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Communicating Vessels: Forms, Politics, History

Interview with Darko Suvin

by Sezgin Boynik

Sezgin Boynik: *Can you tell in which way the discussions concerning Brecht and Formalist issues in late fifties and beginning of sixties were related to politics and to Marxist theories, in general and particularly in Yugoslavia?*

Darko Suvin: I started writing about literature, fiction, poetry and drama roughly in the second half of the fifties. I finished my studies in '55/56 and then went to army service. So I started to write somewhat as a student, but mainly after 1957. At that moment I didn't know much about old battles (socialist realism versus modernism) that had been fought and won by modernism, more or less. If you read Sveta Lukić's book *Savremena jugoslavenska literatura 1945-1965* (published as a whole in 1968, but his theses were known earlier) you will see these things. The battle was won on the basis of a compromise between the Left intellectuals and the Party politicians. The political top was not much interested in arts or literature, they realised these were politically of secondary importance if you hold all newspapers, radio, and TV. So they offered a *quid pro quo*: as long as you writers and intellectuals don't question present-day power; we will let you in peace to write in whatever form you wish. This implicit compromise had two components (of course I realised this retrospectively, I didn't know it then): first of all there was a genuine revulsion against the arbitrary Stalinism, both on the top of the party (Kidrič, Djilas, Tito, Kardelj, probably also Ranković, but he never spoke much publicly, so you couldn't guess what he really thought) and in the masses -- not so much in between, in the middle party cadres where Stalinism was strongest. And second, the central Party Agit-Prop commission lost all effective power even during Djilas's heading it in the early '50s, it was dismantled in the drive against USSR Statism, and especially after his ouster in 1954.   Even

though Agit-Prop commissions remained in each federal republic's central committee, they didn't do too much, they were more or less *vatrogasci* (they put out fires), but they weren't good enough to start any fire on their own. I knew some guys in the Agit-Prop of the Croatian central committee, for example Marin Franičević, a good poet from Dalmatia in his youth, or Vojin Jelić, from Kninska Krajina, a very interesting and tormented novelist – but they just didn't know what to do in cultural politics, and they had practically no research apparatus. Of course they were all in the Partisans and many of them, depending on age, in the Left underground movement even before the 1941 occupation by the Axis. They were all brought up on Lukács in the best case and Todor Pavlov (a Zhdanovian esthetician in USSR) in the worst case. The best knew also what Second International people wrote about culture, such as Plekhanov and Mehring, and some Lenin**,** as filtered by Stalinism. And they knew oodles of Engels, and of course of Stalin. Retrospectively, Engels is all that remains from those theories, and he never wrote specifically about the arts (though when he incidentally did, he could be illuminating, I remember a bit about Ibsen having the background of values from free Norwegian peasantry). I think also some Lukàcs about French realism remains; his really first-rate work up to the mid-20s we didn't know, I discovered it in the 60s. Engels is a great genius in my opinion, but he was not applicable without great changes to a mutated capitalism and world: a great genius with great mistakes, such as finding dialectics in nature or believing in scientism.

   In brief, the climate in SFR Yugoslavia was in the 1950s very open, right up to the late 60s, to all kind of neo-Marxism. We young ones were at that time calling it an 'open Marxism': I theorised the openness in theatre

by using Brecht's "open forms" (also the title of Eco's first theoretical book, which I used). It was like a plant on which you could graft many new things -- the Soviet selectionist genetician Michurin was very popular, also the American Burbank. For example, I remember one of the things which made me less than popular in the Faculty of Philosophy (that is, Arts) in Zagreb: we had a debate on the first theory of literature which was published in Zagreb, based on an introductory book by several hands coordinated and edited by two professors, Zdenko Škreb and Fran Petre – the former was a Germanist and the latter a real "cemented" or hard-line Slovenian Party member, follower of Ziherl, the Slovenian Zhdanov, who fortunately didn't have that much power. So we had a discussion in *Hrvatsko filološko društvo* (the Philological Society, a kind of professional organisation of people dealing with "language arts") at the beginning of the 1960s. I was then a young assistant in Dramaturgy and Theatre Arts, I stood up and said, "The whole book is based on the idea of difference and interaction between form and content, could you please explain to me how do these work in literature? Is it for example like a glass of water, the glass is form and the water is content? And if so, how we could differentiate the form from the content in the novel?" They were extremely offended, because they had no answer; and I suppose I got the reputation of a disrespectful extremist. What we learned actually is what every critic already knows, that you cannot disjoin these two. If you write about anything, say in my case about Krleža or Brecht, you start where you can, what struck you as salient when reading, because criticism is not a science but an art, and you go where you can, following certain protocols of evidence and consistency. The basic modernist idea, which was theorized by the Formalists, is that the *izjava* (the message) of any work

of art is to be understood through its form, and at that point the relationship of form to content becomes uninteresting. You can say that what remains from content are themes, for example Balzac has a theme of avarice in *Gobseck*. But the same theme would have a totally different effect in another novel by Balzac, not to speak of Molière, because it was written up or about in different way: in other words, it had a different form.

My generation came to know about Russian Formalists through the work of Aleksandar Flaker in Russian studies, who was my personal friend. I knew him from political conferences before I came to university; he was a very active and engaged researcher. He published a fantastic book, *Heretici i sanjari (Heretics and Dreamers)* in 1954, which was an overview of all non-socialist-realist writings in Russia in twenties. Also there were other critical approaches which Škreb mediated from postwar West Germany, such as those by Wolfgang Kayser, maybe second-rate stuff but useful in order to know what is grotesque and such studies (it is actually important if you think that half of Krleža, our great writer, is grotesque, not to speak of Swift or satire in general). So there were no problems in grafting other plants on the sturdy tree of Marxism, we had no fear; we thought that truth will win because of its inner persuasiveness, we didn't need a police, we just needed to upgrade the plant through its own inner juices. In short, the most important thing my generation learned – say in movies through Eisenstein – is that any statement about art, including the politics of art, is to be arrived at through form. Somewhere I wrote that this is "the ABC of any materialist approach to art," but there are 25 other letters, then you go on, to DEF etc. But if you don't begin with Formalism you don't get anywhere, while if you do begin

with this, you have more chances to deal with your material and ideological circumstances.

SB: *While describing relation between Marxism and Formalism in Yugoslavia you said that you were then not scared by innovations, can you develop that?*

DS: Of course we thought of ourselves as the avant-garde, as friends of the novelty. We are the novelty in backward peasant and patriarchal Balkans, and therefore we were communists. That was the idea in the young Left intelligentsia. I theorised this later for SF literature by adapting for it Ernst Bloch's Novum.

The problems in the Party were different; they had their hands full with economy and foreign policy. Also, culturally speaking the Party was very provincial in Yugoslavia; they just didn't know what was happening in the world. For example I was a kind of *protégé* of Marijan Matković, a prominent middle generation dramatist who was editor of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences' periodical *Forum* in Zagreb where I published. He was a "krležijanac" (disciple of Krleža), formally rather a pre-Modernist realist, and an extremely loyal fellow-traveller of socialism. I gave him some stuff about Brecht, and he made a grimace and exclaimed, 'Darko, Brecht in Yugoslavia!?!?'. This was ambiguous, maybe we weren't yet up to Brecht, maybe he was too severe for us, but at any rate he was asynchronous to us (in his opinion; I disagreed). Or when I translated Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade* in the early 60s, he refused to print it: 'I cannot spend socialist money for a piece against socialism', was his reply. I tried to persuade him that the debate between Marat and Sade was exactly one of the things we needed to graft on our tree, but I failed.

SB: *You have published in 1965 a text on Brecht where you say that in Yugoslavia there is still resistance toward Brecht …[1]*

DS: The staid theatre people hated him, both the bourgeois and the Party...

SB: *…yes, but also you say that in Yugoslavia in the mid-sixties Brecht was thought of as too sociological, and not enough Formalist to be taken into consideration.*

DS: Well that is my vocabulary. Because in Russia in the twenties there was a big battle between sociologists and Formalists. The synthesis of that was a kind of socio-formalism with people like Bakhtin and Voloshinov. You may know that Bakhtin, who was censored, has published much of his writing under the name of his friends Voloshinov and Medvedev; at any rate the decisive ideas in those books were his. Some reactionary US Bakhtinists say that these things published under the name of Voloshinov and Medvedev are Marxist and Bakhtin was anti-Marxist, so he wouldn't have written them. But this is nonsense, Cold-War stupidity. Even Formalists like Eikhenbaum, Tinyanov, and Shklovsky were also interested in sociological aspects and Marxism. I think that both approaches in itself are insufficient, both Formalism and sociologism. In literary studies, sociology means relationship of writings to its own production and politics;

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1   "Naši 'socijalistički larpurlartisti', kako ga više ne mogu, kao što su to ždanovci činili, nazivati formalistom, sada mu paradoksalno zamjeraju sociologiziranje, nedovoljni formalizam, neučestvovanje u 'vječno-ljudskim' problemima'." Darko Suvin, 'Paradoks o čovjeku na pozornici svijeta (praksa i teorija Berta Brechta)', Forum: *Casopis Odjela za suvremenu književnost Jugoslavenske Akademije Znanosti i Umjetnosti*, 1965: 7-8, p. 586. (*ed. note*)

Formalism means inner workings of writings (or art) in general. The inner workings of art apply in the moment of writing and in the moment of reading, so in the moment of production or in the moment of consumption. But of course these workings are shaped by so-called sociology, that is to say by ideology: what and how do you choose to write, what and how do you understand. Therefore you cannot have a Chinese wall and say, here is society and politics and there is pure art. Pure art sounds fine, but it is only a *fin de siècle* fantasy, at the end of 19th century, *l'art pour art*. I think this is intrinsically nonsense. There is a group of poems in English called "nonsense poetry"; that is great fun, but it's not really nonsense, it is just a refusal of dominant sense. Or for example *zaum* poetry in early 20th Century Russia; or even *Alice in Wonderland*, one of the greatest books in English literature. It does not make sense only in the sense of Dickens and George Eliot, or even worse of bourgeois and if you wish capitalist positivism. But surely there are other ways of making sense.

SB: *Apart from not having sense, these limit cases of literature always have some social background. They are always somehow related to the ideology.*

DS: Partly what they want to do is some experimental probing of limits of literature. For example, is it true that the limit of poetry is a word? Well maybe not, maybe it is a syllable. But at least it is a valuable experiment, even if it is proved as a negative experiment.

SB: *In which way it was negative?*

DS: A "negative experiment" in science is a failed one which is useful because it points out which way not to go further. And the limit of poetry is a word, not a syllable, because the syllable has no semantic dimension. But why not try it and see how it works, as say in Khlebnikov. I see no problem for anybody in power to let the kids play with these kinds of experimentations. By the way if you look at the political attitude of Futurists in Russia, they were communist *sputniks* .

SB: *What do you mean by communist sputnik?*

DS: The original Russian meaning of *sputnik*, before the little machine sending beep-beep from the sky in 1957, was "fellow traveller": one who will go together with, accompany the Communist Party, in Croatoserbian *suputnici*. They were intellectuals, much too undisciplined (maybe fortunately, we have to say today) to be Party members, but agreeing with the Party line. I read in a book published in Russian in sixties, called *Lenin and Literature*, how Lunacharsky persuaded Lenin to go to a recital of Mayakovsky in 1921. After the recital Lenin said that it was very interesting; it was "hooligan communism" – *khuligan* in the very Russian sense as dangerous people on the margins of society, bohemians… Which I would gloss as: why not bohemian communism, each class should have their communism! If there is workers' communism, intellectuals' communism, why shouldn't there be a bohemian communism? We are all alienated by class society, even the workers are no saints... So why not put together our fragments and hope something more coherent will emerge? Consider that bohemians as a social class were anti-bourgeois, they were poor for one thing and also despised (if you see the opera *La bohème*, taken from a French novel, they are all starving). They are poor because they still don't want to or cannot sell their services to the bourgeoisie. Sometimes they are on the Right, mostly on a kind of anarchoid Left, but always against the

dominant class. Considering this, we can talk about the contribution of the bohemian class to the revolution.

It would be interesting to examine swearword nouns in general, the obverse of your positive slogans. *Bugger*, say, the contemptible word for homosexuals, came from the French *bougre* applied to Albigensian heretics, whose religion was supposed to stem from Bulgaria (*bogomils)*. Hooligan itself was adopted from Irish Gaelic as an English slur on the Irish rebels (*houlihan*). And *loot* is Hindustani slang for plunder, which entered English in 18th Century when the East India Company simply appropriated the Moghul emperor's treasury, evaluated today at 273 million British pounds (of which the modest company chief in India Clive took personally only 8%)**.** The same holds for *thug*, only it was Indian rebels that time (the "Thuggee" sect). By the way Lenin and the Dadaists met in Zurich in 1916 …

SB: *I am not sure whether they met, but they were living in same quarter in Zurich in 1916.*

DS: Well, yes, we have no data they met (except in Stoppard's play).[2] But why were they living in same quarter? They were against the war, they were against imperialism and the whole old world, and they had to flee where they could. These two groups were what the surrealists would call 'communicating vessels'. To refuse that kind of energy is one of the greatest mistakes of later Leninism, not to speak of Stalinism: it refuses the energies available to it, it refuses present energies from workers and from intellectuals, because the new class thinks it is enough to have power. Speaking in Gramsci's terms, they had constraint by force, but they didn't have a consensus. The communist party in Russia had a majority consensus in 1917/1918, and following the Civil War which they won, this consensus lasted until roughly 1926 or so. After that the party ruled mostly by police terror. Why? Because they lost the energies from below – of course, not only or even mainly from the marginals but from the workers and intelligentsia (the peasants were never wholeheartedly for communists in Russia, as different from Yugoslavia, where they were the pillar of communist power from 1942 to 1949, the ill-guided attempt at working cooperatives).

SB: *My understanding of formalism is related to what you are explaining now. If intrinsic processes are not sufficient to explain the transformations happening to an art form, then in any case we will need some extrinsic factors such as a social field or ideology.*

DS: I think that terms such as intrinsic and extrinsic are misleading. Adorno once said "The social is where it hurts". That is a gloomy way to put it, but the social is primarily inside us.

SB: *I agree with that. But I want to say that many formalists and socio-formalists were dealing also with explicitly political issues. For example LEF in 1924/5 published a special issue on 'Lanage of Lenin', the Futurist Kruchenykh published one year earlier small booklet with same title, etc, which is somehow related to the limits of the language, what we were talking about earlier, but also with the effectiveness of that language. So in any case even intrinsic Formalists were not entirely interested just with the shape of the artistic forms.*

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2   Tom Stoppard, *Travesties*, London: Faber & Faber, 1978.

DS: But these were only their personal opinions in politics. What matters is that if you want to understand anything in art, whether it is music, painting or especially literature, you have to talk about transformation. Writing is composed of the stuff of everyday life, because we use language in our everyday life communication, but it is composed in such a different way that it gains a cognitive autonomy: you can understand life in and around you better. When I was starting to write in fifties and in sixties the best people called this structuralism, or structuralist poetics. My dissertation on Ivo Vojnović has the subtitle 'genesis and structure', because I found I had to do a genesis, which I think is a very good thing in a dissertation. I would recommend to any doctorate to deal with the historical coming about of its subject-text: look at biography, letters, and all available material of its incubation period, which will help to understand the genesis. Then you understand in which situation it was produced, and then you can see what it is, how it reproduces and changes elements of its environment in what is actually a form, or structure. Structure is the sophisticated French version, maybe sublation, of form. Structure deals with limitations or inner constrains of the formal properties (as Lévi-Strauss described them in his work on kinship relations). The problem with a rigid understanding of structure is that it evacuates history: how do structures then change? In fact, how did they originally even come about? This is connected with the issue of variations, to begin with in the Darwinist development of species. I have in literature – and especially in theatre performance, where this is a focus -- always been fascinated by variants. What is an original, what is a variant? I have arrived at the position that I don't think there is any original: this is a theological problem

SB: *I didn't understand why it is a theological problem…*

DS: Well in monotheism your origin is in God, all origin comes from God. By the way I am in a perverse way rather fond of some well-articulated theologies, such as some variants of the Catholic and even more the Buddhist ones. Some of these variants lasted for half a millennium or longer as the only way of systematic thinking available in important civilizations, so they got to some insights that shouldn't be sneezed at but maybe taken over and re-functioned. But if you are atheist then there is no origin; there are just variations, Epicure's aleatoric (that is, historical and situational) swerves of atoms.

SB: *Isn't that also one of the main questions of Formalism which is dealing with historical transformations, or historicism? But before that I would like to know what you think about Formalist involvement with the literary movements. Because I have an impression that the advancement of their methodological approach had partly to do with their involvement in the most advanced literary experiments. For example Jakobson wrote a book about Khlebnikov, Shklovsky on zaum, and so on, they were always engaged with the newest forms in artistic productions.*

DS: They were a theoretical parallel to the Futurists, again a case of "communicating vessels". But then they had also other interests. What was the supreme paradigm of Shklovsky in the novel? It was Laurence Sterne. Why? Because *Tristram Shandy* is always written in variants: my uncle Toby said that, and afterwards he said this, while this was happening, then it turned out like that, etc. It is sequence of variants or cases; it foregrounds what is hidden in a smooth pre-planned plot. In Aristotelian *Poetics* this is called episodes,

situations not fully defined by the overall plot but with a certain autonomy, as in Brecht. All Formalists were fascinated by Gogol, a grotesque writer who proceeds by episodes, as Bakhtin was by Dostoevsky. The Formalists started by analysing and deconstructing phonetic features of poetry through Futurists and similar vanguardists, but then they had to invent their forebears. So who can serve better in Russian literature than Pushkin, Gogol or Dostoevsky? In the novel they reacted against realism, just as Mayakovsky's plays reacted against Stanislavsky.

SB: *Also they were against Symbolism, and especially literary theory coming from Symbolists.*

DS: Symbolism is an inadequate response to realism. It's a kind of uncle who tried to kill his brother but didn't manage: they were not successful, we the sons we will kill the father (remember the Russian fascination for the *Hamlet* constellation!). Basically they downgraded the Tolstoy-Turgenev line, wrongly believing that even Chekhov fit into it (but that was so only in Stanislavsky's interpretation of his plays, which Chekhov disliked). Now here is a dilemma: as you know, Lenin loved Tolstoy, and he wrote a very interesting essay about Tolstoy, regarding him as a "mirror" – the metaphor is dubious – of the peasants' horizons in the budding of Russian revolution, which in my opinion is correct, though insufficient. It is a pity that Lenin didn't have time to be a literary critic; he would have been a very good one. So we have (in Russia and elsewhere) in fact two vanguards in modernism: one is the Leninist party, and the other is Modernist artistic movements. It is very interesting to see the relationships between these two vanguards: except for a few examples, they generally refused to learn from each other, they were arrogant or suspicious. One exception on the

political side is Gramsci, who understood the role of culture (in the widest sense, including advertising and brainwashing) very well, and was even a quite interesting theatre critic. Another exception on the intellectual side is Brecht, who tried very much to collaborate with worker choruses and the communist party. To my mind, the two most important Marxist thinkers after – and in the wake of but not confined to – Lenin of the 20th Century are in fact Gramsci and Brecht. I could add Benjamin but he is very much influenced also by Jewish mysticism and the Frankfurters: unthinkable without Marxism and very usable in it, but not quite inside it.

But who had the main influence in the workers' choirs for whom Brecht was writing his plays? It was the social-democratic party, not the communist party. Both Brecht and Benjamin thought hard about becoming members of communist party, but in the end they did not formally join, they were *sputniks*. They didn't want to be members of a party already rather ossified in 1928/29 when they were seriously thinking of joining. At that time and in the thirties the German Communist Party was in terrible shape, all good people were kicked out by Zinoviev and later Stalin, or they were exhausted by fractional sects and fights. But ideologically Brecht considered himself as communist; or, as one of his friends described Brecht in USA in 1941-1947: "a party consisting of one person, closely allied with the communists". I think this good definition of a *sputnik* is the best political definition of Brecht. As the early feminists were talking about a failed marriage of Marxism and Feminism, in general here too we have a failed marriage of Marxist avant-garde and artistic avant-garde. Surely this has to do with arrogance on both sides: partly by politicians who didn't have sufficiently sensitive antennas to understand

Brecht and Benjamin, or Pilnyak, Belyi, and even Mayakovsky, who was rudely criticized for his theatre plays, which I think contributed to his suicide.

SB: *I have looked at the index of 'Lenin on Literature and Art' book where Mayakovsky is mentioned five or six times in very contradictory terms. Sometimes Lenin got furious at his poems, and in another instance Lenin thought that his poems are a better contribution to economy than the dull economist is offering.*

DS: That's the poem about too many conferences, *Perezasedavshiesia*. It is a sociologically interesting but I think innocent little poem, not very important. Though I may be wrong, it has a wonderful Gogolian grotesque image of the bureaucrat splitting in half to go to two conferences.

SB: *Going back to your previous answer that in fifties and sixties you were not afraid of novelties in merging Formalism and Marxism and that you were seeking for novel artistic expressions in Marxism, I would like to know what was for you a novel artistic expression at that time in Yugoslavia?*

DS: Miroslav Krleža. He was the idol of us youngsters. In high school we were all *krležijanci*, anybody who thought about art at all, or about committed art and Left-wing art, was a *krležijanac*. We didn't know much about painting.

SB: *What about initiatives such as Exat, New Tendencies …*

DS: Let me rephrase it this way: I didn't know much about art. Even though I am very much interested in visual art, it is a new language to learn, and I never had time to do it systematically. Still, I am an inveterate

goer to art events. For example if you look at my book covers, chosen by me, they are usually some art works or paintings. A book published in Belgrade has a painting by René Magritte, whom I like deeply, Nena and I went to several exhibitions of his all over the world (he too practices estrangement!). But at that time most energies were concentrated on literature. Some people at the Faculty of Arts in Zagreb had a review called *Umjetnost riječi (word-art* or *Wortkunst)*, where I published a theoretical text on science fiction at the beginning of sixties. Those times were very active, with lots of contradictory positions. I concluded in my latest book, largely dealing with the self-management epoch in Yugoslavia (*Samo jednom se ljubi,* Belgrade 2014), that the golden age of self-management was between 1958 and 1968. Here I am talking about self-management in production related to economy and politics. But in culture, self-management started a bit earlier, though it was sabotaged by the party. The first attempts at autonomous periodicals in the beginning to mid-fifties, as one in Zagreb Faculty of Arts, also in Slovenia, were forbidden. Even though at that time first attempts at self-management were made in factory organizations, the cultural attempts were thought of, I believe wrongly, as a bit dangerous. What you don't understand seems menacing. Thus you ossify.

However, from another aspect, the intelligentsia which was introducing the self-management experiments in culture was not "organic", as Gramsci would say, to workers and peasants; it was the classical intelligentsia coming from petty or indeed, though rarely, from high bourgeoisie. Many of the best people from these classes decided to adopt the Popular Front version of Marxism (for example my father, a doctor who went with the partisans). However its

majority was in favour of socialism because it benefited them in economic terms, they had financial privileges, also it was patriotic, and their professional work was prized. There were a few people, like the *Praxis* philosophers and sociologists, who really believed (so did I) that in SFR Yugoslavia we had a kind of Hegelian sublation of all the best in the bourgeoisie without the worst, that is to say the *citoyen* without the capitalism. That was the Party cell in the Faculty of Arts in Zagreb, people like Frangeš, Prelog or Gajo Petrović, hugely influential writers and teachers. All was then new and open, very contradictory. Petrović and the excellent sociologist Rudi Supek edited then the bimonthly *Praxis*, but this started just before I left. Of course I read and mostly shared its views, I think they were politically right to insist on self-management and energies from below and contest creeping Stalinism from above. On the other hand the philosophers were rather exclusive, they didn't interact with us "art critics." Furthermore, they went in for a weird symbiosis with Heidegger, thinking he supplied the philosophical horizon lacking in Marx, so they were forever talking about Being, *Dasein*, *Sosein,* ontic, etc. That was similar to Sartre's thinking that Marxism applied to mass problems but not to individual problems, so it had to be compensated by Husserl and company, but to my mind (now retrospectively) much worse: Heidegger is the great reactionary thinker of the 20th Century, the brown Plato; his affinities to Nazism are not casual, I don't believe you can combine him with any Marxist horizon. (This is I think proved by similar attempts in the French deconstructionists.)

Finally, in regard to the Faculty of Arts itself, the *Praxis* people didn't have an adequate cultural policy. If you read my *Memoirs of a Young Communist* you will see that we in the Student Union had a cultural policy -- I wrote a position paper about it which I still think was pretty good -- that the upper echelon of professors was not happy about. We wanted to end the semi-feudal position of full professors (in Italy they call them barons). Those power relations were based on very concrete interests and a strong will to dominate, even in each little and unimportant field of culture and philology. There was so much libido involved in those fights, it was unbelievable. Whereas we in the Student Union said, let's have a teaching collective in each section (*Odsjek)*, and the head of collective would be elected each year, or each two years, he or she could be professor, *docent* (junior assistant professor) or anybody; normally it should be someone who has already published a book, so we acknowledged professional competence. This came to naught, the "barons" had much energy and the Party little for cultural matters, thinking it was all superstructure anyway, while we students and later young assistants were naive and easily deflected onto professional matters. The *Praxis* people thought in lofty general terms and didn't want to waste their time on such piddling matters as pedagogy in the Faculty of Arts. So my relations to them were sympathetic but distant, they didn't defend me when I was attacked. They behaved, maybe unavoidably, as an embattled little sect.

The main trouble with the Party was that, not having an adequate cultural policy, they didn't know what to do with contemporary collective creativity. Instead they wanted to give the heritage of the past to the masses; so you had cheap novels of Balzac and Fielding and Tolstoy, you had free exhibitions, cheap theatres, literature, cinema, discounted visits for trade-union groups, etc.; however, everything shown was belonging to the past or to a present stylistically continuous with the

past, that is, pre-Modernist (this changed in some fields from the mid-50s on). They knew how to deal with that, because Lenin liked Gorky, and Marx and Engels liked Balzac. But they didn't know how to deal with the new stuff. So it was easy for the Zhdanovians to call Joyce, Proust or Kafka decadents. I must say in Yugoslavia there was little of that, maybe from 1946 to 1951.

SB: *Are you talking about the post-1945 situation and the fifties?*

DS: This begins in the workers' movement even earlier. It is a philistine or subaltern tradition which passed from the Second International to the Third International, basically: let's take the best that exists and give it to the masses. But what is the best in this case is what the bourgeoisie has done, sifted, and codified. Remember the huge laudation of the bourgeoisie in *The Communist Manifesto*: 'the bourgeoisie built things more imposing than the Cologne dome, etc' -- that logic was still active in the fifties in Yugoslavia. But that logic of a productive bourgeoisie is not valid anymore, the bourgeois logic is entirely destructive now; it is responsible for imperialist wars, huge desolations, mass killings -- just look at the two world wars, at the hundreds of "small" mass killings since 1945, at West Asia today. You can't admire solid bourgeois virtues anymore, they don't exist; now it is all suicidal. The First World War is to my mind the beginning of modern history, everything changes after that, violent barbarism is in command (which then infects "really existing socialism" too). The Left cannot any more seek anything affirmative in bourgeois horizons, though of course I am all for Enlightenment and *citoyen* virtues – but updated as socialist or communist.

SB: *What was your cultural policy at that time? Concretely I would like to know how you thought of Krleža's formal innovations in relation to cultural policy you were interested in.*

DS: You have to know that Krleža begins his literary career as a quasi- or semi-Expressionist at the time of World War 1; he wrote long Whitmanesque unrhymed expressionist poems, expressionist plays and prose. In the thirties Krleža was involved in a conflict with the Socialist realists, that is the orthodox (illegal) communist party, regarding art and literature, known as "the literary conflict on the Left" (*sukob na književnoj ljevici*), and this was a reason why he never went to Partizans. He was generously rehabilitated after the war by Tito, not by Djilas who hated Krleža and even reportedly wanted his execution. (Djilas was a real maximalist; first he was a maximalist inside the party and later on he was a maximalist against the party. To my mind he was a good historical writer, by the way, but a very limited politician and bad political writer.) At any rate we didn't know much about Krleža's involvement with the 1930s cultural struggles, this was only clarified in the sixties. However, he learnt his lesson, and later didn't meddle in non-artistic politics. After the war Krleža evolved this Enlightenment plan of summing up all knowledge about the Yugoslav lands in a *Yugoslav Encyclopedia (Enciklopedija Jugoslavije)*, was given ample finances for it, edited this huge work, and wrote more novels and a play. I knew Krleža slightly, I visited him, and we had discussions. An example: a congress by the Union of Writers of Yugoslavia was due in Titograd in 1964. I went to Krleža and said, why don't we organize some small group including you, Marijan Matković, and your disciples, and propose something about the current cultural policy. He looked at me with pity and said:

'Have you seen the TV performance of my play *Gospoda Glembajevi* a few weeks ago?' (One of the principal actors in it was Fabijan Šovagović, who was from rural Croatia; in his way not a bad actor, but not for *drame du salon* of Ibsenian provenience.) 'They do not know how to wear a tuxedo!'

That response of his was the same as Matković saying 'Brecht in Yugoslavia, Darko what are you thinking of? We are not ripe for it.' Though I think he was wrong, we had a mass basis for understanding Brecht in self-management, had we had much support and patience to show the working people how to understand itself (maybe different from how we understood it). True, it was not a traditional working class; it was a peasant-derived new working class, lacking for example common workers' traditions such as trade union organizations, etc. They had to be constantly lifted out of the momentary serious problems of personal and their enterprise survival, lodging in cities, education, and so on. And my elders and betters implied that first we have to do the job of the Enlightenment, and maybe after one generation we can get to the Brechtian, that is truly communist agenda. I disagreed, I thought both agendas were the same: communicating vesels again, or maybe the DNA double helix. And I think I may have been right: postponing communist elements means they never come.

SB: *But isn't this a contradictory position, to ask for cultural policy in such a situation; to insist for a cultural policy for workers who were lagging behind the self-management? Wasn't the party behind the mass movement which initiated self-management?*

DS: There would be no contradiction in cultural policy had the Party allowed changes

to happen. To begin with, let me point out it was only one little group at the top of the Party who were in favour of self-management; it was proposed initially in 1948-1950, by people like Boris Kidrič, when they were afraid of Soviet invasion and they were still enemies with the West. So they needed a mass basis, to activate the people four or five years after the war, and they picked up the workers' spontaneous idea to have factory councils. Basis democracy was the way to mobilize and motivate for reconstruction and unity very tired and exhausted people in the post-war situation. Later on Kardelj and Djilas claimed that they were mainly responsible for this idea, but whatever their input the genuine articulation was clearly Kidrič's. And it worked for 10 or 20 years. Maybe they had difficulties in first five years to make people to understand what all this change was about. Then they passed a law in 1958 that it was possible to veto the director, the manager, and through such experiences self-management got a more concrete shape. Though we cannot talk about full workers' management; it would be more appropriate to call it workers' participation, but there was great participation: I calculated in my book on SFR Yugoslavia *Samo jednom se ljubi* that perhaps 25% of the 4 million workers at the time passed in a dozen years through membership of the Workers' Concils.

SB: *Even if there was a platform also to discuss art in relation to the self-management theory, it seems that there were not so many attempts to do that.*

DS: There were two problems. Number one is *kulturna zaostalost*, which means that we were really backward, except some artists and writers around Krleža and the pre-war Belgrade Surrealists; people didn't even know that somebody like Brecht existed (you must

know that before post-1945 mass education the majority was illiterate or with a bare 3-4 years of elementary schooling). Maybe I better say the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia didn't know, for when I published my book on Brecht in 1970 I got a letter of thanks from a woman worker saying she sang Brecht songs (I suppose with Eisler's music) in the workers' choir before 1941. Brecht means also Bloch, Benjamin, all Weimar culture; they only knew that Lenin disliked Mach, where actually he was half right and half wrong. Lenin was right on the political fallout of the Machists in Russia, but he was not right about Mach himself. There is no modern physics without Mach, and there is no Einstein without Mach; basically Leninists, as different from Lenin himself, never digested Einstein. What does Einstein mean? In science he means whatever his equations mean; but in philosophy he means that your situation co-determines your world, the place you are situated in (your locus).

SB: *It radically contextualizes the position.*

DS: Exactly. Here we get to the second problem, which is an ideological aberration. Engels and Lenin are always based on the assumption that there is a general and overarching scientific truth, but of course one which we don't fully know yet, because we are fallible people who fell from Eden -- or translated into Marxism, we fell into class society, so we cannot know the full truth -- but we are getting there asymptotically. That is a method which can work, as Marx would say, in a society based on the steam engine (capitalist competition), but it cannot work in society based on electricity and electronics.

SB: *You just mentioned asymptotic. I have read in your early article, published in journal 'Delo', on the asymptote in Krleža which opens*

up unforeseen possibilities or radical futurity, through Lenin. Can you say more about this?

