

Es sind nicht viele nationalsozialistische Künstler, die Jahn in das Lexikon aufgenommen hat. Elk Eber taucht lediglich in der zweiten Auflage auf,⁵⁹ was die Vermutung nahelegt, es habe nach der ersten Auflage Beschwerden wegen seines Fehlens gegeben. Wichtig ist der Satz, dass er »seit 1933 mit wuchtigen Figurenbildern aus den Kampfjahren der Bewegung und dem eigenen Kriegererlebnis« hervortrat. Mit der Überklebung wurde sein Name wieder getilgt, und der Platz wurde mit leichten Erweiterungen der umliegenden Artikel, besonders desjenigen über die Ebenisten gefüllt.



Abb. 7: Der Braunschweiger Löwe, 1166, Bronze

Zu Albert Speer heißt es in der zweiten Auflage, er »führt im Geiste der von Troost eingeleiteten Richtung der Baukunst im neuen Reich Monumentalbauten des Staates und der Partei aus, ist künstlerischer Gestalter der Reichsparteitage, Leiter des Amtes ›Schönheit der Arbeit‹ in der NS-Gemeinschaft ›Kraft durch Freude‹ und seit 1937 Generalbauinspektor für die Reichshauptstadt.«⁶⁰ Auch seine Aufnahme könnte auf eine Intervention zurückgehen, da er in der ersten Auflage noch fehlt, obwohl er als Hitlers Lieblingsarchitekt und durch seine Ämterfülle außerordentlich großen Einfluß hatte.

In der überklebten Fassung wurde er durch die Brüder Speckter, Hamburger Romantiker, ersetzt, die mit der dritten Auflage wieder endgültig aus dem Lexikon verschwanden. Speer wurde von Jahn nicht wieder aufgenommen, ist aber heute fast mit einer ganzen Spalte erneut vertreten.⁶¹

Josef Thorak, der »Meister kraft- und bewegungsgeschweller monumentaler Bildwerke, die oft für Bauten des Dritten Reiches geschaffen sind«, kommt in den ersten beiden Auflagen vor.⁶² Von ihm werden außerdem die Porträts von Hitler, Hindenburg und Mussolini erwähnt.

An seine Stelle tritt in der überklebten Fassung Johan Thorn-Prikker, »bes. bekannt durch seine religiösen Glasgemälde von expressionistisch-dekorativer Haltung«. Auch er hat das Schicksal erlitten, mit der dritten Auflage wieder endgültig aus dem Lexikon zu verschwinden.

Adolf Ziegler ist der dritte Starkünstler jener Zeit, dem bereits in der ersten Auflage Platz eingeräumt wurde.⁶³ Er hatte, seit 1936 Präsident der Reichskammer der bildenden Künste, im Auftrag von Goebbels 1937 die Beschlagnahmeaktionen in den Museen durchgeführt und die Ausstellung »Entartete Kunst« eröffnet. Jahn schrieb über ihn: »Sein Eigentlichstes gibt er im Gobelin und dem mit allegorischer oder mythologischer Bedeutung ausgestatteten weiblichen Akt, der in hell leuchtenden Farben eine eigentümliche Verbindung schärfster Gegenständlichkeit und klarster Plastizität mit idealer Schönheit zeigt.« Mit der überklebten Fassung verschwand Ziegler wieder aus dem Lexikon. Der Ersatzartikel über Heinrich Zille war erst nach Johann Georg Ziesenis einzufügen, weshalb hier wieder beide Spalten der Seite überklebt werden mußten. Es stellt sich eine eigentümliche Verbindung zwischen Ziegler, bei dem die eigentümliche Verbindung zwischen Gegenständlichkeit und Schönheit betont wurde, und Zille her, bei dem es heißt: »In diesen mit weichen Kreide- oder Kohlestrichen gegebenen Zeichnungen wechseln Humor und Tragik oder verbinden sich in eigentümlicher Weise.« Der Artikel über Zille wurde bis heute in den Jahnschen Formulierungen beibehalten und nur durch einen Hinweis auf Zilles fotografische Tätigkeit ergänzt.⁶⁴

Aus der kurzen Betrachtung dieser Veränderungen, die durch das Ende der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft notwendig geworden waren, ergibt sich, dass es offenbar auch in einem so knapp gefassten Lexikon nicht möglich war, sich gänzlich jeder ideologischen Implikation zu enthalten. Allerdings ist auch an diesen Stellen das Streben nach Neutralität und Sachlichkeit spürbar. Ob es die vermuteten Interventionen nach der ersten Auflage tatsächlich gegeben hat und welche Nachwirkungen im einzelnen möglicherweise der Zufall einer Änderungsnotwendigkeit an einer bestimmten Stelle über fast siebzig Jahre hin hervorgerufen hat, wäre noch weiter zu untersuchen.

