
Theory and History of Literature

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Theory of the Avant-Garde

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Translation from the German by Michael Shaw
Foreword by Jochen Schulte-Sasse

Theory and History of Literature, Volume 4

University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis

1984

garde intends the abolition of autonomous art by which it means that art is to be integrated into the praxis of life. This has not occurred, and presumably cannot occur, in bourgeois society unless it be as a false sublation of autonomous art.²¹ Pulp fiction and commodity aesthetics prove that such a false sublation exists. A literature whose primary aim it is to impose a particular kind of consumer behavior on the reader is in fact practical, though not in the sense the avant-gardistes intended. Here, literature ceases to be an instrument of emancipation and becomes one of subjection.²² Similar comments could be made about commodity aesthetics that treat form as mere enticement, designed to prompt purchasers to buy what they do not need. Here also, art becomes practical but it is an art that entralls.²³ This brief allusion will show that the theory of the avant-garde can also serve to make us understand popular literature and commodity aesthetics as forms of a false sublation of art as institution. In late capitalist society, intentions of the historical avant-garde are being realized but the result has been a disvalue. Given the experience of the false sublation of autonomy, one will need to ask whether a sublation of the autonomy status can be desirable at all, whether the distance between art and the praxis of life is not requisite for that free space within which alternatives to what exists become conceivable.

Bürger
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Chapter Four The Avant-Gardiste Work of Art

1. On the Problem of the Category 'Work'

The use of the concept 'work of art' when applied to products of the avant-garde is not without its problems. It might be objected that the crisis of the concept 'work' that was touched off by the avant-garde movements is being obscured and that the discussion therefore rests on false premises. "The dissolution of the traditional unity of the work can be shown in a perfectly formal fashion to be the common characteristic of Modernism. The coherence and autonomy of the work are deliberately called into question or even methodically destroyed."¹ One cannot but agree with this comment by Bubner. But does that mean that one must conclude that aesthetics today has to dispense with the concept 'work'? For that is how Bubner justifies his turning back to the Kantian aesthetics as today's only relevant one.² First, we must ask ourselves what it is that has entered a crisis: the category 'work,' or a specific historical form of that category? "Today the only works which really count are those which are no longer works at all."³ This enigmatic sentence of Adorno's still makes use of the concept of 'work' in a twofold sense: in the general sense (and in that sense, modern art still has the character of work), and then in the sense of organic work of art (Adorno speaks of the "rounded work"), and this latter limited concept of work is

in fact destroyed by the avant-garde. We must thus distinguish between a general meaning of the concept 'work' and differing historical instantiations. Generally speaking, the work of art is to be defined as the unity of the universal and the particular. Although the work of art is not conceivable if this unity is not present, unity was achieved in widely varying ways during different periods in the history of art. In the organic (symbolic) work of art, the unity of the universal and the particular is posited without mediation; in the nonorganic (allegorical) work to which the works of the avant-garde belong, the unity is a mediated one. Here, the element of unity is withdrawn to an infinite distance, as it were. In the extreme case, it is the recipient who creates it. Adorno correctly emphasizes: "Even where art insists on the greatest degree of dissonance and disharmony, its elements are also those of unity. Without it, they would not even be dissonant."⁴ The avant-gardiste work does not negate unity as such (even if the Dadists had such intentions) but a specific kind of unity, the relationship between part and whole that characterizes the organic work of art.

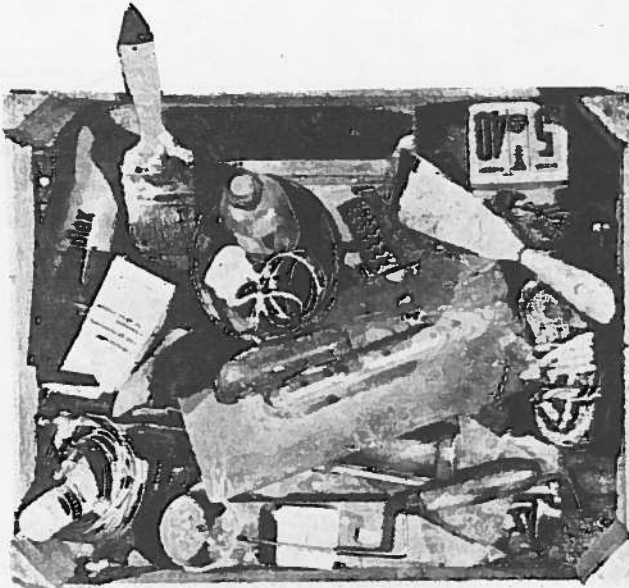
Theoreticians who consider the category 'work' null and void could answer this argument by pointing out that in the historical avant-garde movements, forms of activity were deployed that cannot be adequately subsumed under the category 'work': the Dadaist manifestations, for example, which made the provocation of the public their avowed aim. But what is involved in these manifestations is far more than the liquidation of the category 'work'; it is the liquidation of art as an activity that is split off from the praxis of life that is intended. It must be observed that even in its extreme manifestations, the avant-garde movements refer to the category 'work' by negation. It is only with reference to the category 'work of art,' for example, that Duchamp's Ready-Mades make sense. When Duchamp puts his signature on mass-produced, randomly chosen objects and sends them to art exhibits, this provocation of art presupposes a concept of what art is: The fact that he signs the Ready-Mades contains a clear allusion to the category 'work.' The signature that attests that the work is both individual and unique is here affixed to the mass-produced object. The idea of the nature of art as it has developed since the Renaissance—the individual creation of unique works—is thus provocatively called into question. The act of provocation itself takes the place of the work. But doesn't this make the category 'work' redundant? Duchamp's provocation addresses itself to art as a social institution. Insofar as the work is part of that institution, the attack is also directed against it. But it

is a historical fact that the avant-garde movements did not put an end to the production of works of art, and that the social institution that is art proved resistant to the avant-gardiste attack.

A contemporary aesthetic can no more neglect the incisive changes that the historical avant-garde movements effected in the realm of art than it can ignore that art has long since entered a post avant-gardiste phase. We characterize that phase by saying that it revived the category of work and that the procedures invented by the avant-garde with antiartistic intent are being used for artistic ends. This must not be judged a 'betrayal' of the aims of the avant-garde movements (sublation of art as a social institution, uniting life and art) but the result of a historical process that can be described in these very general terms: now that the attack of the historical avant-garde movements on art as an institution has failed, and art has not been integrated into the praxis of life, art as an institution continues to survive as something separate from the praxis of life. But the attack did make art recognizable as an institution and also revealed its (relative) inefficacy in bourgeois society as its principle. All art that is more recent than the historical avant-garde movements must come to terms with this fact in bourgeois society. It can either resign itself to its autonomous status or "organize happenings" to break through that status. But without surrendering its claim to truth, art cannot simply deny the autonomy status and pretend that it has a direct effect.