DS: Well this is a fantasy Lenin – which doesn't mean some important aspects of his cannot be caught in this way. These early plays by Krleža, the *Legends*, which I argued amounted to the image of an asymptote to infinity, were all written between ca. 1917 and 1920, nobody knew anything about Lenin, except either what the bourgeois press wrote about him, as a maniacal sadistic killer, or hymnic praise. Krleža accepted the "demonic" aspect, but turned it into the tradition of the fallen archangel, the rebel Lucifer; he uses the 'lighthouses' metaphor for Michelangelo, Goya, Lenin and Columbus. Krleža then visited Russia as you know in 1925, at the time when a very solid bureaucracy was beginning (there is a short story in his *Glembayevs* cycle, where one of them is a communist and goes to Russia and becomes part of the State trust). Krleža was very dubious about all kind of things going on in revolutionary Russia. I think he knew Stalinism from the inside, at the very beginning of it. I have a feeling that he was rather pleased with Bukharin but I don't know. So the Party could not expect much politically from Krleža after 1945, he did what he had to do at the Ljubljana congress of Union of Writers at the beginning of fifties where he gave a great keynote speech about socialist misunderstandings of culture, which he camouflaged by talking about the Second International. Clearly he knew that there was continuity between Second and Third International, culturally speaking. Politically there was a big difference between them, indeed opposition: shall we make revolution or shall we not. But culturally they were living in the same world. Lenin was living in the world of Kautsky, more or less. Yet at the same time he was Einsteinian enough to forge

the hypothesis of 'weakest link': the weakest links of imperialism are backward countries. That was totally Dadaist; everybody in the Second International told him he was crazy. It was a great flash of genius, and this is what happens: Russia, China and Yugoslavia are all proof that Lenin's crazy idea could work. In other words, the working masses of Western and Central Europe, Germany, France, England and even USA, at least tolerated, and often supported, the World War of imperialists against other imperialists. So the Russian Revolution showed that Marx, who reasonably for 1848 and maybe even for 1871 claimed that the revolution will happen in the West, was wrong. This is the thesis of Gramsci in his article *Revolution against Capital*, which he wrote in 1917/18, that the Russian revolution is a revolution against *Das Kapital*. This was to say that Lenin had to change some basic concepts of Marx regarding revolution, but sticking to the main trunk of Marx (to go on with my botanical analogy), which was getting rather dry at that time. Lenin was grafting new stuff on that trunk which helped its energy to vitalize, to flow.

SB: *How would you describe this main trunk, is it the concept of class struggle?*

A: No, the main trunk is to me alienation and dis-alienation; it is the concept of freedom, self-determination of each and all. But in order to be dis-alienated, to gain the freedom, we have to have conscious class struggle. In my terms, dis-alienation is the horizon towards which to move, the goal; class struggle is the – alas -- necessary vector of how anybody can move from the present alienated locus towards that horizon (see "Locus, Horizon, and Orientation: The Concept of Possible Worlds as a Key to Utopian Studies (1989)" in my *Defined by a*

Hollow). As Brecht once wrote, in order to have a handful of rice, the coolie has to bring down three empires. Since we are living in the world of class struggles from top toward the bottom leading to huge barbarisation, we have to reverse this and turn it the other way around, as class struggle of bottom against the top and against barbarisation. This is actually an Einsteinian idea. In my opinion, Marx is the great forebear of Einstein as far as situated thinking goes. Marx still has some elements of the old, as "iron laws of society" in preface to *Capital*, which I think is more Newton than Einstein. This is actually Roman Law (*lex*), which Newton transferred to a physics based on eternal truths. Einstein deconstructed the eternal truths, just as Marx deconstructed the eternal truths of Smith and Ricardo and the bourgeoisie.

SB: *We have skipped one topic that I would like to know more about; namely the concept of history and critique of historicism in the work of Russian Formalism. This anti-historicism, which is often discussed in Viktor Shkovsky as the zig-zag history of literary changes, etc. is somehow related to the discussions of Marxism.*[3]

DS: I am not so sure about their anti-historicism, they were very interested in history inside literature but refused its mechanical dependence as a "superstructure" on an economic "basis" (which was right) and then exaggerated the autonomy. After all, they came from a very backward Russia and

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3   "These ruptures in literary history takes place for reason that have nothing to do with chronology. No, the real point is that the legacy that is passed from one literary generation to the next moves not from father to son but from uncle to nephew", Viktor Shklovsky, 'Literature without a Plot: Rozanov', *Theory of Prose*, Dalkey Archive Press, 1990, p. 189-190. (*ed. note*)

didn't have the tools of a Williams or Jameson. Also, the Formalists are a very heterogeneous group, very much differing from each other. Shklovsky is different from Eikhenbaum, Tynyanov is different from Jakobson, and so on. But if we take a common denominator, I don't think they were anti-historicist. They are against a certain dominant kind of historicism, that of Ranke who defines history as "*wie es eigentlich gewesen*", as it really happened (he also wrote a book on Serbia and Bosnia). This typical German historicism is basically a laicized Protestantism, some kind of *opus dei in Germanos,* of God working by way of the Germans: a monolithic and determinist historical method, based on totally teleological conceptions. You have to understand that this concept of history is actually a quasi-delirious teleology, and its insistence on first-hand data is subordinated to that. Since Formalists have criticized these kinds of approaches to history thoroughly, me and my generation, as many others, have benefited immensely from them. In one of my first essays, published in *Umjetnost riječi*, on science fiction, I had used the Shklovskian theses you speak about, of inheritance from junior uncle to nephew (or niece), in order to propose a sophisticated way of treating the history of literary genres, and I still believe this is correct.[4] How do historical changes come about in Formalism? They come about when a dominated (or oppositional) style of yesterday – the junior uncle -- becomes the dominant style of today. But how does that huge reversal happen? That is a class struggle for heaven's sake, you only have to put a little bit of Marxism into it and everything is clear. Of course the Formalists didn't say this, they were not interested in macro-politics. There

is a wonderful apocryphal anecdote, which I like to quote, an imaginary dialogue between Shklovsky and Trotsky, the most intelligent Formalist and the most intelligent Leninist. Shklovsky said to Trotsky, and the first half is a real sentence of his, "I do not care what flag flies on the fortress, I am a literary critic and I don't care about the war ," to which Trotsky replies "But war cares about you."

SB: *But Shklovsky himself was in the war!*

DS: Yes he was; he was SR [Socialist Revolutionary] commissar and commander of an armoured battalion, and afterwards he was for a time in Berlin. In his personal life he cared a lot about the war, and this dichotomy is interesting in a negative way, the dichotomy between a personal and official posture. When he is a Formalist, then the Holy Ghost comes down upon him and he does not care about war anymore...

But formalist historicism is all about that zigzag transformation of dominated to the dominant, which is about a real driving force in history. I would like to see a whole history of literature written through this dynamics. I tried to do that in my writings on science fiction. But concretely to trace and discuss these transformations, or to prove the theses of Formalists, you need a huge group of scholars, some kind of Einsteinian Socialist Academy of Science, which does not exist anywhere. Raymond Williams tried later to do this with his "Social Theory of Literature".

SB: *I was just going to ask about the concept of 'residual elements' in Williams, to whom you refer frequently in your texts.*

DS: Exactly. Williams is my *maitre à penser*, not the only one. I have others too, Lucien Goldmann, Krleža, Brecht, Bloch, most

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4   Darko Suvin, 'Naučna fantastika i utopizam,' *Umjetnost riječi*, 1963:2, pp. 113-115. (*ed. note*)

important Marx, and so on. Finally my contemporary Jameson.

SB: *Can you please schematize the relation between the historical concepts of Formalists and the Marxist sociology of Williams?*

DS: Well, Formalists gave you a form, and Marx gave you classes.

SB: *No, I meant the relation between the concept of 'residual elements' of Williams and the idea of uneven historical transformations in Formalists?*

DS: The Formalists didn't know enough about society, except when they were studying the history of their subject, for example the history of Russian poetry or something similar; but in general they didn't have much knowledge of social history. When Shklovsky is writing about Sterne he does not care about England in 18th century, for him Sterne is an extra-temporal or eternal paradigm, an *exemplum*. Williams comes from a Left which was ideologically not Leninist. He began as a kind of Leftwing or Left Labourite modification of F. R. Leavis, an interesting literary critic, a petty-bourgeois rebel who fought against the dominant high bourgeois tastes (he loved for example D.H. Lawrence). At some point Williams read Marx, not through Lenin but through Leavis or through the class struggles that he knew very well in Britain, coming from a Welsh worker family. Of course you know that Marx himself got the idea of class struggle primarily from England and France. True, struggles between classes go on everywhere all the time, see for example Heine's poem *The Weavers* or Brecht's *Questions of a Worker Reader*; but in Germany they were masked by the (exactly "residual") feudal elements. And when we talk about Williams we have to remember this historical importance of class struggle in England, from at least Cromwell's revolution on. So I think that the concept of residual in Williams is coming from two sources. One is English or UK history, that is quite clear, the Non-conformists are residual; and second, it comes from Marx and Engels who said that Balzac by being on the Right and hating the bourgeoisie, understood it very well, and his descriptions could be used by the Left. What is Balzac? He is ideologically residual – not in his writing technique, his technique is on the frontline of the future, but his ideology is completely reactionary, a bourgeois monarchism. I found Williams very congenial, I read all he wrote before I met him while on sabbatical in Cambridge in 1970/71, he was then in Jesus College. Also I saw him in the seventies-eighties when he was teaching part-time at Stanford University, he would stop often in Montreal where we arranged a lecture for him, for example on Brecht's *St. Joan of the Stockyards* we were performing at McGill. He was also interested in science fiction, he wrote even a novel of politics set in future and some historical novels, also an essay on utopian science fiction. But I think his magnum opus is *The City and the Country*.

SB: *In your article 'Can People Be (Re)presented in Fiction?' you say that 'Formalism is the A and B of any integrally materialist approach to art,*

from which should then proceed to C, D, and so on, ' this C and D meaning dialectics.[5]

DS: Yes, I mentioned that earlier; also meaning semiotics and narrative analysis (agents, chronotope). I would today stress more this historical component, or dialectical component as understood by Marx (not by Hegel). As you know Marx took dialectical logic from Hegel but adapted it to the circumstances of capitalism, which means to a macro-historical situation. I have been struck by Braudel's *longue durée* vs *durée événementielle* (long before Badiou). *Duree événementielle* is for example the French Revolution, it lasts ten, maybe fifteen years, as one generation. *Longue durée* is the key for solving the problem which Marx faced in his famous passage about Greek literature in the introduction to *Grundrisse*:.[6] how can we still enjoy the Greek tragedy? We can, I would say today, because we are in the *longue durée* of class society. That means that a duration of the last five thousand years is united by some macro-continuities, for example by dominant and dominated, killers and killed, exploiters and exploited. Of course there are big differences between the Homeric aristocracy and Wall Street today (the former risked their lives and the latter never do); but on the other hand, dialectically speaking, in this history there is also continuity; you can find this in Benjamin's idea that ruling

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5   Paradoxically, all the lessons of Russian formalism without which we can't begin making sense of action, belong here under the heading of materialism (albeit a partial and inconsistent, not yet a dialectical one). Formalism is the A and B of any integrally materialist approach to art, from which we should then proceed to C, D, and so on." Darko Suvin, 'Can People Be (Re)Presented in Fiction? Toward a Theory of Narrative Agents and a Materialist Critique beyond Technocracy and Reductionism', *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, (eds.) C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. (ed. note)

6   "In the case of the arts, it is well known that certain periods of their flowering are out of all proportion to the general development of society, hence also to the material foundation, the skeletal structure as it were, of its organization. For example, the Greeks compared to the moderns or also Shakespeare. It is even recognized that certain forms of art, e.g. the epic, can no longer be produced in their world epoch-making, classical stature as soon as the production of art, as such, begins; that is, that certain significant forms within the realm of the arts are possible only at an undeveloped stage of artistic development. If this is the case with the relation between different kinds of art within the realm of the arts, it is already less puzzling that it is the case in the relation of the entire realm to the general development of society. The difficulty consists only in the general formulation of these contradictions. As soon as they have been specified, they are already clarified. … But the difficulty lies not in understanding that the Greek arts and epic are bound up with certain forms of social development. The difficulty is that they still afford us artistic pleasure and that in a certain respect they count as a norm and as an unattainable model", Karl Marx, Grundrisse: *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, Translated by Martin Nicolaus, London: Penguin Books, 1973, p. 110 - 111. (ed. note)

classes have their continuity. This could be seen very clearly in the transformation of the bourgeoisie: they entered the scene of history as anti-aristocratic, but soon started to act as an aristocracy, because they took the same role of a ruling class. This is a clear example of continuation of domination. In order for this to happen ruling classes need certain apparatuses of domination. Althusser didn't invent the ideological apparatuses, discussion regarding ideologies and apparatuses existed before him, but maybe he, for the first time, put these two concepts together. For example the *salons* in and around Napoleon's time are ideological apparatuses, as centres of a kind of power forging the tastes of what is acceptable or not in discourse – say, on art. If you adopt the key of *longue durée* versus the short duration versus the medium duration (one has to have a hierarchy of durations), then the way how we understand historical transformation will change. If you look at my book *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* you will see that in the theoretical part there is one scheme describing how science fiction deals with time. Time/temporality is for me a very important issue.

SB: *How do you treat these different temporalizations, distinct durées in your theoretical work? Do they co-exist, or are they in some kind of constant struggle, in kind of contradictory relations?*

DS: They are in dialectical relations. Of course they co-exist. I would say today that of my three levels in agential theory, the *actants* are long duration and unchanging, half a dozen narrative functions. I can't imagine any narration without actants, in history or pre-history or even species-specific, as Feuerbach would say. The *types* are probably a long duration of class history but they change according to major "geological" shifts – some

become marginalised and a few new ones arise; and the *characters* are related clearly to the individualism, which begins partly the end of the Antiquity, as in Plutarch's characters for example, Alexander the Great versus Caesar. Christianity adopted this as the concept of one single soul; whereas Greeks had many souls, or Socrates had his *daimon* speaking to him about his community, the *politeia*; but characters then got backgrounded until the Renaissance, the rise of the cities and merchants. So to answer your question I would say that dialectic is methodologically the starting point, but one must historicize, as Jameson said "always historicize!" This means that the *durées* sometimes mesh and more often are in contradictory oppositions.

SB: *But I was speaking more of teleological historicism …*

DS: As I argued earlier, teleological historicism is essentially a theological problem. If we are not willing to accept the theological answer, then we have to find an alternative to teleology. Either we get communism or we get savagery, to adapt Rosa Luxemburg. That is to say, instead of teleology you have a bifurcation, Hercules on the crossroads... It is a time and a vision of catastrophic choices. This also means social struggles never end. I have realized while writing my last book on socialist Yugoslavia, that I cannot imagine any society without politics, and I think Marx was wrong there (maybe we should say semantically imprudent).

SB: *Can you clarify this …*

A: Marx thought that politics was all about class conflict; so that after the abolition of class conflict there will be no politics. But if politics means primarily how society or any collective distributes its material resources,

when, how much, for what and to whom, then it will always exist. There is a novel by Wells set in a future where all our problems are solved; but still there is a conflict between scientists and artists. The scientists want to go to Mars or Venus and so on, whereas the artists want something else here and now. I think that human wishes and desires will always be larger than our material bases. So, do we now build a huge expensive accelerator, or do we go to Pluto, or do we let the sea into Sahara? There must be politics to solve this. In class society you solve this with violence, and in classless society by argument: as Brecht said in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, with pencils, not pistols. But important problems to be solved will remain in classless society. In that case you need politics to solve them, as Montesquieu said by "pressures, checks and balances" -- I am a big fan of Montesquieu.

SB: *You describe this dialectics needed for an integrally materialist approach to art, referring to Bakhtin and Mukařovský, as social formalism.*

DS: I would not call it that now. These are traces of my intellectual genesis.

SB: *Then in the same text you offer a criticism of Greimas's theory of actants by proposing instead a Marx's model of history from '18th Brumaire'.[7]*

DS: Marx speaks of "character mask", which is a type: the capitalist, the worker, etc. In the *18th Brumaire* you have the best description of how Marx characterizes the classes.

SB: *What you find as most objectionable in Greimas' model of actants is lack of any social and ideological context.*

DS: I am less and less fond of the word ideological; I would rather say historical, and if you wish a lack of historical semantics. I mean by this even macro-historical: I think it is perfectly fine if you have chosen to talk about overarching transformations happening in the time span of one or five thousand years. But you must have some kind of fundament, what the French would call *assiette*, a place where you are seated, a seat in history. For us time is history, we don't exist outside of that. This does not mean that you are Robinson on your island and history is an ocean, or any other metaphor in which you are here and history is there. History is in your language, in your dreams, in your body, everywhere. If you have grown up during the war and you ate badly, history is then in your bones – you will have trouble with your health when you are forty or fifty. Only when you are striking and the police shoot at you, history is at the moment outside and getting forcibly into your inside. The so-called biological inside or "inner environment" is 90% historical. That's why I think that the discussion around genetics is one of the greatest bourgeois operations of ideological obfuscation. I have nothing against genes, but it is used in very reactionary ways to obliterate the importance of history. A good example of this is Dawkins's book *Selfish Gene*. I rather like his conceit by which individuals are nothing but seed-pods for chromosomal propagation, but on the whole it is sheer nonsense.

SB: *If we assume that history is everywhere, then any literary theory which avoids history is actually violence toward the literature it analyses. Could you say about Greimas that too?*

DS: The basis for Greimas's analyses and his system are Lithuanian folk stories. In Lithuanian folk stories the main agent is usually a Catholic priest; is that not

7   Suvin, 'Can People be (Re)Presented', p. 667.

historical!? Whereas a few hundred kilometres or years away that would be an orthodox or a protestant or an animist priest; which would make things completely different. I find Greimas very obnoxious, though he has one advantage: he has brought his system to the point where it becomes so self-contradictory and top-heavy that it is ready to collapse into materialism and history, which is what I try to do.

SB: *When you discuss the text through three agential levels, then the problem of representation alters from the usual discussions which consider the artistic work as reflection of reality. Thus I would like to know your position regarding the discussions on realism?*

DS: When Aristotle speaks about mimesis, he at some point asks, referring to zither I think, what kind of reflection is that when you represent somebody's state of mind by musical sounds? It certainly is not a reflection in the ordinary sense of how a mirror works. The worst book Lenin ever wrote is *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, or at least half of the book. The *pars destruens* is ok, as I said, but his *pars construens* is terrible, very Engelsian at his most reductive. I much like Gramsci's finessing this in his *Quaderno 11* (1930-32). He substitutes "translation" for Lenin's infamous "reflection" as the basic principle of Marxist philosophy. This gets interesting: for him it is a principle of productive convertibility between two texts (so this is a general approach not confined to translating texts between two different languages, though he himself did that from German). His *exemplum* is that there must in fact exist a convertibility between the specific languages of philosophy, politics, and economics since all three share the same stance towards the world. This is then, I would say more precisely, a general epistemological

principle that gives dogmatic priority to none of such languages: and though he doesn't say so aloud, out goes the primacy of economic basis as against philosophical or political "superstructure"! For example, he situates Lenin's term of "hegemony" into a translatory oscillation between philosophy and political practice (the Greeks would allot the latter to *sofrosyne*, practical wisdom).

You see, reflection is based on the metaphor of mirror, whether it is an ordinary mirror or a mirroring in water, as with Narcissus. But once you start to reflect on reflection, even the simplest reflection has *seine Tücken*, as Marx would say, its complications or malices or vagaries: for example, left becomes right in mirroring. What did this mean; that a revolutionary party becomes right-wing in literature? Of course not (necessarily)! But you see it is a very complicated question, the change of shapes or anamorphism (much beloved by the Baroque). What Stalin and Zhdanov meant by reflection is some kind of imagined political correctness: to say good things about us, and bad things about enemies. That is a self-reflection – to reflect our own opinions, horizons, and point of views, to repeat and confirm them. In this case what is being reflected is nothing material, it is the apparatus *idea* of the ruling party; not the things or relationships between people. We have several questions here. There is a very good book written by another Lithuanian, Jurgis Baltrušaitis, an art historian who wrote on many different varieties of morphing, such as anamorphosis, metamorphosis, etc. Anamorphosis is describing distortions; like in the famous Baroque park Bomarzo near Rome, where all wall horizons are distorted. Well, in any mimesis, which is a metamorphosis (and it is not a coincidence that my best known book is called *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*,

which means changes of shapes in it), there are various way of producing distortions, such as one to one, one to two, upside-down, inversion, eversion, conversion, subversion, etc. Then there are convex and concave mirrors, as in fairgrounds (and one of my latest books is again not by chance called *Defined by a Hollow*). This business of mimesis is horribly complicated; just imagine imitating a state of mind by playing music, by having the chorus dancing. It is a simple fact that the dance does not imitate in any precise way the war before the Troy; it is a dance that must follow its own laws of a body traversing space – gravity, kinds of leaps and turns, etc., even if you give spears to the dancers. It is absolute petty-bourgeois stupidity to say that imitation is a kind of one-to-one relation. Let me take the canonic Socialist Realist example: Gorky's *Mother* (a book I am sentimentally fond of, and it is not the author's fault it got into such a canon). Gorky wrote about the mother of a revolutionary in Russia, because there were revolutionaries in Russia outside of literature. But not all revolutionaries, probably not even too many, had a mother that would carry on their work. So what Gorky did is to make a type, which is a Mother of the Revolutionary, and very near to an allegory, the Revolutionary Mother, if not indeed The Mother of the Revolution. If we agree that type is kind of form, then it has its own laws, just like distortion (say perspective) in painting has its laws. Therefore you must investigate the form, and that is the materialist part. Form is not, as my elder colleagues at Faculty of Arts would have said, the glass outside holding the water inside.

SB: *Brecht said that if something had a good form we have to take its content. You are quoting this as well.*

DS: All of us are children of our epochs. Brecht for example thought that he was doing anti-Aristotelian theatre. Because German Aristotelians, both in theory (such as Gustav Freytag, a theoretician of drama) and in theatre practice claimed their basis lay in Aristotle's *Poetics*. In fact they were not Aristotelians, they were 19th century bourgeois Positivists. So Brecht being anti-Aristotelian meant anti what was meant by Aristotelianism when he was young. Brecht is also a child of his time, of the discourse of his time. In fact if you read his poetics, in many ways he is Aristotelian as well, as I mentioned his overall structure is episodic, etc. Aristotle didn't theorize enough the episodic nature of theatre, but he recognized it as such. Brecht wouldn't have the concept without Aristotle. So if Brecht was speaking in terms of form and content, it is because he was raised in a German school in the first decade of 19[th]century, poor guy! And so were the listeners to whom he was trying to get something across.

SB: *But it seems that he wanted to break from that legacy.*

DS: Of course he saw the limits of that education very soon, he almost got kicked out of school when he wrote against the World War. But one question is centrally important here: what is estrangement (his *Verfremdung*), is it form or content? It's a way in which form makes you look at your world.

SB: *You write that the most formalized analysis can become precise, instead of formalistic, if only enters into feedback relation with the environment?*

DS: I am great admirer of the feedback metaphor. This is a cybernetic metaphor which Marx didn't have. I understand it as

two entities which interact. A changes B then B changes A, which become A1, and so on.

SB: *Feedback is possible because there is a flow of information from one source to another.*

DS: Exactly: flow of information, or of anything else. This is a semiotic concept, which begins with thermodynamics.

SB: *If we talk of reformulations of reproductions of agencies, then usually discussion goes toward the re-articulation of artistic text, which you also mention occasionally.*

DS: You have here basically the old question: which one is first, chicken or egg? This is what some anthropologists, such as the interesting Gregory Bateson, called a double bind. Whatever you answer will be a wrong answer. The solution is that you have to step out of the double bind, that is, to say "I don't agree with your question." Thus, the question whether artistic work is a reflection or not, is also such a double bind. In some ways it is, in some it is not, and anyway what is meant by reflection is most imprecise and unproductive. We have to recognize it as such and refuse to recognize it as valid question.

SB: *How is it possible to do that?*

DS: By using imaginative freedom. My entire last book (*Samo jednom se ljubi*) has advanced to foregrounding this concept of freedom, meaning dis-alienation.

SB: *Can you tell briefly how Brecht became your intellectual and artistic horizon in the fifties in Yugoslavia?*

DS: Very simple, through student theatre. I was deeply engaged in student theatre, which was one of the democratic forms of self-expression in socialist Yugoslavia. First I was involved in the Zagreb Youth Cultural Society *Goran Kovačić*, which had its own theatre troupe. Later on it became the famous SEK (Studentsko eksperimentalno kazalište, Student Experimental Theatre), whose main director was my friend Bogdan Jerković. I was a kind of dramaturge (art director) of SEK, and we were part of the international body of Western and Central European student theatres, which was an incubating space for the '68 movement. You know the '68 youth and student movements didn't come out of nowhere, they were incubating since the fifties. So we had four festivals each year, at Easter time in Parma, Italy; in middle of May in Zagreb, in June in Erlangen, West Germany, and in October, we had it first in Istanbul, but the Turkish police didn't like that, so we shifted it to Nancy, in France. It was called UITU (Union Internationale des Théâtres Universitaires). The head of the student theatre and festival in Nancy, Jack Lang, later on became a famous Socialist Party minister of culture. At that time there was a big Brecht renaissance in two student theatres of West Germany, Frankfurt and Hamburg. This was in the fifties, the time of SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, people who were later demonstrating). They also produced some very interesting discussions, with theoreticians in Germany such as Karlheinz Braun or Claus Peymann (who much later became *intendant* of Brecht's Berliner Ensemble), and in France some like Chéreau who later went to direct films. They were focusing mostly on the peripheral Brecht; not *Galileo*, not *Mother Courage*, but *Lehrstücke* (his 1930s' "plays for learning"), the early *Drums in the Night, Der Tag des Großen Gelehrten Wu*, one of his school's adaptation in 1940s from Chinese, and mostly on early anarchist Brecht. After I saw these plays I started reading Brecht.

We had a huge scandal in Erlangen when Brecht's son-in-law, the great actor Ekkehard Schall, came as a guest and recited some of Brecht's most communist poems in 1961 just after the Berlin Wall; right-wing students in the audience booed it with hate, a real theatre scandal in a nice 19th-century theatre. I was vice-president of UITU, an organization consisting mainly of Western Europe countries and Yugoslavia. The Russians were outside that organization; only in some exceptions, Polish student theatres would come to UITU events. Therefore the Student Union of Yugoslavia forbade me to be president, they were afraid of Russian disapproval; it was part of Tito's balancing policy. So, to answer your question, I haven't met Brecht inside Yugoslavia, but in Germany, Italy or France; as you know Brecht's greatest world success was with Mother Courage in 1954 in Paris, when Roland Barthes and a whole group of intellectuals became Brechtians. After that I was collecting books and publications related to Brecht. I was spending my per diems of 25 DM for buying books while abroad in these UITU meetings. These festivals had also debates. I was head of the debate programme of the Zagreb May IFSK festival (Internacionalni festival studentskog kazališta), which I have eternalized by putting into my mentioned book the cover-image of our publication, made by Mihajlo Arsovski, famous Macedonian graphic designer in Zagreb. I was editing the *IFSK Bulletin* with these debates, heavily influenced by Brecht. For us Brecht was anti-Stalinist and anti-capitalist, that is to say totally analogous to socialist Yugoslavia.

SB: *Were you at that time then drawing this parallel between Yugoslavia socialist self-management and Brecht?*

DS: No, then I was not thinking about the Yugoslav situation as a problem. I was, as all of us, very naïvely of the opinion, quite wrong, that the revolution had happened, we have solved all antagonistic problems, and we are left only with material difficulties, cultural backwardness, and remnants of the past that would be solved due to science, our wise leadership, and all that. OK, that was crap, we all had to mature! But I think Brecht was identical to the furthest horizons of the Yugoslav revolution, that is to say radical refusal of alienation. *Verfremdung* actually is a refusal of *Entfremdung* – the estrangement counteracts alienation. By the way this was very well discussed by Ernst Bloch in his essay *Entfremdung /Verfremdung*.[8]

In the student theatre there was a very interesting fight between formalists and nihilists, say the Brecht wing and the Grotowski wing; Grotowski was soundly beaten. Then he went to New York and became world-famous by being followed by US theatre people such as Schechner and company. And he beat Brecht worldwide just based on American ideological export. Of course Grotowski has some interesting things, he is a great director of actors, he knew quite a bit about Asian theatres, and he has this kind of Catholic existentialist background, which has its own strength. But I didn't like that much, it's all revelling in Christ's passion – blood, sweat, and snot, no women allowed except as mourners. Thus, when I came to the USA for 1967/68, I had to decide whether I wanted to continue with theatre criticism. During that year I taught

8   Ernst Bloch, 'Entfremdung, Verfremdung: Alienation, Estrangement', translated by Anne Halley and Darko Suvin, *TDR/The Drama Review* 15.1, 1970, pp.120-125.

in Amherst, Massachusetts, which is five hours by bus to New York. Nena and I went on weekends to see all plays of that season in New York, Broadway, off-Broadway, off-off-Broadway, and the leading theatre journal, *TDR,* gave me the money for all the often expensive tickets. At that time, ever since the US public was shocked by success of Sputnik in 1957, a lot of money was being thrown at the universities, to invest into research. Of course most of the money went to the weapons industry, arms technology, space, hard sciences, and similar, but even the small portion given to Humanities and Social Sciences was relatively huge. So there was no problem getting funding and grants for halfway decent proposals. But I didn't like the atmosphere and horizons of the US theatre, and to systematically criticize for years something you don't like is counter-productive, you become what is in German called a *nörgler* – a nagger or moaner; that is boring to read and boring to write.

Therefore I returned the money, and I stopped being a theatre critic. There were also other reasons, one was that I was busy with my academic work (lecturing and writing). However, I could have stayed in New York City. Because universities were hiring a lot of teachers, in '68 I had four contracts awaiting signature on my desk. One was to stay in Amherst, at Massachusetts University; it was a progressive State, the only US one with protective labour legislation and so on; another in San Francisco; and a third one on the outskirts of New York City, on Long Island. And the fourth contract was from McGill University in Montréal, Canada. Now I liked the hustle and bustle of Manhattan, but I didn't much like the USA. It was a very violent country, with wonderful oases which you could also call ghettoes – the campuses. In New York a lot of things were happening, like

later the siege of Columbia University; I went to see that, but I didn't much believe in those student revolts (paradoxically: the rich kids were striking, and the proletarians in police uniforms were putting down the strikes). Of course their strong revulsion against both consumer capitalist and Stalinist forms of human relationships was correct, and they pioneered the revulsion against life being absorbed by getting more and more things, against reification – though that was easy in a country of most abundant production. They were sincerely on the Left without quite knowing what this was or should imply (say clearer ideas, more organisation). When a strike happened in Amherst I felt my duty was to solidarise with the students, but they were basically anarchists, they were only against the war and sexual or drug repression, and what they were for was unclear. However, I didn't believe in smoking marijuana, it obfuscates the mind which we need. Certainly some of the general US fights were worthy fights, those against the Vietnam War and against racism, but they were not fights in which I could as a foreigner participate, not my fights. So at the end I went to Canada and I didn't become a theatre critic. A few years later I experienced some of the 1968 student leaders, whom I defended, turning into Post-Modernists and attacking me.

SB: *Why did you leave Yugoslavia?*

DS: They didn't vote to prolong my assistant status job in the Faculty of Arts after six years, in spite of my having had a special dispensation to teach courses and published 5 books. There were all kinds of intersecting reasons, personal and political, the nationalists were already on the rise, the Party didn't protect me; I fell between two stools so to speak. I believe I got about 47 votes as against 25, but out of a 100 members of the faculty Council

(all teachers), the rest was absent, and we operated under a utopian self-management rule that you need to get an absolute majority of 51 votes. There were some irregularities in the meeting, so I sued them and might well have won. But you cannot be in a university on the basis of a court ruling instead of peer approval, I believed, and I was very disgusted. On top of some other conflicts I had had earlier with theatres and so on, I concluded I could very well be an alienated intellectual anywhere in the world. So though the Faculty got frightened and gave me a one-year paid leave (at the time I was also very sick and mainly in hospital), I resigned in 1967 and applied for a job through friends in the USA -- which I then got in Amherst as described above. I had been in the USA in 1965/66 on a Ford Foundation grant, had had lectures all across the country and followed courses at Yale University, and refused with patriotic indignation offers of employment in various places. Now I had to come back with tail tucked in.

SB: *I would like to continue the discussion with your translation and analysis of Brecht's verse poem 'The Manifesto'. You relate it to cognitive faculty of estrangement: "Poetry is here not only in strong opposition to the stifling superficial babbling of the reigning, totally ideologized doxa of the capitalist media or brainwashed common sense; it is above all a "stumbling block" (formulation of the poet Giampiero Neri) to the hegemonic babble—one which forces the reader/stumbler to stop and look at what is really happening at his feet. (p. 19-20)"*

A: Brecht did a transposition of Marx's *Manifesto of the Communist Party* into verse; which of course, if you believe in form being meaning, makes it a different animal. This is theoretically too interesting, because the style of *the Communist Manifesto* is also

very artistic, it is a prose pamphlet style. Otherwise it wouldn't have lasted for 150 years. Brecht was turning it into a verse translation/adaptation in 1944, when the Red Army was approaching Germany (later on he doubled the initial adaptation). He read everything he could get, both US and German émigré literature, and was struck by the fact that no one rebelled during the defeat of Hitler when the Nazi army was on the front, so a rebellion by workers should have been on the cards but did not happen. He was horrified by this, and thought (rightly) that the German working class had forgotten Marxism. Therefore it had to be re-acquainted with it in a way which would be interesting, that is to say in verse. In my opinion he also thought that Marxist prose, due to the abuse by the social-democratic (and I think also communist) party in banalities did not work so well any more. He was giving it a new lease of life, so to speak, by putting it into verse. He used the hexameter form based on some German translation of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* from 1820s, which he had known in the Weimar era and taken with him into emigration.

This raises the huge question of the relation of poetry to history. I wrote in that analysis: "Surely, charity begins at home: poetry cannot exist without a relation to its own history. The poet — and the translator — must be cognizant of it, but not necessarily the synchronic reader who has to fry today's potatoes today. For the reader, the relation is basically one of poetry to what Marx and Engels called the only science they knew — the history of relationships among people, in different social formations, in the struggles of classes differently shaping each formation." I wish I could go on, but this needs a semestral doctoral course... Maybe this can be approached a little by the essay I

recently wrote and which I propose you print in the same issue of *Rab-Rab* as this interview, "Epistemological Mediations on Science, Poetry and Politics".