- 1 Paul Fechter: *Ernst Barlach. Zeichnungen*. München: Piper Verlag 1935; Will Grohmann: *Paul Klee. Handzeichnungen II 1921-1930*. Potsdam: Verlag Müller & Kiepenheuer 1934; Otto Pankok: *Die Passion*. Berlin: Kiepenheuer Verlag 1936; Emil Nolde: *Jahre der Kämpfe*. Berlin: Rembrandt-Verlag 1934; Max Sauerlandt: *Die Kunst der letzten 30 Jahre*. Berlin: Rembrandt-Verlag 1935; Alois J. Schardt: *Franz Marc*. Berlin: Rembrandt-Verlag 1936; Alfred Hentzen: *Deutsche Bildhauer der Gegenwart*. Berlin: Rembrandt-Verlag 1934.
- 2 Adolf Hitler: *Mein Kampf*. 188./189. Auflage, München 1936, S. 283-284 (1. Aufl. 1925/1927).
- 3 Hitler 1936 (wie Anm. 2), S. 288.
- 4 Vgl. Christoph Zuschlag: »Entartete Kunst«. *Ausstellungsstrategien im Nazi-Deutschland*. Worms 1995, S. 301-306.
- 5 Fritz Klimsch: *Erinnerungen und Gedanken eines Bildhauers*. Berlin, o. J., S. 147.
- 6 Betroffen waren von Ernst Barlach: *Schäfer im Sturm*, 1908, Holz, Kunsthalle Bremen (Laur 140); *Der Liebende und Der Dichter*, 1916, Holz, Paul Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, deponiert in der Nationalgalerie, Kriegsverlust (Laur 237 und 238); *Frierendes Mädchen*, 1917, Holz, Ernst Barlach Haus Hamburg, ehemals Skulpturensammlung Dresden (Laur 254); von Käthe Kollwitz: *Die Mutter*, 1926-32, Gips, Nationalgalerie Berlin, Kriegsverlust (Seeler 27 A); Grabrelief, 1935/36, Bronze (Seeler 30); von Wilhelm Lehmbruck: *Drei Frauen*, 1913/14, Bronze, Nachlaßleihgabe im Museum Duisburg (Schubert 80); *Große Sinnende*, 1913, Bronze (Schubert 64); von Lehmbruck blieben zunächst ausgestellt: *Badende*, 1913, Bronze (Schubert 71); *Torso der Großen Stehenden*, 1910, Bronze, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum Köln, heute Museum Ludwig (Schubert 52).
- 7 Von Gerhard Marcks wurden ausgestellt: *Seraphita*, 1933, Bronze, Museum Wiesbaden (Rudloff 268); *Brigitte*, 1930, Bronze (Rudloff 214); *Trauernder Eros*, 1934, Bronze (Rudloff 297); *Atlantochter*, 1936, Bronze (Rudloff 320); *Nanna I*, 1936, Bronze (Rudloff 324).
- 8 *Essener National-Zeitung*, 8.11.1936.
- 9 »Was in Museen und Ausstellungen nicht mehr gezeigt werden soll« In: *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 5.11.1936.
- 10 In der ersten Auflage des Kataloges ist als Tafel 17 Lehmbrucks *Torso der Großen Stehenden* abgebildet. In der zweiten Auflage sind von Tafel 17 an die Abbildungen zum Teil umgestellt worden, und als Tafel 30 wurde Ludwig Kaspers *Karyatide*, 1936, Stukko, (Kat. Nr. 70) hinzugefügt.
- 11 Dass schließlich gar keine Lehmbruck-Plastiken mehr in der Ausstellung zu sehen waren, ist von der Forschung bisher noch nicht registriert worden. Auch Josephine Gabler ist das nicht aufgefallen: Josephine Gabler: *Skulptur in Deutschland in den Ausstellungen zwischen 1933 und 1945*, Diss. Freie Universität Berlin 1996, S. 87.
- 12 Vgl. Eberhard Roters: *Galerie Ferdinand Möller. Die Geschichte einer Galerie für Moderne Kunst in Deutschland 1927-1956*. Berlin 1984; zu den Ausstellungen S. 304.
- 13 Vgl. Andrea Hollmann, Roland März: *Hermann Göring und sein Agent Josef Angerer. Annexion und Verkauf »Entarteter Kunst« aus deutschem Museumsbesitz 1938*. Paderborn 2013.
- 14 Aufgeführt sind aus der Reihe »Die Kunstbücher des Volkes«: Alfred Hentzen: *Deutsche Bildhauer der Gegenwart*. Berlin 1934; Carl Dietrich Carls: *Ernst Barlach. Sein Leben und Schaffen*. Berlin 1931; Rudolf G. Bindig: *Georg Kolbe*. Berlin 1933; August Hoff: *Wilhelm Lehmbruck. Seine Sendung und sein Werk*. Berlin 1936; Rolf Hetsch: *Ruth Schumann*. Berlin 1933; Carl Georg Heise: *Fabelwelt des Mittelalters*. Berlin 1936.