The category 'work' is not merely given a new lease on life after the failure of the avant-gardiste attempt to reintroduce art into the praxis of life; it is actually expanded. The *objet trouvé* is totally unlike the result of an individual production process but a chance find, in which the avant-gardiste intention of uniting art and the praxis of life took shape, is recognized today as a 'work of art.' The *objet trouvé* thus loses its character as antiart and becomes, in the museum, an autonomous work among others.⁵

The revival of art as an institution and the revival of the category 'work' suggest that today, the avant-garde is already historical. Even today, of course, attempts are made to continue the tradition of the avant-garde movements (that this concept can be put on paper without being a conspicuous oxymoron shows again that the avant-garde has become historical). But these attempts, such as the happenings, for example, which could be called neo-avant-gardiste, can no longer attain the protest value of Dadaist manifestations, even though they may be prepared and executed more perfectly than the former.⁶ In part this is owing to the avant-gardistes' effects



Neo-avant-garde: Daniel Spoerri, *Who Knows Where Up and Down Are?*
1964 © Siegfried Cremer, Stuttgart.

having lost their shock value. But it is probably more consequential that the sublation of art that the avant-gardistes intended, its return to the praxis of life, did not in fact occur. In a changed context, the resumption of avant-gardiste intentions with the means of avant-gardism can no longer even have the limited effectiveness the historical avant-gardes achieved. To the extent that the means by which the avant-gardistes hoped to bring about the sublation of art have attained the status of works of art, the claim that the praxis of life is to be renewed can no longer be legitimately connected with their employment. To formulate more pointedly: the neo-avant-garde institutionalizes the *avant-garde as art* and thus negates genuinely avant-gardiste intentions. This is true independently of the consciousness artists have of their activity, a consciousness that may perfectly well be avant-gardiste.⁷ It is the status of their products, not the consciousness artists have of their activity, that defines the social effect of works. Neo-avant-gardiste art is autonomous art in the full sense of the term, which means that it negates the avant-gardiste intention of returning art to the praxis of life. And the efforts to sublimate art become artistic manifestations that, despite their producers' intentions, take on the character of works.

To speak of a revival of the category 'work' after the failure of the

historical avant-garde movements is not without its problems. The impression might be created that the avant-garde movements have no decisive significance for the further development of art in bourgeois society. The opposite is the case. Although the political intentions of the avant-garde movements (reorganization of the praxis of life through art) were never realized, their impact in the realm of art can hardly be overestimated. Here, the avant-garde does indeed have a revolutionary effect, especially because it destroys the traditional concept of the organic work of art and replaces it by another, which we must now seek to understand.⁸

2. The New

Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie* is not conceived as a theory of the avant-garde but lays claim to greater generality. Yet Adorno's point of departure is the insight that the art of the past can be understood only in the light of modern art. It therefore makes sense to examine the important section on Modernism (*AT*, p. 31-56) and to try to discover whether the categories used there can help us understand the avant-gardiste work of art.⁹

Central to Adorno's theory of modern art is the category of the new. Adorno is perfectly aware, of course, that objections can be raised to the use of this category, and sets out to refute them from the start: "In an essentially non-traditionalist society (the bourgeois), esthetic tradition is a priori questionable. The authority of the new is that of the historically ineluctable" (*AT*, p. 38). "It (the concept of Modernism) does not negate earlier artistic exercises as styles have always done; however, it negates tradition as such. To that extent, it ratifies the bourgeois principle in art. Its abstractness is linked to the commodity character of art" (*ibid*). Adorno sees the new as a category of modern art as something distinct from the renewal of themes, motifs, and artistic techniques that also marked the development of art before the advent of Modernism. He does this because he feels that the category is grounded in the hostility to tradition typical of bourgeois-capitalist society. What this means, Adorno has explained elsewhere: "All of bourgeois society stands under the law of exchange, of the 'like for like,' of calculations which leave no remainder. By its very nature, exchange is something atemporal, like the ratio itself. . . . But this means no less than that memory, time and recollection are liquidated as a kind of irrational remnant."¹⁰

To begin with, we will attempt to clarify Adorno's thought for

ourselves by some examples. Newness as an aesthetic category existed long before Modernism, even as a program. The courtly minnesinger presented himself with the claim that he was singing a 'new song,' the authors of the French tragicomedy state that they are meeting the public's need for *nouveauté*.¹¹ Yet in both cases, we are dealing with something different from the claim to newness of modern art. In the case of the courtly poet and his 'new song,' not only the theme (*Minne*) but also an abundance of individual motifs already exist. Newness here means variation within the very narrow, defined limits of a genre. In French Tragicomedy, themes can be invented but a typical plot line exists, which makes the sudden turn of the action (example: a person diagnosed as dead turns out to be still alive) the identifying characteristic of the genre. The tragicomedy that comes close to what was later called popular literature already accommodates at the structural level the public's desire for shocklike effects (*surprise*). Newness becomes a calculated effect.

There is, finally, a third kind of newness that the Russian formalists proposed to elevate to a developmental law of literature: the renewal of literary techniques within a sequence of works of a literary genre. The 'mechanical' technique, i.e., the technique that is no longer perceived as form, and that therefore no longer conveys a new view of reality, is replaced by a new one that *can* accomplish this until it too becomes 'mechanical' and must be replaced in turn.¹² In all three cases, what is referred to as newness differs fundamentally from what Adorno means when he uses the concept to characterize Modernism. For here, we have neither a variation within the narrow limits of a genre (the 'new' song) nor a schema that guarantees surprise effects (tragicomedy) or the renewal of literary techniques in works of a given genre. We are dealing not with development but with a break with tradition. What distinguishes the category of the new in Modernism from earlier, perfectly legitimate uses of the same category is the radical quality of the break with what had prevailed heretofore. It is no longer artistic techniques or stylistic principles which were valid heretofore but the entire tradition of art that is negated.

This is precisely the point where Adorno's use of the category of the new must be challenged. For Adorno tends to make the historically unique break with tradition that is defined by the historical avant-garde movements the developmental principle of modern art as such. "The acceleration in the replacement of esthetic programs and schools at which the philistine smirks because he considers them

fads comes from the incessantly intensifying compulsion to reject which Valéry was the first to observe."¹³ Adorno knows, of course, that newness is the brand that identifies the eternally identical consumption goods offered the buyer (*ÄT*, p. 39). His argument becomes problematic where he claims that art "appropriates" the brand of consumer goods. "It is only by assimilating its imagery to the autonomy of his poetry that Baudelaire reaches beyond a heteronomous market. Modernism is art through mimetic adaptation to what is hardened and alienated" (*ÄT*, p. 39). Here, at the latest, Adorno pays for his failure to precisely historicize the category of the new. Since he neglects to do so, he must derive it directly from the commodity society. For Adorno, the category of the new in art is a necessary duplication of what dominates the commodity society. Since that society can survive only if the goods that are produced are also sold, it becomes necessary to constantly lure the buyer with the appeal the newness of products has. According to Adorno, art also submits to this compulsion, and in a dialectical reversal, he claims to recognize the resistance to society in the very adaptation to the law that governs it. But it must be borne in mind that in the commodity society, the category of the new is not a substantive but merely an apparent one. For far from referring to the nature of the commodities, it is their artificially imposed appearance that is involved here. (What is new about the commodities is their packaging). If art adapts to this most superficial element in the commodity society, it is difficult to see how it is through such adaptation that it can resist it. The resistance that Adorno believes he discovers in art and that is compelled to take on ever new forms can hardly be found there. It remains the positing of a critical subject which, because it thinks dialectically, can perceive the positive in the negative. It must be remembered that where art does in fact submit to the coercion to bring what is new, it can hardly be distinguished from a fad. What Adorno calls "mimetic adaptation to the hardened and alienated" has probably been realized by Warhol: the painting of 100 Campbell soup cans contains resistance to the commodity society only for the person who wants to see it there (see illustration). The Neo-avant-garde, which stages for a second time the avant-gardiste break with tradition, becomes a manifestation that is void of sense and that permits the positing of any meaning whatever. Although to do justice to Adorno's position, it must be said that "mimetic adaptation to the hardened" does not simply mean adaptation but a showing of what is the case. And it is precisely to the portrayal that has not been deformed by the concept that he attaches the hope



Neo-avant-garde: Andy Warhol, *100 Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962.
© Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, West Germany.

it might make recognizable something that would otherwise remain unperceived. That he saw the aporia that overtakes art as a result is demonstrated in this formulation: "No general judgment can be made whether someone who does away with all expression is the mouthpiece of reified consciousness or the speechless, expressionless expression that denounces that consciousness" (*AT*, p. 179).