SB: *Can we describe the adaptation of 'Manifesto' by Brecht as an instance of estrangement? In your text on the adaptation you describe it as a stumbling block, which is a term used by Russian Formalists.*

DS: Yes, that is a term used by Shklovsky. That is what Formalists called *zatrudnenie formy*, making the form difficult, which prevents distracted reading. It is based on the simple idea that unless you concentrate on text, you will not understand it. If you stumble over a feature, you come to pay attention (or perhaps you throw it away). Furthermore, the form is difficult not only or primarily because it is baroque and complicated, but because it introduces new images and concepts. Then you ask "what is this?", you de-automatise your relation to the artwork. On the contrary, if you automatise the concept as a cliché, and discuss it through automatically expected images and concepts, then nobody will pay full attention to it. So the text or its style has to be refreshed by putting it in some other way, which will be vivid enough to make the reader stop (stumble) and ask about the text. As I said, Brecht also introduces some new things that were not in *The Communist Manifesto*. Of course they are Marxist terms, concepts, and images, but certainly they were not in the original *Manifesto*. For example he introduces the "God of Profit", something like Moloch or Baal. He sits there ruling the people, he is blind but very powerful. Literally, he is a blind God sitting in a temple, certainly a vivid image. Marx himself was not bad at finding vivid images, 'the spectre is haunting Europe' for example. That spectre is more or less a spectre of Hamlet's father, because

Marx loved Shakespeare whom he recited to his children when they were riding on his shoulders on Hampstead Heath. There are also spectres in German tradition, but with Shakespeare it is related to revenge righting an old wrong. Also Marx speaks often about theological or supernatural caprices of the Capital, a dead thing bearing fruit and so on. Therefore it is easy to make a parallel with a religious entity out of it. Of course Brecht reworks also Mammon from Bible, false god of gold and riches, since he was a very close reader of Bible, the Luther translation which is the beginning of modern German literary language.

SB: *In your book on Brecht you criticize the work of Lee Baxandall on Happenings as nihilist estrangement, as no more than a renewal of sensual perception without cognitive values. Or you even say that this is a right-wing estrangement.[9]*

DS: Well mythology is primarily, for us at least, an estrangement. By right-wing I mean basically some kind of mythical approach. For example Hitler believed in the occult science of I think seven moons, six of which have already disappeared, each in a catastrophe where the Earth changed; in the last one the Aryans had to retreat to North Scandinavia, but before that they were ruling all Europe, and they should come back and start to rule again. This myth I would say is

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9   "It is a beatific vision of the discontinuous flux of things, related to a consciousness of the limits of philosophical humanism and of the positive meaning of alienation. As such it is the horizon of all consistent nihilist estrangement". Darko Suvin, 'Reflections on Happenings', *To Brecht and Beyond: Soundings in Modern Dramaturgy*, Brighton & Totowa NJ: The Harvester Press, 1984, p. 253. (ed. note)

an estrangement, of course this is not a part of the normal bourgeois world, but from the Right. So, there is nothing in estrangement which makes it automatically progressive or left-wing. It is a technique of perception. If you gave me a little time I could find you more sophisticated examples of right-wing estrangements from literature. Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantoes*, say, have a section against usury, which is the right-wing, traditionally Catholic name for capitalism. Right-wing is, to put it in general terms, a reaction against French revolution, freedom, equality, and democracy from below; it can easily be ideologically anti-bourgeois too. Fascism has always had a left wing, such as the SA of Nazi Germany whom Hitler had killed in 1934. They were sincerely anti-capitalist, so they thought, and horrified that Hitler made a compromise with capitalist industrialists. They really thought that it was a national socialist party. So, right wing estrangement exists too.

As to nihilist estrangement: by the way, I was a good friend of Baxandall, he was a left-wing guy in New York. And I got interested in these Happenings while in New York City. I saw a few, and they also published very good small pamphlets describing various Happenings by Kaprow and others. After studying them I wrote that critique for *TDR (Theatre and Drama Review)*. Basically I understood happenings as a-political estrangement, that is to say, they are dealing with individual re-orientation to the world, and whether this has anything to do with politics is none of our business. Once we re-orient you can go out and do whatever you want, something or nothing, left or right. I thought that this was a variant of estrangement which was formally interesting, and up to a point maybe even useful, but certainly insufficient. I didn't know what to

call it except nihilist estrangement, by which I was referring to Nietzsche -- certainly not to the Russian nihilists who killed the Tsar.

SB: *Baxandall's theory of Happenings is actually similar also to his interpretation of Eastern European political cinema (particularly of Makavejev) which he calls cine-marxism.*[10]

DS: In these writers it is all approximate, because they didn't know too much about Eastern Europe.

SB: *Apart from not knowing, they were also reproducing certain Western stereotypes of Eastern Europe avant-gardes. For Baxandall, Makavejev's estrangement techniques are better than Godard's, because he has a sensual, non-mediated, and non-cognitive approach.*

DS: I am all in favour of sensuality in arts. It can provoke a gut reaction. But gut reaction is, more or less, semi or un-conscious. How do you then go on, what can it orient you toward? Everything or nothing. Also I don't think that Baxandall is right about Makavejev. True, there is a little bit of what Baxandall was getting at. I can tell you that Makavejev was very much impressed by Deleuze and Guattari. While I was staying with him in Paris in his apartment I saw on his working table their *Anti-Oedipus* book, which he praised to me as a great revelation. I have some very basic doubts about them, even as I think that *A Thousand Plateaus* and also Guattari on his own are better. Certainly not all of Makavejev is as Baxandall wants

10   Lee Baxandall, 'Toward an east European Cinemarxism', *Politics, Art and Commitment in the Easth European Cinema*, ed. David W. Paul, London: Basingstoke, 1983.

to portray it. For me Makavejev is a utopian communist, as redefined by the New Left.

SB: *In your text you describe this nihilism as pseudo-biological values substituting for the historical ones.*

DS: Exactly. For they are not truly biological, as I was saying earlier that 90% of what is inside us is not biological. I don't have much to add to this text; probably today I would define more accurately what I meant by nihilism, but in first approximation it may be OK. I wrote somewhere that political economy, including politics pivoting on political economy, is our version of the Greeks' *ananke*, destiny. As you know in Greek tragedy destiny decides what will happen, that Oedipus must do this and that, and there is no escape from it. Our version of it is probably pretty near to the Greek one, but where the ancient Greeks said destiny we say political economy. It is what the actantial system calls the Mandatory, the supreme power which determines your world. I think that even the Marxist concepts of political economy describe a horribly alienated way of life. Of course, in order to change it, you have to first describe it. But in order to describe it well, which is from a value-based point of view, you have to have lot of doubts about it – as Marx had. You simultaneously posit and deny, a tough thing to do formally.

SB: *Can you tell bit more about your concept of cognitive estrangement, how it is related to knowledge and politics?*

DS: Brecht said once, in his optimistic phase before Hitler, that he wanted to make his audience into an audience of statesmen – in other words, people who are able to build and rule a State (there are astounding parallels between him and Gramsci, unbeknownst to

both). We should today add to these people who know how to build a State also people who know how to keep and maintain this State as a non-State, a dialectical democracy from below. But Brecht was not so far wrong. What he meant is roughly similar to Lenin saying (in his fiercely utopian *State and Revolution*) that every cook, *svaka kuharica*, which is female, is going to be able to rule the State. In other words Brecht and Lenin take the plebeian society or classes and believe they can do what was the prerogative of rulers, which is to know how collectively to rule and maintain the State or a society. How do you do that? You must learn a lot, about finances, about military matters, about psychology, etc, which the ruling class knew, in their own brutal and imperfect ways. You cannot say that Disraeli or Bismarck didn't know how to rule. But we are talking about different kinds of learning and knowing. For plebeians or proletarians, to know how to rule is, if you boil it down to a minimum common denominator, to make people willing, interested, eager and able to learn by saying that what exists now is not the only possibility. So this is cognitive estrangement. For example, to see that what exists as State is not what it seems it is but is a machine of exploitation, or a killing machine. It is maybe a very rough kind of estrangement, but still it is an important estrangement. Basically today the State is two things: a machine for extracting money out of the ruled in favour of the rulers, for keeping and maintaining this exploitation and killing of people, and a killing machine; it kills people in prisons or in the wars. Marx somewhere says that each government has two basic departments, the army and the finances. That is, how to extract money from people and then how to dominate them and other people by means of moneys you have extracted from them, which

is by an organized army. That is true for any State that ever existed.

SB: *So cognitive estrangement is to rethink about the world where we are living in.*

DS: Yes, to rethink, not only conceptually but also sensually, to see anew and to understand *what you see something as* (this is what the mature Wittgenstein was about). I arrived to this through defining science fiction. I disliked the adjective scientific, a futurological function, which was in the West identified with militarism – science and futurology work for the army. And in the East it was identified with a Stalinist type of pseudo-Marxism, which was also supposed to be a science. In both cases there was a 19th-century view of science that I disliked, which is this asymptotic arrival at absolute truth or certainty instead of situatedness. So cognitive, as adjective of understanding, suited me better than science as describing estrangement. It refers to a process, as cognition which has to be gained. But science usually meant something which already exists, and we had to apply it successfully. And the Stalinists added that only the stupid bourgeoisie thought science was confined to natural sciences; whereas we know also that there is the social science of Marxism.

SB: *What you explain is part of your two horizons, Einstein and Lenin…*

DS: Yes: Einstein with Marx as precursor, and the best Lenin, which is the Lenin of *State and Revolution*.

SB: *Is communism a horizon for all utopologists?*

DS: Yes and no. Empirically no, utopological stances span the whole political gamut, though most of it is somewhere on the Left.

But if you want to be radically consistent, and you refuse the status quo, then it is the final horizon. However, let us be careful and first define what we mean by communism! I wrote an essay three years ago, which I haven't managed to publish in English yet but should come out in *Critical Quarterly*, about the Janus nature of communism. There is the sense of Marx, Brecht, Bloch, Gramsci and the best Lenin, which I call C1; it is plebeian communism by direct democracy from below, the original Soviets. And then there is what was "really existing" communism as it ruled after the Russian, Yugoslav, Chinese, Cuban, and a couple of other revolutions, which I call C2; it is State communism by an elite (soon becoming a bureaucratic oligarchy and a ruling class) from above, and this is ambiguous: at first mainly liberatory, it grows into an alienated and corrupt form of C1. So what I am talking about here as a horizon, which means a final line when you look as far as you can, or as a Weberian "ideal type", is C1. This communism as the coming about of de-alienation is of course the horizon of all utopologists.

SB: *I found your text on Engels and Utopia very useful and interesting.[11]*

DS: The essay on Engels is one I really like, I would today write it in the same way. It seems to me that I proved, at least to myself, that there is an unsaid part (a *non dit,* as the French say) in Engels, a blank where I put my question marks – if you remember – which falsifies his argument. I can understand why he and Marx were on the one hand

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11 "Utopian" and "Scientific": Two Attributes for Socialism from Engels' (1976)', *Defined by a Hollow: Essays on Utopia, Science Fiction and Political Epistemology*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010

very respectful towards people like Owen and Fourier, and on the other hand quite exasperated by their followers in practical politics of the 1840s. So, you have to say they were socialist, they were well-meaning, they had good insights, but they incorporated something that was insufficiently thought out. How do you call that which was insufficiently precise? Well, they called it as it was called by everybody back then in England, which is utopian, and it meant being nowhere (*u* is no, *topos* is place), being up in the air. That to my mind is, if you read *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction,* a bourgeois definition of utopia. It is wonderfully put by Macaulay, great ideologist of England in 1820 and 30's, he wrote the Indian Education Act, and so on: 'An acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia'. One is concrete and empirical bourgeois possession, worth a lot of money (London is in Middlesex); whereas the other is *fumisterie*, as the French would say, hot air. Well, this is very convenient from the bourgeois point of view: utopias are cobwebs in the mind, get solid possessions! But that totally denies the emancipatory potential of utopia, which is exactly put by Raymond Ruyer: *"les choses pourraient être autrement,* things could be different". Thinking this way then, in Utopia you would have more than in Middlesex. You would have other and better things. Maybe you would not possess acres in Middlesex, but you would have use of the fruits of the whole country, plus solidarity with the other people who grow and use them. The whole Lockean tradition of knowledge and possession is turned upside down in the terms of utopia. This is the first point, that Marx and Engels had to find a bad adjective for Fourier and Owen, but not as being reactionaries and enemies, simply using a term available to them then that would describe them as not sufficiently "scientific". However, there are two problems here, and

beyond the bad definition of utopia there is also a bad definition of science. The bourgeois definition of science is perpetual progress in the asymptotic form; it is the science (both science of society and natural science) which led to – or gave no problems in being used for -- Auschwitz, Hiroshima, today the bombing of Ukraine. I don't buy this! That's why I didn't like to use word science, and instead used the wider term cognitive, referring to the striving to understand.

This procedure of splitting a single semantic concept into a good and bad pole was first used by Hesiod in *Works and Days*, so far as I know. Of course you could use the same Hesiodean procedure I used for communism also for science, and have S1 as wisdom and S2 as corrupt bourgeois positive truth which can be capitalised. I wrote an essay about that too, called "On the Horizons of Epistemology and Science" (*Critical Quarterly* 52.1 (2010): 68-101; //onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8705.2010.01924.x/full). What does this procedure or stance basically imply? It implies that originally, in pre-class or lower-class or even liberatory intellectual semantics, there was a first usage and interpretation of the concept which was usable for de-alienation. Then in bourgeois or monopolistic capitalism, a second usage and interpretation came about, which was totally alienating and must be rejected if the human species is to survive barbarism. It is a historically well-known and most important development in semantics, in which for example *sub-iectum*, that what is below you and on which you base yourself, becomes the "subject" that looks at the now inert object; Williams has several more such examples in his wonderful *Keywords*.

SB: *You mention also a heuristic aspect of this estrangement.*

DS: I am very much taken by little games in psychological optic illusions, for example when you have a line which is put between arrows, and then you have same line which is put in reverse arrows. The lines seem longer between reverse arrows though they are exactly identical. If you extrapolate this to the huge illusions we are living in, then heuristic is to say "take a centimetre measure and you will see that they are the same." This is heuristic to my mind: take a value system, measure by it, and you find X.

SB: *What about your novum? In your chapter 'SF and the Novum' from Metamorphoses of Science Fiction, in order to delineate the singular condition of literariness of a SF you propose a term novum as "differentia specifica" of the SF narration. You distinguish SF "by the narrative dominance of a fictional 'novum' (novelty, innovation) validated by cognitive logic." This specific novelty of SF, as far as I understood, has one very productive epistemological effect, which keeps the notion of empirical (i.e. science) and the notion of fiction (i.e. utopia) as in some kind of strange irresolvable tension. Further, this tension and unfamiliar relation implies also certain estrangement through novum of SF.*

DS: Well, we hadn't yet got to turbo-capitalism which is full of fake novums every year. So what I later added to this text from my *Metamorphoses of SF* book, in an essay in *Defined by a Hollow,* is to again split it into the fake novum (continuous with the capitalist status quo) and the true novum, radically different. As you may notice, I love such dichotomies, though I think that this could be refined. So it would be nice to have a reasoned typology of novums, I wish somebody would do it.

SB: I*n the reprint of your text in 2008 on defining the literary genre of science fiction* *(originally published in 1973) you add a new line concerning the discontented social classes. What was reason of this? The earlier text defines the literary genre of utopia as: "Utopia is the verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where socio-political institutions, norms, and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community, this construction being based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis." Now you add: "it is created by discontented social classes interested in otherness and change, in it, difference is judged from point of view or within their value system". How should we describe an interest of social classes in relation to the specific narrative of SF, which is novum? Is this an echo of Marxist thesis that class struggles are engine of history?*

DS: The earlier definition was up in the air without any social anchoring, it was supposedly eternal rather than *longue durée* (a fossil remnant of scientist universalism). The addition is in historical *longue durée*, "as carried by a discontented class". It is not enough to say simply a discontented group, then you can have reactionary utopias as well. I read a number of them by Russian White émigrés, for they too can be discontented. It must be a sufficiently important social class to produce a viable ideology. In other words if we accept a socio-formalist vocabulary, I lacked the social part in first definition.

SB: *From your 'Memoirs' on Yugoslavia: "In another place I hope to speak about the Communist Party vocabulary which on the one hand soon grew rather wooden but on the other had surprisingly spontaneous aspects." What would you say about political slogans from the perspective of conceptual discussions we had until now (estrangements, novum, etc.), especially about slogans in Yugoslavia?*

A: I never researched that in any systematic way. First of all I know of no collection of political slogans, there is no corpus of material on that issue, so that research still remains to be done; it may of course be difficult to collect this corpus. Second, I fear we would need a rather elaborate theory on ideology and language in order to do this. So I personally won't do any serious research about it. But I did remark on this issue here and there. For example in *Samo jednom se ljub*i I briefly discussed how the wartime (and later) slogan "Brotherhood and unity" (*Bratstvo i jedinstvo)* melds the French revolutionary *fratérnité* with the necessities of 1941, of countering murderous fascist and quisling chauvinisms in an extremely divided ex-Yugoslavia (not so dissimilar from today's frozen exploitation). The brotherly unity has a connotation and a denotation – one can illustrate this with the old model of the atom: connotation is the nucleus, and denotations are all electrons dispersed around the core. Connotations in this case are Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, Bosnians, Albanians, Montenegrins, Macedonians, all ethnic groups; and the denotation is that which can bring about the unity, which is nothing else but the Communist Party, an Aristotelian unmoved mover. It is a core which didn't assert itself openly; throughout the whole NOB (Liberation War) there is no talk about the Communist Party, except in very confidential documents. There are three reasons for this: most Yugoslav communists were formed in illegal circumstances during the monarchist regime when communists would be shot at sight without further reasons; so they had that reflex of secrecy in order to survive. You have to read Krleža's memoirs about meeting Tito in the late 1930s: it was in some village, veiled with mystery and precautions, Tito had a revolver in his pocket. The two other reasons were not to offend Stalin and the

Western powers. I think this was a correct strategy until 1945/46, which afterwards turns to its opposite. It becomes what I call in my latest book abominable secrecy (*mrska tajnovitost*), meaning bureaucratic secrecy.

The French revolutionary *liberté* was present in the parallel slogan of "Death to fascism, liberty to the people" (*Smrt fašizmu, sloboda narodu*). Both of these are parallel constructions, much like the distichs in classical Chinese poetry, with identical syntax but variant -- in this case strictly antithetic -- semantics in the two halves. Thus, the unitary brotherhood fights for freedom (quite rightly not for *égalité*, which is both philosophically and politically dubious).

Or take the wonderful voluntary work brigades' slogan at the Youth Railways 1946-48: "We build the railway, the railway builds us" (*Mi gradimo prugu, pruga gradi nas*)! Of course this establishes the ideal horizon only, people are always more complex than slogans; I was there in all three years; you can read it in my *Memoirs*. This is a full-fledged case of feedback, similar to what we were talking about earlier. It means that while people change and renew things around them, these things and doings change and renew the people who do them. All three slogans are strokes of genius. No doubt, some agitprop section staffed by (published or not yet published) writers first coined them, but those particular ones survived a kind of Darwinian selection to prove very durable memes. I wish I knew who imagined them.

As you rightly remarked to me, there was also the Partizan song "Padaj silo i nepravdo, narod ti je sudit zvan", I well remember its mellifluous music. It has an especially good text, alluding to the Hvar Island revolt in the 16th Century, very Benjaminian

(it can be found at http://lyricstranslate.com/en/jugoslovenske-partizanske-pesme-padaj-silo-i-nepravdo-lyrics.html). And yes you're right, "Fall down thou violence and injustice, the people is called to be thy judge" is the program of NOB, both a national liberation struggle and a plebeian revolution. This whole matter of the Partizan cultural revolution by means of songs, dances, little theatrical sketches, and a lot of improvised printed leaflets with articles, poems, and even black-and-white drawings is now being investigated, for example by the excellent Slovene essayist Miklavž Komelj. It is the matrix within which the slogans of the time should be considered.

Darko Suvin

Epistemological Meditations on Science, Poetry and Politics

I propose in this essay to suggest, first, an orientation in epistemology (toward a "soft" skepticism). On that basis, and assuming that science exists only as history — possibly a long-duration one — I enlist the help of Hesiod, Nietzsche, and Marx for a hypothesis of two major alternative horizons and roads in science. The original S1 is science-as-wisdom, present in all civilizations; the upstart S2 is science-as-domination-and-profit, present from rise of capitalism, in which people have no place. I then draw a parallel between sciences and arts, including their institutional anchorage, and in particular insofar as narration is concerned. I end with a brief glimpse of how the art and cognition of poetry may intervene in a politics of survival: importantly but indirectly.

1. Central Orientation Points for Epistemology:
For a "Soft" Skepticism

I am not aware of a systematic basis for epistemology we could today use, but I postulate that our interpretations of what is knowledge or not, and how can we know that we know, are largely shaped by the "framework of commitments" we bring to them. Catherine Z. Elgin usefully formulated in 1982 a strategic "soft" skepticism that still allows such commitments:

> Philosophy once aspired to set all knowledge on a firm foundation. Genuine knowledge claims were to be derived from indubitable truths by means of infallible rules. The terms that make up such truths were held to denote the individuals and kinds that constitute reality, and the rules for combining them ... were thought to reflect the real order of things. … This philosophical enterprise has foundered. Indubitable truths and infallible rules are not to be had.

Instead, thinking always begins with working approximations based on "our best presystematic judgments on the matter at hand" (Elgin 183). As we advance toward understanding, we often discover these approximations are untenable or insufficient — but there is no other ensemble to be had. Even "scientific evidence," in the sense of proof, is always "theory-laden," determined by "our conception of the domain and... our goals in systematizing it..." (Elgin 184-85). Alternatively, a tradition from the more radical Skeptics through the Post-Modernists and extreme constructionists has questioned whether there is a reality to be known and whether, if it is there, we could know it or talk about it.

Neither the absolutist (Objectivist) nor the nihilist tradition is satisfactory. The horizon I am sketching is characterized by Elgin and Nelson Goodman in 1988 as "reject[ing] ... both unique truth and the indistinguishability of truth from falsity" (3). A univocal world — *the* fixed reality out there — has been well lost, together with the Unique Final Truth (divine or asymptotically scientific) and other Onenesses of the monotheist family. A sense of panic at the loss of this clear world, at the loss of theological certitude, not only permeates dogmatists of all religious and lay kinds, but has also engendered its symmetrical obverse in an absolutist relativism. How is a third way possible beyond this bind?

It can begin by recognizing that right and wrong persist, but that rightness can no longer be identified with correspondence to a ready-made, monotheistic Creation, but must be created by us, with skill and responsibility, *within contingent historical situations*. Goodman and Elgin think that the term and concept of truth as usually conceived is too solidly embedded in faiths and certitudes of monotheistic allegiance to be safe and useful; to the contrary, categories and argument forms that are products of changing human cognition are better instruments for practical use, testable for situational rightness. Truth is strictly subordinate to rightness in this approach, and this rightness is dependent on our various symbol systems (cf. Aronowitz vii-xi and passim). One consequence is that science loses its epistemic primacy: like art and everyday perception, "[it] does not passively inform upon but actively informs a world" (Elgin 52-53). Both arts and sciences overtly repose on intuitions, it is only that for sciences these are buried in their axioms as indubitable certainties. Whether you prefer Marx's or Balzac's description of 19th-Century France will depend on your general or even momentary interests, but they're in no way either incompatible or subsumed under one another: and both are cognitive.

Sketching an operative epistemological realism can further proceed by recognizing that there are still some logical ways if not of defining truth then at least of defining untruth (Goodman and Elgin 136). All opinions are constructed and relatively wrong or limited, but even so some are valid within given limits (this needs a sense of relevance or pertinence, impossible to detach from the situation and context of the knowing subject – cf. also Prieto), and some are more wrong than others. This holds pre-eminently for those I would call *monoalethist* (from *alethé*, truth): all those – from monotheists to lay dogmatists (Fascists, Stalinists, and believers in the Invisible Hand of the Market) – who hold they have the Absolute Truth, including the belief that relativism is absolute. *Only belief in the absolute right (Haraway's "God-trick," "Situated" 589) is absolutely wrong.*

2. Cognition Is Constituted by and as History: Life-destroying and Life-preserving Science

2.1. A Dissident View of Science

In a remarkable passage right at the beginning of *Works and Days*, Hesiod invents the myth (or allegory) of the two Erises, the benign and the malign one (I: 11-26). The bad Strife favours wars and civil discords. But the firstborn is the good Strife, whom Zeus has placed at the roots of the earth, for she generates emulation: one vase-maker or poem-singer envies the other, the lazy and poor peasant imitates the industrious and richer one. This *polar splitting of concepts* seems to me a central procedure of critical reason, dissatisfied with the present nominations and trying to insinuate opposed meanings under the same term. I shall adopt this Hesiodean procedure for knowledge and then science.

The principal ancestors to this endeavour may be found in Marx and to a minor but still significant degree in Nietzsche. I take from Nietzsche that belief in a fixed correspondence of

intellect to thing/s is an ideal impossible to fulfil and leads to faking and skepticism. This Truth is a lie, and whenever erected into a system, as in religion and in Galilean science, it compels lying. Any cognition developed against this fixed horizon partakes for Nietzsche of a huge, finally deadly "illusion" (*Zur Genealogie* 128). The constructivist account, on the other hand, is a creative transference of carrying across, in Greek *meta-phorein,* whence his famous hyperbolic statements such as that knowing are "nothing but working with the favourite metaphors" (Philosophy xxxiii). For Nietzsche wisdom arises out of the knowledge of nescience: "And only on this by now solid and granite basis of nescience may science have arisen, the will for knowing on the basis of a much more powerful will, the will for *unknowing*, for the uncertain, the untrue! Not as its opposite, but — as its improvement!" (*Jenseits* 24). Yet take care: in terms of fictional Possible Worlds vs. ours, Nietzsche's "untrue" is the opposite of the illusionistic, and rules out angels, UFOs, Mickey Mice, and the Invisible Hand of the Market. Nescience demolishes The Monolithic Truth while preserving verifiability for any given situation, and denies the illusions that so often lead to fanatical belief.

More useful still is Marx, whose relevant views I discuss at length elsewhere ("Living" and "On the Horizons"; cf. also Aronowitz, esp. ch.s 2 and 3). Suffice it here to say that Marx had a dual view: he rejected positivistic approaches, pouring his scorn on the falsities of bourgeois political economy; but simultaneously he chastised all attempts to subject science or cognition to "a point of view from the outside, stemming from interests outside science" (MEW 26.2: 112). *Capital* itself is presented as a project of "free scientific research," which assumes the task to clarify the inner relationships of the phenomena it deals with without imposition from the outside, and in particular against "the Furies of private interest" (MEW 23:16). His two major, consubstantial cognitive insights are first, that societal injustices are based on exploitation of other people's living labour; but second, the insight that the proper way to talk about the capitalist exploitation which rules our lives is not in the *a priori* form of dogma, a closed system, but in the *a posteriori* form of *critique*, which is a negative, denying science: it sketches in a powerful theory but as an antithesis to the capitalist status quo or Kuhnian norm. Legitimate cognition is epistemically grounded in the process it describes, and strategically developed by articulating a radically deviant stance against a dominant in a given historical situation (cf. Marcuse). After Marx, it should be clear that facts are valid only within categories or Aristotle's *genera*, so there are no descriptions wholly independent of prescriptions: "All modes of knowing presuppose a point of view.... Therefore, the appropriate response to [this is]... the responsible acknowledgement of our own viewpoints and the use of that knowledge to look critically at our own and each others' opinions." (Levins 182) The rightness of a theoretical assertion depends on evidence as interpreted by the assertor's always socio-historical needs, interests, and values. In particular, all judgments contain both factual & evaluating aspects; though some might be more openly or more intensely evaluative.

As suggested, science always proceeds from axioms, impossible to state exhaustively and by definition unprovable but committed to a given firm view. Approaching science from this epistemological basis, I suggest the Hesiodean procedure of splitting the institutionalized horizons of science-as-is off from those of a potentially humanized science-as-wisdom, which would count its casualties as precisely as the US armed forces count their own (but not those they bomb).

I wish I could call the latter "science" and the former something else, perhaps technoscience, but I do not want to give up either on science or on technology. I shall provisionally call the firstborn, good science "Science 1" (S1) and the present one, whose results are mixed but seem to be increasingly steeped in the blood and misery of millions of people, "Science 2" (S2). The medieval theologians would have called them *sapientia* vs. *scientia*, though in those early days they optimistically believed *scientia* could be tamed.

These are ideal types only, intermixed in any actual effort in most varied proportions: also, the beginnings of S2 are in S1, and amid its corruption it retains certain of its liberatory birthmarks to the present day. Nonetheless, S2 is fixated on *domination* and the consubstantial *occultation of the knowing subject* that evacuates his/her inevitable societal stance and of the tacit, again societally implied but not conceptually formalisable, element in knowledge (see M. Polanyi and Merleau-Ponty). This flows out of its being "a particular moment in the division of labor." The avoidance of capricious errors "does [not] protect the scientific enterprise as a whole from the shared biases of its practitioners." In sum, "The pattern of knowledge in science is ... structured by interest and belief.... Theories, supported by megalibraries of data, often are systematically and dogmatically obfuscating." It is not by chance that "major technical efforts based on science have [led] to disastrous outcomes: pesticides increase pests; hospitals are foci of infection; antibiotics give rise to new pathogens; flood control increases flood damage; and economic development increases poverty" (Levins 180, 183, and 181).

2.2. On the S2 Paradigm

Bourgeois civilization's main way of coping with the unknown is aberrant, said Nietzsche, because it transmutes nature into concepts with the aim of mastering it as a more or less closed system of concepts. It is not that the means get out of hand but that the mastery — the wrong end — *requires* wrong means of aggressive manipulation. S2 is not only a cultural revolution but also a latent or patent *political* upheaval. The scientific, finally, is the political.

There are strong analogies and probably causal relations between the "search for truth, proclaimed as the cornerstone of progress" and "the maintenance of a hierarchical, unequal social structure," within which capitalist rationalization has created the large stratum of "administrators, technicians, scientists, educators" it needed (Wallerstein, *Historical* 82-83). In particular, it created the whole new class of *managers*. As Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* pointed out, "to manage" originally meant to train a horse in his paces, in the manège (67). F.W. Taylor did exactly this — he broke "the men," calling in his *Shop Management* for "a planning department to do the thinking for the men" (Braverman 128). Since "machinery faces workers as *capitalized* domination over work, and the same happens for science" (Marx, *Theorien* 355), control was later built into the new technologies. During the 19th Century, "science, as a generalized social property" (S1) was replaced by "science as a capitalist property at the very center of production." This is "the scientifico-technical revolution" (Braverman 156), while technoscientific ideology becomes, as Jameson notes, "a blind behind which the more embarrassing logic of the commodity form and the market can operate" (*Singular* 154). Already by the early 1960s, 3/4 of scientific R&D in the USA was corporate yet financed directly or

through tax write-offs by the Federal government, that is, by money taken from tax-payers, while profits went to corporations (164-66). It is almost a century by now that scientific research is mainly determined by expected profits to the detriment of S1 (cf. Kapp 208ff.), where it is not neglected for purely financial speculation.

The Humean, quintessentially bourgeois supposition that science does not deal in values, which began to be widely doubted only after the Second World War, had as "its actual function to protect two systems of values: the professional values of the scientists, and the predominant [status quo] values of society as they existed at that moment…." (Graham 9, and cf. 28-29). The stances of "objectivity" and erasure of the subject actively fostered a treatment of people (workers, women, patients, consumers) as objects to be manipulated just as nature was. As a hierarchical institution devoted to manipulation, S2 was easily applicable for "human resources" too: the Nazi doctors' experiments were only an extremely overt and acute form of such *Herrschaftswissen*, knowledge used for domination.

We must ruefully accept, with due updating, Gandhi's harsh verdict about science: "Your laboratories are diabolic unless you put them at the service of the rural poor" (Gandhigram). Or Brecht's even richer question of 1932 (sensing the worse to come, which has not ceased coming):

> Faced with all these machines and technical arts, with which humanity could be at the beginning of a long, rich day, shouldn't it feel the rosy dawn and the fresh wind which signify the beginning of blessed centuries? Why is it so grey all around, and why blows first that uncanny dusk wind at the coming of which, as they say, the dying ones die? (GBFA 21: 588)

He went on for the rest of his life to worry at this image of false dawn through the example of Galileo. His final judgment was that Galileo — reason, science, the intellectuals — failed, and helped the night to persist, by not allying himself with a political dawn-bringer. But then, we might ask today, where was he to find a revolutionary class who wanted such an ally, and where indeed was Brecht to find it after 1932? In his poem "1940" (after the pustule had broken) Brecht matter-of-factly noted:

> From halls of learning
>
> Emerge the butchers.
>
>
> Hugging their children tightly,
>
> Mothers scan with horror the skies
>
> For the inventions of the scientists.

2.2. Sketches for a S1 Paradigm

Predominantly, S2 is Power (over people), S1 is Creativity (within people). In this view science is a usable and misusable ensemble of cognitions, not an absolute truth we can approach asymptotically. It is principally a "by whom" and "for what" — an "impure" productive relationship between (for example) workers, scientists, financiers, and other power-holders, as well as an institutional network with different effects upon all such different societal groups, which can and must become less death-oriented.