- 15 Vgl. Frédérique Régincos: »Im Widersprüchlichen vereint. Rolf Hetsch und Bernhard A. Böhmer« In: Meike Hoffmann (Hg.): *Ein Händler »entarteter« Kunst. Bernhard A. Böhmer und sein Nachlass*. Berlin 2010, S. 53-66.
- 16 Rudolf Belling, Ernesto de Fiori, Joachim Karsch, Gerhard Marcks, Ewald Mataré, Hein Minkenberg, Emy Roeder, Edwin Scharff, René Sintenis, Milly Steger, Christoph Voll, Gustav Heinrich Wolff.
- 17 Vgl. Isgard Kracht: *Franz Marc – »entartet«, aber deutsch*. Nördlingen 2005, S. 16.
- 18 Hermann Barge: *Die Geschichte der Buchdruckerkunst von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Leipzig 1940, S. VIII.
- 19 Barge 1940 (wie Anm. 18), S. 427.
- 20 Barge 1940 (wie Anm. 18), S. 430-431.
- 21 https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gesellschaft_f%C3%BCr_freie_Publizistik; letzter Aufruf 11.07.2018.
- 22 https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_W._Eichler; letzter Aufruf 11.7.2018.
- 23 Barge 1940 (wie Anm. 18), S. 431.
- 24 *Deutsches Volkstum 1933*: Max Sauerlandt: »Volkskunst oder populäre Kunst?«, S. 987-993; Paul Ferdinand Schmidt: »Die Urgestalt des deutschen Formerlebnisses«, S. 848-852; Lothar Schreyer: »Voraussetzungen einer heroischen Kunst in unserer Zeit«, S. 900-904.
- 25 Wilhelm Stapel: »Die spätbürgerliche Kunst und das nationale Erwachen« In: *Deutsches Volkstum 1933*, S. 841-848.
- 26 Barge 1940 (wie Anm. 18), S. 431.
- 27 Das Heft enthält: Adolf Hitler: »Die deutsche Kunst als stolzeste Verteidigung des deutschen Volkes«, S. 434-442; Paul Schultze-Naumburg: »Das neue Reich und die Kunst«, S. 443-449; Thilo von Trotha: »Vom Wesen einer neuen deutschen Kunst«, S. 450-451; Richard Eichenauer: »Gedanken über die Tonkunst im neuen Reich«, S. 452-461; Hedda Lembach: »Artgemäße und artfremde Kunstauffassung an der deutschen Bühne«, S. 461-465; Wilhelm Rüdiger: »Grundlagen deutscher Kunst«, S. 465-472; Otto Dietrich: »Adolf Hitler als künstlerischer Mensch«, S. 472-475; Waldemar Hartmann: »Ursprünge und Wegbereiter germanischen Kunstschaffens«, S. 475-478.
- 28 Barge 1940 (wie Anm. 18), S. 420.
- 29 Barge 1940 (wie Anm. 18), S. 498-506.
- 30 Paul Schultze-Naumburg: *Kampf um die Kunst*. München 1934, S. 68.
- 31 Biografische Angaben nach: *Festschrift Johannes Jahn zum XXII. November MCMLVII*. Leipzig 1958, S. 439.
- 32 https://research.uni-leipzig.de/catalogus-professorum-lipsiensium/leipzig/Jahn_476/markiere:johannes%20jahn/; letzter Aufruf 08.07.2018.
- 33 *Festschrift Jahn 1958* (wie Anm. 31).
- 34 In *Festschrift Jahn 1958* (wie Anm. 31): Hanns-Conon von der Gabelentz: »Ein Schlachtenbild von August Querfurt im Staatlichen Lindenau-Museum zu Altenburg«, S. 261-265; Heinz Ladendorf: »Kairos«, S. 225-235; Edgar Lehmann: »Bemerkungen zum Staffelhör der Benediktinerklosterkirche Thalbürgel«, S. 111-130; Heinrich Magirius: »Das Konversenhaus im Kloster Altzella«, S. 153-164; Henner Menz: »Briefe und Zeichnungen von Lyonel Feininger«, S. 331-336; Hans-Joachim Mrusek: »Zur Baugeschichte des Meissner Domes«, S. 131-137; Werner Schmidt: »Menzel und Watteau«, S. 317-324.
- 35 »Johannes Jahn. Schriftenverzeichnis in sachlicher Folge« In: *Festschrift Jahn 1958* (wie Anm. 31), S. 343-349.

- 36 Vor einigen Jahren waren die Vorlesungsverzeichnisse der Leipziger Universität über die Website der Universitätsbibliothek einzusehen; inzwischen werden sie nur noch vor Ort in der Bibliothek oder im Universitätsarchiv vorgelegt.
- 37 Johannes Jahn: »Hans Thoma. Zu seinem 100. Geburtstage am 2.10.1939« In: *Deutsche Pressekorrespondenz*, 25.9.1939, S. 6-8; ders.: »Wilhelm Schulze-Rose« In: *Die Weltkunst*, 25.9.1932.
- 38 Johannes Jahn: »Die Entdeckung der deutschen Kunst« In: *Kunst der Nation* 1934, H. 11, S. 1-2; ders.: »Was wissen wir von deutscher Kunst?« In: *Das Reich*, 3.8.1941, S. 21-22.
- 39 Johannes Jahn: *Wörterbuch der Kunst*. Stuttgart 1940, S. 267; 2. Aufl. 1943, S. 322.
- 40 Johannes Jahn, Stefanie Lieb: *Wörterbuch der Kunst*. 13. Aufl., Stuttgart 2008, S. 407.
- 41 Jahn/Lieb 2008 (wie Anm. 40), S. 239.
- 42 Jahn 1943 (wie Anm. 39), S. 175-177 und die Überklebung S. 177.
- 43 Johannes Jahn: *Wörterbuch der Kunst*. 3. Aufl., Stuttgart 1950, S. 167.
- 44 Jahn 1940 (wie Anm. 39), S. 138; 1943, S. 167.
- 45 Vgl. Andreas Hüneke: »The Role of Art in Germany between 1933 and 1945« In: *Persecuted Art and Artists under Totalitarian Regimes during the 20th Century*. Bönen 2003, S. 30-32.
- 46 Vgl. Robert Eikmeyer (Hg.): *Adolf Hitler. Reden zur Kunst- und Kulturpolitik 1933-1939*. Frankfurt am Main 2004, S. 50, 74, 90, 114, 126, 136.
- 47 Hans H. Zerlett an Helmut Schreiber, 26.8.1940, Archiv der Deutschen Kinemathek Berlin, 4.3-80/11-0 Venus vor Gericht – 2 Zerlett; vgl. Andreas Hüneke: »Entartete Kunst« in einem NS-Film« In: *Recherche Film und Fernsehen* 2, 2008, H. 4, S. 42-44.
- 48 Aktennotiz der Kunsthalle Mannheim, 5.8.1937, zitiert nach: *Verboten – verfolgt. Kunstdikatur im 3. Reich*. Duisburg 1983, S. 36-37.
- 49 Zitiert nach: Andreas Hüneke: *Das schöpferische Museum. Eine Dokumentation zur Geschichte der Sammlung moderner Kunst 1908-1949*. Stiftung Moritzburg Halle 2005, S. 215.
- 50 Jahn/Lieb 2008 (wie Anm. 40), S. 229.
- 51 Jahn/Lieb 2008 (wie Anm. 40), S. 229.
- 52 Jahn/Lieb 2008 (wie Anm. 40), S. 195.
- 53 Jahn/Lieb 2008 (wie Anm. 40), S. 117.
- 54 Jahn/Lieb 2008 (wie Anm. 40), S. 589.
- 55 Jahn 1943 (wie Anm. 39), S. 85.
- 56 Jahn 1940 (wie Anm. 39), S. 74.
- 57 Jahn 1943 (wie Anm. 39), S. 85 mit Überklebung.
- 58 Jahn 1950 (wie Anm. 43), S. 80.
- 59 Jahn 1943 (wie Anm. 39), S. 151.
- 60 Jahn 1943 (wie Anm. 39), S. 629.
- 61 Jahn/Lieb 2008 (wie Anm. 40), S. 785-786.
- 62 Jahn 1940 (wie Anm. 39), S. 552; 1943, S. 664.
- 63 Jahn 1940 (wie Anm. 39), S. 610; 1943, S. 733.
- 64 Jahn/Lieb 2008 (wie Anm. 40), S. 910-911.