This shows the limits of the usefulness of the category of the new when one attempts to understand the historical avant-garde movements. If we sought to understand a change in the means of artistic representation, the category of the new would be applicable. But since the historical avant-garde movements cause a break with tradition and a subsequent change in the representational system,¹⁴

the category is not suitable for a description of how things are. And this all the less when one considers that the historical avant-garde movements not only intend a break with the traditional representational system but the total abolition of the institution that is art. This is undoubtedly something 'new,' but the 'newness' is qualitatively different from both a change in artistic techniques and a change in the representational system. Although the concept of the new is not false, it is too general and nonspecific to designate what is decisive in such a break with tradition. But even as a category for the description of avant-gardiste works, it is hardly suitable, not only because it is too general and nonspecific but, more important, because it provides no criteria for distinguishing between faddish (arbitrary) and historically necessary newness. Adorno's view according to which the ever accelerating change of schools is historically necessary is also debatable. The dialectical interpretation of adaptation to the commodity society as resistance to it ignores the problem of the irritating congruence between consumption fads and what one will probably have to call art fads.

Here, another theorem of Adorno's becomes recognizable as historically conditioned, and that is the view that only the art that carries on in the wake of the avant-garde corresponds to the historical level of development of artistic techniques. Whether the break with tradition that the historical avant-garde movements brought about has not made irrelevant all talk about the historical level of artistic techniques practiced today is something to be carefully thought about. The availability of and mastery over artistic techniques of past epochs (like the old-masterly technique in certain paintings of Magritte, for example) owed to the avant-garde movements make it virtually impossible to determine a historical level of artistic procedures. Through the avant-garde movements, the historical succession of techniques and styles has been transformed into a simultaneity of the radically disparate. The consequence is that no movement in the arts today can legitimately claim to be historically more advanced *as art* than any other. That the neo-avant-garde that makes it is least able to make good on this claim was explained in the preceding section. The time is gone when one could argue against the use of realistic techniques because the historical development had passed beyond them. To the degree Adorno does so, his theoretical position is itself part and parcel of the epoch of the historical avant-garde movements. That Adorno did not see the avant-garde movements as historical but as still alive in the present points to the same conclusion.¹⁵

be imperfect, the expression of a fear of a technique that has become too powerful, and of a social organization that severely restricts the individual's scope.

The interpretations of the allegorical procedure sketched above cannot lay claim to the same place value as the concepts that explain the procedure itself, however, because as interpretations they already belong to that domain where the individual analysis of works is essential. In what follows, we will therefore attempt to continue confronting organic and nonorganic work without as yet introducing categories of interpretation. The organic work appears as a work of nature: "fine art must be clothed *with the aspect* of nature, although we recognize it to be art" (*Critique of Judgment* § 45). And George Lukács sees the task of the realist (as opposed to the avant-gardiste) as twofold: "first, the uncovering and artistic shaping of these connections (i.e., the connections within social reality) and secondly and inseparably from the former, the artistic covering of the connections that have been worked out abstractly—the sublation of the abstraction."²⁴ What Lukács calls 'covering' here is nothing other than the creation of the appearance (*Schein*) of nature. The organic work of art seeks to make unrecognizable the fact that it has been made. The opposite holds true for the avant-gardiste work: it proclaims itself an artificial construct, an artifact. To this extent, montage may be considered the fundamental principle of avant-gardiste art. The 'fitted' (*montierte*) work calls attention to the fact that it is made up of reality fragments; it breaks through the appearance (*Schein*) of totality. Paradoxically, the avant-gardiste intention to destroy art as an institution is thus realized in the work of art itself. The intention to revolutionize life by returning art to its praxis turns into a revolutionizing of art.

A different mode of reception that is a function of the construction principles of the various types of works corresponds to the difference suggested above (it goes without saying that this mode of reception need not in each and every case accord with the actual mode of reception of the individual work). The organic work intends the impression of wholeness. To the extent its individual elements have significance only as they relate to the whole, they always point to the work as a whole as they are perceived individually. In the avant-gardiste work, on the other hand, the individual elements have a much higher degree of autonomy and can therefore also be read and interpreted individually or in groups without its being necessary to grasp the work as a whole. In the case of the avant-gardiste work,

it is possible only to a limited extent to speak of the work as a whole as the perfect embodiment of the totality of possible meaning.

5. Montage

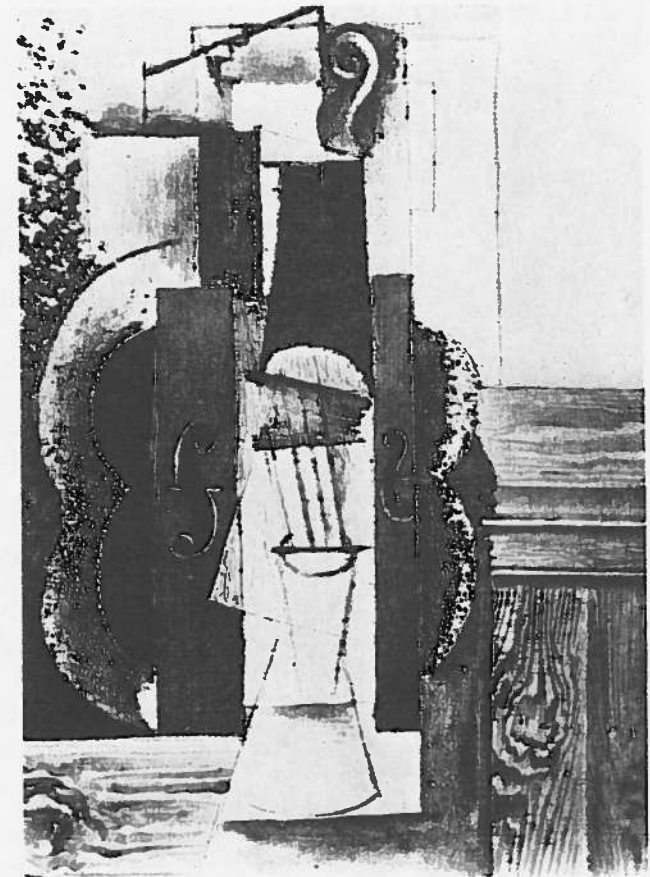
It is important to clearly understand at the very onset that the concept of montage does not introduce a new category meant to replace the concept of allegory. Rather, it is a category that permits a more precise definition of a particular aspect of the concept of allegory. Montage presupposes the fragmentation of reality and describes the phase of the constitution of the work. Since the concept plays a role not only in the fine arts and in literature but also in the film, it is necessary to first clarify what it refers to in each of the various media.