So, what would an updated, sophisticated S1 mean — how can we really get a science for the people, science wedded to easing human life and to a humane quality of life? I believe that our *first* necessity is *radical social justice*, so that rethinking would get a chance. S1 must be based on holistic *understanding*, which would comprise and steer analytical knowledge (Goodman and Elgin 161-64). This would not at all diminish its impressive status as institution; on the contrary, S1 would finally be as truly liberating, both for its creators and its users, as its best announcers have, from Bacon to Wiener and Gould, claimed it should be. It could at last embark on a full incorporation of aims for acting that would justify Nietzsche's rhapsodic expectation: "An experimenting would then become proper that would find place for every kind of heroism, a centuries-long experimenting, which could put to shame all the great works and sacrifices of past history" (*Fröhliche* 39) — truly, a joyous science. It would have to ask: what questions have not been asked in the last 400 years, and for whose profit have we ignored them?

Second, we must learn and internalise the lesson that our technical competence, based on an irresponsible S2 yoked to the profit and militarism that finance it, vastly exceeds our understanding of its huge dangers for hundreds of millions of people and indeed for the survival of vertebrate ecosphere (cockroaches and tube worms might survive). To survive, we imperatively have to establish and enforce a graduated system of *risk assessment* (Beck) *and damage control* based on the negentropic welfare of the human community and the eco-system in which we are embedded. This means retaining, and indeed following consistently through, Merton's famous four basic norms of science — universalism, scepticism, public communism, and personal disinterestedness (cf. also Collingridge 77-85 and 99ff.) — as well as strict scientific *accountability* that adds to the norm of not falsifying findings the norm of being responsible for their consequences. This means practicing science **from the word go** (its teaching) as most intimately co-shaped by the overriding concerns of what and who such an activity is for: "A stronger, more adequate notion of objectivity would require methods for systematically examining all the social values shaping a particular research process…" (Haraway, *Modest* 36, building on Harding; cf. also Wallerstein, *End* 164-67, 238-41, and 264-65). Major scientific projects should not be allowed to become "in house" *faits accomplis* without a public debate which acknowledges that: "Every decision involves the selection among an agenda of alternative images of the future, a selection that is guided by some system of values" (Boulding 423), and within which all the parties involved should provide a list of all previous major research funding, occupations, investments—and even public stands on political issues (cited in Collingridge 186, with disfavour).

These suggestions are just the beginning of a first pass at a solution.

3. Narrations in Science and Fiction

3.1. Not Only Conceptual Understanding

The Kantian tradition has a major difficulty with judgments: they deal with particulars, but how is one to account for any particular, notoriously contingent and as it were anarchic, for which the general concept has still to be found? Kant sometimes finessed this by using examples, which hide a generalized allegory: the particular Achilles is the example of Courage in general. This welcome subterfuge pointed already to the untenability of claims for science as *the* best (or only) knowledge, since an example partakes both of image and of an implied story, as Achilles before Troy. It reintroduced history as a story, enabling us to understand why the *Iliad* was an unsurpassed cognitive fount for the Hellenes. It follows that science and other ways of cognition — say art — do not relate as "objective" vs. "subjective" (or strong male vs. weak female), but as human constructions elucidating the human species' traffic with aspects of the universe or nature. All of them share some overlapping aspects, for example: a/ a striving for *understanding*: literary knowledge, say, was posited by Auerbach as an attempt "to designate man's place in the universe" (17); b/ fundamental *assessments* — suggested but not determined by "facts" — which are epistemologically indispensable but not specifiable as a proposition or argument (see 1.); c/ a sense of relevance, which Grene (following C.F.A. Pantin) calls *recognition of pattern* in all acts of knowing, that includes awareness of *Gestalt* (Kekulé's dream of the benzene ring, Maxwell's equations that add one missing term) and intuitive perception of form (Grene 204; cf. the work of Gendlin, such as "Thinking" and "A Changed"). Unspecifiable may be also called *esthetic*, as in Dirac's comment that the Theory of Relativity was accepted for two reasons: agreement with experiment and a "beautiful mathematic theory [or simple mathematic concepts that fit together in an elegant way] underlying it, which gives it a strong emotional appeal" (cited in Grene 205). The pattern may also be statistical, or an analogical model as Darwin's transfer of pigeon- & stockbreeding to origins of all species.

3.2. Sciences and Art/Poetry

What are then a few of the relevant differences and similarities between the cognitive horizon and route of sciences and of arts, including creative writing (poetry in the wider sense)? I think there might be at least two, an immediately sociopolitical and power one, and an epistemological (that is, long-duration political) one.

3.21.

One major difference appears to be that these two ways of cognition are guided by different constraints for coherence and different conventions of anchoring or "entrenchment." For one thing, sciences may have "long duration" additiveness and deal with univocal and stereotypic contrivances or arrangements — that is, those in theory repeatable with identical effects. Nonetheless, every engineer knows practice is different: we touch here upon Geertz's "local knowledge," best dealt with precisely in arts such as literature but also unavoidably foregrounded in social sciences such as precisely anthropology.

Sciences are thus supposed to be cumulative and self-correcting, and whatever is not such is non-science, which in this exclusive optic means non-cognitive. Yet first of all, this is denied by Kuhn's theory of interpretive paradigms in science which are exclusive and not cumulative, depending as they do on a powerful institution supporting it — that might change; I propose to return to this. And second, the non-cumulative or non-subsumptive characteristics are well represented within disciplines such as philosophy, theory and criticism of arts (including literature), and many "human sciences," including some kinds of theology. Their coherent duration is often as long or longer as that of Baconian experimental and Galileian or Cartesian mathematized science, and they "exhibit all the features we require for making rational appraisals of the relative merits of competing ideologies within them." Such "nonsciences, every bit as much as the sciences, … both have criteria for assessing the adequacy of solutions to problems; both can be shown to have made significant progress at certain stages of their historical evolution" (Laudan 191). The crucial element here seems to be *ongoing institutional anchorage*, decisive for science though not unknown in art: think of Athenian or Renaissance performance, supported — like science — by institutions geared to foreseeable and applicable results. An anchorage is also the ideal horizon of the more decentralized institutionalization of publishing of poetry or the novel in periodicals and books, operating with statistical projections. The supposed cumulative progress seems thus to be an epiphenomenon of stable historical anchoring in strongly organized social interests.

The differences between sciences and nonsciences as long-duration cognition are of a piece with their institutional political and financial patronage, which entails a stable overall paradigm. The patronage, and thus the loyalty (or if you wish subservience) to the reigning ideology and the *patrons*, is in sciences unbroken from, say, the Royal Society on, whereas — despite the attempt of Richelieu's *Académie française* and its successors in many States, down to Stalin — it is intermittent and scattered in the arts. This leads to the second difference in their internal power-structures. It is more hierarchical, from top down, in S2 as a strong institution; while the tradition of S1 and almost all art is from bottom up. Of course, in both cases the univocity wavers for the non-institutionalized creator or artefact. In the case of people, the projects and stereotypes within which they work (for ex., genre conventions, from the epic poem to Science Fiction) are enmeshed with the creator's complex past and present histories, with not quite foreseeable choices. In the case of artefactual tradition, the novel has since its birth, and poetry has since the Romantics, played off constant paradigm shift against generic enablement and anchorage, the New against the recognizable. A computer is foreseeable, a human brain is not. Science is what can be fully repeated, art is what cannot.

To repeat about the similarities: the general horizon, source, and finally the aim — the Supreme Good — of both sciences and arts is to my mind the same: making life, that precious and rare cosmic accident, richer and more pleasurable; fighting against entropy by making sense, in different ways, of different segments of nature, including very much human relationships. In brief, both are cognitive tools and pursuits. More particularly, both deal, against a horizon of human interest and evaluation, with *situations* or with Bakhtin's chronotopes — significantly taken from a popularizer of Einstein, Ukhtomsky — which then, most importantly, imply a whole Possible World.

As Bruner argues, the arts are differently entrenched from sciences: the arts implicitly cultivate hypotheses, each set of which requires a Possible World but not the widest possible extension for applying that set in our World Zero, that is, testability in the scientists' sense; rather, they must be recognizable as "true to conceivable experience" or verisimilar (52 and passim). In the words of de Beauvoir: "It is necessary that I, the reader, enter into the author's world and that his world should become mine" (82). Institutionally speaking, at least since the Romantics the community at large of authors and readers is NOT required to be the *immediate* tester and judge of a new artistic chronotope, though a smaller — sometimes very small — group usually does take up such a function. This situation is formalized in the notion of a specific "voice" indispensable for every literary author: it would be difficult to use this notion in physics or biology, though things get trickier when the product is a literary work about science (and all scientific reports are such hybrids, nearer to literature as they get longer, say in Marx or Darwin). The detailed description of what a quality of life (or its lack) may be is what fictional cognition in much narrative deals with, say in the best Science Fiction such as Le Guin's (see Suvin,"Cognition"). In general, the different genres of literature "can provide us with knowledge of how to live (in the novel), of how people have lived (in biography), and of how to try to transform one's own performed life into knowledge for living (in autobiography)" (Ette 988).

The formalizations of S2 try to taboo this horizon and to erect the very specialized, fenced-in lab as *the* exemplary situation-matrix, the only allowed chronotope, and quantitative precision as the only horizon, insofar as both are extrapolatable to reality. Yet both the lab and full quantification fail immediately and obviously in all social and biological studies, say primate research, not to speak of sociopolitical research. The chronotope of an S2 experiment is manipulated so as to be mathematically explainable, which usually means quantitatively predictable; the human agents must be kept out.

Furthermore, formally speaking, "atom" is the name of an agent in a story about "chemistry," just as "Mr Pickwick" is the name of an agent in a story about "the Pickwick Club" (Harré 89), though there are different rules of storytelling in the two cases. "[Theoretical] fictions must have some degree of plausibility, which they gain by being constructed in the likeness of real things," concludes the middle-of-the-road historian of science (Harré 98). If we take the example of literary and scientific "realism," we find they are consubstantial products of the same attitude or bearing, the quantifying this-worldliness of bourgeois society. This is a contradictory stance, with great strengths — obvious from Cervantes and Fielding on — based on looking steadily at this world as a whole, and increasingly great dangers based on possessive reification of bourgeois atomized individualism. The dangers surface when institutionally sanctified science stakes out a claim to being the pursuit of the *whole truth* in the form of *certainty*, while the apparently weaker and certainly more modest Dickens escapes them. S2 science likes to think of itself as inductive. However, as a planet's map is regulated and shaped by the grid of cartographic projection, so is any system based on a deductive principle, for example the Aristotelian excluded middle or the Hegelian necessarily resolved dialectical contradiction. And this principle is also a kind of meta-reflection about, or methodic key of, the system that is in its (obviously circular) turn founded on and deduced from it. When a philosophical or scientific system exfoliates in the form of a finite series of propositions *culminating* in a rounded-off certainty, its form is finally

not too different from the 19th-Century "well-made," illusionistic stage play; no wonder, for they both flow out of the Positivist orientation, where decay of value leads to despair. The Lady with the Camelias and the Laws of Thermodynamics are sisters under the skin: both show a beautifully necessary death.

However, the situational or situated hypotheses of both fiction and today's science are constructed or taken up for (different but converging) purposes co-defined by the interests of the subject constructors. Each has necessarily a formal closure – involving among other matters a beginning, middle, and end, as Aristotle's *Poetics* phrased it for plays – but many are open-ended, and their multiplicity is always such. Further, a longer work (a theory or a novel) is articulated like a chain or a tapeworm, in a series of delimited events which stand together (this is a literal translation of Aristotle's *systasis pragmaton*) as segments to result in a final unity. When, in several branches of quantum mechanics, and similarly in catastrophe theory, a whole battery of models is regularly used, and "no one thinks that one of these is the whole truth, and they may be mutually inconsistent" (Hacking 37), the differences to Balzac's *Comédie humaine* series or the set (the macrotext) constituted by the poetry of — say — Byron, Shelley, and Keats remain obvious, but the overall formal similarities as cognitive pursuits do not deserve to be slighted either.

3.22.

Here I wish to briefly introduce a second factor for evaluating cognitive artefacts, profoundly epistemological and enduringly political, which I would call *internal richness allowing for a richer bite on reality (intensity)*. I could buttress this with a number of authorities, say Spinoza, but to remain economical I shall do so basing myself on Michael Polanyi mentioned above, who calls it "levels of reality": an entity is more real when it has "the capacity to reveal itself in unexpected ways in the future", with a greater range of interesting consequences. This means the entity's significance is not exhausted by our conception so far, it has untapped depth and a power of manifesting itself in yet unthought ways. A problem or a person have greater depth or a deeper reality than a cobblestone, even though the stone is sensually more tangible in its Sartrean *facticité*, the sheer being there (Polanyi, cited in Grene 219-20). A mineral's tangibility, its meaning or uses, is more publicly or collectively anchored, thus subject to much slower change. To the contrary, significant art is as a rule much richer, in the above double direction of inward and outward: the three-dimensional solidity Berenson described in Giotto's bodies as felt by the beholder *exists for us* more intensely than most perceptions in our everyday World Zero (223), and so does the psychological three-dimensionality Tolstoy's 1812 soldiers.

> But I would claim for the best science often the same status, usually called the "fruitfulness" of a theory. However I would divorce this from the (surely basic) predictability. Important insights in both conceptual-cum-mathematical theories are much more fruitful than usually predicted. In Grene's words, "It is not predictability, but *un*predictability that distinguishes the more powerful & most interesting discoveries..." (221).

4. The Poet's Politics as Semantics: Thinking as Experience

Poetry and fiction always imply a reader standing for a collective audience, ideally his whole community (this is foregrounded in plays). It was the accepted norm not only for ancient Greece but also for Leibniz or Kant that such creations in words reach some transmittable understanding of human relationships, so that Baumgarten called his foundational *Aesthetica* of 1750 the" science of sensual cognition." For many poets it then became logical and ethical to think of translating such cognition into politics as concrete human relationships of power.

How may artistic creators *professionally* participate in politics? This was no problem for poets in the era of Homer, Alcman or Solon but became complicated when political units grew larger as well as more obviously based on divergent class interests and the attendant oppression of a major part of the body politic. Plato clearly felt poets as worrisome competitors to his philosopher-king and advocated banning all those who didn't fit his norms. There followed many painful historical experiences, including in Europe the splendid but today not often applicable attempts of the Romantics either to participate directly as bards of revolt, albeit by means of altered language — see for ex. Hugo — or to turn away totally from politics — which means leaving it to the **status quo**. We may today follow the lead by Rancière (but cf. on poetry as cognition also Spivak 115ff.) and posit something like the following:

The poet-creator can — in fact, cannot but — participate in politics though I shall argue with Rancière that he can do so only paradoxically. This means, literally, that she is one who doubts the reigning commonplace opinions, one who *swerves* from them by infringing old usages and meanings and, implicitly or explicitly (this is a matter of situation and personal temperament), creating new ones. Epicure's ruling principle of the atoms swerving from the automatically straight path may stand as the great ancestor of all creative methods and possibilities (cf. Suvin,"Living"). As a place of truthful thinking — not sundered from feeling — verse and prose poetry have often filled in the voids left by institutionalized science and institutionalized philosophy, and of course by most institutionalized politics. These use generalization, irremediably wedded to concepts, which cannot fully account for the relationship between people and nature, the finite and the infinite. Poetic creation sutures conceptual thought to justification from recalled immediate sensual, bodily experience which is, thus far, much more difficult to falsify or disbelieve. Centrally, this is bound up with topological (one could metaphorically call this also "metaphorical") cognizing. In the stronger case of the so-called absolute metaphor — one that cannot be fully and economically replaced by existing conceptual propositions — I propose that such topological imagination has *equal cognitive dignity* to the conceptual one (cf. Blumenberg, beginning with 10-13)

This creative attitude, however, immediately leads to an intimately personal paradox of living in politics as anti-politics. All that is commonly taken for politics — for us, say, since the effects of the antifascist wars, such as peace and the Welfare State, have been largely or fully expunged — is alien and inimical, where not actively threatening and deadly. Where personality is valued for and as consumption and carefully shaped phrases or images pertain increasingly to mendacious and death-inducing advertising (cf Suvin "Death"), art has to upset. Our immediate

major poetic ancestor, Rimbaud (in a filiation beginning with many Romantics and Baudelaire), was led to exasperation at having to reconcile his deep hatred of the bourgeoisie and existing society with the irrefragable fact of having to breathe and experience within it:

> ….industrialists, rulers, senates:
>
> Die quick! Power, justice, history: down with you!
>
> This is owed to us. Blood! Blood! Golden flame!
>
> All to war, to vengeance, to terror…. Enough!
>
> -   -   -   -   -   -
>
> …I'm there, I'm still there. ("Qu'est-ce pour nous…," 113)

The obverse of this aporia (the *assez* vs. *j'y suis toujours*) is Thomas More's great coinage of utopia: the radically different good place which is in our sensual experience not here, but must be cognized — today, on pain of extinction. What is not here, Bloch's Yet Unknown, is almost always first adumbrated in art and fiction, most economically in verse poetry. From many constituents of the good place, I shall here focus, as does Rancière (92-93), on *freedom* — Wordsworth's "Dear Liberty" (*Prelude* l. 3) which translates the French revolutionary term of *liberté chérie* — that then enables security, order, creativity, and so on. The strategic insight here seems to be that the method of great modern poetry from Rimbaud on (and prose too, in somewhat differing ways), if you wish *its epistemic principle, is freedom as possibility of things being otherwise;* this is to be understood by means of the interaction of what is being said and how it is being said, a consubstantiality of theme and stance. Poetic freedom is a historically situated, political experience of the sensual, which is necessarily also polemical swerve from and against the *doxa*, in favour of fresh cognition. The common, brainwashed understanding includes much that has in the past truly been liberating politics but has retained only a few impoverished slogans from its heroic ages (the liberal, communist, and antifascist ones) when it directly flowed out of human senses. Therefore, "creators have to retrace the line of passage that unites words and things" (Rancière). And in prose, I would add, the line that unites human figures and spacetimes by means of plot and of metaphoric clusters (see Suvin, "On Metaphoricity" and "Heavenly").

Note

The first part of this essay uses paragraphs from my longer discussion in "On the Horizons." Amid the Great Ancestors of epistemology I would count Master Mo Zi (5th C BCE), Aristotle, Epicure as transmitted mainly through Lucretius, and then Marx and Hegel.

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Anthony Iles

Studying Unfreedom: Viktor Shklovsky's Critique of the Political Economy of Art

Initially[1] a participant in the Russian Futurist circle in Saint Petersburg which included David Burliuk, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Velimir Khlebnikov, Viktor Shklovsky became an important critic and theorist of art and literature in the 1910s and 1920s in Russia. In 1916 he founded OPOYAZ (Society for the Study of Poetic Language) with Yuri Tynianov, Osip Brik and Boris Eichenbaum. Up to its dissolution in the 1930s the group developed the innovative theories of literature characterised as Russian Formalism. Shklovsky participated in the Russian Revolution of February 1917 however, immediately after the revolution of October 1917, he sided with the Socialist Revolutionary against the Bolsheviks and was forced to hide in Ukraine, returning to participate in the Civil War, fleeing again in 1922 to Berlin where he stayed until 1923. In Berlin he published *Knight's Move*, a collection of short essays and reviews written in a period spanning the first few years of the revolution, and *Sentimental Journey*, his memoir of the years of revolution and exile 1917-1922. Shklovsky's novel, *Zoo: Letters Not About Love*, includes a letter appealing to the soviet authorities to allow him to return. This, and the intercession of his literary peers, Maxim Gorky and Vladimir Mayakovsky, secured his return to Russia. However, in the context of many Soviet Marxist's suspicion of Shklovsky's anti-Bolshevik past and the popularity of Formalism, Shklovsky found fewer and fewer opportunities to publish in Russia in the latter half of the 1920s. He sought employment in the State cinema of Goskino as a screenwriter, where he worked with the directors Lev Kuleshov, Abram Room and Boris Barnet. Shklovsky's novel *Third Factory*, published in 1926 represents an attempt to address his critics. As increasingly savage attacks by Marxists were brought to bear upon the influence of Formalism on the study of literature (the so-called Marxism – Formalism debate) and upon the arts in general throughout the 1920s, Boris Eichenbaum published 'Theory of the Formal Method' in 1925 retrospectively codifying the formalist approach as a 'science' and defending it's relevance to Marxist critics.[2] Shklovsky made one of his final public pronouncements on formalism in a contradictory and satirical self-critical text entitled 'A Monument to Scientific Error', though there are strong indications (such as his correspondence with Roman Jakobson) that this was actually an attempt to revive rather than bid farewell to OPOYAZ's project. With Mayakovsky's suicide in April 1930 and the Stalinist purges which followed throughout the 1930s (Boris Eichenbaum was gradually restricted to only academic work and later accused of 'rootless cosmopolitanism', Roman Jakobson had already left for Prague in 1920, realising after 1928 a return would be impossible), after 1931 Shklovsky retreated, publishing little critical

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1   This text was originally prepared for a presentation at the RetroFormalism Conference, 'Methodology of the Error', Merve-Verlag, Berlin 19.04.2014. An earlier version of this text was published in Logos, http://logosjournal.ru

2   Towards the end of the 1920s the influence of Formalism (specifically Shklovsky and Boris Eichenbaum are named) in the cinema was also attacked. For a key example see the 'RAPP Resolution on Cinema September 1929', originally published in *Na literaturnom postu*, 1930, no. 2 (February), pp.62–8. Translated and reprinted as document 110 in Ian Christie & Richard Taylor, *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939*, London: Routledge, 2003.

work, until 1940 when the authorities' rehabilitation of Mayakovsky (after 1935) allowed him to publish *Mayakovsky and His Circle*.[3]

We can't uncritically or unproblematically recover Shklovsky for contemporary Marxist thought. However, Shklovsky's work presents interesting problems for thinking through difficulties which go to the heart of Marxist engagements with culture and, I will argue in this text, provides useful tools or 'devices' for renewing some specific vectors of Marxist or communist thought today. This is because Marxist aesthetics and cultural criticism have moved on significantly from a narrow relationship to Bolshevism or to dialectical materialism. In a period of renewed attention to 'the object' as well as renewed propositions of the political valences of poetics, I've been working with Shklovsky in order to rethink the relationship of the critique of political economy to culture.

Recent approaches by Marxist critics to culture have involved renewed focus and attention to artistic and literary production which places labour at it's material centre rather than posing it as something external – e.g. as content external to the work to be celebrated and affirmed as appropriate 'subject matter' for committed art. One of the proponents of such an approach is UK art historian John Roberts who has recently proposed a 'labour theory of culture'. In his text, 'Art after de-skilling' he writes:

> Little [...] has been written on the transformed conditions and understanding of labour in the artwork itself. [...] so little art-history and art-criticism – certainly since the 1960s – has been framed explicitly within a labour-theory of culture: in what ways do artists labour, and how are these forms of labour indexed to art's relationship to the development of general social technique?[4]

Some key axioms of this approach are as follows:

> – Work is internal to the art work. The form of artistic labour determines the form of the artwork, moreover artistic labour has a different ontology to wage labour and therefore defines itself in relation to it, but generally negatively or critically.
>
> – Labour cannot serve as a ground for emancipation. This is to say that labour is a capitalist category, and capital and labour remain bound in antagonism as

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3   This historical summary follows Viktor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History – Doctrine*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981. However there are divergent accounts. Jyrki Siukonen for example has challenged my account of Shklovsky's marginalisation, 'In the 1930s Shklovsky did not publish as much as in the 1920s, that is true. However, after Poiski optimisma (1931) he published at least the following books: 1933 Chulkov i Levshin (on historical figures). 1936 Marko Polo (historical novel). 1936 Povest o khudozhnike Fedotove (on historical figure). 1937 Zametki o prose Pushkina (on Puskin's prose). 1939 Dnevnik (collection of articles). 1940 Minin i Pozharskii (historical novel)'. Jyrki Siukonen in correspondence with the editor, May, 2015.

4   John Roberts, 'Art After De-Skilling', *Historical Materialism*, 18 (2010) pp.77–96. The major work in which John Roberts puts forward his 'labour theory of culture' is *The Intangibilities of Form*, London: Verso, 2007.

the central contradiction of capitalism as a mode of production and as a social relation. It is senseless to affirm labour or work, the practice of the exploitation of energetic human expenditure for instrumental purpose, as the positive pole of this two-sided relationship. Rather, the overcoming of capitalism must involve the abolition of labour as practice and as a class along with all other classes which rest upon labour's exploitation.

– Use value has long been treated as neutral. In capitalism a thing's use might be multiple, even highly subjective, but its necessity, its general social use is a presupposition for its exchange.[5]

– For artistic critics of capitalism there has been an urgent and consistent need to de-naturalise the social use of things.[6]

An account which stands out in its rigorous attention to the complex mediations between artistic and productive labour is that suggested by Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*. In his late work Adorno synthesised a form of aesthetic philosophy heavily indebted to German Idealism with a deep critique of material relations under late capitalism. Through it's paratactical and dense passages he elucidates a theory of art and aesthetics grounded in, but resistant to, the dominant system of exchange and production.

The aesthetic force of production is the same as that of productive labor and has the same teleology; and what may be called aesthetic relations of production [*ästhetisches Produktionsverhältnis*] – all that in which the productive force is embedded and in which it is active – are sedimentations or imprintings of social relations of production. Art's double character as both autonomous and *fait social*

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5 This critical approach to use value finds one of its earliest expressions in the work of Russian Marxist Isaak Illich Rubin whose book, *Essays On Marx's Theory of Value*, was published in Russia in 1924 and suppressed after 1928, its translation into English and republication in the 1970s had a significant influence upon so called 'value-form' approaches to readings of Marx. Key proponents of which would be Chris Arthur and the group Endnotes in the United Kingdom and the numerous theorists grouped under the so-called Neue Marx-Lektüre (New Marx Reading) approach initiated by Helmut Reichelt and Hans-Georg Backhaus in Germany. Chapter 4 of Rubin's book specifically focuses on 'Thing and Social Function'. Isaak Illich Rubin, *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, (Trans. Miloš Samardźija and Freddy Perlman), Delhi: Aakar, 2008.

6 This re-thinking of 'use' and usefulness is core to Shklovsky's theory of estrangement as well as a recurrent motif in his own literary production. It is explored by other Russian avant-garde thinkers, with a specifically Marxist valence in the work of the hybrid 'formalist-sociologist' Boris Arvatov's conception of the socialist object, http://roundtable.kein.org/sites/newtable.kein.org/files/Arvatov%2C%20B.%20-%20Everyday%20life%20and%20the%20culture%20of%20the%20thing.pdf Kazimir Malevich's text 'Laziness as the truth of Mankind', (1921), translated from the 1921 German text *Die Faulheit als tatsächliche Wahrheit der Menschheit,* available, http://www.workaffair.greteaagaard.net/satelite_files/malevich_laziness.pdf as well as his later critique of functionalism in art and objecthood, 'Painting and the Problem of Architecture',
Nova generatsiia, Vol. 3, №. 2 (1928) are resources which might support such an investigation.

is incessantly reproduced on the level of its autonomy. It is by virtue of this relation to the empirical that artworks recuperate, neutralized, what once was literally and directly experienced in life and what was expulsed by spirit.[7]

By Adorno's account, it is not the case that art models 'economy' in any affirmative or literal sense. Rather, this relationship is mediated and indirect, marked by the domination of all spheres of social life by 'economy' under the value-form. Unlike science, art does not deny the subjective origins of it's own objectivity, yet it carries a 'truth content' derived from this.[8] Art, by pursuing its own ends and incorporating material alien to it exposes to transformed and transforming perception of those 'imprintings of social relations of production' sedimented in material. That art does this by acting as if it were free of those relations which had been the generative matrix from which this material issued forth is (to a rationalist point of view) perverse and one reason for philistine condemnation.[9] Yet it is exactly these factors which makes art critical in much more than a simply ideological sense.

> The basic levels of experience that motivate art are related to those of the objective world from which they recoil. The unsolved antagonisms of reality return in artworks as immanent problems of form. This, not the insertion of objective elements, defines the relation of art to society.[10]

There is then, in the attention to 'immanent problems of form', the critical sense by which art returns the products of general social technique to society. These are not returned to the world of utility, but rather, the opposite – 'the function of no function' – a negative utopia which enables the thought of what is not presently possible.[11] In Viktor Shklovsky's late formulation, in terms of literature, this amounts to nothing less than a 'search for the purpose of humanity.'[12]

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7   Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, Robert Hullot-Kentor (Trans.), London & New York: Continuum, 1997, p.5.

8   See Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998, pp.16-17.

9   'By crystallizing in itself as something unique to itself, rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as "socially useful," it criticizes society by merely existing, for which puritans of all stripes condemn it.' Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, op. Cit., p.296.

10   Ibid., p.7.

11   Adorno quoted in Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, op.cit., p.95. The variant translation from the Continuum edition runs, 'Insofar as a social function can be predicated for artworks, it is their functionlessness.' op. Cit., p.297.

12   Viktor Shklovsky, 2011, op. Cit., p.4.

Without suggesting a direct correspondence I'd like to draw the theories of both Theodor Adorno and Viktor Shklovsky into a relationship of mutual illumination to suggest that certain aspects of their work are both surprisingly complimentary and unfinished.[13]

There are a number of strong coincidences between Adorno and Shklovsky on the issue of autonomy and artistic intention. For Adorno, art's autonomy is not only derived from its negative relation to productive labour (art is rarely made under the strictures of wage labour) but also its independence from artistic intentionality. For Adorno, the criticality of art lay in the paradox of autonomy: art was autonomous (free, giving itself its own law) at the same time as it was heteronomous (unfree, imprinted by commodity relations). For Shklovsky,

> Art processes the ethics and world view of a writer and liberates itself from his original intention. Things change when they land in a book.[14]

Attention, particularly in Shklovsky's work of the late 1920s, is therefore drawn to the determinations acting upon art, the, if not dialectical then definitely, circuitous formulation of the freedoms and unfreedoms structuring art. Having often been accused of celebrating art for art's sake, the formalists strongly rejected the position hitherto attributed to them.[15] The theme is part of a highly self-reflexive and complicated moment in Shklovsky's work. Beset by critics of Formalism and slurs relating to his earlier political associations, Shklovsky's *Third Factory* seeks to both construct and destabilise a compromise between Marxism and Formalism. In an atmosphere of tightening strictures around writers' work Shklovsky claims, 'I am studying the unfreedom of the writer.' And later in the same passage, 'A work of literature lives on material. *Don Quixote* and *The Minor* owe their existence to unfreedom. It is impossible to exclude certain material; necessity creates works of literature.'[16] Such statements appear to hover between a rigorous defence of previous claims for the autonomy of art and literature, a sharper assessment of their status as material with inherent determinations, and a direct reflection on and answer to the pressures his own writing is being subjected to. In each subsequent description freedom is defined negatively. Just as his argument for the autonomy of art has led to pressure on his artful criticism, the study and creation of art requires 'unfreedom'.

We might think this ostensible freedom through two formulations of 'double freedom': the first, that formulated by Karl Marx as the double freedom of labour power, free to sell itself as commodity, free from ownership of property or means of production, to work or starve. Marx writes:

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13   Shklovsky's work is 'notoriously idiosyncratic'. The associations I will be making will be necessarily fragmentary, for my argument it is sufficient that they are possible.

14   Viktor Shklovsky, 'On the Freedom of Art' in *Third Factory*, Richard Sheldon (Trans.), Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 2003., p.52.

15   Viktor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History – Doctrine*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, pp.118-120.

16   Viktor Shklovsky, op. Cit., 2003, pp.8-9.

For the conversion of his money into capital, therefore, the owner of money must meet in the market with the free labourer, free in the double sense, that as a free man he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand he has no other commodity for sale, is short of everything necessary for the realisation of his labour-power.[17]

Art, on the other hand, according to Kant, must also be doubly free in an almost symmetrically, opposite sense. Free from wage labour, but also, like labour, free of having a commodity or other service to sell. Kant writes:

Fine art must be free art in a double sense: it must be free in the sense of not being a mercenary occupation and hence a kind of labour, whose magnitude can be judged, exacted or paid for according to a certain standard; but fine art must also be free in the sense that, though the mind is occupying itself, yet it feels satisfied and amused (independently of any pay) without looking to some other purpose.[18]

Marx's formulation deliberately satirises bourgeois freedom as exactly its opposite – compulsion, absolute poverty – for the proletarian. Kant's formulation of art's freedom reserves for it a special role as the 'free' sphere in which the contradictions of class society can be resolved, at least ideally. On the other hand, art, and contemporary art in our present moment in particular, has always struggled to be paid, in a sense which directly contravenes Kant's definition, yet remains 'free' of the unfreedom of wage labour. To make art for a wage would be to surrender art's autonomy to the executive command of a capitalist. Therefore art finds itself positioned as not-labour and not-capitalist, but it's purposive purposelessness is instrumental to bourgeois society as the privileged space of particular 'freedom' which justifies general unfreedom. As Shklovsky's self-critical 1930 text, 'A Monument to Scientific Error', makes clear,

it turns out that where a neutrality or a lack of social purpose actually existed, that neutrality was actually pursuing its own, strongly directed goals.[19]

From Shklovsky's pronouncement in *Knight's Move*, that, 'Art has always been free of life. Its flag has never reflected the colour of the flag that flies over the city fortress.'[20] to the formulation in *Third Factory,* 'I am studying unfreedom'[21] we travel the distance between a liberal idea of freedom – freedom of expression, freedom of speech, that is freedom for certain subjects at

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17   Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume One*, London: Penguin, 1990, p.272.

18   Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, tr. Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, §51, p.190.