BESPRECHUNGEN

Karl-Ludwig Hofmann, Ursula Merkel (eds.): *Georg Scholz. Schriften, Briefe, Dokumente*. Bretten: Lindemanns Bibliothek 2018. 658 pp., 62 ill. ISBN 978-3-88190-667-8. 45 EUR.

Curators and scholars of *Neue Sachlichkeit* often cite Georg Scholz's satirical artworks as mere illustrations of his left-leaning politics without providing the kind of critical commentary found in writings about the artist's more prominent contemporaries. Karl-Ludwig Hofmann and Ursula Merkel's weighty publication of Scholz documents provides the resources for a more nuanced analysis. From his home in small-town Baden, beginning in the early 1920s, Scholz developed a formal lexicon and a theory of art making that complicate the strict periodization and stylistic boundaries typically drawn between Expressionism, Dada, and *Neue Sachlichkeit*. This important contribution draws on archival resources long understudied or difficult to access and provides a deeper understanding of the networks of place, politics, and patronage that contributed to Scholz's formation as an artist.

With nearly half of its 658 pages devoted to two previously unpublished literary works, this volume also allows the reader to experience Scholz as a writer. Scholz's voice crackles and sparks – by turns sardonic, irreverent, earnest, and striving. The editors rightly posit a »Doppelbegabung« on par with such contemporaries as Rudolf Schlichter, Scholz's erstwhile Karlsruhe classmate and later his connection with Berlin's post-revolutionary art scene.¹ Part 1 includes 15 texts published during Scholz's lifetime, including key critical essays published in Berlin-based journals such as *Der Gegner* and *Das Kunstblatt*. Part 2 comprises Scholz's extensive correspondence with friends, patrons, curators, and academic colleagues dating from 1913 to 1945. Part 3 features two previously unpublished and largely unstudied works: *Als Ob* (1930), a spicy and theatrical account of Scholz's faculty tenure at the *Badische Landeskunstschule*, and *Ich hatt' einen Kameraden. Kriegserinnerungen* (1931/32), a lightly fictionalized memoir of his experiences during World War I.

The work of compiling, transcribing, and annotating these documents covered a span of years and required a close working relationship with the *Georg-Scholz-Nachlaß* in Waldkirch, which holds many of the letters and unpublished writings.² Previously, volume editors Merkel and Hofmann contributed to several foundational studies of interwar realism in Baden and were key members of the Heidelberg working group that organized the first Scholz retrospective in 1975 at the *Badischer Kunstverein*.³ The *Karlsruhe Bezirksverband Bildender Künstler* published a catalog of Scholz's graphic works in 1982.⁴ The centenary of the artist's birth, in 1990, brought monographic exhibitions at the *Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe* and *City of Waldkirch*, the latter featuring key additions from the estate.⁵ Felicia Sternfeld's monograph and catalogue raisonnée, published in 2004, remains the most complete and authoritative text about the artist's life and production.⁶ Recent exhibitions tend to highlight Scholz's verist prints and paintings from the early 1920s, but these works often function as thematic signposts or prophetic visions.⁷ As such, this volume provides key materials for the provenance researcher and

rich context for the historian concerned with mapping networks of aesthetics, place, and politics.