Film is the stringing together of photographic images that because of the speed with which they flow past the eye of the spectator, create the impression of movement. In the film, the montage of images is the basic *technical procedure*. It is not a specifically artistic technique, but one that lies in the medium. Nonetheless, there are differences in its use. It is not the same thing when natural movements are photographed as when simulated ones are created by cutting (for example, the leaping stone lion in *Potemkin*, which is edited from shots of a sleeping, an awakening, and a rising marble lion). In the former case, there is also a montage of individual shots but the impression created in the film only reproduces illusionistically the natural sequence of movements, whereas in the second case, it is montage that creates the impression of movement.²⁵

Although montage is thus a technical device given with the medium itself, it has the status of an artistic principle in painting. It is no accident that, apart from 'precursors' who can always be discovered after the fact, montage first emerges in connection with cubism, that movement in modern painting which most consciously destroyed the representational system that had prevailed since the Renaissance. In the *papiers collés* of Picasso and Braque that they created during the years before the First World War, we invariably find a contrast between two techniques: the 'illusionism' of the reality fragments that have been glued on the canvas (a piece of a woven basket or wallpaper) and the 'abstraction' of cubist technique in which the portrayed objects are rendered. That this contrast is a dominant interest of the two artists can be inferred from its presence



Pablo Picasso, *Still Life*, 1912. © by SPADEM, Paris/VAGA, New York, 1981.



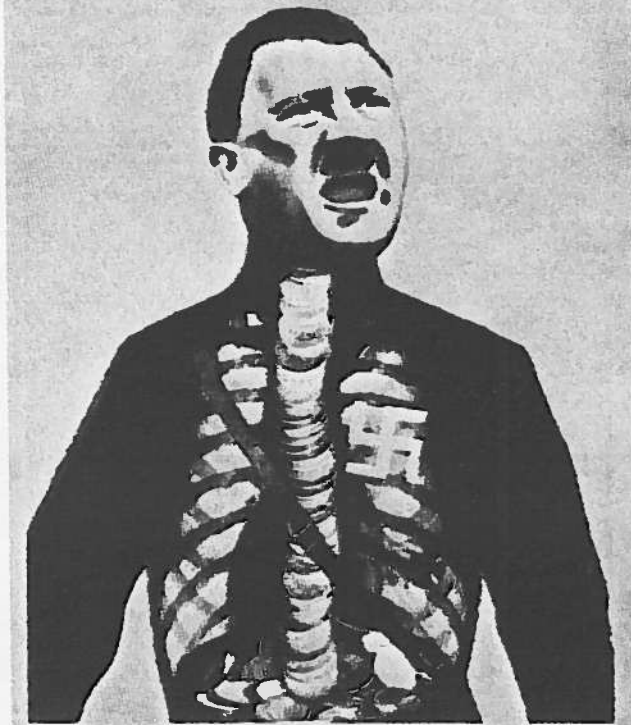
Pablo Picasso, *Violin*, 1913. © by SPADEM, Paris/VAGA, New York, 1981.

in paintings of the same period that dispense with the technique of montage.²⁶

One must proceed with great care as one attempts to define the intended aesthetic effects that may be observed in the first montage canvases. There is unquestionably an element of provocation in sticking a piece of newspaper on a painting. But this must not be overestimated, for the reality fragments remain largely subordinate to the aesthetic composition, which seeks to create a balance of individual elements (volume, colors, etc). The intent can best be defined as tentative: although there is destruction of the organic work that portrays reality, art itself is not being called into question, as it is in the historic avant-garde movements. Instead, the intent to create an aesthetic object is clear, though that object eludes judgment by traditional rules.

Heartfield's photo montages represent an entirely different type. They are not primarily aesthetic objects, but images for reading (*Lesebilder*). Heartfield went back to the old art of the emblem and used it politically. The emblem brings together an image and two different texts, an (often coded) title (*inscriptio*) and a lengthier explanation (*subscriptio*). Example: Hitler speaks, the ribcage shows an esophagus consisting of coins. Inscriptio: Adolf the Superman. Subscriptio: "swallows gold and spouts junk [literally tin]" (see illustration). Or the SPD poster: socialization marches on and, in a montage effect, some dashing gentlemen from industry with top hats and umbrellas out front and, somewhat smaller, two soldiers carrying a swastica banner. Inscriptio: Germany is not yet lost!

ADOLF - DER ÜBERMENSCH



SCHLUCKT GOLD UND REDET BLECH

John Heartfield, *Adolph - The Superman - Who Swallows Gold and Spouts Junk*, 1932. © Gertrud Heartfield.

Subscriptio: 'socialization marches' it says on the posters of the Social Democrats and at the same time they decide: socialists will be shot down'²⁷ (see illustration). The clear political statement and the antiaesthetic element characteristic of Heartfield's montages should be emphasized. In a certain sense, photomontage is close to film not only because both use photography but also because in both cases, the montage is obscured or at least made difficult to spot. This is what fundamentally distinguishes photomontage from the montage of the cubists or Schwitters'.

The preceding remarks do not of course claim to come anywhere close to exhausting the subject (cubist collage, Heartfield's photomontages); the aim was merely to give a sketch of all the elements the concept 'montage' takes in. Within the frame of a theory of the avant-garde, the use to which film puts the concept cannot become

Noch ist Deutschland nicht verloren!

Die Sozialisierungsmarschier!

Größer als die politische Gefahr ist die wirtschaftliche Notlage unseres Landes. Es lautet daher das erste Gebot: An die Arbeit! Nur Fleiß kann uns retten. Jeder Einzelne bringt uns dem Sieg näher.



„Die Sozialisierung marschier!“ haben „Sozial“-Demokraten plakatiert und haben zugleich beschlossen: Sozialisten werden niedergeschossen. Seitdem regiert die Reaktion, und heute schreiben, wie zum Hohn, National-„Sozialisten!“ (daß ich nicht lache): „Deutschland erwache!“ Umsonst! Ihr Parteien der Niedertracht habt die Rechnung ohne den Wirt gemacht. Der deutsche Arbeiter wird erwachen und den Sozialismus zur Wirklichkeit machen!

John Heartfield, *Germany is Still Not Lost!* 1932. © Gertrud Heartfield.

relevant because it is part and parcel of the medium. And photomontage will not be made the point of departure for a consideration of the concept for it occupies an intermediate position between montage in films and montage in painting, because in it, the fact that montage is being used is so often obscured. A theory of the avant-garde must begin with the concept of montage that is suggested by the early cubist collages. What distinguishes them from the techniques of composition developed since the Renaissance is the insertion of reality fragments into the painting, i.e., the insertion of material that has been left unchanged by the artist. But this means the destruction of the unity of the painting as a whole, all of whose parts have been fashioned by the subjectivity of its creator. The selection of a piece of woven basket that Picasso glues on a canvas may very well serve some compositional intent. But as a piece

of woven basket, it remains a reality fragment that is inserted into the painting tel quel, without substantive modification. A system of representation based on the portrayal of reality, i.e., on the principle that the artistic subject (the artist) must transpose reality, has thus been invalidated. Unlike Duchamp somewhat later, the cubists do not content themselves with merely showing a reality fragment. But they stop short of a total shaping of the pictorial space as a continuum.²⁸

If one cannot accept the explanation that reduces to a saving of superfluous effort the principle that calls into question a technique of painting that was accepted over the course of centuries,²⁹ it is principally Adorno's comments on the significance of montage for modern art that furnish important clues for an understanding of the phenomenon. Adorno notes the revolutionary quality of the new procedure (for once, this overused metaphor is appropriate): "The semblance (*Schein*) of art being reconciled with a heterogeneous reality because it portrays it is to disintegrate as the work admits actual fragments (*Scheinlose Trümmer*) of empirical reality, thus acknowledging the break, and transforming it into aesthetic effect" (*ÄT*, p. 232). The man-made organic work of art that pretends to be like nature projects an image of the reconciliation of man and nature. According to Adorno, it is the characteristic of the non-organic work using the principle of montage that it no longer creates the semblance (*Schein*) of reconciliation. Even if one cannot accept in every detail the philosophy lying behind it, one will not fail to endorse this insight.³⁰ The insertion of reality fragments into the work of art fundamentally transforms that work. The artist not only renounces shaping a whole, but gives the painting a different status, since parts of it no longer have the relationship to reality characteristic of the organic work of art. They are no longer signs pointing to reality, they *are* reality.