19   Viktor Shklovsky, 'A Monument to Scientific Error', (1930), http://saladofpearls.wordpress.com/2014/03/24/viktor-shklovskys-monument-to-scientific-error-1930/

20   Viktor Shklovsky, *Knight's Move*, Normal/London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005, p.22.

21   'I am studying unfreedom as though it were a set of gymnastic equipment. [...] It is essential to seek out methods. To find a way of studying unfreedoms of a different type.' Viktor Shklovsky, op. Cit., 2003, pp.40-41.

the expense of others – to freedom defined negatively – an oscillation between freedom and necessity, emphasis of it's negative and determinate sense without illusion of universality. The bourgeois autonomy of art and of reason, is founded on their relation, or non-relation, to labour and to political action. That art might move beyond these narrow 'freedoms' was a challenge that Futurism had embodied in the years leading up to the 1917 revolutions and had become core to the Soviet avant-garde in the years of social and artistic upheaval which ensued after 1917. Yet, for Shklovsky and other formalists, the question had not been satisfactorily settled through simplistic proclamations which collapsed art into life. Shklovsky expresses himself therefore by a succession of contradictions: 'But chance is crucial to art. The dimensions of a book have always been dictated to an author. The marketplace gave a writer his voice.'[22] Were Shklovsky's contradictions logical, we could say *Third Factory* marks a passage from Kant to Hegel.[23] However, what we are presented with is a plethora of affirmations and negations, apparently paradoxical, which form a dense constellation to be negotiated rather than resolved. Progress is held up to attention, resolution remains suspended and this paradoxical material is worked over and over. The object of this search is both literature and the writer himself, his life, but the succession of problems and their non-resolution are arranged in such a way as to be only resolvable, if at all, with recourse to practice. The case for freedom then in Shklovsky's *Third Factory* is far from art for art's sake, but rather, when chance is affirmed, it is the heteronomous conditions set by literary commerce which ultimately determines (in the last instance). This position was further developed by formalist critic Boris Eichenbaum (as well as other formalist researchers), proposing in the late 1920s a form of 'immanent sociology' by which socio-economic concerns could provide a framework with which to analyse the impact of the conditions of a writer's work, the mechanism of the literary market and the habits of the reading public upon a writer's output in its historical context.[24] Yet, this application of literary sociology, calculated to wrong foot formalism's most dogmatically sociological critics, would remain an overly narrow field of study without its complement of the cognitive focus of the formalists' earlier studies. Eichenbaum's own emphasis, in the late 1920s, on the conditions of literary production became steadily more self-reflexive and less tenable as the reality of state regimentation of literature and criticism

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22   Ibid., p.8.

23   Leon Trotsky's critique of formalism accuses the school of being Kantians. Leon Trotsky, 'Literature and Revolution', in *Leon Trotsky On Literature and Art*, London: Pathfinder Press, 1970, p.40. I am sympathetic to Erlich's interpretation that 'the formalist critics were neo-Kantians even if they did not know it', however, it would be better put to say that aspects of Kant's critical aesthetics survive unconsciously in the formalists work, but these show significant development and risk much more through their exposure to particular artworks than Kant might. Whilst Shklovsky quotes Kant in *Knight's Move*, the only book of his Trotsky appears to have read, Boris Eichenbaum stressed adamantly that the formalists departed quite consciously from philosophical aesthetics: 'Art, considered apart from philosophical aesthetics and ideological theories, dictated its own position on things.' There is some consistency across the work of Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson, Yuri Tynanov, to support this claim: I will pick up this theme and some of the arguments against a simplistic 'neo-Kantian' reading throughout this essay since it also has an important bearing on Adorno's self-conscious and critical relation to Kant.

24   Viktor Erlich, op. Cit., 1981, pp.125-127.

came to the fore. The new direction the formalists had indicated was to become a dead end, just as productivism in art met its limit at the point it sought to intervene into the social factory in ways that went beyond superficial theorisation.[25] We might reflect on what formalism and other aspects of the Soviet avant-garde intuited about the relationship of art and society when they grounded that relationship in a solid investigation of art as a specific form of production. It is this insight, which Theodor Adorno's late work, *Aesthetic Theory*, sought to restore to the reception of artworks:

> the relation of art to society is not to be sought primarily in the sphere of reception. This relation is anterior to reception, in production. Interest in the social decipherment of art must orient itself to production rather than being content with the study and classification of effects that for social reasons often totally diverge from the artworks and their objective social content.[26]

If Adorno emphasised production from the perspective of the reception of art works, Shklovsky addressed the problem from the standpoint of the maker of the thing being made. His own motif, of the factory, emphasises the *produced* nature of literature. In this respect Shklovsky strongly emphasises the determination in the last instance of commodity relations. When Shklovsky discusses the factory, its product is not only the commodity but the peculiar commodity of human labour power itself.

> First of all, I have a job at the third factory of Goskino.
> Second of all, the name isn't hard to explain. The first factory was my family and school. The second was *Opoyaz*.
> And the third – is processing me at this very moment.
> Do we really know how a man ought to be processed?[27]

This passage, which produces a slippage from the factory as the place of work, to the place that processes human material has its echo later in Shklovsky's anthropomorphisation of flax, by which the product acquires a voice:

> Flax, if it had a voice, would shriek as it's being processed.
> It is taken by the head and jerked from the ground. By the root.
> It is sown thickly – oppressed, so that it will not be vigorous but puny.
> Flax requires oppression. It is jerked out of the ground, spread out on the fields (in some places) or retted in pits and streams.
> The streams where the flax is washed are doomed – the fish disappear. Then the

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25 On the fate of productivism see John Roberts, 'Productivism and Its Contradictions', *Third Text*, Vol. 23, Issue 5, September, 2009, pp.527-536.

26 Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, op. Cit., p.299.

27 Viktor Shklovsky, *2003*, op. Cit., p.8.

flax is braked and scutched.
I want freedom.[28]

The attention to, and riffs off, 'factory' and 'process', can only have been a nod to Shklovsky's avant-garde peers and their manifold initiatives to dissolve art and artists into the auratic productive site for pro-revolutionaries of the day: the factory.[29] However, Shklovsky's characterisation of the factory is far from the idealism of his peers. Rather than affirm it's magical process of transformation of concatenated human labours into productive power, and heaps of product, Shklovsky emphasises the ground-up by product – the human, disfigured and exhausted, thrown out of production as a mere husk. Moreover, this is extended to the raw material itself. As we know the by product of the production process is not only raw material worked into valuable product, but the labour power which is congealed into the product and which constitutes it's value. This production over and over reproduces labour power separate from its products, separate from the means of making this product and available again to partake in this process again. We cannot attribute such insights to Shklovsky himself, but his views do not contradict such a view, whereas those of many of his Marxist peers and critics would seem to underplay such basic analysis of the labour process.[30]

The question of 'separation' goes to the heart of the polemics between Marxists and formalists in the 1920s. The formalists' attempt to study the internal workings of literature, to enumerate the devices used and adapted by writers, expunged all external reference in an attempt to assert a theory which pertained to the internal literariness of literature, rather than reading its significance through disciplines of sociology, history, geography, anthropology or political science. This involved studying the constitutive parts of literature and language – by breaking these down and studying the process of genesis and perception in literary works – rather than their social significance. The approach exposed the formalists to the criticism that their approach was insufficiently systematic or universal, and that they were proponents of 'art for arts sake'. A

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28 Ibid., p.49.

29 See John Roberts, 'Productivism and Its Contradictions', *Third Text*, Vol. 23, Issue 5, September, 2009, pp.527-536 andJohn Roberts, 'The Missing Factory', Mute, http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/missing-factory

30 It appears here that Shklovsky shared, with his contemporaries: Kazimir Malevich, Andrei Platonov, Yuri Olesha, disgust at and implicit satire of the celebration of 'labour for labour's sake' under the Bolsheviks, an almost heretical view in the context of the policy of intensive industrialisation under the New Economic Plan and subsequent waves of 'Stakhanovism' that followed in the 1930s. Whether this was an aesthetic or political stance, or both, is a question I'd like to foreground, but ultimately cannot answer in full here. Three significant contributions to the question of Marx's the aesthetic currents of Marx's own political thinking are Stewart Martin, 'Artistic Communism – A Sketch', *Third Text* [special issue on 'Art, Praxis and the Community to Come' edited by John Roberts], vol. 23, issue 4, July 2009, pp. 481-94; Beverley Best, *Marx and the Dynamic of the Capital Formation: An Aesthetics of Political Economy,* Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 and Anthony Iles and Marina Vishmidt, 'Make Whichever You Find Work', *Variant* issue 41, Spring 2011, http://www.variant.org.uk/issue41.html I address the question of the politics of work under socialism, capitalism and communism in further detail in the essay, Anthony Iles, 'Capitalist Limits', in *Brave New Work: A Reader on Harun Farocki's Film A New Product*, Hamburg: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2014, pp.97-121.

few Marxist critics however recognised that, in terms of an approach specific to the problems of literature, Marxism (or historical materialism) had, as yet, little to offer and they might instead learn from Formalism.[31] Shklovsky's retort, in 'A Monument to Scientific Error' is to use Engels to show that the study of a phenomena or instance of production required exactly the attention to the constituent parts of the phenomena.

> When we contemplate either nature, the history of man, or our own intellectual activity, the first picture presented to us is one of an endless intertwining of mutually connected forces. But this conception, however correctly it grasps the general character of the phenomena as a whole, yet is insufficient to explain the separate parts out of which that whole is composed; and so long as we do not know these, neither are we clear about the whole itself. In order to learn to know these separate parts, we must take them out of their natural or historic connections, and inquire, in each case separately, into their qualities, their special causes, their operation, etc.[32]

I would concur, that whilst the systematic construction of a holistic theory for literature and art was not something formalism achieved, the individual studies by formalists, treating each literary production as a specific instance with it's own elements, devices, techniques, is the closest thing we have in the history of literature to the process Marx attempted with regards to specific instances of the labour process in capitalism. Just as Marx was misunderstood as a proponent of economism, the formalists were understood as proponents of 'art for art's sake'.

Another instance of separation. Shklovsky consistently emphasises the incommensurability of everyday life experience and literature. Initially in the separation of everyday speech and literary language (e.g. *Theory of Prose*) '[...] these two languages, that is, the poetic and the practical, do not coincide.'[33] On the other hand the liveliness of Shklovsky's descriptions, his biographical and autobiographical digressions, its insistence upon the vivacious role of art versus the monotony and deadening effects of automatic or habituated perception suggest otherwise. Here, I'd like to indicate that in this opposition of mechanisation to elasticity – of dead material, to life, Shklovsky seems to strongly associate with one of the key preoccupations of Bergsonian vitalism. We might ally Shklovsky to the eccentric vitalism of both Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia whose introduction of mechanical elements into art tended to critique both art (anti-art) and

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31 For example, U. Foxt, 'Marxist literary scholarship cannot as yet meet the Formalists on their own grounds; it lacks a well worked out system of literary concepts; it does not yet have its own poetics.' quoted in Viktor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History – Doctrine,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, p.114. Viktor Erlich enumerates several other serious Marxist critics of Russian Formalism who were drawn to study and emulate the techniques developed by Opoyaz, among them Pavel Medvedev, U Foxt, A. Zeitlin and Boris Arvatov.

32 Frederick Engels, 'The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science', quoted in Shklovsky, 'Monument...', op.cit.

33 Ibid., p.4.

industrial modernity, celebrating by contrast the convulsive, aleatory and passionate life of the organic.[34] I would like to suggest, then a corresponding effort on Shklovsky's part that a similar resistance to *ratio* lives in his tendency towards digression, inutility and instrumentalisation which amounts not only attention to the poetic object but (as the project of Retroformalism strongly emphasises the potential for) makes criticism poetic and makes poetic thought itself critical.

   One of the key motifs in Shklovsky's writing is the car. The car or automobile was both the site of work for Shklovsky, he worked as a driver and mechanic in the army and later wrote a technical manual for a car, and an icon, commodity, exemplary of modernity.

> The machine gunner and the contrabassist are extensions of their instruments.
> Subways, cranes and automobiles are the artificial limbs of mankind. […]
> Drivers change in proportion to the amount of power in the engines which
> propel them.
> An engine of more than forty horsepower annihilates the old morality.
> Speed puts distance between a driver and mankind.
> Start the engine, press on the gas – and you have forthwith left space behind,
> while time seems measured only by the speedometer.[35]

For Shklovsky, things are sensory extensions of man, but also transform his sensation and use him (as their own extensions of their purpose). Thus, rather than a simple curtailment of autonomy, both man and thing are autonomous, make their own rules and impress themselves upon their 'objects'. There is nothing 'unnatural' about the shaping of life by things, but rather there are degrees, the machine being the most extreme and apparently of another order than nature's (man's inorganic being?) shaping of man.

> Things make of a man whatever he makes from them.
> Speed requires a goal.
> Things are multiplying around us – there are ten or even a hundred times more
> of them now than there were two hundred years ago.
> Mankind has them under control, but the individual man does not.
> The individual needs to master the mystery of machines; a new romanticism is
> needed or machines will throw people out of life on the curves.
> At the moment, I am bewildered, because this tire-polished asphalt, these neon

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34   Excellent criticisms of the widespread and problematic influence of vitalism on European and global cultural modernism can be found in Donna V. Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Negritude, Vitalism, and Modernity*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. The strong and varied influence of vitalism on Russian modernism is the focus of the study Hilary Fink, *Bergson and Russian Modernism: 1900-1930,* Evanston: Northwestern Press, 1998.

35   *Zoo...,* op. cit., p.115-116.

signs and well-dressed women – all this is changing me.
Here I am not as I used to be; here it seems, I fall short.[36]

Shklovsky reveals a fear of both mechanisation and feminisation through 'things' particularly 'machines'. Through 'speed' machines and the humans embedded in them annihilate space and time. Speed requires a goal. This changes the shape of human sense-perception, but also the structure of time even the destiny/destination of life.

Automobiles are a cipher for the overtaking of the slow, old order and a sign of the revolution going out of control, by superempowerment of isolated 'individuals' via the apparatus of the machines.

You brought the revolution sloshing into the city like foam, O automobiles!
The revolution shifted gears and drove off.[37]

Here, we might read this contradictory and multi-valent reference as a subtle critique of mechanisation (out of control of its driving force – humanity) under the NEP in Russia.

Shklovsky used the analogy between the construction of a steam engine and the construction of the russian word for it: Train = parovoz (par = steam, Voz = carriage, Cart = povozka po (on) + voz (carriage)+o) to explain how language is constructed of smaller, historical elements.[38] In the linguistic analogy what is emphasised is the very elasticity and historicity of language, whereas what is emphasised in the advance of the steam engine (and he lived in destructive times) is destruction.

Shklovsky is criticised by many, among them, Frederic Jameson for lack of 'historical' insight. Yet we might counter, that as a Lukácsian (we could perhaps include Trotsky here too), Jameson remains exposed to Moishe Postone´s critique of Lukács celebration of historical totality. Postone points out that life under capital is characterised by 'a historical dynamic beyond human control', siding with this process rescues nothing. In real subsumption, 'Historical process as such cannot be opposed to capitalism.'[39] Whilst capital imposes unity, empty homogenous time, attention to artworks instead sharpen our sense of the particular, the fragmentary and its undigestible heterogeneity: (Shklovsky) 'social reality is stepped – it is multi-temporal. The epochs existing in it either clash or peacefully coexist.'[40] Though Jameson and Lukács might recognise the multi-temporality of modernity it is their overemphasis on 'totality', specifically in Marx´s work,

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36   *Zoo*, pp.119-120.

37   *Zoo...,* op. cit., p.117.

38   Viktor Shklovsky, *The Energy of Delusion: a Book on Plot* Illinois: Dalkey Archive, 2011, p.15.

39   Moishe Postone, *Time, Labour, Social Domination*, New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.215.

40   Viktor Shklovsky, *The Energy of Delusion*, op. cit., p.3.

which I wish to criticise here. Not only did Karl Marx himself on occasion use foreign terms such as 'ensemble' in order to avoid 'das Ganz' (the whole, or totality), I want to emphasise how Shklovsky's temporal and fragmentary perspective aligns with a critique of historical telos explored in Marxian thought.

Another way of considering history within literature is through questions of literary succession and influence, and in their later work the Formalists addressed this.

Tynyanov:

> There is no continuing direct line; there is rather a departure, a pushing away from the known point – a struggle […] Any literary succession is first of all a struggle, a destruction of old values and a reconstruction of old elements.[42]

Eichenbaum:

> Thus the basic position for our historical-literary work had to be a passion for destruction and negation, and such was the original tone of our theoretical attacks; our work later assumed a calmer note when we went on to solutions of particular problems.[43]

Shklovsky:

> The work of art arises from a background of other works and through association with them. The form of a work of art is defined by its relation to other works of art, to forms existing prior to it. […] Not only parody, but also any kind of work of art is created parallel to and opposed to some kind of form. *The purpose of the new form is not to express new content, but to change an old form which has lost its aesthetic quality.*[44]

From these statements we can reconstruct a perspective whereby art is influenced by the history of forms which preceded it, but moves forward through negation and struggle rather than peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, this implies that criticism itself is also historical, and must

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41   Marx's use of the term 'ensemble' is discussed in Étienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx*, London and New York: Verso, 2014. In the Marxist tradition I am thinking specifically of Theodor Adorno, 'the whole is false' and Walter Benjamin 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'.

42   Tynyanov, 'Dostoyevsky and Gogol' (1921) quoted in Boris Eichenbaum, 'Theory of the Formal Method', in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays,* (Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Trans.), Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1965, p.134.

43   Ibid., p.134.

44   Viktor Shklovsky, 'The Relation of Devices of Plot Construction to General Devices of Style', Boris Eichenbaum, p.118.

move with it's object, even absorb and learn from its transformed and transforming impetus. Of course, these formulations stem from the Formalist's engagement, or even attempts to seek accommodation, with Marxism in the post-revolutionary period. What I intend to foreground is their emphasis, true to the avant-gardism of the pre-revolutionary period, on rupture and negation as internally and externally structuring dynamics shaping artworks. Successful artworks are determinate negations of the existing state of things. The formalists explicitly extended these dynamics to their own theoretical and interpretive work retaining in view the particular instances of negation of ossified social forms, only arguably at the expense of a view of the totality.

> the Formalists argued that literature should be regarded as a practice which, through a variety of formal devices, enacts a transformation of received categories of thought and expression. [It] does not, as does science, organize the world conceptually, but rather disorganizes the forms through which the world is customarily perceived, opening up a kind of chink through which the world displays to view new and unexpected aspects.[45]

The necessity to disorganise the form of appearance 'through which the world is customarily perceived' can be thought of in correlation to a tradition in Marxist thinking, that passes prominently through the work of Georg Lukács, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, which develops Karl Marx´s theory of commodity fetishism – the way definite human social relations take on a 'phantasmagoric' form of appearance in capitalism.[46] For Marx, this necessitated 'ruthless criticism of all that exists' because in this society appearance and essence do not coincide. Georg Lukács, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno each developed Marx´s insight and each therefore ascribed a 'cognitive content' to artworks, but to very different ends and without foregrounding any possible praxis. The Russian formalists initiated a technical account of how the construction of literature achieves this cognitive content, how truth involves the breakage of appearance in practice through specific instances and in specific conditions – those particular to the production of literature. My argument is that this remains a fragmentary but nevertheless useful contribution to the tradition.

The French collective Théorie Communiste (TC) have recently theorised communist revolution as communisation – that is as a process, rather than an event or a program. Counter to theories which sought to affirm class belonging as a positive antagonist to capital and its overcoming, TC understand the working class in relationship to capital – a relationship that capital has brought about and is integral to its reproduction – the reproduction of capital is dependent on the class and the reproduction of the class is dependent on capital. For TC, revolution entails the self-abolition or self-overcoming of the working class. In the present moment class belonging has

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45 Tony Bennet, *Formalism and Marxism*, Taylor & Francis, E-library, 2005, p.26.

46 Here I am drawing on Gillian Rose's account of the philosophical development of these three thinkers' thought in Gillian Rose, 'The Lament over Reification' in *The Melancholy Science*, London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1978, pp.27-48.

become a constraint, a rift or swerve (écart) is therefore evident in its existence and constitution as a class.

> We know that if we are able to speak of revolution as communisation in the present sense, it is because the present class struggle contains, within itself, the production of class belonging as an external constraint: it contains rifts: […] To act as a class means, today, to lack any horizon beyond capital and the categories of its reproduction, and, for the same reason, to be in contradiction with the reproduction of one's own class, to question this reproduction. We call the situations and practices that experience this duality 'rifts'.[47]

Whilst revolution is not the product of class consciousness or appropriation of symbolic or institutional power on the part of the class, the above passage suggests it involves a form of self-reflection from a position of contradiction. It is not merely a question of perception or identity – because the class is defined fundamentally materially – but there is a sense in which the forms of 'incommensurability' of estrangement discussed above – the production of a qualitative leap out of present conditions – have a similar valence to 'the tension towards the abolition of its own rule' in TC's theory of communist revolution as communisation.[48] Thus, rather than a unitary project TC's revolution is a conjuncture of rifts and contradictions – an 'undoing of the social totality'. Shklovsky's concept of art as device assumes an endless process of digressive negations but implies a unity of art only in negative terms, as that from which new art digresses and overcomes.

Due to their troubled relation to the absolute, each of these perspectives would seem hard to reconcile with what Stewart Martin has discussed as the 'subterranean identity of communism and absolute art'.[49] Yet, Martin's description of 'an activity in which consciousness and non-consciousness relate to each other as alternative modes of an absolute activity that is their common foundation' would seem to bring into sharper focus the complex combination of subjective and objective factors that these accounts of art and communism imply.[50] For Stewart Martin, the horizon towards which the absolutisation of art and communism converge is life, specifically 'non-capitalist life'.[51] For Shklovsky, life is that which is annulled in the everyday and habitual, but brought into relief and made vivid, through art.[52] The centrality of specific subject-object relations to the 'general antagonism' which is felt in art, and expressed as 'rifts' in class struggle, is emphasised by Marina Vishmidt:

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47 R.S. (Théorie Communiste), 'The Conjuncture', *Sic* No.2, January, 2014, p.38.

48 Ibid., p.39.

49 Stewart Martin, 'Artistic Communism: A Sketch', *Third Text*, 23:4, pp.481-494, 2009, p.487.

50 Ibid., pp.484-485.

51 See ibid., pp.485-486 and p.489.

52 'held accountable for nothing, life fades into nothingness. Automatization eats away at things, at clothes, at furniture at our wives and our fear of war.' Viktor Shklovsky, 'Art as Device', *Theory of Prose,* op.cit., p.5.

The subject's intrinsic object character is evermore accentuated by class decomposition, precarious labour and logistical modes of governance. She can thus learn to become other than the manipulable unit she has been socialised to be in part through an aesthetics of de-propertisation.[53]

Auditing the project of a 'commonist aesthetics', taking some distance from conflations of means and ends in theories of communisation, Vishmidt proposes countermeasures which are future-oriented and speculative:

A rationality premised on sensuous non-knowledge, on an embodied approach to contingency as historical reality, describes both the political ecology and the political aesthetics we should take as our task to acknowledge in the practices where it exists and develop it where it doesn't.[54]

Shklovsky's technique of estrangement can be understood as an intuitive response to the process of reification – people becoming thing-like and products becoming personified – an attempt to restore vivacity and critical attention to life. In Shklovsky's famous description, art is a device for making the familiar unfamiliar, for directing 'automatic' perception towards the particularity of objects and relations. Content, is under this system, simply a pretext for the uprooting of habitual perspectives through literary devices. Artistic technique in literature can be composed of 'rhetorical figures, linguistic and lexical facts, phonetic or rhythmic elements, and methods of composition and plot construction [...]' but also the *absence* of one or more of these.[55] Other movements throughout the 20th century developed these formal concerns with reduction, separation and so on: OULIPO, Lettrism, L A N G U A G E poetry and sound and concrete poetry each explored the breaking down of prose and poetry into smaller independent units – following the important model of filmic montage. The breaking down and articulation of smaller and smaller units is mimetic of industrial and autonomising logic used in industrial processes, but here it is to be used against habituation rather than in its service.

53   Marina Vishmidt, 'All Shall Be Unicorns: About Commons, Aesthetics and Time', *Open, September,* 2014, http://www.onlineopen.org/article.php?id=128

54   Ibid.

55   Carla Benedetti, *The Empty Cage: Inquiry into the Mysterious Disappearance of the Author*, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005. pp.117-118.

In an oft quoted passage from 'Art as Device' Shklovky explains how 'the device of art makes perception long and "laborious".'[56] It is specifically an attack on the theories of Alexander Potebyna, but also cites Herbert Spencer to address the tendency by which a 'law of the economy of creative effort' is […] generally accepted.'

What I think Shklovsky was doing here provides fertile ground for doing exactly the opposite of what Trotsky sought to do in *Literature and Revolution*, that is read art not as a consequence of social conditions, but as a critic of them.[57] Shklovsky's assertion of the poetic process and its perception has a curious proximity to Marx's description of sensory attention within the labour process in *Capital Vol.1*. He describes how attention, rather than being merely dulled by repetitive work is in fact compelled to greater attention.[58] Here, difficulty reverses the economy of attention posed by Shklovsky's contemporaries. A peculiar symmetry emerges whereby that what is difficult, perhaps painful even, is within the reception of an artwork pleasure, whereas in the labour process what is automated, simple, becomes the greatest effort and an additional strain for the exploited worker.

The recent reforms of Higher and Primary Education in the United Kingdom have implemented, according to Danny Hayward, a 'formal aesthetics of behavioural psychology ' – a troubling rearming and deployment of formalist techniques to the ends of producing an automatic subject appropriate to crisis capitalism's instrumental needs.[59] In this new recuperation of formalism,

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56   Benjamin Sher's translation from, Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose,* Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991. Caryl Emerson's modification of Sher's translation:
'So, in order to return sensation to life, in order to make us feel things as objects, to make a stone feel stony, there exists that which is called art. The purpose of art is to impart sensation to an object as something seen rather than [merely] recognized; the device of art is the device of the "estrangement" of things and the device of defacilitated form, enhancing the difficulty and duration of perception, so that the perceptual process in art is an end in itself and should be prolonged: art is a means for experiencing the making [delan'e] of a thing, but what is made in art is not important.' Caryl Emerson*,* 'Shklovsky's *ostranenie*, Bakhtin's *vnenakhodimost* (How Distance Serves an Aesthetics of Arousal Differently from an Aesthetics Based on Pain)*' Poetics Today* 26:4 (Winter 2005), p.640.

57   Trotsky dedicated a chapter of his famous work to a critical and somewhat uninformed discussion of the Russian Formalists. Leon Trotsky, 'Literature and Revolution', in *Leon Trotsky On Literature and Art,* London: Pathfinder Press, 1970, p.33.

58   'At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes [verwirklicht] his own purpose in those materials. And this purpose he is conscious of, it determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it. This subordination is no mere momentary act. Apart from the exertion of the working organs, a purposeful will is required for the entire duration of the work. This means close attention. The less he is attracted by the nature of the work and the way in which it has to be accomplished, and the less, therefore, he enjoys it as the free play of his own physical and mental powers, the closer his attention is forced to be.' Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol.1, p.284.

59   Danny Hayward, 'Keeping Up With the Pavlovs', *Mute*, http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/keeping-pavlovs

its slow revival via behavioural psychology, content is firmly detached from 'interest'. It remains unclear how exactly one might map this instrumental use of formalism back onto its origins in a guardedly purposeless purpose by which aesthetic technique might make 'perception long and 'laborious'. It is clear that purposelessness can easily be derailed by purpose and that anything that does not kill capital completely might be used despite itself.

Shklovsky said 'Art converts the particularities of things into perceptible form.'[60] Rather than establishing a stability between literature and its object, or criticism and its object (literature), means and object instead become unstable, dynamic and poetic, emphasising that the process of automatism – automatic perception, habituation – which is itself a dynamic invariant in industrial culture finds an equally dynamic force of opposition in art (and this is especially so if we think of art, film, literature and music all at once). According to Frederic Jameson, in Shklovsky's work, '[…] we are made to realize the incommensurability of words to experience, of models to lived existence […] segments of events are fragmented to the point where the infinite divisibility of all human experience in time seems a demonstrable fact.'[61] The emphasis on time, divisibility and non-equivalence is suggestive of aesthetics and art as an invariant counter-movement to capitalism's dynamism. Yet, if social confrontation initiates a process as indifferent to the valorisation of value, as aleatory as art, as concerned to preserve the separation of human life from its functional destruction as labour power then there is a possibility for social struggle to ally itself to art's concerns without either collapsing completely into the other.

Shklovsky's contemporaries and future collaborators (in *LEF*) might have learned important lessons from this thought as they sought to merge the ontology of artistic and productive labour via the efficient work-time reordering of Taylorism. As an example we might read a, in this context rather grizzly, quote from Sergei Tretiakov's 'Biography of the Object':

> The compositional structure of the 'biography of the object' is a conveyor belt along which a unit of raw material is moved and transformed into a useful product through human effort.[62]

Proposing a form of sensory labour in the artwork by which a reader's many-sided 'free play of [...] physical and mental powers' could be expanded to the fullest rather than simply trained, Shklovsky did perhaps not realise how close he was to posing a critical labour theory of culture, and how this might provide at least some provisional tools for understanding and criticising the instrumentalising and accelerating tempos of capitalist culture.

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60   Viktor Shklovsky, 'Letter to Tynyanov', 2003, op. cit., p.xix.

61   Frederic Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism*, Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972, p.77.

62   Sergei Tretiakov, 'Biography of the Object', *October* 118, Fall 2006, pp. 57–62, p.60.

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Three Studies on *Ostranenie*

Anthony Iles

Introduction to the texts

In Viktor Shklovsky's model of estrangement and theory of art as device, art's development is peripatetic and digressive. Techniques that which provoke attention to material, by frustrating easy recognition, historically pre-date modernism (Tolstoy, Pushkin and Sterne) and are found frequently in folk tales and riddles – 'estrangement can be found almost anywhere'. But these techniques are substantially intensified in modernism and draw their provocation from the technological inventions characteristic of modernity – cars, telephones, trains. Shock, speed and the bombardment of the senses is matched by disruption, surprise, close attention to an object. However, as modernity itself loses its teleology of freeing labour power, this concentration of perceptual labour also ceases its development along coherent lines. Amidst revivals, pastiche, counter-cultural avant-gardes find themselves caught between a contradictory prevision of their own museumification, or privatisation, and attempts to extend and apply avant-garde technique to an everyday life which is no longer separable from the history of these devices' repurposing as apparatuses. In one sense we already live in a world saturated by estrangement – as advertising – objects drawn to attention out of their mundane sphere of existence as commodities. In another sense, forms of estrangement continue to seek to dissolve themselves in revolt against the totally administered world, to break habituation. It is in this sense that GKP ask, 'What kind of thought is art?', and propose that a present politics of art is a destruction (*onenačinjenje*) of the form of relations of art. Conceptual art forced thought's plasticity back into thought itself, estranging our conceptual apparatus itself making it the object of new attention, yet this has come to stand for a revival of aestheticism, rather than its withering away. Therefore noise, as an anti-aesthetic, non-musical category, may, as Mattin argues, estrange material other than sound and force a conflict between being and experience. This approach suggests that science turns again to

the question, or fiction, of the subject, a project that may yet challenge and dissolve scientific objectivity through an active form of experimental rationality which risks self-abolition.

The following three texts were generated through a sequence of temporally distributed dialogues, presentations and discussions between their authors. They represent, in this form, three quite distinct authorial positions, each position implies and responds to recent practice as well as the historical legacies of Russian Formalism.

A question initially posed to the authors was:

Art marks out a history of negations yet its self-abolition today is only more art. Art's 'exit' from its present situation can neither be obtained through disavowing its ties to the social relations of production nor by affirming a positive role within them. Pinioned between luxury and austere social programs what are the present prospects for practices which seek to critically test and reduce art's inflated claims against the backdrop of a sequence of asset bubbles, increasing state violence and diminished social reproduction?

What may appear now as islands of coherent thought in dialogue were, and will likely be, exposed to further exigencies of practical scrutiny of these and other pressing questions.

Anthony Iles

Relations of Production

Contemporary art's freedom, plurality and indeterminacy is best measured against capitalism's absolute hostility to qualitative difference and to the development of human powers as ends in themselves. Kant's formulation of art's freedom reserved for it a special role as the 'free' sphere in which the contradictions of class society could be resolved, ideally. Art, therefore, finds itself positioned as not-labour and not-capitalist, but its purposive purposelessness has been instrumental to bourgeois society as the privileged space of particular 'freedoms' which justify general unfreedom. Historically art which attempted to break with the 'freedoms' of bourgeois culture appears to have ended up securing them in the museum, or exiting only to capitulate to the instrumental machinations of the plan (capitalist or socialist). Art, during the decline of European bourgeois culture, has hewn closely to this cultures' necessity to hide labour, remaining functional to labour's intensification. Notable exceptions exist, but where they have exalted labour as labour they often tended to denigrate art as negation, becoming a form of Public Relations – a form of negotiation which obviates other antagonisms. The art strike, or artistic strike, presupposed characteristics of the labour contract which do not obtain in art. This negation, by casting unalienated activity within the constraints of its alienated other forces the collapse of certain contradictions which previously held unemployment, employment and undetermined art within tensions functional to their mystification. In this sense, a stable dynamic between capital, labour and art is suffering a prolonged breakdown between all the partners constitutive of this relationship.[1] Of course a crisis is also an opportunity, and this breakdown is profitable for certain parties, temporarily at least. Yet as art incorporates material

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1   Screamin' Alice, 'The breakdown of a relationship? Reflections on the crisis', http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/15

outside its field into it, the material and social world begins to interfere with it in unforeseen ways. Even as profits flow, the relationship as a whole falls increasingly into question – the continuation of art is bound to heteronomous forces which contradict and thwart its 'freedoms'.