To that end, the collected writings track a sustained and fundamental tension between Scholz's »preußischer Schneidigkeit« and the »süddeutsche Gemütlichkeit« he ascribed with satirical word and image to his adopted home region.⁸ Born in 1890 in Wolfenbüttel, near Braunschweig, Scholz moved to Karlsruhe in 1908 to begin his studies at the Großherzoglich Badische Akademie der bildenden Künste. This turned out to be a bitterly divided scene. The Akademie's foremost personalities, Professors Hans Thoma and Wilhelm Trübner, advocated divergent realist styles that created a classed and political divide in the student body – between followers of Thoma's brand of Heimatkunst and those drawn to the French-inflected modernism espoused by Trübner. Rudolf Schlichter described this clash of sensibilities as an »unversöhnliche Feindschaft« in his second of two published autobiographies, *Tönerne Füße* (1933).⁹ (This text also contains Schlichter's oft-cited description of Scholz as a sharp dresser with a cold, stiff personality reminiscent of a »budding Prussian tax assessor.«¹⁰) Scholz studied in Karlsruhe for four years and continued as a Meisterschüler with Trübner, with whom he remained in correspondence until Trübner's death in 1917.¹¹

Literary scholars and historians of World War I will also find rich material for study. Scholz was called up to military service in March 1915 and from March 1916 served in Reserve Infantry Regiment 250 until the war's end, seeing action on the Eastern and Western Fronts.¹² Letters to family friend Hans Friedrich »Onkel« Geitel, sent between May 1916 and December 1917, paint a stark image of everyday life on the front lines.¹³ Letters open with heartfelt gratitude for care packages of chocolate and cigarettes but turn to blunt descriptions of the »jammervolle Bilder« that comprise the experience of trench warfare: »Von einem guten Kameraden...fanden wir nur noch 1 Hand u. 1 Fuß.«¹⁴ Wounded by a hand grenade in France in August 1918, Scholz recovered »im Lazarett« where he met the physician Theodor Kiefer, who would become a close friend and key patron.¹⁵ Scholz contributed a fictionalized excerpt from his war diary to the left-leaning political journal, *Der Gegner*, in 1922.¹⁶ In this text Karl Bosse (Scholz's literary alter ego) observes life in the German trenches with a wry, sardonic wit. Bosse's realist language alternates between the mundane – describing his work assignment decorating a regimental menu featuring such traditional dishes as Königsberger Klops – and the comically grotesque, as Bosse casually shifts from this itemization of meatballs in caper sauce to an observation of the maggots seething from a fetid wound in a comrade's neck.¹⁷

Scholz returned to his wife and young son in Grötzingen, near Karlsruhe, in winter 1919.¹⁸ Soon after, he joined several former academy colleagues in forming the Karlsruhe secessionist association, Die Gruppe Rih.¹⁹ Rih operated as a regional arm of the Berlin-based Novembergruppe, an influential expressionist exhibition society with wide-ranging connections. Through Scholz's participation in Novembergruppe summer exhibitions he soon linked up with Berlin Dada.²⁰ In June 1920, George Grosz and John Heartfield invited Scholz to exhibit his collage painting *Bauernbild* (1920) – probably the best-known of Scholz's works today – in the forthcoming Erste Internationale Dada Messe.²¹ Grosz urged Scholz above all else to finish the *Bauernbild* and to send it quickly, »sonst hat's keinen Zweck.«²² The notion that Scholz's work would have a purpose *only* if it were shown in Berlin is an important one, underscoring the regional

tensions at play in this post-revolutionary moment. As the correspondence shows, Scholz was a clever operator, navigating between Baden and Berlin and between a number of powerful personalities. The artist carefully managed his reputation in the southwest through contact with the Karlsruhe Kunsthalle director Willy Storck;²³ with his Kaiserslautern friend and patron, Dr. Theodor Kiefer;²⁴ and through the Mannheim collector and gallery owner Dr. Herbert Tannenbaum²⁵ – all the while dispatching scores of pages to Grosz and Heartfield in Berlin, in which he lamented the stagnant art scene in Baden and plotted his eventual getaway.²⁶ (In an amusing touch, Scholz often signed his letters to Grosz »Your Georges II«.)

From 1919 to 1923, Scholz worked from Grötzingen without an academic appointment or official gallery representation. Funds were scarce with inflation on the rise, and the artist aimed to subsidize his painting practice through the production and sale of fine art prints. Yet this work too required startup capital. Posters, cigar box covers, and illustrated novels provided the Scholz family with the basic income necessary to survive. Scholz described the unpleasant situation in an October 1921 letter to Theodor Kiefer:

»Das ekelhafte Geldverdienen geht leider immer vor. Ich mache z.Zt. in Plakaten für ganz große Firmen wie Kornfrack, Pils, Persil, etc. Das wird noch am besten bezahlt. Pro Plakat brauche ich 2 Tage Arbeit, meine Frau malt die Schrift. Also Großbetrieb, wenn Kartoffeln, Kohlen, Holz, Wintermäntel etc. bezahlt sind, so kann ich wieder an die hohe »Kunscht« denken.«²⁷

Considerations of labor, art markets, and the dynamics of gender have been largely overlooked in the scholarship about Scholz, but such factors merit our closer consideration.