But it is doubtful that one can follow Adorno in ascribing political significance to the artistic procedures of montage. "Art wishes to confess its impotence vis-à-vis the late capitalist totality and inaugurate its abolition" (*ÄT*, p. 232). That montage was used both by the Italian futurists, of whom it can hardly be said that they wanted to abolish capitalism, and by Russian avant-gardistes after the October revolution, who were working in a developing socialist society, is not the only fact that militates against this formulation. It is fundamentally problematical to assign a fixed meaning to a procedure. Bloch's approach is more appropriate here, for he starts out from the view that the effects of a technique or procedure can vary

in historically different contexts. He distinguishes between montage in late capitalism and montage in a socialist society.³¹ Even though the concrete determinations of montage that Bloch advances are occasionally imprecise, the insight that procedures are not semantically reducible to invariant meanings must be held onto.

This means that one should try to pick those of Adorno's definitions that describe the phenomenon without assigning a fixed meaning to it. The following would be an example: "the negation of synthesis becomes a compositional principle" (*ÄT*, p. 232). On the production-aesthetic side, negation of synthesis refers to what was called rejection of reconciliation on the side of aesthetic effect. If, to check Adorno's statements, one looks again at the collages of the cubists, one can see that although they allow one to discover a principle of construction, they do not show a synthesis, in the sense of a unity of meaning (one need only recall the antithesis of 'illusionism' and 'abstraction' to which reference was made earlier).³²

When considering Adorno's interpretation of the negation of synthesis as a negation of meaning (*ÄT*, p. 231), one must remember that even the withholding of meaning is a positing of it. The automatic texts of the Surrealists, Aragon's *Paysan de Paris* and Breton's *Nadja* all show the influence of the technique of montage. It is true that at the surface level, automatic texts are characterized by a destruction of coherence. But an interpretation that does not confine itself to grasping logical connections but examines the procedures by which the text was composed can certainly discover a relatively consistent meaning in them. Similar considerations apply to the sequence of isolated events on the opening pages of Breton's *Nadja*. Although it is true that they lack the kind of narrative coherence where the last incident logically presupposes all preceding ones, there is nonetheless a connection of a different kind between events: they all follow the identical structural pattern. Formulated in the concepts of structuralism, this means that the nexus is paradigmatic, not syntagmatic. Whereas the syntagmatic pattern, the phrase, is characterized by the fact that, whatever its length, the end is always reached, the sequence is, in principle, without one. This important difference also entails two differing modes of reception.³³

The organic work of art is constructed according to the syntagmatic pattern; individual parts and the whole form a dialectical unity. An adequate reading is described by the hermeneutic circle: the parts can be understood only through the whole, the whole only through the parts. This means that an anticipating comprehension of the whole guides, and is simultaneously corrected by, the comprehension

of the parts. The fundamental precondition for this type of reception is the assumption of a necessary congruence between the meaning of the individual parts and the meaning of the whole.³⁴ This precondition is rejected by the nonorganic work, and this fact defines its decisive difference from the organic work of art. The parts 'emancipate' themselves from a superordinate whole; they are no longer its essential elements. This means that the parts lack necessity. In an automatic text that strings images together, some could be missing, yet the text would not be significantly affected. The same is true of the events reported in *Nadja*. New events of the same type could be added or some of those present could be omitted and neither additions nor omissions would make a significant difference. A change in their order is also conceivable. What is decisive are not the events in their distinctiveness but the construction principle that underlies the sequence of events.

All of this naturally has important consequences for reception. The recipient of an avant-gardiste work discovers that the manner of appropriating intellectual objectifications that has been formed by the reading of organic works of art is inappropriate to the present object. The avant-gardiste work neither creates a total impression that would permit an interpretation of its meaning nor can whatever impression may be created be accounted for by recourse to the individual parts, for they are no longer subordinated to a pervasive intent. This refusal to provide meaning is experienced as shock by the recipient. And this is the intention of the avant-gardiste artist, who hopes that such withdrawal of meaning will direct the reader's attention to the fact that the conduct of one's life is questionable and that it is necessary to change it. Shock is aimed for as a stimulus to change one's conduct of life; it is the means to break through aesthetic immanence and to usher in (initiate) a change in the recipient's life praxis.³⁵

The problem with shock as the intended reaction of the recipient is that it is generally nonspecific. Even a possible breaking through the aesthetic immanence does not insure that the recipient's change of behavior is given a particular direction. The public's reactions to Dada manifestations are typical of the nonspecificity of the reaction. It responds to the provocation of the Dadaists with blind fury.³⁶ And changes in the life praxis of the public probably did not result. On the contrary, one has to ask oneself whether the provocation does not strengthen existing attitudes because it provides them with an occasion to manifest themselves.³⁷ A further difficulty inheres in the aesthetics of shock, and that is the impossibility to make

permanent this kind of effect. Nothing loses its effectiveness more quickly than shock; by its very nature, it is a unique experience. As a result of repetition, it changes fundamentally: there is such a thing as expected shock. The violent reactions of the public to the mere appearance of the Dadaists are an example: newspaper reports had prepared the public for the shock; it expected it. Such a nearly institutionalized shock probably has a minimal effect on the way the recipients run their lives. The shock is 'consumed.' What remains is the enigmatic quality of the forms, their resistance to the attempt to wrest meaning from them. If recipients will not simply give up or be contented with an arbitrary meaning extrapolated from just a part of the work, they must attempt to understand this enigmatic quality of the avant-gardiste work. They then move to another level of interpretation. Instead of proceeding according to the hermeneutic circle and trying to grasp a meaning through the nexus of whole and parts, the recipient will suspend the search for meaning and direct attention to the principles of construction that determine the constitution of the work. In the process of reception, the avant-gardiste work thus provokes a break, which is the analogue of the incoherence (nonorganicity) of the work. Between the shocklike experience of the inappropriateness of the mode of reception developed through dealing with organic works of art and the effort to grasp the principles of construction, there is a break: the interpretation of meaning is renounced. One of the decisive changes in the development of art that the historical avant-garde movements brought about consists in this new type of reception that the avant-gardiste work of art provokes. The recipient's attention no longer turns to a meaning of the work that might be grasped by a reading of its constituent elements, but to the principle of construction. This kind of reception is imposed on the recipient because the element necessary within the organic work when it plays a role in constituting the meaning of the whole merely serves to flesh out structure and pattern in the avant-gardiste work.