Unlike science, art does not deny the subjective origins of its own objectivity, yet it carries a 'truth content' derived from this.[2] Art does not model the 'economy' in any affirmative or literal sense. Rather, this relationship is mediated and indirect, marked by the domination of all spheres of social life by the 'economic', the primacy of the value-form. The material available to art is the material produced by this class society – a certain mode of production defined by a specific division of labour – by pursuing its own ends and incorporating material alien to it art exposes to transformed and transforming perception of those 'imprintings of social relations of production' sedimented in material. That art does this by acting as if it were free of those relations which had been the generative matrix from which this material issued forth is (to a rationalist point of view) perverse and a reason for philistine condemnation.[3] As unconsciously formed material it is 'not yet', 'behind', or 'disqualified' in relation to thought.[4] But art remains a form of self-reflection that troubles philosophy, and its status as material is that which binds it to other forms of material production, whilst reserving and extending undetermined purposes for its exceptional pursuits.[5]

Viktor Shklovsky was explicit, estrangement was a way of renewing perception and renewing art. Art might use anything as material, external or internal to it. This draws other areas understood as non-artistic into it, but, as Shklovsky insisted, it is the form of art's enquiry which remains sovereign. Nonetheless, this theory found itself used in turn, specifically to develop a programme of the dissolution of art into life. Shklovsky thought this was bad for propaganda, but it turned out to be even worse for life – most of the artists advocating this position ended up dying at the hands of the state they had strengthened, many were worked to death in labour camps.

Endeavours which sought to overcome art's purposelessness through instrumentality in production attacked art's proximity to inutility – idealising work as the apotheosis of humankind. These efforts lent practical applications to the lessening of shock upon the working body in

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2   See Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998, pp.16-17.

3   'By crystallizing in itself as something unique to itself, rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as "socially useful," it criticizes society by merely existing, for which puritans of all stripes condemn it.' Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, op. Cit., p.296.

4   See GKP, 'On Formalization, Errorization and *Onenačinjenje*', in this issue of Rab-Rab and Christoph Menke, 'Not Yet: The Philosophical Significance of Aesthetics', in *Aesthetics and Contemporary* Art, New York/Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011.

5   '... art is at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy, which ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form, namely the unconscious element in acting and producing, and its original identity with the conscious.' F.W.J. Schelling, System of Transcendental Idealism (1800), trans P Heath, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1978, p.231.

production. According to Manfredo Tarfuri, Dada chaos, 'the systematic use of the unexpected' – forms of performative estrangement – incorporated shock and anguish into a 'new principle of development' by rendering them active.[6] Anguish could be put to use. Formalism's formulation of the decelerating effects on perception of estrangement, in turn are deployed as coping with, and then enabling, acceleration.

We should think hard about the reasons capital seek to develop instrumental purpose for the waste products of its production processes. Contemporary UK education now deploys formalist means to interrupt the lazy perception of distracted students forcing attention to otherwise banal and instrumental knowledge, entirely expedient to the needs of a national economy in austerity mode. In this movement we have shifted from anguish to banality – action as a state of being forward, advancing – to action, and the flinching armoured subject, as the norm. When anguish can be contemplated or put to use we perhaps had better understand how it can be deactivated, rendered inactive. Rather a swerve out of these developments – an end to exploitation – than contribute to any acceleration of such 'progress'.[7]

'Formalism' in the Greenbergian sense was medium specific, bound to the separation of the arts and their continual integral definition. As education and going abroad to war widened their interests a generation of artists refused the discipline of medium, developing expanded approaches to material and the art experience as material. At the same time a generation of workers and women broke the discipline of the factory and home refusing capitalist subjectivation inside and outside the 'hidden abode of production'. Determinant to each tendency was the need anyway for capital to break with its own discipline and stagnation, seeking higher profits through hi-tech investment and the reorganisation of markets – an expansion of the 'materials' and communication technologies, made available to art – recomposing workers and consumers as subjects and artists as entrepreneurs – purveyors in an economy of experiences. To say that these developments were only co-terminus with capital's commodification of aspects of social life outside of previous limits of social production would be to undermine how each of these parties, capital, workers, artists strain against the historical limits of a particular social consensus.

If throughout the 20th century a certain tendency within art has attempted to reduce, by negating, every one of art's claims to a principle – Marcel Duchamp, 'Reduce, reduce, reduce, was my thought' – we may have long passed the point of exhaustion of these claims. This is perhaps because every claim to a principle (e.g. discipline, medium, identity, representation) has been negated and reduced through adherence to its pursuit of truth, or elimination of

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6   Manfredo Tarfuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, Cambridge Mass. And London: MIT Press, 1976, p.89 and 96.

7   'Revolution brings about what would happen without spontaneity in any case: the socialization of the means of production, planned management of production, and unlimited control of nature. And it also brings about what will not happen without resistance and constantly renewed efforts to strengthen freedom: *the end of exploitation*. Such an outcome is not a further acceleration of progress, but a qualitative leap out of the dimension of progress.' Max Horkheimer, 'The Authoritarian State', op. Cit., p.107.

untruths. Having arrived at the recognition of its dependence on what has been made elsewhere – a 'ready-made thing, made either mechanically or by the hand of another man' – art has deflected to what has been understood as an artists 'choice', 'nomination' or, more critically, 'quantification'.[8] As nomination, contemporary art is endlessly rediscovering the limitations of its apparent lack of limits. Contemporary art manifests the proliferation of difference and the proliferation of meaninglessness, diminishing its internal rigour as it draws material from apparently anywhere. On the other hand, from the point of absolute negativity vis a vis art almost any claim now passes because any claim has equal (or equally little) purchase on veracity. This plurality produces an exponential surfeit of claims to be again negated in turn, one by one.

'Art is anything I say it is.' The claim chimes with the absurdist literary exercise which has been used over and over to teach us about language – Lewis Carrol's Humpty Dumpty who says, 'words mean anything I want them to mean'. This egg can be used to prove, among other things, that even after nominalism something remains. Humpty Dumpty, and any sovereign who asserts mastery over language in this way, asserts a false and tragi-comic sovereignty which is only a form of proxy sovereignty leaning on the authority of another tyrant. Also, since Humpty, as the product of a nursery rhyme, is himself only a creation of language after all, the speaker masters language, but in turn language possesses and forms him. Loosed from social communication, language becomes bearer of violent passion. Language, as Jean-Jacques Lecercle reminds us, is outstripped by reality – there are less words than things or feelings to express. In turn the real is that which language separates from and includes. The less quoted clause in Humpty's sentence 'words mean anything I want them to mean; if I want them to assume more meaning, I pay them extra' suggests that the mastery of words is connected to the mastery of capital over labour, that is, it is historically contingent and subject to resistances.

Nominalism can only go so far before it falls short of the real and becomes ridiculous in the face of it. Nominalism has, in the past, laid bare art's conditions – contested and negated its claims. Art's conditions are in turn conditioned by the forces of social production of the society of which it is a part and from which it separates itself, critiques or affirms. An aesthetic relations of production counterposes a critical dimension to the capitalist relations of production, but the source of its forces of production are the same. The formalists intended thorough disassembly, when they proposed to study and criticise how a thing was made, while Lenin deferred, 'as for the organisational form of the work, we do not invent it, we take it ready-made from capitalism'. Estrangement forces the artifice of words and the artifice, or arbitrariness, of the present arrangement of things – making them appear in their separation by revealing the mechanics of their appearance. At the same time, estrangement forces us to see what words can do and what our command or lack of command over them cannot do. Therefore, art offers the space for contemplation of conditions, but not their practical overcoming. Political action would be dependent on a subject which is neither contemplative nor universal – since the aesthetic regime

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8   Marcel Duchamp, interview by Georges Charbonnier, radio interviews, RTF, 1961 (authors
      translation) quoted in Thierry de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, Boston MA: MIT Press, 1996, p.162. Art &
      Language describes Duchamp's shift to finding or choosing as a 'logic of quantification'.

announced by Kant is the target that political and artistic contestation today has to go beyond. As far as art has elicited such subjects through 'participation' it has done so only to reinscribe art's powers of conformity and police subjects better, more intimately. These situations have also provided opportunities for expanded commodification rather than de-commodification.

The current phase of capitalist 'development' poses the absence of work as a consequence work's intensification, but this is experienced only as labour's obsolescence – as desperation outside work and the desperate leisure of the wealthy. The reality of work's overcoming cannot be brought forth by capitalism and art presently can barely even entertain this thought – the absence of work – as anything other than 'real-life training', creative management of the surplus time of the lucky few. If anti-art was necessary to renew art's concept, its exhaustion as institutional critique transferred all remaining power and manoeuvrability of that concept there: to arts institutions, strengthened all the more for having their limits thoroughly tested. Art's institutions remain capitalist institutions, as such their destruction will likely happen not through an art which is beholden to them.

Since there is no positive pole to affirm in labour, art now lurches between negativity and affirmation, today frequently affirming 'alternatives' which turn out to be nothing of the sort: either limited and gestural, readily commodifiable, or future areas of expansion for the state.[9] Accelerating commodification is itself a symptom of technological developments which undermine the basis of capital accumulation. The prospects for art in this capitalist society are therefore increasingly enchained to an upward transfer of assets, a concentration of wealth, which takes the form of a violent redistribution rather than an expanding circuit of production and reproduction.

Art marks out a history of negations yet its self-abolition today is only more art. Art's 'exit' from its present situation can neither be obtained through disavowing its ties to the social relations of production nor by affirming a positive role within them. Pinioned between luxury and austere social programs, can art reflect and act meaningfully by 'studying unfreedom' rather than affirming small and fleeting freedoms?[10] The prospects for practices which seek to critically test and reduce art's inflated claims against the backdrop of unstable asset bubbles, increasing state violence and diminished social reproduction, lie in sustained conflict with its own institutions and the institutions of capital through their points of contact and through the radical disconnection with both implied by arts dynamic of formal and resistant enquiry.

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9   'flight itself always degenerates into a convulsive repetition of the very situation from which he would flee.' Theodor Adorno 'Theses on Need' (1942), (Trans.) Keston Sutherland, *Quid*, No.16, pp.40-44.

10   'I am studying unfreedom as though it were a set of gymnastic equipment. [...] It is essential to seek out methods. To find a way of studying unfreedoms of a different type.' Viktor Shklovsky, *Third Factory*, Richard Sheldon (Trans.), Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 2003, pp.40-41.

Grupa za Konceptualnu Politiku

On Formalization, Errorization and

Onenačinjenje

Formal structure is, as phonological structure, the very structure or opposition of significances, and as such – *determinant*, and from Althusserian Marx onwards also *the determinant in the last instance*. Phonological structure of insignificant significances or elements, non-content's forms or unfounded significances, for historical materialist (scientist and theorist, and we will deal with that here when we include the art to this argument) always means the structure of relations of production or the disposition which is taken, considering *the means of production,* by *labourer* and *non-labourer*. Labourer and non-labourer, the only phonological opposition in the language of social relations, whose criteria of disjunction is developed according to two axes – both productional and by no means ideological. Whether the political as well, it remains to be seen, but for some other time because our homological straining of concepts is still going on. What we can say at this moment is that the thesis that relations of production are relations of power is something we agree on, and in that sense we could say that what is in question is *the political*, which still doesn't say a thing about *politics* – but not only as practice, because Marxists concept of mode of production also implies irreducibility of structure to practice, and according to that also irreducibility of relations of production (structure) and social relations of production (practice) to one another. Political, therefore, for original problematics of Marxism, how we read it by thinking on Poulantzas, belongs to the disposition of structure, and now we add to the State as well, while for Marxists, politics belongs to the disposition of practice. What will be our inspiration after this is what we understand with Lazarus as irreducibility of politics to practice (because the latter always evokes theory and science), and irreducibility of thought to being – although so far we have insisted exclusively to irreducibility of being to thought. The abundance of being we now exchange for the abundance of thought, because to the given we are adding possible. Therefore we could agree about all of those who think that virtual is more

abundant then given or actual. Thus, on the side of being remains theory with its objectalities, but also the State or the political, which structure is articulated by conceptualization of social relations of production.

If for the moment we have agreed that the relations of production are relations of power, then such also are *the aesthetic relations of production*. Those are the relations of production in which artists accede and which could be represented and experienced as the relations in the division of labor. But, since the division at instances of mode of production is structural activity established and based by formalization into ideologema of social division of labor, it differently divides divisions which are imposed by ideology.

Could we detect the form of subsumption in the aesthetic relations of production? What would be formal, and what the real subsumption in domain of aesthetics or domain in which consciously/intentionally aesthetical is being produced, therefore in the art? The terminology is perhaps bothering, but it is precise and it facilitates moving through the problem, inasmuch as it (problem) is formed (established) by it alone (terms and concept).

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Our thinking is that we won't find real subsumption into this sphere. According to the *Capital*, it is impossible. The real subsumption is possible exclusively in material production organized in the capitalist way and initiated by the capital as a private property. When the State does it in the domain of material production, then it's not the work of capital, no matter how all other elements of the content of concept are coinciding. However, in the case of art we are in domain of intellectual labor and the whole domain remains in the sphere of formal subsumption. Trade of art works, as we see, exists, but the appropriation of the way of their production is impossible to subjugate to intensification and organization which capital is carrying out in domain of material production. The owner of the art work becomes the trader when he sells it, starting from the artist, but even when the artist is deskilled, he can not be subject to real subsumption. The logic of the concept of artist and art doesn't allow it yet, although it is not excluded that it is entirely abandoned by the empirical reality. Then formal analysis, structural analysis, and according to our opinion historical materialism is exactly that, which will not have anything to do with one of ideologema and that would be it. The art doesn't have to exist not even in a historical sense, who cares about it. We will have situation which is difficult to imagine, but that might be something similar to situation in which today we can find applied or industrial art, i.e. the world of designed objects of industrial production. Beauty will approach to the beauty of nature, since intentionality of aesthetic would disappear in decomposition of the space of aesthetic encounter and expectation from one side, and, from the other, also of politics of artist (designer) whose final ambient of his work hands over to the masses of heterogeneous procedures and activities, including their productional contribution.

What is the relation of formal subsumption in material production and in this one which we are now discussing – in the art production? It is clear that we have to come to the point when we have to decide if art is production at all and to keep in mind how to fight out with the word

practice, because as politics is not a practice, according to our thought, the art shouldn't be either. But, if it is production and what production would mean for us after going away and returning to the concept of the mode of production, remains to be seen.

If we remember well *Reading Capital*: Distinction formal/real subsumption in material production is nothing but effect of the analysis of structure which is affected by principle of division set by it (analysis) alone and existing between *manual* and *intellectual labour*. It divides material production from other productions or practices, but it also divides very intellectual labour. This is well known. Now, however, and for needs of our analysis, by this principle we would like to divide material production itself. In other words, we suggest that this principle divides very production to *production* and *exchange* (to which side we place both distribution and consumption), that is to divide material production or production in the narrow sense. Finally, this application of the principle of division we would like to have as one which divides production from reproduction, and then we would have to divide very production to production and reproduction. *Outside divisions are now hitting an inside of production enabling division inside of it, which could result in two forms of the structure and ensure structurally the basis of insight into existence of forms of subsumption in one mode of production.*

Therefore, the result which we are getting is the one that could be read in *Reading Capital*, and which is division of relations of production in domain of material production to one which corresponds to the production, and to the other which corresponds simultaneously to that which from the other angle or degree of analysis corresponds to the exchange, reproduction or intellectual labor, and all of this is visible exclusively from the standpoint which divides and analyses the production, and not the exchange. Relation of production which are present in production, in exchange are appearing as relations of exchange run by the ideology of exchange. This remark is perhaps incautious but it offers us possibility to think relations of exchange as relations of formal subsumption. That will further result with the fact that relations of production in domain of art are actually relations of exchange, because those are *relations which are dominated by exchange, and not by mastery of the production itself.*

In question, therefore, are two *relations of production*: *real or material appropriation* (*Aneignung*) and *property*. Formal subsumption is the one which implies non-labourer as the owner, but not as the one who has real appropriation (power of initiation) of the production. Real subsumption is the situation or relation in which the owner is the one who simultaneously initiates and manages the production. The agent which is at that position is non-labourer, and real subsumption concerns the labourer – even when he is deprived of any skill. Ideas of all-mighty capital are leviathanian and they belong to the modern mythology which is referring to the abstract rationalism inclined to dialectics.

However, there are two relations of production and those who strive to overmaster them or to dominate in them. That is achieved either by possibility of initiating the means of production or by possibility of appropriating the product of labour, and as real subsumption shows, it is possible to have power (to be more powerful) in both of relations or by both basis of production. Formal subsumption is the power of property or appropriation of product and it is twofold: in

feudalism, the product of labour is being plundered (out-economically), and in capitalism, this plundering is done by purchase of product (economically) from those who are the only who are producing them, and those are always labourers. Firstly, knights of trade replace knights of sword who in the next step appear as knights of industry. Formal power is, therefore, power in the age of formal reproduction and it is trading or exchanging in capitalism. Therefore this relation – of property – reveals that in question is *the exchange power*: the one who is going to launch a product dominates over the one who is going to produce it. In the domain of material production this went easily, but in the domain of art, it goes a bit harder.

Formal subsumption is subsumption by the exchange, reproduction and intellectual labour situated in the exchange and interpretation. When we apply that to the activities which are not part of material production, then we see that all of them belongs to the domain of formal subsumption, and that the exchange of products of intellectual labour is possible, but it is certain that they are distributive. That has a name and it is commodification, but it still can not lead to the real subsumption, because it needs possibility of complete disjunction from the means of production and absence of any skill of the one who realizes that labour. Intellectual labour is not material and therefore it is not possible to have thinking without thinking as it would be possible to have routine labour or labour without thinking. The fact that someone could still think while working in routine and automatically doesn't have anything to do with labour itself. But, if it has with something else, more sublime or emancipatory, it remains to be seen.

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All what is said until now has been inevitable for situating into the position in which it is necessary to oppose the thought of art from the perspective of artists and the thought about art from the perspective of scientist. All what is said until now is formalization implied by the formalistic approach. Relation of Marxism towards Formalism is completed by self-critique of Victor Shklovsky, which ends with these words in "Monument to a Scientific Error": *Obviously, I am not declaring myself a Marxist, because one does not join scientific methods. One masters them and one creates them.* Structuralists approach – formalization – it seems to us enough in order to have established Marxist critique, or sociological, as it was named in "The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship". The critique of Formalists conducted by Medvedev is based on the inconsistency of Formalists who didn't include "other series" in their analysis and because they missed the role of determining fact of the economical and with it the significance of the content. Detailed development of this critique deserves more attention, but for us in this very moment it is enough to accent that it's the question of straining around scientific position. In that relation and approach we've found misunderstanding from which thought drips from art, and where *a device* is a point of departure. And for us, that device has the role of the principle – and in art it is: *ostranenie* or *estrangement.* And why estrangement? Wondering, perhaps? It is found in philosophy and with it philosophical thought begins. Therefore, that should also be kept in mind, since at this point the art is on the line with knowledge via philosophy. We haven't solved that issue yet: hence, we haven't understood if the thought is exclusively knowledge-based. If we remain formal, we would say that thought is the one which establishes some relation – claims – and requires that principally is being principal, and that principally is adhering to principle. That

would then mean that it's open for discussion (polemos, agon), which leads to the knowledge as a result. It is still difficult situation. The truth as the breakthrough of real remains behind us. What kind of thought is art?

We have, therefore, a scientist who is infatuated because of his closeness with artists and art's thought, according to the judgment of Marxist Medvedev who didn't get carried away by it. That is one proposition. Another proposition is disqualification of that thought because it is artistic, and then also disqualification of art itself. Artistic knowledge is, even if it's more genuine, still more naïve form of knowledge. All of that should take us to the art as domain of disqualified. That could work in such a manner only if we agreed that thought is knowledge. Therefore, the situation is: we get to know, we get to know the truth, but it is knowledge of second order and finally – disqualified.

Would we then exchange the science of art by the experience and thought of art from the very art? Would we rather experiencing instead of studying art as exclusion and non-freedom? Conviction to art is an experience of exclusion to which we resist by rejecting to exclude ourselves and to experience the illusion of transcendence in that way. Exclusion is form of non-freedom and anti-production is the one which introduces lack, it deprives, and that is scenario of every *mode* of production. Of mode, because "onačinjenje" (način = mode in Serbo-Croatian language, o-načinjenje = to make something modal) of production is its usurpation and siege by the power and non-labourer. It is its structuration according to the laws which are then represented as technological and natural – since allegedly they are corresponding to the nature of the object of production and processing. Of mode, since the point is in "onenačinjenje" (onenačinjenje = abolition of mode) of production. It is estrangement (ostranenie) which is politics of art in this moment. Politics of art since it is the only politics: *onenačinjenje*. Is it a destruction of the form of relations of production in art in question here? Nonform of art as its politics? Formalism taken to its consequences and disjunction of knowledge from experience of thought and from very thought and politics? Disjunction of knowledge and science from thought of art?

Mattin

Noise as Device[1]

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.[2]

In the history of noise there have been riots, scandals, misunderstandings, excitement and misconceptions. Here I will try to address where I think the potential of noise actually lies. Noise is a very diffuse term. However, it has also been a musical practice within a specific tradition. What first attracted me to noise was the possibility for pushing the limits of what was acceptable: sonically, culturally, conceptually and socially.

However, noise is not always disruptive. In order to be disruptive it needs to encounter negatively a set of expectations. Once the tropes of noise have been understood, then its critical negative effect is no longer valid. Here I will identify some of the potential that noise- as musical practice- has for producing alienation and estrangement. In order to do this I want to use noise

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1   An earlier version of this paper was presented at *Noise and the Possibility of the Future* conference organized by Warren Neidich which took place at the Goethe Institute in Los Angeles on the 7th of March 2015. Thanks to Warren Neidich, Ray Brassier, Anthony Iles and Sezgin Boynik.

2   Viktor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique', *Russian Formalist Criticism Four Essays* Translated and with and introduction by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln,University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 12

as a device in a similar way that the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky used his concept of *ostranenie* (estrangement or defamiliarisation), and in so doing I will argue that noise needs to be understood both historically and contextually.

Shklovsky was part of the Russian formalists which also included Boris Eichenbaum, Roman Jakobson, and Yuri Tynianov. The Russian formalists were interested in breaking apart artworks into tropes, mechanisms or devices (*priem*). For Shklovsky this was done in order to roughen the surface of reality so as to defamiliarise automated perception. As he said, "The artwork is the the sum of its techniques." Therefore, Shklovsky finds the structural dance of literary devices, as arbitrary and impersonal as the moves of chess pieces.

For Shklovsky, *ostranenie* is a device used in writing in order to counter the habituation of perception, to produce a sense of defamiliarization. In his famous 1917 essay *Art as Device (*or other times translated as *Art as Technique)* , he takes an example of o*stranenie* from a moment in Tolstoy's "Kholstomer", where the narrator is a horse which is puzzled by the belief of humans in the system of property and the lack of coherence with regards to what they say and their deeds. The passage is worth quoting at length (as Shklovsky does):

"But even then I simply could not see what it meant when they called me "man's property." The words "my horse" referred to me, a living horse, and seemed as strange to me as the words "my land," "my air", "my water."

> But the words made a strong impression on me. I thought about them constantly, and only after the most diverse experiences with people did I understand, finally, what they meant. They meant this: In life people are guided by words, not by deeds. It's not so much they love the possibility of doing or not doing something as it is the possibility of speaking with words, agreed on among themselves, about various topics. Such are the words "my" and "mine", which they apply to different things, creatures, objects, and even to land, people and horses. They agree that only one may say "mine" about this, that or the other thing. And the other who says "mine" about the greatest number of things is, according to the game which they've agreed to among themselves, the one they consider the most happy. I don't know the point of all this, but it's true. For a long time I tried to explain it to myself in terms of some kind of real gain, but I had to reject that explanation because it was wrong. Many of those, for instance, who called me their own never rode on me- although others did. And so with those who fed me. Then again, the coachman, the veterinarians, and the outsiders in general treated me kindly, yet those who called me their own did not. In due time, having widened the scope of my observations, I satisfied myself that the notions "my," not only in relations to us horses, has no other basis than a narrow human instinct which is called a sense of or right to private property. A man says "this house is mine" and never lives in it; he only worries about its construction and upkeep. A merchant says "my shop," "my dry goods shop," for instance, and does not even wear clothes made from the better cloth the keeps in his own shop. There are people who called a tract of land their own, but they never set eyes on it and never take a stroll on it. There are people who call others their own, yet never

see them. And the whole relationship between them is that they so-called "owners" treat the others unjustly [...] And people strive not for the good in life, but for goods they can call their own." [3]

Here we can see how the displacement of the voice from the perspective of the horse makes us see reality differently, one that breaks the smoothness of the appearance of reality and goes on to describe a cruel reality for those who cannot express themselves.

Can noise also produce this "roughing of the surface"? Historically, yes. It is what noise has been doing: disturbing the order of things, making us aware that those things that we took as stable, those things that we took for granted, contain elements that we cannot decipher. In a similar way to Shklovsky's *Ostranenie,* noise forces perception but not because it "incorporates the sensation of things as they are perceived" but because we don't know how to deal with it. It produces a mismatch between cognition and sensation. It is not only a question about sensibility, it is a question that we don't have the conceptual categories to deal with. However, this is only a matter of time.

Noise pushes perception to the limits because there is in it something we cannot properly decipher. There is something that goes beyond our conceptual categorisation. It is not properly indexed yet and we don't have the right tools to deal with it. Either there is something wrong, or it actually shows our inadequacy to deal with reality. In this regard it brings our senses closer to reality and to our impossibility to ascribe meaning to reality. This is why noise, in some regards, is the most abstract yet the most concrete of cultural expressions. On the one hand it is abstract because it constantly forces complexity to reach another level which had not yet been explored and concrete because its specificity has to do with the unacknowledged residue that surfaced in a precise send-receiver situation.

So, then what would it mean to claim the possibility to use noise as a device? It would mean to incorporate and appropriate its own deciphering. While Shklovsky wants to prolong the "artfulness" of the object as much as possible and by doing this, to prolong an aesthetic experience, I propose that the deciphering of noise could be a way to socialise the way its estrangement effect works. Inevitably this would mean the disappearance of this estrangement but it would also allow us to understand how our cognitive and sensory capacities work. In doing so, we could translate the conceptual problems that are posed by noise into further techniques or devices.

Why not try to prolong the aesthetic experience? Because both terms, "aesthetic" and "experience" are problematic terms that should not be taken for granted, especially taking into account the kind of understanding of subjectivity that history presupposes (with a strong relationship to the notion of the individual).

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3   Ibid p.15

The philosopher Ray Brassier made an excellent point regarding the potential of noise to not be subordinated to "aesthetics":

> "I am very wary of 'aesthetics': the term is contaminated by notions of 'experience' that I find deeply problematic. I have no philosophy of art worth speaking of. This is not to dismiss art's relevance for philosophy—far from it—but merely to express reservations about the kind of philosophical aestheticism which seems to want to hold up 'aesthetic experience' as a new sort of cognitive paradigm wherein the Modern (post-Cartesian) 'rift' between knowing and feeling would be overcome. In this regard, I would say that there can be no 'aesthetics of noise', because noise as I understand it would be the destitution of the aesthetic, specifically in its post-Kantian, transcendental register. Noise exacerbates the rift between knowing and feeling by splitting experience, forcing conception against sensation. Some recent philosophers have evinced an interest in subjectless experiences; I am rather more interested in experience-less subjects. Another name for this would be 'nemocentrism' (a term coined by neurophilosopher Thomas Metzinger): the objectification of experience would generate self-less subjects that understand themselves to be no-one and no-where. This casts an interesting new light on the possibility of a 'communist' subjectivity." [4]

Later on I will try to argue that noise in practice can often produce this "rift between knowing and feeling" and in so doing it will bring it closer to Shklovsky when he claimed: *'I am studying the unfreedom of the writer.'* [5] From the perspective of this essay, the best thing that noise can do is to question the constraints of what we consider freedom and how it relates to what we understand as the production of subjectivity.

Criticisms of Shkolvsky: Noise as a Corrective

Jameson in his book "The Prison House of Language" criticizes Shklovsky's notion of *ostranenie* on three grounds which are connected to each other:

a) Shklovsky's notion of *ostranenie* is ahistorical.

b) For Shklovsky's theory to makes sense he needs to isolate the material that he is working with, thus allowing us not to see it as a text (in the Barthesian sense) i.e. not being able to take the context into account.

c) One is unsure whether *ostranenie* resides in the form or the content or the perceiver.

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4   Brassier, Ray *Against an Aesthetics of Noise*, 2009. Available here: http://www.ny-web.be/transitzone/against-aesthetics-noise.html (accessed 20th April 2015)

5   Viktor Shklovsky, op. Cit., 2003, pp.8-9.

Regarding the first criticisms Jameson takes Brecht as being able to update a historical understanding and use of the estrangement effect:

> *"The effect of habituation is to make us believe in eternity of the present, to strengthen us in the feeling that the things and events among which we live are somehow "natural" which is to say permanent. The purpose of the Brechtian Estrangement-effect is therefore a political one in the most throughout going sense of the word; it is as Brecht insisted over and over, to make you aware of the objects and institutions you thought to be natural, were only historical: the result of change, they themselves henceforth in their turn became changeable (the spirit of Marx, the influence of The Thesis on Feurbach is clear.)"* [6]

Noise is always historically and contextually understood. There is only one exception which has always been considered noise and that is gride (like the sound of nails on a blackboard)[7]. Or as Jacques Attali puts it "Noise, then, does not exist in itself, but only in relation to the system within which it is inscribed" (Attali, 1985, p.26-27). With regards to individuation, noise is always within the frame but also at the margins of the frame. In fact noise constantly undermines its own framing. Or as Miguel Prado puts it: 'What noise interferes in is the assumption of closed autonomy or independence within a system'.[8] The individual instances challenge its own process of individuation by always pointing out that there is something missing. If the estrangement effect is still taking place, if there is still some noise going on, this means that our conceptual understanding is not fully able to grasp what is going which means it is difficult to individuate something precisely.

In the history of western music noise has always been put aside but it always comes back because it actually exists in the essence of western music (i.e. in the tone) . In a recent conference on noise where this text was first presented, Ulrich Krieger, explained very well how the tones that we actually hear contain some noise because a mathematically perfect tone would actually sound strange to our ears.[9]

Finally on the issue of whether the estrangement takes places in the form, content, or in the perceiver, with regards to noise, Attali answers this from the perspective of Information Theory:

6   Frederic Jameson, *The Prison House of Language* (Princeton University Press, 1972), 58

7   Hillel Schwartz interviewed by Sonic Acts, he talks about this around 2'20" https://vimeo.com/113593758 (video accessed 17th May 2015)

8   Miguel Prado, "Schelling´s positive account on noise: On the problem of Entropy, Negentropy and Anti-Entropy", unpublished paper 2015.

9   Ulrich Krieger, "Noise – A Definition" a talk delivered at the conference *Noise and the Possibility of the Future* organized by Warren Neidich which took place at the Goethe Institute in Los Angeles between the 6th and 7th of March 2015.

"noise is the term for a signal that interferes with the reception of a message by the receiver, even if the interfering signal itself has a meaning for the receiver."[10]

Tension

If there is no such thing as silence. Then what is there?

There is information but within this information there is noise, a noise that we still do not define as something specific (i.e. music). Because it is very difficult to situate specifically where the noise resides within the context that I am talking about, I will refer here to noise in the general sense that Jaques Attali referred as the "signal that interferes with the reception of a message by the receiver."

This would allow me to not necessarily focus on the phenomena of sound but on the general "material" that can interfere with the receiver when they are trying to decode a message, which in the context that I am talking about would be a concert. In this sense this would include non-phenomenal elements such as expectations and projections of the people involved and the general atmosphere that can be produced.

How do we know when noise is producing the estrangement effect? In concert situations we can perceive the estrangement effect when there is some tension in the atmosphere. This tension is produced because there is a set of expectations that are not being met. At the same time, people project onto what is going on but without having clear references. There is confusion but at the same time there is concentration.

If there is tension (because noise is producing this critical potential i.e. a reconsideration of what critical means) this is because the safety mechanisms that allow us to "get it" are not working. Different logics are taking place. People think differently of what is going on in the sense that there is no possible unity of thought that can be used to describe the situation.

This tension does not allow for a total subjective experience, you can't just immerse into what you are perceiving because there is a friction between the reality that we are experiencing and our inability to deal with it. I will try to explain this through my own practice. I come from years of experience of making noise and improvised music with a computer, but at some point it was clear that noise had become a genre of music with specific tropes that were becoming a parody of itself (loud volume, aggressive frequencies, total movement or total stasis...). So, I became interested in a different approach to noise, one that has to do with silence, but silences that are full of expectation because one does not know what might happen next. This came from a shifting of my understanding improvisation not as an act of interaction between the musicians and their instruments but as a collective social interaction happening in a given space without

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10   Jaques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 26-27

nuetral positions (such as, one of the spectator). Therefore, assuming, after Cage's *4'33"*, that there is no such thing as silence, and that the audience might well be producing the sounds, I incorporated a Marxist perspective in trying to understand and expose how social relations that are produced in given space.

Social interaction occurs easily if the performers don't use instruments. Instead through generic gestures available to all, such as speech or movements in the space, it is possible to generate unprecedented reactions from both the audience and the performers . It is no longer an interaction anticipated by a musician or director beforehand (like in Brecht's case) but elements that are put there in order to generate the unexpected which hopefully produce a tension and estrangement in everybody involved included the performers themselves.

The precondition for producing tension has to do with suspending the contract and consensual presupposition between audience and performer. If this tension occurs we do not relate to each other in the form of consensus because the elements necessary for constituting consensus are being taken away. In this sense, the situation ungrounds itself. It makes everyone think without a totally prescribed role and in this process a collective self-consciousness emerges. We don't know how to relate to either one's self or to each other. It forces people to think about the relations to one another without prefiguration. It is no longer the bad sociality of the consumer nor of the emancipated spectator. It just means a suspension of clear cut roles where people experience and explore their own conditioning, their unfreedom.