Likewise, Scholz's use of the word »Kunscht« – a hybridization of »kunst« and »kitsch« and a riff on the regional dialect of Germany's small-town southwest – may prompt useful discussions about the connections between art and kitsch, center and periphery. Scholz thought carefully – and often with some ambivalence – about the implications of this high/low blending. In a 1922 essay for the *Karlsruher Tagblatt*, Scholz proclaimed that it would be the task of his generation to bridge the gap between art and kitsch, and he set this imperative into a contemporary art historical context:

»Es müssen neue, interessante (!) Bilder geschaffen werden, in deren durch den Expressionismus wiedergewonnenen Raum mit der Sachlichkeit der Gegenwart erfüllte Gegenständlichkeiten hineingebaut werden [...] Es müssen alle Mittel der bildlichen Darstellung erprobt und geprüft werden [...] selbst die Mittel des Kitsches im Sinne der Ansichtspostkarten und der photographischen Malerei.«²⁸

Scholz called for the use and theorization of kitsch materials and the end of bourgeois »Staffelei-Extase«, forging an art closer to the experience of everyday life.²⁹

In February 1923, Scholz accepted a new academic post as head of the lithography workshop at the Badische Landeskunstschule, which had been reorganized as a combined school of arts and crafts in 1920.³⁰ This job brought a well-appointed Karlsruhe atelier and a measure of economic security Scholz hoped would allow more time to produce »Tendenzkunst« for Grosz and Heartfield's Malik Verlag in Berlin.³¹ In letters to Grosz, Scholz offered an ironic and often amusing assessment of the local Landeskunstschule, where he was maligned by the faculty senate as a »communist« and unrecognized in the local art scene: »Der Hauptfehler [ist]...daß ich hier in Grötzingen, Karlsruhe und Baden überhaupt sitze! ...Also scharf politisch eingestellte Leute gibt es

hier zu Lande kaum.«³² Upon seeing Grosz's infamous *Ecce Homo* (1923) portfolio for sale in Herbert Tannenbaum's Mannheim gallery at the inflationary price of 27.000 marks, Scholz left feeling »sehr entmutigt«, possessing little economic capital and only his personal collection of hand-printed fine art lithographs to offer as a potential trade.³³

Subsequent letters demonstrate the sprawling, transregional network of Germany's 1920s art market.³⁴ Through Grosz Scholz connected with the influential *Kunstblatt* editor Paul Westheim, who used his work to illustrate several key essays and introduced Scholz to a national audience with a September 1923 feature article.³⁵ That same year, curator Gustav Hartlaub first approached Scholz with plans for a major exhibition that came to fruition two years later in *Neue Sachlichkeit. Deutsche Malerei seit dem Expressionismus* at the Mannheim Kunsthalle. Scholz hoped to make a strong showing in the Mannheim exhibition, but sought to differentiate his latest efforts from the satirical pictures he had published in journals such as *Der Gegner* and *Die Pleite*. (In a response to Hartlaub's invitation, Scholz asserted that works of politically contingent Tendenzkunst would be out of the question.)³⁶ Instead, the six oil paintings Scholz exhibited in Mannheim represented the culmination of his turn to Gegenständlichkeit.³⁷ Westheim's exhibition review for *Das Kunstblatt* praised Scholz's contributions while marking them with a decidedly southern German bonhomie:

»Gewiß, man ist auch hier aggressiv, betont und unterstreicht auch Tendenz, aber doch – ganz unbewußt – mit einer süddeutschen, menschlich freundlichen Bonhomie. Gibt man dem Bourgeois eins in die Fresse, so geschiehts immer noch mit einer gewissen Gutherzigkeit...«³⁸

Scholz was named a professor at the Badische Landeskunstschule in December 1925, a position he held until his dismissal – under reactionary pressure – in July 1933. In a photograph gracing the book's cover, Scholz sits cross-legged in his atelier, seated in front of his portrait of the banker W. Kahnheimer (1924, now lost) with a look of bemused satisfaction – a retort, perhaps, to rumors from Berlin that Schlichter had denounced the Karlsruhe professor as an »arrivierten Bourgeois.«³⁹ Beginning in 1926, Scholz scaled back his painterly production and shifted his focus to teaching and his work with the Karlsruhe Institut für Handwerkswirtschaft, a multi-regional partnership for which he would travel frequently to Berlin and Hannover as an advocate for professional craftsmanship.⁴⁰ Scholz's unpublished autobiography, *Als Ob* (1930), offers a spirited and dishy account of the aesthetic, political, and social milieus at the Badische Landeskunstschule through the eyes of Prof. Karl Bosse.⁴¹

Following Scholz's dismissal from the Landeskunstschule, in summer 1933, the artist moved with his wife and son to a shared apartment in Karlsruhe. A 1934 visit to the Kloster Beuron an der Donau sparked a new interest in painting and church art. In 1935, the Scholz family relocated to the small town of Waldkirch, near Freiburg, where Scholz converted to Catholicism and made his living painting large-format religious scenes for local churches.⁴² French troops entered Waldkirch on 21 April 1945, signaling the end of World War II and precipitating the flight of the Nazi-appointed mayor. The town quickly sought a replacement candidate. Georg Scholz, who had lived in Waldkirch since 1935, spoke fluent French, and was a declared anti-fascist, emerged as a leading candidate. After first demurring before the position, Scholz was named mayor of Wald-

kirch on 19 October 1945, a post he held for just 40 days before suffering a fatal heart attack on 27 November.⁴³ He was 55 years old.

Hofmann and Merkel have achieved a major contribution with *Georg Scholz. Schriften, Briefen, Dokumente*, which not only provides key materials toward our understanding of Scholz the artist-writer, but of Neue Sachlichkeit as a regional phenomenon. The art historian Carl Einstein grew up in Karlsruhe but made his home in Berlin, and he later described the southwestern Residenzstadt as a city of boredom where »deformierte Bürger dösten und quälten zwischen Stammtischen und Grammatik.«⁴⁴ Such types figure centrally in Scholz's best-known satirical works of the 1920s. Yet despite good connections and professional opportunities to relocate to Berlin, Scholz chose to stay in small-town Baden. The collected writings shed light on Neue Sachlichkeit in Karlsruhe and offer important new perspectives on the relationship between place and politics in interwar Germany.