By presenting the formal methods of scholarship in literature and the fine arts as the recipient's reaction to avant-gardiste works that elude traditional hermeneutic approaches, we have attempted a genetic reconstruction of the nexus between the avant-gardiste work and those methods. In this attempted reconstruction, the break between formal methods (which are directed at procedures and techniques) and hermeneutics that seeks to discover meaning had to be given special emphasis. But such a reconstruction of a genetic nexus must not be understood to mean that specific scholarly

methods should be used in dealing with certain kinds of work as, for example, the hermeneutic in the case of organic works, the formal in the case of avant-gardiste ones. Such an allocation of methods would run counter to the thought that has been outlined here. Although it is true that the avant-gardiste work imposes a new approach, that approach is not restricted to such works nor does the hermeneutic problematic of the understanding of meaning simply disappear. Rather, the decisive changes in the field of study also bring about a restructuring of the methods of scholarly investigation of the phenomenon that is art. It may be assumed that this process will move from the opposition between formal and hermeneutic methods to their synthesis, in which both would be sublated in the Hegelian sense of the term. It seems to me that this is the point that literary scholarship has reached today.³⁸

The condition for the possibility of a synthesis of formal and hermeneutic procedures is the assumption that even in the avant-gardiste work, the emancipation of the individual elements never reaches total detachment from the whole of the work. Even where the negation of synthesis becomes a structural principle, it must remain possible to conceive however precious a unity. For the act of reception, this means that even the avant-gardiste work is still to be understood hermeneutically (as a total meaning) except that the unity has integrated the contradiction within itself. It is no longer the harmony of the individual parts that constitutes the whole; it is the contradictory relationship of heterogeneous elements. In the wake of the historical avant-garde movements, hermeneutics is neither to be simply replaced by formalist procedures nor is its use as an intuitive form of understanding to be continued as before; rather, it must be modified as the new historical situation demands. It is true, however, that within a critical hermeneutics, the formal analysis of works of art takes on greater importance as the subordination of parts to the whole, postulated by traditional hermeneutics, becomes recognizable as an interpretative system that ultimately derives from classical aesthetics. A critical hermeneutics will replace the theorem of the necessary agreement of parts and whole by investigating the contradiction between the various layers and only then infer the meaning of the whole.

Chapter Five Avant-Garde and Engagement ✓

1. The Debate between Adorno and Lukács

In a theory of the avant-garde, a section on engagement is justified only if it can be shown that the avant-garde has radically changed the place value of political engagement in art, that the concept of engagement prior and subsequent to the avant-garde movements is not the same. It is our intent, in what follows, to show that this is the case. This means that the discussion of the question whether it is necessary to deal with engagement within the framework of a theory of the avant-garde cannot be separated from a discussion of the problem itself.

So far, the theory of the avant-garde has been treated at two levels: the level of the intention of the historical avant-garde movements, and that of the description of the avant-gardiste work. The intention of the historical avant-garde movements was defined as the destruction of art as an institution set off from the praxis of life. The significance of this intention is not that art as an institution in bourgeois society was in fact destroyed and art thereby made a direct element in the praxis of life, but that the weight that art as an institution has in determining the real social effect of individual works became recognizable. The avant-gardiste work is defined as nonorganic. Whereas in the organic work of art, the structural

and partially realized, see Elisabeth Lenk, *Der springende Narziss. André Breton's poetischer Materialismus* (München, 1971), p. 57 ff., 73 f.

21. One would have to investigate to what extent, after the October revolution, the Russian avant-gardists succeeded to a degree, because social conditions had changed, in realizing their intent to reintegrate art in the praxis of life. Both B. Arvatov and S. Tretjakov turn the concept of art as developed in bourgeois society around and define art quite straightforwardly as socially useful activity: "The pleasure of transforming the raw material into a particular, socially useful form, connected to the skill and the intensive search for the suitable form—those are the things the slogan 'art for all' should mean." (S. Tretjakov, "Die Kunst in der Revolution und die Revolution in der Kunst," in Tretjakov, *Die Arbeit des Schriftstellers*, ed. H. Boehncke (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1971), p. 13. "Basing himself on the technique which is common to all spheres of life, the artist is imbued with the idea of suitability. It is not by subjective taste that he will allow himself to be guided as he works on his material but by the objective tasks of production" (B. Arvatov, "Die Kunst im System der proletarischen Kultur," in Arvatov, *Kunst und Produktion*, p. 15). With the theory of the avant-garde as a point of departure, and with concrete investigations as guide, one should also discuss the problem of the extent (and of the kinds of consequences for the artistic subjects) to which art as an institution occupies a place in the society of the socialist countries that differs from its place in bourgeois society.

22. See Christa Bürger, *Textanalyse als Ideologiekritik. Zur Rezeption zeitgenössischer Unterhaltungsliteratur* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1973).

23. See W. F. Haug, *Kritik der Warenästhetik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971).

Chapter Four: The Avant-Gardiste Work of Art

1. R. Bubner, "Über einige Bedingungen gegenwärtiger Ästhetik," in *Neue Hefte für Philosophie*, number 5 (1973), p. 49.

2. The point of departure of Kant's aesthetics is not the definition of the work of art but that of the aesthetic judgment. But for such a theory, the category 'work' is not central; on the contrary, Kant can also include in his reflections what is beautiful in nature, which, not having been produced by man, does not have the character of work.

3. Th. W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music* (New York: Continuum, 1973), p. 30.

4. Th. W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 235. Abbreviated as *AT*.

5. See the exhibit *Metamorphosis of the Thing: Art and Anti-art, 1910-1970*, Brussels 1971, which was shown in Brussels and elsewhere.

6. See M. Damus, *Funktionen der bildenden Kunst im Spätkapitalismus. Untersucht anhand der 'avantgardistischen' Kunst der sechziger Jahre* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1973). The author attempts to bring out the affirmative function of neo-avant-gardiste art. Example: "Pop art . . . which seems more intimately connected with American metropolitan life than any other earlier art in the choice of its objects, its colors and its execution advertises comics, filmstars, electrical chairs, bathrooms, autos and automobile accidents, tools and comestibles of all kinds as it were, it advertises for advertising in this exhibit" (p. 76 ff.). But since Damus does not have available to him a concept of the historical avant-garde movements, he tends to neglect the divergence between Dadaism and Surrealism on the one hand, and that between those two movements and the neo-avant-gardiste art of the sixties on the other.

7. An example of this: Referring explicitly to Breton's demand that poetry should be put into practice, Gisela Dischner summarizes the intentions of concrete poetry as follows: "But the concrete work of art moves toward this utopian state, its sublation in concrete

reality" ("Konkrete Kunst und Gesellschaft," in *Konkrete Poesie. Text + Kritik*, no. 25 (January 1970), p. 41.

8. The significance here ascribed to the avant-garde movements is certainly not undisputed. In Hugo Friedrich's *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik*, which certainly claims to be a theory of modern poetry, Dadaism is not treated at all. It is only in the second, enlarged edition that we find a chronological table, which includes this comment: "1916. Dadaism is founded in Zürich." (*Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik. Von der Mitte des neunzehnten bis zur Mitte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, 2nd ed. [Hamburg: rowohlt's deutsche enzyklopädie 25/26/26a, 1968], p. 288.) This is what the reader is told about Surrealism: "The Surrealists have interest only because of their programs which resort to pseudoscientific theories to confirm a poetic procedure that came in with Rimbaud. The conviction that in the chaos of the unconscious, man can infinitely enlarge his experiences; the conviction that in the production of a 'super-reality,' the madman shows no less genius than the poet; the concept of poetry as a formless dictation from the unconscious: these are some of the items of this program. It confuses vomiting—indeed, artificially induced vomiting—with creation. No first-rate poetry came out of it. Lyric poets of superior quality who are counted among the Surrealists such as Aragon or Eluard hardly owe their poetry to that program but to the general stylistic constraint which, since Rimbaud, has made lyric poetry the language of the alogical" (*ibid.*, p. 192 f.). It must be said first of all that the perspective of the present study is not that of Friedrich's. I am concerned with understanding the important historic break in the development of the phenomenon 'art' in bourgeois society; what Friedrich cares about is "poetry of quality." The following point is more important: The thesis concerning the structural unity of poetry from Baudelaire to Benn cannot be discussed when one adopts Friedrich's concept of structure, because that concept is itself problematic. What is involved here is not the term 'structure' (in the passage quoted above, Friedrich speaks of "stylistic constraint," for example), nor the fact that his use of the term differs from its use in structuralism, which became known in Germany only subsequently. What is involved is the scholarly or scientific method marked by Friedrich's use of the concept 'structure' to refer to wholly heterogeneous phenomena: poetic techniques (the 'technique of focusing' [*Einblendungstechnik*]), themes (isolation and fear, for example), and poetological theorems of the poets (language magic, for example). The unity of these different spheres is posited with the help of the concept of structure. But one can speak of structure only where categories of the same order are brought together—which leaves the question whether the artistic procedures and techniques of the avant-garde were already fully developed in Rimbaud. This question touches on the problem of 'precursors.' Because historical accounts have a narrative structure, precursors can always only be identified after the fact. Only after certain (not all) techniques used by Rimbaud gained general currency did he become recognizable as a 'precursor' of the avant-garde. In other words, it is only through the avant-garde that Rimbaud achieved the significance that today is justly ascribed to him. (Friedrich's book is available in the English translation of Joachim Neugrosche as *The Structure of Modern Poetry* [Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1974].)