Your role as auditor cannot be taken for granted and by doing this it undermines capitalist socialization: you are not just consuming something. Nevertheless you are part of it. Through enforced participation where you are not consulted in advance, you are reminded that you are not a sovereign individual, that you do not have a choice to remain neutral, that you are not free. With money you can always negotiate your situation in capital. The more money you have, the more power and the more you can choose your situation.

Marx wants freedom for the individual but this is possible only in and through the community. The condition of my freedom is the condition for everyone's freedom. Now my freedom seems to be purchased at the expense of others. My ability to consume comes at the cost of others to produce goods in terrible circumstances. Systemic alienation cannot be negated just by discursive participation or making noises together. We have structural and systemic exploitation and this means there is no possibility for a kind of immediate negation in the whole of network of mediations.

There is no immediate negation of mediation as such. False immediacy has been too present in noise and in free improvisation.

We need to think about our conditions of experience, but not as indeterminate thinking but as determinate thinking. We need to find a specific point to focus on and noise can be this focus because it is precisely what we have no control over and questions our conditions of experience. What am I witnessing? How do I behave given the suspension of the audience

performer relation? How do we relate to each other once we are no longer passively consuming? Some people would reassure their individuality, reasserting themselves. I refuse this position, I refuse to take for granted a notion of the individual fermented under capitalist conditions.

Many people might try to reconcile this experience as a prank or a joke, reestablishing normality as if they cannot tolerate having to think about what is going on and why is it going on. In my experience when tension is produced it can go into two direcions: a) people reassert themselves, their knowledge and authority, pretending to be clever by making a joke or behaving as if they have seen it before. This attitude kills the tension. b) people follow the tension and when this happens, a certain honesty emerges where the individual contributions become part of a collective rational agency that tries to makes sense out of the situation, understanding that there is some undecipherable noise going on. There are certain techniques that can help the acceleration of tension and estrangement such as: spiking space (organise the furniture in unconventional ways), human sampler (sampling and repeating things that have been said in the space), glitching voice (malfunctioning discourse), anti-social realism (collapsing the impotence of changing the social conventions in the performance space with the impotence to change reality in the general sense), ungrounding the situation (tear apart these social conventions), going fragile (sharing deep insecurities and doubts), daring together (doing the ungrounding collectivelly).

Once we have identified that there is tension, then we try to measure its critical potential. Noise can be transformative precisely because it makes you connect to other aspects of reality that are not necessarily sound. In doing so it foregrounds its historical specificity. It is in the socialization process of this deciphering that I can see the potential of noise understood as a device.

Three Levels

There are three levels from which we can measure the awareness that noise can produce.[11]

1. *Awarenes*: This would be noise understood as an absolute immersion in sound that could be required of the listener, which would also mean the most phenomenological approach to noise. It is not surprising that people who claim this approach often imply a very individualist emphasis. As, for example, in Francisco Lopez[12] or in VOMIR. In fact with Vomir we can see this connection between noise as absolute autonomy and the individualist politics in his NOISE WALL MANIFESTO:

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11 This triadic understanding of the potential of noise comes from a conversation with Ray Brassier.

12 As you can read from his bio on what he is trying to produce: "transcendental listening, freed from the imperatives of knowledge and open to sensory and spiritual expansion." Taken from http://www.franciscolopez. net/ (accessed 13 May 2014)

> "*The individual no longer has any alternative but to completely reject contemporary life as promoted and preached. The only free behavior that remains resides in noise, withdrawal and a refusal to capitulate to manipulation, socialization and entertainment*"[13]

I find this approach the most problematic precisely because it would the most aestheticised one and because it implies a certain agency of the individual which under these conditions would be a very questionable claim.

2. *Awareness as*: Here the context would need to be taken into account: you have the map and you identify other references. It already takes you away from the total immersion of sound. A couple of examples come to mind:

a) Cage 4'33", even though Cage would want to deal with the sounds just as sound in themselves, it makes you question what music is, and tears apart previous judgment values, the audience needs to question themselves and their roles (are they producers of sound or/and the perceivers?)

b) Junko and her extreme vocals which sonically trigger the most disturbing imaginary situations, nevertheless her delivery is the most neutral one without any of the clichés of noise: aggression with such as references to serial killers or concentration camps or simply pure expression as if it was an act of freedom. I would say that her work produces the rift between knowing and feeling because it tears apart any reconciliation between your cognitive abilities to deal with it and how it makes you feel.

Here we can see how noise no longer relates to just sound but it takes into account other aspects that have to do with the context, the historical reception of the material and our ability to deal with it.

3. *Awareness of the mechanisms that produces an awareness*: This last level is the most transformative because it makes you reconsider your relationship not only to the context but also with the mechanisms that you have in order to deal with this context. This inevitably would not just be about aesthetic experience but questioning what experience is, and how it is produced but more importantly how subjectivity is produced. It would not only force conception against sensation (like in the case of Junko) but it would also force the process of objectification in which you would have to see yourself from a third perspective point of view because the means to feel and see yourself as an individual are being undermined.

   For example your condition as audience or performer is not totally given so there can be an element where positions shift to conditions that are not yet described. This would resist the fetishism of the singularity of a unique experience.

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13   VOMIR, HNW MANIFESTO: http://www.decimationsociale.com/app/download/5795218093/ Manifeste+du+Mur+Bruitiste.pdf (accessed 17th May 2015)

Socialisation Of Noise As Device

Why would it be important to try to socialize the estrangement effect that noise has on us? We have to take into account that both formalist strategies and noise are being recuperated for very nasty purposes. Anthony Iles in his text discusses how some of the formalist strategies are used in Britain: "Disturbingly, we discover recently, in the reform of both Higher and Primary Education in the United Kingdom – a 'formal aesthetics of behavioral psychology ' – a troubling reformulation and deployment of formalist techniques to the ends of producing an automatic subject appropriate to crisis capitalism's instrumental needs." [14] This is is done in order for students to develop better information acquisition and 'encourage' the cognitive 'development' of the individual student."[15]

In regards to noise, we can see how it is being used in the battlefield, in torture and the city in order to disperse demonstrations. James Parker recently delivered a great lecture "Towards a Jurisprudence of Sonic Warfare"[16] in which he points out how the use of sonic cannons like LRAD 500X-RE, the model that appears to have been present at the Ferguson demonstration but also in Gaza and other places, poses juridical holes which is very helpful for governments as they cannot be proven responsible for the damage: as there is no physical impact which can be proven to have caused the damage (it could have been loud music on headphones). Or in another perverse form of recuperation Parker points out that the band Skinny Puppy is trying stop the U.S. Government from using his music for torture.

These, of course are the most perverse forms of the negative critical potential of noise. However, what is argued here is that there is a critical negative potential in noise which can push our thinking and our perception to points where we don't know what "our" means. This approach to noise would go against the absolutisation of experience as a reservoir for agency. To do this a socialisation of the alienating effects of noise through rational understanding would be necessary in order to understand how it functions. To use noise as a device would be to use its alienating potential, to produced fucked up experiences that would make us question ourselves as subjects. If it reaffirms yourself as subject (I get it or I like it) this would not be noise as device but noise as taste which could not expand much further from the experiencing self. The important thing is to identify whether noise has its estrangement effect and if it ceases to have this alienating effect, to recharge its critical negative potential constantly so as not to become a parody of itself in the worst sense.

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14   See Anthony Iles text in this issue.

15   Ibid.

16   This paper was delivered at Liquid Architecture Festival in Melbourne on the 11th of September 2014. Thanks to James Parker for sending me his material and Danni Zuvela and Joel Stern for letting me know it.

Jyrki Siukonen

You Can Get the Story Wrong and Mistake Noise for Work Sounds from the Third Factory

I

Venyamin Kaverin, Russian author and, back in the 1920s, Viktor Shklovky's pupil in the Petrograd/Leningrad-based group Serapion Brothers, admitted in his posthumously published memoirs (Епилог 1989) that at the age of 82 the old arch-formalist Shklovsky had not lost his native wit: "He has a clear head, though, in order to understand the meaning of what he says, we need an even clearer one".[1] As for the rest, Kaverin spat out some sour words.

A writer never as tricky as Shklovsky, Kaverin had been a witness to the world fame that fell on his former teacher from the 1960s onward same time as his own books drew only moderate attention abroad. Personal relations remained apparently decent, but it seems as if Kaverin never fully recovered from the verbal punches Shklovsky gave him in a Leningrad meeting in 1928; "He spouted jokes, made brilliant witticisms, sometimes unusually well directed and remembered for a lifetime [...]"[2]

Kaverin surely remembered Shklovsky's words all his life—a long life—yet he never revealed the sting that hurt him. In 1928, he had answered Shklovsky with a book, *Scandalist, or Evenings on Vasily Island* (Скандалист, или вечера на Васильевском острове), a roman à clef where he sharply drew a satirical and often unflattering portrait of his former mentor. Shklovsky, too, had a good memory and his view of Kaverin's first set of literary reminiscences (Освещенные окна 1974) was unsmiling: "Rotten book—it's a crowd of fragments crossing the street".[3] Kaverin, however, saved the final word for his memoirs. He was the one who kept talking about Shklovsky's surrender, that is, forwarded the argument that Shklovsky meekly capitulated to the Soviet system already during the 1920s, especially in his books *Zoo, or Letters Not about Love* (ZOO, или письма не о любви 1923) and *Third Factory* (Третья фабрика 1926). The bottom line is usually considered the article *A Monument to Scientific Error* (Памятник научной ошибке 1930), where Shklovsky allegedly washed his hands from Formalism.[4]

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1   В. Каверин, Епилог. Мемуары. Москва: Московский рабочий 1989, p. 44.

2   В. Каверин, "Поиски и решения", Новый мир 11, 1954, pp. 187-188. Quoted and translated in Richard Sheldon, "Viktor Shklovsky and the Device of Ostensible Surrender", in Viktor Shklovsky, *Third Factory*. Chicago et al.: Dalkey Archive Press 2002, xxxii.

3   Marietta Chudakova, "Conversation with Viktor Borisovich Shklovsky, January 9, 1981", *Poetics Today* 27:1 Spring 2006, p. 238.

4   The question about Shklovsky's moral stand as a writer in the 1920s is not only Kaverin's making but a topos well established also in Victor Erlich's classic study *Russian Formalism*, first published in 1955. There are some who have sought to defend Shklovsky's reputation, most notably Richard Sheldon, who brought both *Zoo* and *Third Factory* to the reach of English readership. Sheldon's article *Viktor Shklovsky and the Device of Ostensible Surrender* (1977), printed as an introduction to his translation of *Third Factory*, not only answers the criticism by Erlich but also explains how difficult it is sometimes to get to the bottom of Shklovsky's meaning. In my view, accepting the inherent ambiguity in Shklovsky's style is a requisite for reading him.

Calling *Third Factory* "a tragic book in which Shklovsky first tried to prove that we do not need the freedom of art", Kaverin saw the work as a beginning of an era of hypocrisy, betrayal, cynicism and deceived trust. He suggests that future researchers will find, perhaps, the point of no return whereon Shklovsky ceased to notice the need for freedom. Kaverin also reminds his readers that Shklovsky was not among the signees of Solzhenitsyn's letter to the Fourth National Congress of Soviet Writers in 1967 (with the demands of abolition of censorship, for example).[5]

It would be futile to read *Third Factory* as a literary work in 2015 premised on the knowledge on what happened in the USSR after its writing in 1926. Yet for many contemporaries the nature of Shklovsky's soul searching always was political as much as a theoretical concern. The pros and cons of the Formalist methodology (mostly cons) had been discussed in the mid-1920s by all the intellectuals in the Bolshevik leadership (Trotsky, Lunacharsky, Bukharin) and consequently the possibilities to defend an apolitical stand in the field of Soviet literary theory were growing slim.[6] However, in 1926 Shklovsky's problems were not dictated by official policy rather than by his own drifting.

II

In the eyes of Bolshevik Russia, the former SR-party associate Viktor Shklovsky was a political renegade and potential suspect from early on yet he always escaped imprisonment. By 1923, he had already been pardoned twice—not a weak record compared with the poet Gumilyov's, shot at first instance in 1921. Shklovsky's guardian angel in both cases was Maxim Gorky, a leading literary figure and promoter of world literature in post-Revolutionary Russia. Gorky had eye for talent and he supported younger writers even when disagreeing with them in the matters of style. (Gumilyov's execution, a signal of an uncompromising stand against opposers, came as a shock to Gorky, too).

Shklovsky, a university dropout who had participated in pre-war Futurist activities in Petrograd as well as fought in the front in Galicia, Persia and Ukraine, was anything but a handless man of letters. Atop of all the theorizing he knew also how to fix and drive an armored car. The metaphor of the automobile (serving a technical rather than aesthetic purpose) reoccurs in his writings. Two years after *Third Factory* he explained the matter in the following manner:

> *If you wish to become a writer you must examine a book as attentively as a watchmaker a clock or a chauffeur a car.*
>
> *Cars are examined in the following ways: The most idiotic people come to the automobile and press the balloon of its horn. This is the first degree of stupidity. People who know a*

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5   Каверин 1989, pp. 33-44.

6   Aage A. Hansen-Löve, *Der russische Formalismus*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1978, pp. 465-478.

little more about cars but overestimate their knowledge come to the car and fiddle with its stick-shift. This is also stupid and even bad, because one should not touch a thing for which another worker is responsible.

The understanding man scrutinizes the car serenely and comprehends "what is for what": why it has so many cylinders why it has big wheels, where its transmission is situated, and why its rear is cut in an acute angle and its radiator unpolished.

This is the way one should read.[7]

Reading Kaverin's criticism on *Third Factory* I get the feeling that he was beeping the horn. I am not saying that he was stupid, of course. The fact that Shklovsky writes so much about "Viktor Shklovsky" easily blurs the line between the confessional and the fictive, and Kaverin is not the only one who has emphasized the former. For example, Roman Jakobson referred to *Third Factory* as Shklovsky's "memorial service to himself" (самоотпервание) and Victor Erlich named it simply "autobiography".[8] Both categorizations can be agreed on yet Peter Steiner, in my opinion, touches a more interesting vein by underlining the fictional and ironic dimension in Shklovsky's writings. Like *Zoo* three years earlier, also *Third Factory* plays a game of revealed and concealed meanings. Shklovsky tells the reader some seemingly factual incidents from his life and whines about being lost in face of the new Soviet reality, but foremost he exemplifies his use of the instrument. *Third Factory* makes a good read because it shows cunning skill in writing. Erlich is hardly mistaken about the spiritual and methodological crisis that Shklovsky went through during the time, but the "deliberately disjointed meanderings"[9] in the book are not a result of confusion. They are how the automobile is made.

III

Analyzing *Zoo* and its notorious letter twenty-nine, the last one in the book, where Shklovsky asks the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Communist Party for a permission of safe return from exile, Steiner points out that the letter is a false ending.[10] Earlier on in the book Shklovsky had asked his reader to skip the letter nineteen and to read it only after finishing the book. In his preface to the letter nineteen Shklovsky, however, talks about the structure of the

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7   В. Шкловский, Техника писательского ремесла 1928. Quoted and translated in Peter Steiner, *Russian Formalism. A Metapoetics*. Ithaca - London: Cornell University Press 1984, pp. 45-46.

8   Р.О. Якобсон, О поколении, растратившем своих поэтов 1931, in Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings* V. The Hague: Mouton 1979, p. 374; Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism. History - Doctrine*. Fourth edition. The Hague: Mouton 1980, p. 119.

9   Erlich 1980, pp. 119-120.

10   Peter Steiner, "The Praxis of Irony: Viktor Shklovky's *Zoo*", *Russian Formalism: A Retrospective Glance. A Festschrift in Honor of Victor Erlich*. New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies 1985.

book and questions the reader's preconception about the writer of the following letter. He also says that in order to make a work ironic, "you need a double interpretation of the action".[11]

Shklovsky's ironic discourse deals as if with the devices of bookmaking, explained by someone who seems to be the manager. The question is how much his tips should be trusted. Even the aforementioned biographical aspect may be better explained if we don't take all that "Viktor Shklovsky" tells at face value. Lidiya Ginzburg noted in the mid-1920s, with a comparison to Sterne, that in Shklovsky's texts the shifts, displacements and retreats are not so much a literary device as the structure of his mental apparatus.[12] In other words, he doesn't always seem to know where his pen is leading him. In 1928, Shklovsky confirmed this by declaring that *Zoo* turned out entirely different from what he had intended. In the case of *Third Factory*, as seen from his point of view, the result was completely incomprehensible.[13] Still, whose voice is this now, Shklovsky's or "Shklovsky's"?

IV

During his long career Shklovsky, like so many, had to face the tide of hostile Soviet criticism. However, his opponents could never deny him a well-earned place in the history of Russian literature nor ignore his caustic wit. Therefore the idea that Shklovsky wasted his assets (and saved his skin) by giving up to political pressure early on feels somewhat uncomfortable. In retrospect, he never denied that a lasting fear crept into him in the 1930s, but we are not there yet.[14] During the NEP era, when *Zoo* and *Third Factory* were published, Shklovsky and his colleagues (from LEF, Opoyaz or Serapions) hardly were in imminent danger. Personally, Shklovsky had no reason to trust the Bolshevik goodwill (his elder brother Vladimir was a prisoner in Solovetsky 1922-25 and his wife Vasilisa Kordi was kept a hostage in Spalernaya during his Berlin exile), a fact that further complicates the reading of *Third Factory* as political surrender, as suggested by Kaverin and others.

In the book Shklovsky talks about surrender, of course. But what is for what? For a reader not merely fiddling with the stick, the structure of *Third Factory* appears no more complicated than that of an armored vehicle. What blurs the view, however, is the use of camouflage colouring and the high speed Shklovsky often takes the curves. He begins by noting how literary forms

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11 Viktor Shklovsky, *Zoo, or Letter Not about Love*. Transl. by Richard Sheldon. Chicago et al.: Dalkey Archive Press 2001, p. 71.

12 Лидия Гинзбург, Записные книжки. Воспоминания. Эссе. Санкт-Петербург: Искусство-СПБ 2002, p. 13.

13 Виктор Шкловский, Гамбургский счет. Ленинград: Издательство писателей 1928, pp.108-109.

14 Chudakova 2006, 241; Serena Vitale, *Shklovsky: Witness to an Era*. Transl. by Jamie Richards. Champaigne et al.: Dalkey Archive Press 2012, p. 44.

are changing and how the societal pressure keeps growing and mentions the double letters of Mark Twain: "one he sent and the other he wrote for himself—and there he wrote what he thought."[15] He points then to his personal situation as an employee outside his speciality (in film industry) and says he wants to do what he does best: "Let me cultivate my own garden. It's wrong for everyone to sow wheat. I am unable to squeak like the elephant."[16] The elephant, introduced at the beginning of the book, refers to a rubber toy of Shklovsky's son. When pressed it makes a sound, not unlike an obedient Soviet citizen or the horn of the car.

Shklovsky then goes through a series of childhood memories and returns to the present age with the image of flax, one of the key metaphors in the book. This is not the first time Shklovsky favours a fibre crop. In his preface to *Theory of Prose* (О теории прозы 1925) he had likened his study on literary forms to cotton industry: "I am not interested in the condition of the world cotton market or in the policies of the trusts, but solely in the count of yarn and the weaving techniques."[17] The processing of flax, however, is a much rougher business than weaving. As the metaphor unfolds itself on the pages also the level of violence increases. "We are flax in the field /…/ Flax does not cry in the break /…/ I am flax in the field. Looking at the sky, I feel sky and pain."[18] At the end, Shklovsky leaves little room for misunderstandings:

> *Flax, if it had a voice, would shriek as it's being processed. It is taken by the head and jerked from the ground. By the root. It is sown thickly—oppressed, so that it will not be vigorous but puny.*
>
> *Flax requires oppression. It is jerked out of the ground, spread out on the fields (in some places) or retted in pits and streams.*
>
> *The streams where the flax is washed are doomed—the fish disappear. Then the flax is braked and scutched.*
>
> *I want freedom.*[19]

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15 Viktor Shklovsky, *Third Factory*. Translated with an Introduction by Richard Sheldon. Chicago: Dalkey Archive Press 2002, p. 7.

16 *Ibid.,* p. 9.

17 Quoted and translated in Erlich 1980, p. 119.

18 Shklovsky 2002, p. 24; 25; 41.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

V

If it only would be this simple. Yet Shklovsky always twists and bends his metaphors, taking immense pleasure in contradiction.[20] As he makes sure that there is no one way of reading the book he leaves all kinds of particles lying around, pro and con. It is entirely possible to choose half of them and claim that Shklovsky is indeed surrendering "to his times", i.e. to the approaching building of the Soviet society (something he had not bothered himself with before). The other half points to the opposite: when talking about unfreedom he is talking about the limitations of literary forms and norms (with examples from history), and certainly not promoting oppression.

The problem remains that in *Third Factory* Shklovsky's irony is often difficult to follow. It leaves things unresolved. After discussing his personal history (childhood, the student years and Opoyaz), he finds his feelings towards the future confused. Reasons for this are all not revealed. After his homecoming from the linguistically uncomfortable (but highly productive) Berlin exile, Shklovsky, the freewheeling Futurist, adventurous soldier and quirky theorist, found himself, perhaps for the first time, face to face with ordinary everyday problems. Denied a return to his beloved Petrograd (now Leningrad), he had to re-invent himself in Moscow: "I was about to have a child. I had no money. My wife couldn't get to the hospital because I hadn't paid the union fees. I was told you could make money, anyone could make money, in cinema. So I went, I went to the Third Factory [Goskino studio], the one that provided the title for one of my books."[21]

Third Factory records not only the symptoms of post-revolutionary battle fatigue and the efforts to re-establish the broken brotherhood of Opoyaz but also the stress of a proud young father earning his daily bread. The book ends as the author describes the life of his eighteen months old son and contrasts it with his own uninspiring days at the Third Factory offices.

VI

Is *Third Factory* a letter where Shklovsky wrote what he really thought? Kaverin seems to think so, like he thinks his is the clearer head. I am not saying it isn't. However, perhaps Kaverin missed one essential point early on. The epistolary *Zoo* and its plea for return were based on the fact that Shklovsky, no matter how much he discussed the great works of world literature, knew only Russian language. The homesickness that gnawed at him abroad was the most linguistic thing in him. In Berlin or Paris, he could have handled a car but not the metaphor.

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20   For an introduction to the uses of metaphors in *Third Factory* see Sheldon in Shklovsky 2002, ix-xlii.

21   Vitale 2012, p. 148.

Only in Russian language Shklovsky knew how to breathe. Within this limitation, he was always closer to Mayakovsky than polyglot Jakobson. After *Third Factory*, he gradually lost both friends. The book, a good report of the situation in 1926, is not to be blamed. Although in the coming years Shklovsky worked with Mayakovsky in *Novyj Lef* and did his best to reconcile with Jakobson, the joyful days were more or less behind. At home, Mayakovsky had forsaken his love poetry in favour of propaganda. Jakobson for his part resided abroad, occupying himself in serious scholarship. Shklovsky's frame of mind never was academic and he even lacked necessary discipline. Still back in the USSR he remained openly non-Marxist and whisked away political comments with biting irony. In 1926, such behaviour was still possible: "In literature study, the firing line is preferable to the Party line. A pun, needless to say."[22] Call that surrender, if you like.

People were changing. That was probably advisable.

Vegetables, for example, are sometimes cooked in soup and then discarded.

It is essential, though, to understand what happens in that process. Otherwise, you can get the story wrong and mistake noise for work.

Noise is work for an orchestra, but not for the Putilov plant.

On the whole, we probably were vegetables.

But not according to the reading from our meridian.[23]

As Shklovsky mends the fire with metaphors it is uncertain who gets the story right. The workers of the Putilov factory in Petrograd went to strike in February 1917 and started a revolution. Everything proceeded peacefully. It was, however, the workers of the same Putilov factory who had sparked the demonstrations that led to Bloody Sunday in January 1905. Then and there the army fired at its own people.

February 1917 always was the revolution Shklovsky preferred. He had his reservations about the society emerging at wake of the October version. Yet he had nowhere else to go. *Third Factory* captures his mixed moods perfectly in time, without the cheap wisdom of hindsight.

Unlike Kaverin, Shklovsky did not end his career with memoirs. In 1981, at the age of 88, he published a thick volume of new literary studies. He fires here and there, repeats himself, as old people tend to do, but after fifty years of storage life the ammunition is still dry. All those to whom he might have once surrendered are long dead. There are some fitting words to close this case with.

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22   Shklovsky 2002, pp. 63-64.

23   *Ibid.*, p. 38.

My short book is about to end.

But I am one of those people who learn as they write. So let's say instead, almost done learning.

Each person has a so-called preconception. They think they know how to write something that brings all the threads together.

This is something I won't be able to do.[24]

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24   Viktor Shklovsky, *Energy of Delusion. A Book on Plot*. Transl. by Shushan Avagyan. Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press 2007, pp. 399-400.

Rahel Puffert

The Crisis of Representation and its Reference to Mediation

"From Representation to Construction": this was the title selected by the Working Group for Objective Analysis for a book project that was never completed. The plan had been to create an anthology of drawings and statements documenting a four-month working process in early 1921, during which the boundary between composition and construction was intensively explored. The title of the unpublished compendium is a good indicator of the general framework in which the 'social avant-gardes' located their artistic, institutional and political ambitions. [1] For our current purposes, I would like to call this framework the "crisis of representation."

Be it as it may that the crisis of representation often appears today as a new nexus of problems to be addressed, and the critique of representation as a movement stemming from postmodernism, its onset, as those of many other crises, can be pinpointed in the early twentieth century – even if it and most others emerged under other names. The insight that traditional ascertainment of our relation to reality was in need fundamental correction was one shared by scientists of the broadest range of disciplines and ideological orientations: Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Helmholtz, Cassirer.

A supposed congruence between existing entities and the terms designating them was no longer tenable. Cassirer stated that "a completely new perspective on the relation between thinking and being […] ensues from the way of thinking of critical philosophy. The 'object' that had previously served as a known premise now became that which was to be searched for." [2] The paradise of the purely unmediated was forever gated shut. The interaction between "I" and world could no longer escape the process of taking form. Silja Freudenberger thus summarized the central points and obligations emerging within this crisis of representation:

> "1. The notion of a divine perspective is nonsensical.
> 2. The mimetic concept of knowledge and representation must be abandoned.
> 3. There can be hardly any underestimating of the role of specific determinations (conceptual, cultural, social) within the constitution of the world and findings that represent it." [3]

At this point it is worth remembering the warning Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has issued against confusing the two meanings of 'representation'. While acknowledging a connection between them, she distinguishes nonetheless "representation as *speaking for*, as in politics, and

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1   Gough (2005), p 57.

2   Ernst Cassirer: "Goethe und die mathematische Physik. Eine erkenntnistheore- tische Betrachtung", quoted in: Freudenberger, Silja, "Repräsentation: Ein Ausweg aus der Krise", in: Silja Freudenberger/Sandkühler Hans Jörg (Editors): Repräsentation, Krise der Repräsentation, Paradigmenwechsel. Ein Forschungsprogramm in Philosophie und Wissenschaften (Frankfurt/M. 2003), pp. 71-102, especially. p 75.

3   Ibid. p 76.

representation as *re-presentation* as in art and philosophy." Post-structuralist literature – Spivak cites Foucault and Deleuze as examples – too greatly neglects this distinction. [4]

In what follows, the focus will remain on the second definition: depictive representation as reproduction of something previously thought. In painting and sculpture, the crisis of representation implies firstly the definitive refusal of any merely depictive function for these media. A turn to intensive "foundational research" relative to functions and effects of the respective media is the next logical step. [5]

As Arnold Hauser formulates it, the turn to non-representational means was "a change which, in some respects, forms a deeper incision in the history of art than all the changes of style since the Renaissance," adding that "there had always been a swinging to and fro between formalism and anti-formalism, but the function of art being true to life and faithful to nature had never been questioned in principle since the Middle Ages" [6] The avant-gardists' awareness of this epochal break is manifest when Ljulbow Popowa notes that "the analysis of the formal components of art, which has emerged as a goal of artistic activity in the last decade, implies a crisis for representational art." [7] Gough, as well, stresses that the skepticism in our recent decades of "radical breaks, epistemological shifts, and other ruptures of great magnitude" should not cloud our reading of that time. In November 1921 the Constructivists did indeed all give up painting, many of them shifting their activity, more or less, to industrial production or devoting themselves to photographic techniques. [8] These steps by the Constructivists stood however at the end of a chain of consequences arising from a calling-into-question of painting. The turn to abstraction meant anterior functions of art could be dissolved; and it drove a search for new social anchoring. The thorough break with tradition did not stand outside of a sense of historical awareness, however. On the contrary: what the many essays and notes from the era demonstrate is that their authors sought to construct a place themselves within a specific historical development. In other words, to legitimate and steer their newly-found approach

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4   Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: "Can the Subaltern speak?" in: Cray Nelson/ Lawrence Grossberg: *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Illinois 1988), pp. 271-313, especially p 275. Here, Spivak criticizes Deleuze and Foucault in their assertions that there is no longer any representation and that intellectuals' role is no longer to speak for a group or the masses. Both assertions are a misreading of political realities and merely serve to rid intellectuals of their task of speaking out for the weak and the oppressed. They also overlook the very different forms of political representation: advocacy, defense, leadership, spokesmanship are all just as possible as demagogy or abuse of power.

5   A step taken with a high degree of analytic precision. Not only was, for example, the painted image disassembled into its components parts (color, surface, form), only to then be reexamined as these were brought back together, but also the history of painting was studied from new culture-scientific, sociological, and semiotic perspectives.

6   Arnold Hauser: *The Social History of Art*, Volume 4, (London, 1990) (originally published 1951), p 210

7   Popowa, in: Dabrowski (1991), p 157.

8   Gough (2005), p 9.

with the aid of a logic of historical development. [9] From today's perspective, such genealogical extensions could be understood as answers to the new challenge of legitimating one's work. Maria Gough describes this challenge to the Constructivists while keeping in mind one of their motivations:

> "[...] if the nonobjective painter's initial task was to get rid of the referent in painting, his or her next task is to determine the logic or principle by which this new 'painterly content' will be organized. [...] The problem of construction is, in short, a problem of motivation: how to prevent this newly emancipated painterly content from free-falling into the merely arbitrary arrangement of random pictorial elements." [10]

The crisis of representation has a far-reaching epistemological dimension. It carries with it an increase in freedom insofar that the equivalency of original and copy becomes less important as a criterion in many areas of life and knowledge. A sense of this change is to be read in the questions raised by Freudenberger:

> "If we are not representing the world as it is, in our everyday or scientific knowledge, what are we doing? And what can representation be, under these circumstances? When theories of representation are refuted, what are then the possibilities, conditions, and limits of cognition? How does one distinguish between knowledge and non-knowledge, between better and worse depictions of the world? When the world-as-such is not theorizable, how can one even speak of depictions? And what is actually the status of what is depicted?" [11]

The last of these questions raise the issue especially of what function art may have: what intended purpose can an artist be following if the point is no longer to refer to an extra-artistic reality via the produced artifact, to depict reality in one way or another? Far from being aloof thinking-games, Lissitzki's *Prouns* proved that the abstract image yielded by an avant-garde perspective could serve a further purpose – as an experiential chance to become aware of actual notions and configurations of space, be they one's own or potential ones. From today's perspective, Lissitzky's *Prouns* mark out this transition: from that of a pictorial concept locating the observer at a fixed point of view, to one situating her or him in a spacial arrangement. Whereas both the space of picture and observation are static in the former, the latter places the content of the picture in a relation of direct dependency on the observer. It is not pictorial content which is represented, but axies and materials (in this case: colors and forms; words or tones would also be possible) with which and in the midst of which one sees; put at disposal and thus made available. The

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9   One may here compare, for example,: Arp, Hans/Lissitzky, El (Ed.): Die Kunstismen, Baden 1990 (1925), or El Lissitzky: "K. und Pangeometrie", in: Lissitzky-Küppers (1992), pp. 353-358.

10   Gough (2005), p 27.

11   Freudenberger/Sandkühler (2003), p 76.

picture is no longer coextensive with the tableau or the canvass, but has to a certain extent freed itself from its support.

The support merely backs up a process of seeing. It sets into motion the onset of picture(s). The *Prouns* are a case-study of a change in the function of art and concomitant change in reception. And the second meaning of representation resurfaces at just this point. Michael Lingner describes these changes as a given when "the concept of finalization aims not for an autonomy of art, artist, or work, but rather a realization of autonomy *through* art." Here, the task of art is not to represent or symbolize autonomy – or, let us say, to exercise independent decision-making – but instead the goal is to offer art as a medium for the practice of self-determination. [12] In the case of the Constructivists, the path leads from composition to construction, and then to the organization of relations in which the former-viewer is implicated. Artistic work is endowed with an utopian dimension in the Cassierian sense:

> "The great assignment of utopia is that of achieving space for the possible, instead of surrendering to the conditions of our current day and age. It is symbolic thinking which leads people to overcome their natural inertia and gives them a new faculty, the ability to form their own universe." [13]

Art is inaugurated as a field of experiment, one that offers space in order to test out the possible. Not in order to just offer in an impossible location these possibilities as the unrealizable other, but to occur as a situation in which the possible is situated in the *now*, as the only possible means of experience, one which cannot yet be established with any permanence. And it occurs as prototypical rehearsal of realizations on large scales. [14]

> "It becomes apparent that also museums must by no means be moribung undertakings. It all depends on which hand can get the right handle in order to bring the material to life. It is especially important in Germany, where expressionism was long established as the *new painting*, that for once a governmental instance remember the times in which we are living, and keep deployed the entire complex of questions which abstract painting implies." [15]

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12   Michael Lingner: »Krise, Kritik und Transformation des Autonomiekonzepts moderner Kunst. Zwischen Kunstbetrachtung und ästhetischem Dasein«, in: Michael Lingner, Pierangelo Maset, Hubert Sowa (Ed.): ästhetisches dasein, Perspektiven einer performativen und pragmatischen Kultur im öffentlichen Raum (Hamburg, 1999), pp. 25-45, especially p 40.