Shannon Connelly

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- ¹ Karl-Ludwig Hofmann and Ursula Merkel, eds.: *Georg Scholz. Schriften, Briefe, Dokumente*. Bretten: Lindemanns Bibliothek 2018, p. 10.
 - ² I thank Ursula Merkel and the late Karl-Ludwig Hofmann for making transcriptions of these documents available to me before the book's publication for the purposes of my doctoral dissertation (Rutgers University, 2014). I am likewise grateful to the late Friedel Scholz and her son, Georg Scholz, for providing warm hospitality and access to the Nachlass on my visits to the Waldkirch estate.
 - ³ *Georg Scholz. ein Beitrag zur Diskussion realistischer Kunst*, ed. Kunsthistorisches Institut, Universität Heidelberg. Karlsruhe: Badischer Kunstverein 1975. For a critical review see Andrew Hemingway: »On the Conception of the Badische Kunstverein's Georg Scholz Exhibition of 1975« In: *Kunst und Politik* 16/2014, pp. 53-63.
 - ⁴ *Georg Scholz. Das Druckgraphische Werk*, ed. Bezirksverband Bildender Künstler. Karlsruhe: Künstlerhaus Galerie 1982.
 - ⁵ Siegmur Holsten, ed.: *Georg Scholz: Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Druckgraphik*. Karlsruhe: Staatliche Kunsthalle 1990; and Hans-Dieter Mück, ed.: *Georg Scholz, 1890-1945: Malerei, Zeichnung, Druckgraphik*. Stuttgart: H. Matthes 1991.
 - ⁶ Felicia Sternfeld: *Georg Scholz 1890-1945: Monographie und Werkverzeichnis*. Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang 2004.
 - ⁷ See for example Ingrid Pfeiffer, ed.: *Splendor and Misery in the Weimar Republic*, exh. cat. Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt. Frankfurt: Hirmer Verlag 2017, p. 26.
 - ⁸ Letter from Georg Scholz to George Grosz, 4 March 1923. AdK, Berlin, George-Grosz-Archiv Nr. 404. Hofmann and Merkel, pp. 114-17.
 - ⁹ Rudolf Schlichter. *Tönerne Füße*. Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt Verlag 1933. Edited by Carl Grützmaker with an essay by Günter Metken. Berlin: Edition Hentrich 1992, p. 92.
 - ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.
 - ¹¹ A selection of private letters and Scholz's published »Trübner-Anekdoten« (*Das Kunstblatt*, January 1926) are included here. See Hofmann and Merkel 2018, pp. 83-88 and pp. 91-94.
 - ¹² Hofmann and Merkel 2018, pp. 16-18.
 - ¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-104.

- ¹⁴ Ibid. p. 95.
- ¹⁵ Scholz describes the Lazarett experience of sickness, fever dreams, and boredom-tinged recovery in an extended passage of his 1930/31 war memoir, *Ich hatt' einen Kameraden*. Hofmann and Merkel 2018, pp. 404-419.
- ¹⁶ Georg Scholz, »Deutsche Dokumente« In: *Der Gegner* Jg. 2, Heft 1/2 (June 1920): pp. 35-42.
- ¹⁷ Scholz, »Deutsche Dokumente« (as note 16), p. 35. Hofmann and Merkel 2018, pp. 38-46.
- ¹⁸ Scholz joined the center-left Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD), a splinter group of the German Social Democrats (SPD), shortly after returning from combat. The USPD voted to join the German Communist Party (KPD) at its Halle Congress in October of 1920. Eric D. Weitz asserts that the USPD collapse over 1920-21 likely saved the KPD from extinction. See Weitz: *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997, p. 98.
- ¹⁹ Erklärung der »Gruppe Rih« (1919). Manifesto reprinted in Hofmann and Merkel 2018, p. 36.
- ²⁰ Like Scholz, Grosz had joined the November Group in 1919, but the Berlin artist did not exhibit with the organization until 1929. See Helga Kliemann: *Die Novembergruppe*. Berlin: Mann 1969, p. 50.
- ²¹ Postcard from George Grosz and John Heartfield to Georg Scholz, 16 June 1920. Hofmann and Merkel 2018, p. 104.
- ²² Ibid., p. 104.
- ²³ Ibid., pp. 229-239. Dr. Willy Storck had been, since 1920, director of the Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe, and had previously worked as an assistant curator at the Städtische Kunsthalle in Mannheim. In Karlsruhe, he replaced the departing Hans Thoma as director and oversaw a massive reorganization at the art museum in 1920. The archives related to this reorganization are collected in the Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, see especially GLA 235/40177. See also Marlene Angermeyer-Deubner: »Die Karlsruher Kunsthalle – Der Beginn einer modernen Sammlung. Willy F. Storck (1920-27), Teil 1« In: *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg*, Jg. 34/1997.
- ²⁴ Hofmann and Merkel 2018, pp. 128-228.
- ²⁵ For an excellent study of Tannenbaum and his Mannheim gallery, see Karl-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed.: *Für die Kunst! Herbert Tannenbaum und sein Kunsthaus: ein Galerist, seine Künstler, seine Kunden, sein Konzept*. Heidelberg: Vits & Kehrer 1994.
- ²⁶ Hofmann and Merkel 2018, pp. 104-127.
- ²⁷ Letter from Georg Scholz to Theodor Kiefer, 24 October 1921. Hofmann and Merkel 2018, pp. 133-37.
- ²⁸ Hofmann and Merkel 2018, pp. 63-64.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 65.
- ³⁰ The correspondence and documents related to the academy reorganization are collected in the Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, see especially GLA 235/40171. A number of these documents are also excerpted in Karl-Ludwig Hoffmann and Christmut Präger, eds.: *Kunst in Karlsruhe 1900-1950*. Karlsruhe: C.F. Müller, 1981, pp. 66-73.
- ³¹ Letter from Georg Scholz to George Grosz, 14 January 1923. AdK, Berlin, George-Grosz-Archiv, Nr. 402. Hofmann and Merkel 2018, p. 111.
- ³² Letter from Georg Scholz to George Grosz, 11 May 1923. AdK, Berlin, George-Grosz-Archiv Nr. 405. Hofmann and Merkel 2018, p. 119.
- ³³ Letter from Georg Scholz to George Grosz, 14 January 1923. AdK, Berlin, George-Grosz-Archiv, Nr. 402. Hofmann and Merkel 2018, p. 111.