9. By Modernism, Adorno means art since Baudelaire. The concept thus takes in what directly preceded the avant-garde movements, those movements themselves, and the neo-avant-garde. Whereas I seek to lay hold of the historical avant-garde movements as a historically definable phenomenon, Adorno's point of departure is modern art as the only legitimate art of our time. By constructing a history of the concept 'modern' and its opposites, H. R. Jauss has sketched a history of the experience of epochal transition from late antiquity to Baudelaire: "Literarische Tradition und gegenwärtiges Bewusstsein der Modernität," in Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 11-66.

10. Th. W. Adorno, "Was bedeutet Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit," in Adorno, *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit*, ed. G. Kadelbach (Frankfurt, 1970), p. 13.

11. On *nouveauté* in tragicomedy, see P. Bürger, *Die frühen Komödien Pierre Corneilles und das französische Theater um 1630. Eine wirkungsästhetische Analyse* (Frankfurt: 1971), pp. 48-56.

12. See J. Tynianov, *Die literarischen Kunstmittel und die Evolution in der Literatur* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), p. 7-60. For this specific reference, see especially p. 21.

13. Th. W. Adorno, "Thesen über Tradition," in Adorno, *Obne Leitbilder. Parva Aesthetica* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), p. 33.

14. In contrast to the constant change of individual *means* of representation, which marks the development of art, the change of the *system* of representation (even where it extends over a longer period) is a historically decisive event. P. Francastel has studied such a change of the system of representation (*Etudes de sociologie de l'art* [Paris: Bibl. Médiations 74, 1970]). During the course of the fifteenth century, a representational system developed in painting characterized by linear perspective and the uniform organization of the space of the painting. Whereas in medieval painting, differences in the sizes of figures referred to their varying *importance*, they indicate, since the Renaissance, the position of the figures in a space imagined according to the principles of Euclidean geometry. This representational system, which is only being schematically characterized here, has dominated occidental art for five hundred years. Early in the twentieth century, it loses its obligatory validity. Already in Cézanne, linear perspective no longer has the significance it still had for the Impressionists, who clung to it although they dissolved shapes and forms. The universal validity of the traditional system of representation had been broken.

15. It is logical that conscious neo-avant-gardistes should seek to ground the claim they make in connection with their production by arguments that closely follow Adorno's. A representative of concrete poetry, Chris Bezzel, writes as follows: "a revolutionary writer is not one who invents semantic-poetic sentences which have as their content and aim the necessary revolution but one who uses poetic means to revolutionize poetry itself as the model of the revolution . . . measured by the degree of late-bourgeois alienation, the created alienation of art from repressive reality is a great propulsive force. It is dialectical for it unstoppably widens the gap between esthetic and real alienation" ("dichtung und revolution," in *Konkrete Poesie. Text + Kritik*, no. 25 [January 1970], p. 35 f.). Adorno himself is undoubtedly more skeptical as regards "the great propulsive force" of neo-avant-gardiste art. In the *Ästhetische Theorie*, some passages even admit the total ambivalence of such works and thereby simultaneously make possible their critique.

16. E. Köhler, *Der literarische Zufall, das Mögliche und die Notwendigkeit* (München, 1973), chap. III; this quote is on p. 81.

17. On the significance of the 'set' as a production-aesthetic category, see P. Bürger, *Der französische Surrealismus. Studien zum Problem der avant-gardistischen Literatur* (Frankfurt, 1971), p. 154 ff. On what follows, see the analysis there of Aragon's *Paysan de Paris*.

18. Th. W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 66.

19. W. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977). To be referred to as *Origin* in what follows.

20. As an instrument in the interpretation of Breton's work, I used Benjamin's concept of allegory, in *Der französische Surrealismus*, chap. XI, p. 174 ff. To my knowledge, G. Lukács was the first to point out that Benjamin's concept of allegory is applicable to avant-gardiste works ("The Ideology of Modernism," in Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (London: Merlin Press, 1962), pp. 40-43. It is not just the reference to Expressionism in the introduction to *Origin* that shows that Benjamin's study derived from the interest

in understanding the literature of his own time. The matter has been explicitly testified to by Asja Lacić: "He also said that his study was not just academic research but had a direct connection with topical problems of contemporary literature. He emphasized expressly that in his study, he had referred to the drama of the Baroque as a phenomenon that was analogous to Expressionism. That is the reason, he said, that I have treated the artistic problematic of allegory, emblems and ritual at such length" (Hildegard Brenner, ed., *Revolutionäre im Beruf* [München, 1971], p. 44.)

21. On the problem of the "semanticizing of literary procedures," see H. Günther, "Funktionsanalyse der Literatur," in J. Kolbe, ed., *Neue Ansichten einer künftigen Germanistik*, (München: Hanser, 1973), p. 179 ff.

22. The behavior of the Surrealist self as Aragon portrays it in the *Paysan de Paris* (1926) is governed by the refusal to submit to the constraints of the social order. The loss of practical possibilities of action that is caused by the lack of a social position creates a vacuum, ennui. From the Surrealist perspective, ennui is not viewed negatively but rather as the decisive condition for that transformation of everyday reality which is what the Surrealists are after.

23. It is regrettable that Gisela Steinwachs's study (*Mythologie des Surrealismus oder die Rückverwandlung von Kultur in Natur* [Neuwied/Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971], p. 71 ff.), which correctly identifies the phenomenon, does not have at its command descriptive categories that would make possible its precise understanding.

24. G. Lukács, "Es geht um den Realismus," F. J. Raddatz, ed., in *Marxismus und Literatur. Eine Dokumentation* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1969), vol. 11, p. 69 f.

25. On the problem of montage in film, see W. Pudowkin, "Über die Montage," in V. K. Witte, ed., *Theorie des Kinos* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972), pp. 113-30; and Sergei M. Eisenstein, "Dialektische Theorie des Films," in D. Prokop, ed., *Materialien zur Theorie des Films. Ästhetik, Soziologie, Politik*, (München, 1971), pp. 65-81. See Eisenstein's "Montage of Attractions" in Jay Leyda, trans., ed., *The Film Sense* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1947), pp. 230-33, and "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form" in Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed., trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1949), pp. 45-63.

26. See, for example, Picasso's *Un Violon* (1913), Kunstmuseum, Berne, Switzerland.

27. *John Heartfield Dokumentation*, ed. by the Arbeitsgruppe Heartfield (Berlin: Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, 1969/70), pp. 43 and 31.

28. J. Wissmann, who gives a useful overview of the use of collage in modern painting, describes the effect of cubist collage in these terms: the elements that "signal reality" take on the task of "making readable for a viewer those pictorial signs that have become abstract." The aim of this technique is not illusionism in the traditional sense. "What is achieved is an alienation which plays in a highly nuanced form with the antithesis between art and reality," where the contradictions between what is painted and what is real "are left to the viewer to resolve" ("Collagen oder die Integration von Realität im Kunstwerk," in *Immanente Ästhetik. Ästhetische Reflexion* [München: Fink, 1966], p. 333 f.). The point of view from which collage is considered here is that of "immanent aesthetics;" the problem is that of the "integration of reality in the work of art." Barely one page of this lengthy essay is devoted to Hausmann's and Heartfield's photo montages. But it is precisely the work of these men that would have provided an occasion to test the correctness of the view that "an integration of reality in the work of art" occurs in collage, or whether it is not rather the case that the collage principle strongly resists such integration, and that such resistance makes possible a new type of engaged art. In this connection, see S. Eisenstein's reflections:

Instead of a static "reflection" of an event with all possibilities for activity within the limits of the event's logical action, we advance to a new plane—free montage of arbitrarily selected, independent (within the given composition and the subject links that hold the influencing actions together) attractions—all from the stand of establishing certain final thematic effects—this is montage of attractions. ("The Montage of Attractions," in *The Film Sense*, p. 232).

See also Karla Hielscher, "S. M. Eisensteins Theaterarbeit beim Moskauer Proletkult (1921-1924)," in *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, no. 13 (December 1973), p. 68 ff.

29. See Herta Wescher, *Die Collage. Geschichte eines künstlerischen Ausdrucksmittels* (Köln, 1968), p. 22, which explains Braque's introduction of collage by his desire "to save himself the laborious process of painting." A short overview of the development of collage, which correctly insists on the significance of the technique is provided by E. Roters, "Die historische Entwicklung der Collage in der bildenden Kunst," in *Prinzip Collage* (Neuwied/Berlin, 1968), pp. 15-41.

30. On the connection between Adorno's aesthetic theory and the philosophy of history developed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Herder & Herder, 1972), see Th. Baumeister/J. Kulenkampff, "Geschichtsphilosophie und philosophische Ästhetik. Zu Adornos 'Ästhetischer Theorie,'" in *Neue Hefte für Philosophie* no. 5 (1973), pp. 74-104.

31. E. Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*. Erweiterte Ausgabe: Gesamtausgabe, 4. (Frankfurt, 1962), pp. 221-28.

32. W. Iser has written on montage in modern lyric poetry: "Image und Montage. Zur Bildkonzeption in der imagistischen Lyrik und in T. S. Eliots Waste Land," in *Immanente Ästhetik und ästhetische Reflexion* (München: Fink, 1966), pp. 361-93. Starting from a definition of the poetic image as an "illusionary foreshortening of reality" (to apperception, the image only gives one individual element of the object), Iser defines montage as the "side by side" (overlapping) of images that refer to an identical object, and describes their effect as follows: "the montage of images destroys the illusionary finiteness of 'images' and does away with the confusion between genuine phenomena and the form of their apperception. That reality cannot be depicted is shown by the overlapping (or intersecting) images in the form of an abundance of extremely bizarre views which, precisely because of their individual character, are capable of being produced ad infinitum" (p. 393). That reality cannot be pictured or represented is not the result of an interpretation here: it is assumed to be a fact that montage reveals. Instead of inquiring why it is that reality appears as something that cannot be pictured, the fact that it can not becomes an ultimate certainty for the interpreter. This places Iser at the diametric opposite of the theory of reflection (or mimesis). Even in the images of traditional lyric poetry, he discovers the realist illusion ("the confusion of genuine phenomena with the form of their apperception").

33. The application of the categories of paradigm and syntagm to Breton's *Nadja* is the most persuasive part of Gisela Steinwachs's study (*Mythologie des Surrealismus*). Its shortcoming is that in many instances, she contents herself with the search for analogies between surrealist motifs and various structuralist approaches whose cognitive value remains problematical.

34. On the hermeneutic circle, see H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 235 ff. How the dialectic of whole and parts in the interpretation of works can degenerate into a schema "which implements time and again the unrestricted authority of the whole of the individual element," is shown by M. Warnke, "Weltanschauliche Motive in der kunstgeschichtlichen Populärliteratur," in Warnke, ed., *Das Kunstwerk zwischen Wissenschaft und Weltanschauung* (Gütersloh, 1970), p. 80 ff.

35. On the problem of shock in Modernism, see the stimulating comments by W. Ben-

jamin, though their explanatory value would still have to be tested: Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, p. 160 ff. In English: "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, introd. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1968; paperback reprint, Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 155-200.

36. See the consistently lively account by R. Hausmann, valuable especially because of the many reprints of documents it contains: K. Riha, G. Kämpf, ed., *Am Anfang war Dada* (Steinbach/Giessen, 1972).

37. Brecht's estrangement theory is the most consistent attempt to overcome what is nonspecific in the effect of shock and to deal with this problem dialectically, as it were.

38. See P. Bürger, "Zur Methode. Notizen zu einer dialektischen Literaturwissenschaft," in Bürger, *Studien zur französischen Frühaufklärung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972), pp. 7-21, and P. Bürger, "Benjamin's 'rettende Kritik.' Vorüberlegungen zum Entwurf einer Kritischen Hermeneutik," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* N.F. 23 (1973), pp. 198-210. I propose to deal with the theoretical problems that a synthesis of formalism and hermeneutics would pose within the framework of a critique of methods.

Chapter Five: Avant-Garde and Engagement

1. See Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (London: Merlin Press, 1962).

2. See Th. W. Adorno, "Erpresste Versöhnung. Zu Georg Lukács: 'Wider den missverständenen Realismus,'" in Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur II* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963), pp. 152-87.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. 1, p. 517.

4. See also the 'concluding comment' in this book.

5. The two elements of Lukács's theory of the avant-garde, i.e., historical necessity of the genesis of avant-gardist art and its rejection on aesthetic grounds, are also recognizable in the essay, "Narrate or Describe," in Arthur D. Kahn, ed., *Writer and Critic and other Essays* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1970), pp. 110-48. Lukács contrasts the description, which is functionally subordinate to the whole in Balzac, and its treatment in Flaubert and Zola, where it exists for its own sake. He refers to this as "the product of a social development," but also criticizes it: "necessity can also be the necessity for the artistically false, distorted, and corrupt."

6. See G. Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (London, 1962).

7. It may seem surprising that Adorno should endorse the concept of technical progress in art, considering that together with Horkheimer (in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [Herder & Herder, 1972]), he showed the radical difficulties in technical progress: although technical progress opens up the possibility of an existence more worthy of man, that is by no means its inevitable result. The diverse attitude toward industrial technique on the one hand, and artistic technique on the other is owing to Adorno's separation of the two. See B. Lindner, "Brecht/Benjamin/Adorno. Über Veränderungen der Kunstproduktion im wissenschaftlich-technischen Zeitalter," in H. L. Arnold, ed., *Bertold Brecht I*, (München: Sonderband der Reihe *Text + Kritik*, 1972), pp. 14-36. But one certainly cannot reproach Critical Theory with identifying "the economic production relations with the technical structure of the productive forces" (Lindner, p. 27). Critical Theory reflects the historical experience that the unfolding of the productive forces does not necessarily break up the production relations, that, on the contrary, it may perfectly well make available the means for the control of man. "The signature of the age is the preponderance of production relations over the forces of production which have long since made a mockery of them" (Th. W. Adorno, "Einleitungsvortrag zum 16. deutschen Soziologentag," in Th. W. Adorno, ed., *Verband-*