- ³⁴ Scholz operated outside the network of well-connected dealers in Berlin, Dresden, and Düsseldorf. On these gallery networks, and the position of the artist during the German inflation years, see Dennis Crockett: *German Post-Expressionism: Art of the Great Disorder, 1918-1924*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press 1999, pp. 25-33. On the influential Gallery Nierendorf, see Anja Walter-Ris: *Kunstleidenschaft im Dienst der Moderne. Die Geschichte der Galerie Nierendorf Berlin/New York 1920-1995*. Zurich: Zürich InterPublishers 2003.
- ³⁵ See, for example: Paul Westheim, »Der »arrivierte Öldruck« In *Das Kunstblatt* (August 1922), pp. 344-348; Hans Curjel: »Zur Entwicklung des Malers Georg Scholz«. In *Das Kunstblatt* (September 1923), p. 258.
- ³⁶ Letter from Georg Scholz to Gustav Hartlaub, 1 April 1925. Kunsthalle Mannheim, Bestand Altakten, Ordner »Neue Sachlichkeit, L-Z« Hofmann and Merkel 2018, pp. 244-45.
- ³⁷ In addition to *Das Bahnwärterhäuschen* (1925), Scholz exhibited the following pictures in Mannheim: *Herrenbildnis* (now known as *The Banker Kahnheimer*, 1924); the landscape painting *Berghausen-Baden* (1924-25); the still life *Stilleben/Kakteen-Stilleben* (1923); and *Badische Kleinstadt bei Tage* (1923). Scholz exhibited two additional works at the traveling locations in Chemnitz and Dresden, including the older painting *Fleisch und Eisen* (whereabouts unknown, 1922).
- ³⁸ Paul Westheim: »Kunst im deutschen Westen: Teil II: Mannheim: Ausstellung »Neue Sachlichkeit« In: *Das Kunstblatt* (September 1925), p. 267.
- ³⁹ Letter from Georg Scholz to Theodor Kiefer, 24 May 1926. Hofmann and Merkel 2018, p. 187. Scholz's letters to Kiefer attest that his financial situation had improved greatly after December 1925 (thanks in large part to the success in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* show). Scholz had also transferred his business affairs to the Nierendorf Gallery in Berlin and, shortly after taking the professorship in Karlsruhe, had received invitations to join the faculty of art both in Frankfurt and in Berlin.
- ⁴⁰ Scholz's correspondence with Carl Haußer, founding director of the Karlsruhe Institut, traces this fruitful collaboration and a friendship that lasted until the 1940s. Hofmann and Merkel 2018, p. 273-289.
- ⁴¹ Hofmann and Merkel 2018, pp. 307-380.
- ⁴² Hofmann and Merkel 2018, pp. 27-29. Erika Rödiger-Diruf considers this period of »inner emigration« in her thoughtful review of the collected writings for *Kunstform* 19/2018, Nr. 11.
- ⁴³ On Scholz's short-lived term as mayor of Waldkirch, see Wolfram Wette: »Professor Georg Scholz, Bürgermeister der Stadt Waldkirch vom 19. Oktober bis 27. November 1945« In Mück 1991 (as note 5), pp. 8-9. I thank former Waldkirch mayor Richard Leibinger for sharing his knowledge about Georg Scholz and facilitating my access to the Waldkirch estate.
- ⁴⁴ Carl Einstein: *Kleine Autobiographie* (1930), as cited in Hansgeorg Schmidt-Bergmann: »»abgetrennt von den übrigen Ausstellungsräumen« – Die verdrängte Avantgarde: Gustav Landauer, Carl Einstein und Rainer Maria Gerhardt« In *Kunst und Architektur in Karlsruhe. Festschrift für Norbert Schneider*, ed. Katharina Büttner et al. Karlsruhe: Universitätsverlag 2006, p. 86.

ANHANG

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- Abbildung 4: Doppelseite des Buches von Hermann Barge mit Überklebungen (Hermann Barge: *Die Geschichte der Buchdruckerkunst von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Leipzig 1940)
- Abbildung 5: Schutzumschlag des Wörterbuchs der Kunst, 1940 (Johannes Jahn: *Wörterbuch der Kunst*. Stuttgart 1940)
- Abbildung 6: Doppelseite des Wörterbuchs der Kunst mit Überklebungen (Johannes Jahn: *Wörterbuch der Kunst*. 2. Aufl. Stuttgart 1943)
- Abbildung 7: Der Braunschweiger Löwe, 1166, Bronze