13   Ernst Cassirer: Versuch über den Menschen. Einführung in eine Philosophie der Kultur (Hamburg 1996) (originally published 1944), p 100.

14   Michel Foucault defines utopias as "fundamentally unreal spaces", as "society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down." Foucault, Michel: »Andere Räume«, in: Karlheinz Barck et al. (Hg.): Aisthesis. Wahrnehmung heute oder Perspektiven einer anderen Ästhetik (Leipzig, 1992), pp. 34-46, especially. p 39 [English version: "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" translated by Jay Miskowiec]

15   Siegfried Giedion: »Lebendiges Museum«, in: Lissitzky-Küppers (1992), p 383.

With this timely reflection in 1929, Siegfried Giedion presents a good example of what it is to 'apply' art. In review of the Dresden International Art Exhibition he describes Lissitsky's contribution as an extension of the latter's notion of the picture (*Proun*) as a "connecting station between painting and architecture." But he does not leave it at a recognition of an artistic feat. His understanding is that Lissitzky's proposition draws attention to what is possible in an exhibition context while encouraging us to draw our conclusions from this insight. This point cannot be stressed enough: the Russian avant-garde did not only bring to bear the influence of the institution on the social meaning of the individual art work. The fundamental insight that art has a social dimension raised the even more pressing question, by inference, of what consequences to the structure of the institution stemmed from art as a social *praxis*. Like Foster, Benjamin Buchloh has shown that it was the criteria that modernism is usually blamed for – ones that take a lofty stance against change – that prevented the avant-garde advance of new art forms from ever being acknowledged. From today's perspective, it is ever more clear that the crisis of representation is inseparable from questions being raised about reception and mediation:

> "With sufficient historical distance it becomes clearer that this fundamental crisis within the modernist paradigm was not only a crisis of representation (one that has reached its penultimate status of self-reflexive verification and epistemological critique). It was also, importantly, a crisis of audience relationships, a moment in which the historical institutionalization of the avant-garde had reached its peak of credibility, from which legitimation was only to be obtained by a redefinition of its relationship with the new urban masses and their cultural demands. [...] In the early 20s the Soviet avant-garde (as well as some members of the de Stil group, the Bauhaus, and Berlin dada) developed different strategies to transcend the historical limitations of modernism. They recognized that the crisis of representation could not be resolved without at the same time addressing questions of distribution and audience." (16)

The avant-garde critique of the social status of art was both dramatic and far-reaching. It inverted previous relations of commissionship (be it of churches, crowns, or states). The role of art was no longer to be (explicitly) defined from outside. Nor was art to be understood, as the *l'art pour l'art* apologists did, as something free of purpose. Instead, those artists aware of their fundamental anchoring within society started to formulate their own "social purpose" as far as possible. In this process that followed they also formulated demands and expectations relative to their audience and began to organize their relationship to the latter. The avant-gardists escaped that kind of arbitrariness that emerges when art is rooted back again in "artistic personality." The battle in the socio-political realm against the rule of an arbitrary order stemming from the élites – this battle was seen to correlate with a skepticism towards the artistic personality as sole pattern of justification. At the same time, the pairing of artistic with technical and scientific research often did not aid immediate understanding among the potential adressees and audiences. A fact that may seem in contradiction with the synchronous aim of a communication as wide and effective as possible. The alternative – an adherence to the conventions of familiarity and recognition – was for the avant-gardists a specious withdrawal from an achieved level of cognition as well as a paternalistic adoption of an already overcome standard. Extending this thought, a mediation

which interconnects all intermediary steps, and one which may help many in making cognitive gains, can only be an ongoing, distinct, and parallel proposal.

Such a mediation cannot be the substitute for the level of complexity of a statement which, once attained, must be taken note of. In other words: the provocations and efforts of a learning process can be just a little reduced as the pleasures that stem from it, given that one is not seeking to minimize the emancipatory gains of these processes. In Buchloh's case, these considerations are not read as political demands which have been attached to art, but as a consequence of the crisis of representation which in the early twentieth century channeled much effort and reflection. As a result of this crisis, the concomitant relation to recipients as well as questions of distribution and address are *genuine artistic questions* and no marginalia.

Translated by Michel Chevalier

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Martin Krenn

Sergei Tretyakov: *Field Commanders*

In 1931, fourteen years after the Russian Revolution and two years before the Nazis assumed power of the German government, the Russian writer and Futurist Sergei Tretyakov published his book *Field Commanders*[1] that was available in German and Russian. Collaborative in its orientation, Tretyakov's literary and artistic practice intervenes in the social fabric of his time. Tretyakov embeds himself and partakes in life on a collective farm to be able to analyse and influence the revolutionary process of the collectivization of agriculture. While an outstanding example of political avant-garde art, at the same time an element of failure is inherent to this practice. Tretyakov's art practice was embedded in the context of Stalinist politics. The collectivisation of agriculture in the Soviet Union, supported by Tretyakov in *Field Commanders*, led – just a few years after the book was published – to one of the most devastating famines of the 20th century, as well as the mass persecution and execution of independent farmers by the Soviet regime.[2] The political failure, or the failed politics of collectivisation, is obvious given our contemporary knowledge of and the historical distance to events. Any argument following the proverb that 'hindsight is easier than foresight', and thus claiming that Tretyakov could not have possibly recognised the looming catastrophe, is inconsequential. The political failure is – rather – inherent to his own literary political conception. This allows us to identify a 'blind spot' in his theoretical considerations concerning the role of a writer in a revolutionary situation, and this text represents an attempt to find an answer to how such a 'blind spot' could come about in the first place and how it can be avoided.

Avant-Garde

Tretyakov's artistic position is one of the classical avant-garde. The social and political art of the present age is inconceivable without duly considering the influence exerted by the avant-garde of the early 20th century. In particular with reference to *socially engaged art*, *activist art* and *community art*, this aspect needs to be accorded greater relevance than is presently the case. As the art theoretician Gavin Grindon (2011: 81) sees it, the current discussion about political and social art is situated in two art-historical contexts. One is formal, namely the postmodern step towards a collective and participatory art practice. As evidence for this he cites the 2006 debate between Claire Bishop and Grant Kester in *Artforum*.[3] The second is critical and historical, relating to the perceived failure or success of revolutionary ambitions in the historical avant-garde. One reference point Grindon mentions for the failure of the avant-garde is Peter Bürger's influential

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1   To date the book is not translated into English. This text refers to the book *Feld-Herren* published in German, Berlin: Malik-Verlag, 1931

2   In the 1930s the campaign against the "kulaks" (farmers/peasants with their own property) in the Soviet Union became increasingly radical. The "de-kulakisation" campaign, entailing executions and deportations, claimed the lives of 530,000 to 600,000 people. The forced collectivisation led to the collapse of agriculture in 1932/1933 and culminated in a catastrophic famine, with estimates putting the number of victims at between 5 to 7 million. (Hildermeier 1998: 38)

3   Some insights about the debate can be found here: http://leisurearts.blogspot.co.at/2006/05/grant-kester-artforum-claire-bishop.html

Theory of the Avant-Garde (1974; English translation 1984). Problematizing Bürger's negative framing of the political ambitions of the avant-garde as a failure, Grindon suspects that this is nothing other than an establishment of "melancholic history". He proposes a different approach: "Against these melancholy readings of history, it is possible to trace another, joyful, trajectory: a history not of the failure of the radical avant-garde, but of its *success*" (ibid.: 81). Avoiding the term revolutionary avant-garde, Grindon employs instead "radical avant-garde" to describe – with a less "totalitarian term" – a practice in which art aims to instigate "anti-capitalist social change". According to Grindon, so as to create a new historical frame that can be applied to the analysis of contemporary political art, it is crucial to concentrate on little-known historical art practices rather than the famous art objects produced by the avant-garde. (ibid.: 95) The present case study follows this lead. The analysis will seek to identify the political dimension of a radical-pragmatic redefinition of literary practice, which goes hand in hand with the refusal to comply to the bourgeois image of the artist. Tretyakov's case makes it glaringly obvious what occurs when, through art, the political is translated into politics.

Walter Benjamin: The Artist as Producer

The significance of Sergei Tretyakov's work for the art theory of his time is witnessed by Walter Benjamin's famous essay *The Author as Producer* (1934). In contrast to the nearly forgotten book *Field Commanders* (1931) however, Benjamin's essay is still widely discussed in contemporary art discourse.[4] My analysis will concentrate on Benjamin's concepts of political tendency and technique, which I shall then use to examine Tretyakov's work.

Benjamin opens his argument by stating that "the correct political tendency of a work includes its literary quality because it includes its literary tendency" (Benjamin 1998: 88). The translator of Benjamins Text for *New Left Review I/62* (1970), John Heckman, explains, "Benjamin uses the word *Tendenz* throughout to mean the general direction a writer of his work takes, whether political or literary. It combines the notions of political line or group with literary school or movement" (Benjamin 1970). Benjamin states that a social situation forces the poet to choose whom his activity shall serve, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, and indeed, no matter what the writer thinks, a decision will always have to be made. The work of a writer is therefore always political. And Benjamin concludes that the progressive writer, acknowledging the alternative, will choose the proletariat: "He directs his activity towards what will be useful to the proletariat in the class struggle. This is usually called pursuing a tendency, or 'commitment'"(Benjamin 1998: 86). Benjamin then turns to the concept of technique, arguing that:

For the dialectical treatment of this problem [the relationship between form and content] the rigid, isolated object (work, novel, book) is of no use whatsoever. It must be inserted into

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4   It is no coincidence that there are currently various attempts to actualise Benjamin's classical text, for instance by Gerald Raunig, Ruth Sonderegger, Friedrich Tietjen and others.

the context of living social relations. [...] Before I ask: what is a work's position *vis-a-vis* the production relations of its time, I should like to ask: what is its position *within* them? This question is directly concerned with literary *technique*. (Benjamin 1998: 87)

According to Benjamin, the literary technique of a work is characterized by the function that the work has within the literary relationships of production in a historical moment or period. A work with a correct political tendency (as Benjamin puts it) aims to improve the literary relationships of production. This improvement will not be achieved if the literary tendency of a work has no literary quality. And this is why a work with a correct tendency must necessarily exhibit the other qualities: correct political tendency and the correct aesthetic tendency. To extrapolate this for art in general, one could say that the political tendency is always inherent to every artistic form. Consequently, when we accept that no art can avoid the political, even if it understands and defines itself as unpolitical or non-political, then each artistic articulation would likewise be a political articulation. But this does not yet allow conclusions to be drawn about its artistic or political quality.

The philosopher Heinz Paetzold has sought to explain the role played by the concept of technique in Benjamin's approach:

> [...] through the most advanced literary technique both the correct political tendency as well as the literary quality are guaranteed: in Benjamin's theory of art, pivotal importance is attached to technique because a work's social function is decipherable in the technique used to produce it, or more precisely: its function as guidance for political practice. It does not indicate in which relationship a work has to the relations of production of its epoch, but if it stands in them correctly. (Paetzold 1974: 132)

The art historian Friedrich Tietjen suggests that Benjamin's criteria for art with the correct political tendency could be updated and actualized, drawing on terms such as mobilization, activation and organization:

> Benjamin names three features of the task of author: he should help to organize the proletariat, and he should activate them; he should weaken their enemies. If one wants to avoid the term proletariat as being somewhat dubious today, one could generalize with Benjamin that it is the momentum of organizing, activating and subverting that can signify art with the correct political tendency and the correct aesthetic tendency. (Tietjen 2004)

Based on these considerations, one may characterise Benjamin's term "political tendency" as follows:

In the avant-garde political tendency signifies artists collaborating with the proletariat to strengthen the latter's position in their class struggle. Today, it is necessary to broaden and redefine the term proletariat. Therefore, in present art practices a political tendency could

His mission is not to report, but to struggle;
he does not play the role of spectator,

signify an artistic practice that creates collaborative and empowering situations for communities, minorities and other groups who are discriminated against, including people who had fallen out of the classical concept of the proletariat. Depending on its 'correctness', the political tendency of an artwork either strengthens or weakens the struggle against several forms of injustice in society (such as racism, sexism, classism, neoliberalism, etc.).

Another interesting attempt to transform the ideas of Walter Benjamin into something viable for the present-day constellation is evident in several essays by Gerald Raunig,[5] where he is primarily concerned with placing Benjamin's *Producer* essay in a direct relationship to developments in socially-engaged art in the 1990s.

Raunig observes that, under the pressure of the general economic situation and specifically "due to the slump in the art market" (Raunig 2000), a significant number of artists in the 1990s followed the trend of *Community Art*. In his view, this new tendency resulted in numerous projects betraying a superficial political approach, which, moreover, failed to integrate a self-reflective moment in their work and instead "propagated the straightforward transgression of limits and art as a social cure." (Raunig 2000)

In his discussion of leftist art trends in 1920s Germany, Benjamin criticizes in an analogical manner the aestheticized products of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, noting "I further maintain that an appreciable part of so-called left-wing literature had no other social function than that of continually extracting new effects or sensations from this situation for the public's entertainment" (Benjamin 1998: 94). Taking up this critique, Gerald Raunig (2000) analyses how Benjamin opposed any "instrumentalisation of art's content for the 'correct politics'", before proposing to counter the instrumentalisation and/or aestheticization of the political in art with an "intervention in the form", which could become effective in the micro-political field:

In accordance with Benjamin's dialectical pattern, I believe that precisely for the benefit of these productive games of micro-political reformism structural change should be given preference to the big content design, meaning intervention in form, which goes into the vague and puts subjects, both the artists and their objects up front in communities. In terms of a materialist criticism, the question should not be where a project stands in relation to its production conditions but how it is positioned within them. (Raunig 2000)

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5   I am referring to Raunigs' essays "Grandparents of Interventionist Art, or Intervention in the Form. Rewriting Walter Benjamin's The Author as Producer" (2000), and "Changing the Production Apparatus: Anti-Universalist Concepts of Intelligentsia in the early Soviet Union" (2010), as well as several chapters of his book *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century* (2005)
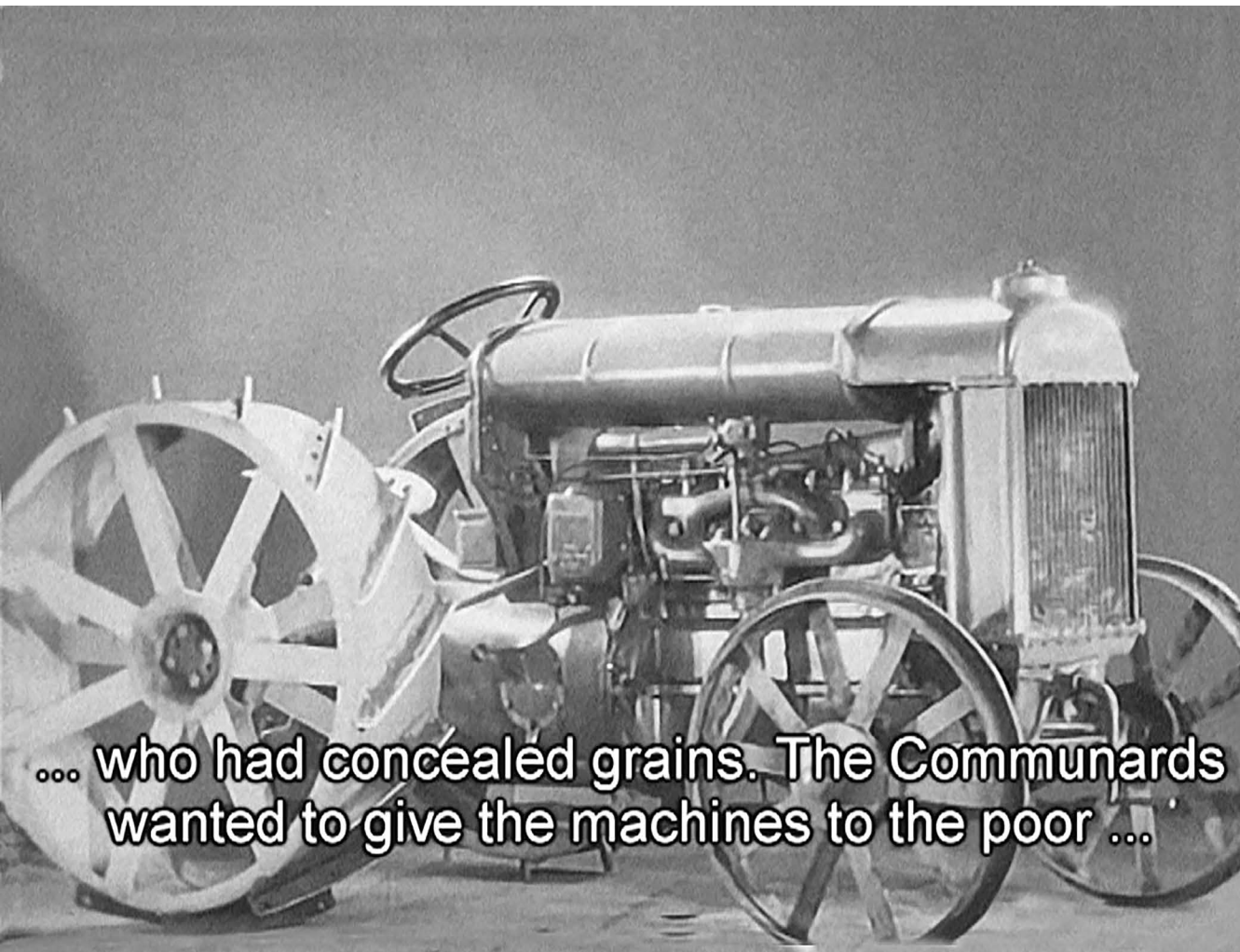
... who had concealed grains. The Communards wanted to give the machines to the poor ...

After my first trip to the kolkhoz, it became clear to me that you needed knowledge to write. The writer's instinct is not enough. No matter how talented you may be, you will always just brush the surface of things if you don't study your subject thoroughly. This is what moved me in 1928 to make the following demands of myself: I shall devote myself to issues related to agriculture, from agronomy to bookkeeping. At the kolkhoz I'm not going to play the part of a guest of honour and an observer, but rather take on some kind of work relevant to the running of the farm. That was how my sketches made from an observer's reports turned into a participant's working credentials. The sketches analysed the situation, raised the burning questions of the day, made concrete proposals, demanded vigorous intervention, – in a word, I took an actively combative position in the construction of something in which I was incorporated as an organic fellow worker. (Tretyakov 1931: 19)

Tretyakov radically broadens the scope of the concept of the writer. Being a writer is no longer about having the right kind of instinct or talent, but acquiring knowledge. One single visit to a kolkhoz was enough for Tretyakov to realise this. The reason that he places such emphasis on gaining knowledge is his understanding of literature. Thinking in the category of political difference, then we may state that Tretyakov is seeking to translate the political into politics and his means for doing so are those of literature. Only when literary practice is grasped as one that is to impact concretely into politics, is the step taken towards rejecting the subjective authorial instinct (which one can recognise – at the very best – as possessing micro-political relevance). Accordingly, political literature does not merely get involved with politics, but immerses itself in politics; it does not just wish to understand politics, but seeks to change politics. The writer moves from observer to political actor. At the same time though, he insists on his autonomy as a writer. In contrast to a politician, who has to meet the demands of a party, Tretyakov makes his own demands, independent of the Party. This is clearly expressed in the insights he gained in the wake of his first kolkhoz visit: "This is what moved me in 1928 to make the following demands of myself: I shall devote myself to issues…" (Tretyakov 1931: 19) These demands are formulated on the basis of his (literary) research experience, they stem from a very specific pragmatism that is not shaped by the state, nor by ideology. His convictions grow out of his thinking as a writer; he demands of himself, finally, to "study the subject thoroughly", for otherwise he would only "brush the surface". (ibid.: 19) For Tretyakov, a thorough study of an object means entering into a complicity with this object, or in other words to heed to the object. Just as the crumbs from the pockets of the *Pionerskaya Pravda* readers are 'made' to talk or given a voice. The object to be examined in *Field Commanders* is life in the commune, from "agronomy to bookkeeping" (ibid.: 19). To be complicit with the object means to be open for a reciprocal relationship of learning from and teaching of one another. It is comparable to the method used by the ignorant schoolmaster Jacotot (Rancière 1991), the only difference being that there is no such thing as a pedagogical teacher-pupil relationship for Tretyakov. Learning from one another is not a question of education, but is the kernel of literary practice itself.

As Tretyakov visits the Terek district's credit association, he soon finds out that the people there have scant interest in a writer.

Field Commanders

How are Benjamin's considerations about the political tendency concretised? Along with Berthold Brecht's epic theatre, Benjamin refers precisely to Sergey Tretyakov's *Field Commanders* in his *Producer* essay. Benjamin's interest is kindled by Tretyakov's role as an "operative writer"(Benjamin 1998: 88). For Tretyakov, the slogan "writers to the kolkhoz" means that artists are to intervene on site into the prevailing structures instead of merely writing about them. Tretyakov criticises how the texts by the nomadic notebook writers remain shallow and static, incapable of representing processes and tendencies: "But it is precisely the social processes, the development of humans and relations, the changing of the functions of things, which are of most interest to us"(Tretyakov quoted in Mierau 2007: 11). As Heinz Paetzold (1974: 133) sees it, Benjamin sought to identify in the operative writer a "political self-understanding of literary production. This becomes directly consequential politically itself, and indeed beyond an emancipatory 'transformative re-functioning' of literary technique for the class struggle." One forceful example of Tretyakov's literary technique, which drawing on our own contemporary concepts may be described as *participatory*, *dialogical* and *interventionist art*, or *socially engaged art*, is a serial novel project he initiated in 1928. Tretyakov invites young readers of *Pionerskaya Pravda* through an advertisement to empty their pockets. Alluding to Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, where an episode tells of the contents of Tom's pockets, he calls upon the young readers to produce everything out of their pockets and, lining them up, to write a story about the apparently irrelevant things which come to light. His idea is to assemble one large story from all the smaller stories by the newspaper readers (Gröschner 2007b: 29). From today's perspective, one could speak of a participatory novel; in this novel people are not described by a writer, but inspired by the seemingly trivial things they carry about with them, they write about themselves and thus the situation they currently find themselves in. "The first condition is not to hide anything and not to be embarrassed. […] Even small things – pieces of fabric, scraps of paper, notes – have to be placed on the sheet of newspaper. Spread out even tiny crumbs on the paper and try and remember how you got them" (Tretyakov quoted in Gröschner 2007b: 29-30). Tretyakov believes that a few things in the pocket of a reader can tell much more about them than any form of a classical first-person narrative. The economic conditions, which are revealed in the respective contents of a pocket, are described from a series of subjective viewpoints. The things and objects materialise the socio-political situation in which the readers write their stories.

This approach is similar to what Tretyakov undertakes in *Field Commanders*. The literary result of his engagement in the commune "Communist Lighthouse" at the end of the 1920s in the Soviet Union, Tretyakov develops a theory out of his experiences which is identify those tasks a political writer sets him/herself. His own range of activities perfectly illustrates this: he convened mass assemblies, collected money for procuring new agricultural equipment, called on peasants to join the kolkhoz, edited the kolkhoz newspaper, launched travelling newspapers and initiated travelling cinemas (Tretyakov 1931: 20-21)

It is interesting to note that Tretyakov not only justified his engagement politically, but indeed above all pragmatically and literarily. Here he differs essentially from the Communist Party functionaries of the time who acted as the mere extension of the Party. He writes.

A white, one-storey house: the credit association of the Terek district. The supreme board was in great excitement: a congress of the kolkhoz is to take place in the next few days. I pass my mandate on to the presidential table.

"How can I get into the 'Communist Lighthouse'?" The answer is rather amazing. "Are you a day-tripper, comrade? Do you need to go immediately to the commune?" "Of course immediately. Shall I just stay in a hotel for a while first?" Voice of my interlocutor, very correct: "Look, comrade, trippers are a plague for the commune. Because of these excursions we have already had to provide them with funds. Satisfying the wishes of day-trippers is also time-consuming work. One comesto the commune as if it were an exhibition!"

"I understand, comrade, but maybe I can make myself useful there!" "Comrade, at the moment the days of great struggle are underway there, the wheat harvest, every pair of hands is valuable." Thoughtfully, as an aside: "What are they thinking by sending us day-trippers at a time like this?" I correct him: "I'm not a day-tripper. I'm a writer." "A writer?" My interlocutor interrupts me. "But a writer was just there. He's just left. Less than a week ago." "But I want to write about the commune." "But it's already been written about. Whole books."

I come from Moscow. Ceremoniously I'd been given an escort. Bragin had proclaimed: 'May the Revolution protect you!' The kolkhoz centre issued me a mandate. But my words don't sound convincing, not even to my own ears. My mandate holds little interest for them. Me – even less so (Tretyakov 1931: 36).

Briefly Tretyakov withdraws to the position of the revolutionary and explains that he's been issued with a mandate. But invoking his political commission, instead of responding to the arguments and prevailing local situation, does not seem convincing even to him. Tretyakov recognises rather that he can only be taken seriously as a writer when he ceases to hide behind the 'pomp and circumstance' of the revolution; from now on – unprotected by the revolution – he has to respond to the necessities of the situation and act according to the needs of the people. Only then can his political literary aspirations be fulfilled; only so can he become an operative writer, a writer who – to think in terms of the ontological difference – can again and again leave the normative-ontological space and become immersed in the ontic realm, without ever having to drop his literary aspirations. The official at the Tarek credit association tells Tretyakov that enough books have been written about the kolkhozes. No new books are needed. On the one hand, Tretyakov wants to rescue literature as an art practice for the commune; on the other hand however, he realises that writers are meanwhile a burden for the commune. This is the dialectic that Tretyakov needs to resolve, and he does so by further developing his literary theory, albeit now making it dependent on the prevailing circumstances, thus placing increasing emphasis on the collectivisation of agriculture and what this undertaking demands. After all, the collective of the kolkhoz farmers is the main protagonist in his novel. He – an "operative" writer – thus gears his literary practice to these ends. He stands in the tradition of the LEF group he cofounded ("Left Front of the Arts"), which is oriented on the "aesthetic and social utopianism of Futurism"

Here we have everything: fear of revenge and coward, petty, genuinely rural concern.

(Fetz 2011: 114). The group's chief concern is to collectivise individual biographies, just the same as agriculture is to be collectivised. If the collective is to speak in the novel, then the author needs to learn to heed its voice. A collective cannot be asked about things in the same way as an individual person, for after all a collective includes all members. In order to allow a collective to speak in a novel like the *Field Commanders*, the author himself has to become part of the collective and the collective an author. In an article from 1932 published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Siegfried Kracauer speaks of the "use value" of literature and sees this manifested in the figure of Tretyakov, as an "operative writer whose writing strives to be action"(Kracauer quoted in Fetz 2011: 112).

The hero in Tretyakov's novel is thus the collective of the field commanders (but this includes himself as well, because he sees himself as part of the collective). The field commanders are to speak in his novel. But how to determine what the collective is? Just who is to speak, to be given a voice? Who belongs to the collective and who does not? As Tretyakov sees it, women definitely belong to the collective, and he considers it his task to intervene on their behalf.

> At the end of January young people from the new-born kolkhozes appeared at the farms, in the backyards and corridors of the commune. They were silent and they wandered around the commune shyly like a pack of horses. A single young girl had strayed among them. She resembled Marfa Lapkina from the movie *The General Line*, with the only difference that she was of much greater calibre. The young girl came from the kolkhoz "Terek–Cossack". She and two other communards – this was the whole "female sector" among the sixty-member mass. Five percent, while thirty was the target set. I myself had to one time agitate at a kolkhoz meeting for the training of female tractor drivers. Even at a meeting of the commissioners of the entire combine I had to preach to the collectivists that a woman's place was also on the tractor. And the answer? "A woman on the tractor? Can't crank it up, can she?" I shouted that I had seen whole brigades of female tractor drivers in the film *Giant*, and these brigades took on the men (Tretyakov 1931: 197).

This passage clearly shows that a collective as such is never finalised. Who is to be part of the collective is something that continually changes and is disputed. But the *Field Commanders* collective in Tretyakov's novel can only exist when it is founded on something else apart from the participation of its members. This foundation is not, as one would perhaps think, the positive ideal of the collectivisation of agriculture. Tretyakov is far too pragmatic to be labelled as an idealist. Nor is it, moreover, the Communist Party, which – above all its bureaucracy – is criticised by Tretyakov on several occasions, for it stands in the way of his ideas of collectivisation. At one point he writes: "Moscow has left us in the lurch with the newspaper. They gave us the run around. While I was still in Moscow there was passionate debate as to what the kolkhoz paper was to look like." (ibid.: 215) To be able to analyse upon what the collective is founded
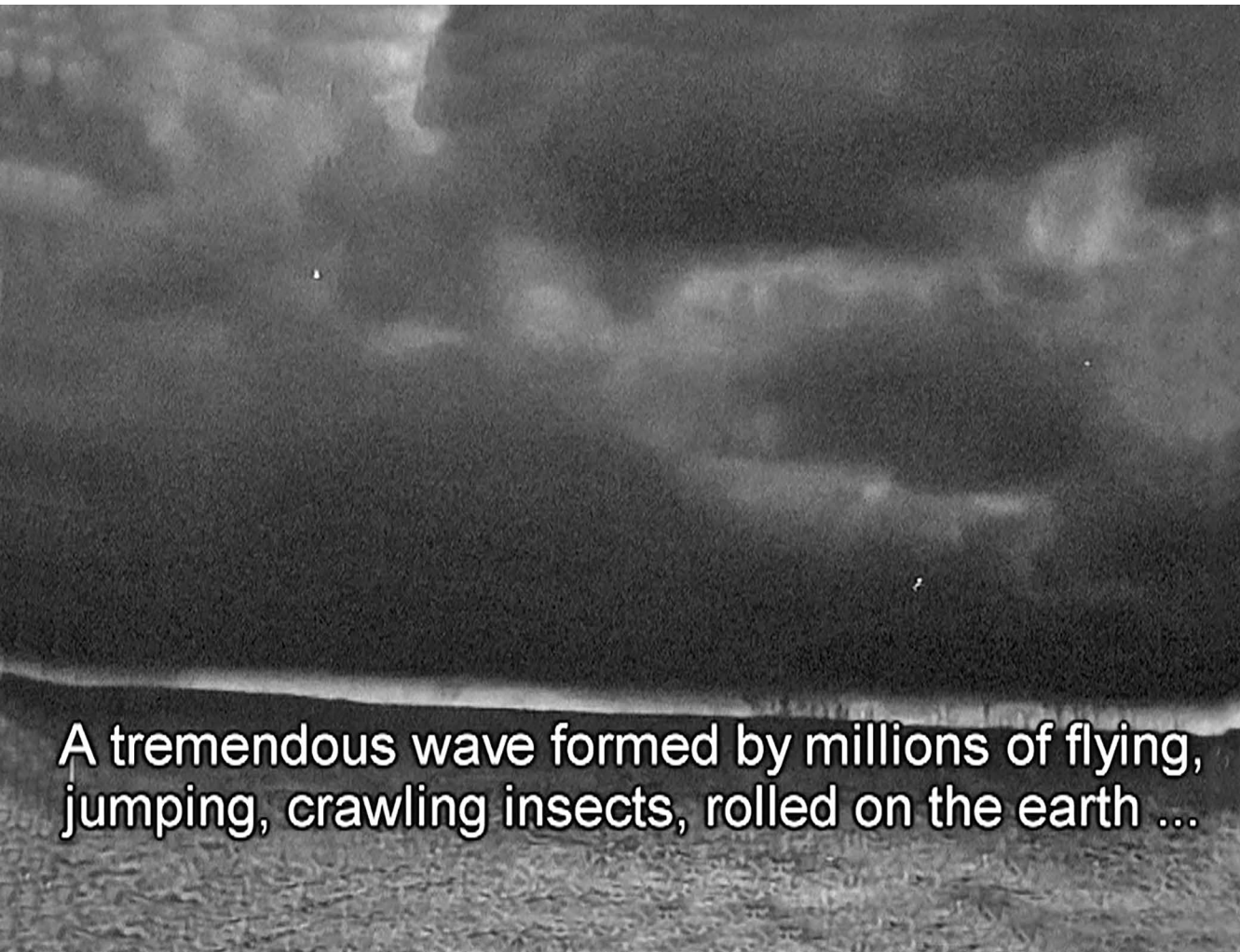
A tremendous wave formed by millions of flying, jumping, crawling insects, rolled on the earth ...

in Tretyakov's novel, we need to turn to Ernesto Laclau's theory of the *empty signifier* (2007).[6] For Tretyakov, the collective does not obey a specific ideology (what collectivisation is supposed to be is discussed and negotiated over the course of its implementation), it is not the domain of a specific occupational group (not just farmers but also officials and writers are to be part of it), nor is it restricted to a specific gender (there are to be female tractor drivers). The more the novel progresses, the clearer it becomes that the collective corresponds to a signifier which becomes increasingly empty. Or in other words: Tretyakov's literary idea of the collective is ideologically 'emptied' for pragmatic reasons and therefore seems to be able to unify all the contradictions and differences which emerge within the factual collective. Unifying all social identities in the collective should not mislead us as to the differences however. So that the social identities can nevertheless form a collective consciousness – the novel's trajectory – they have to become links in a chain of equivalence which marks out and defines the boundary of the collective, both literarily as well as factually. This can only succeed when these identities face a negative outside or exterior: the collective in Tretyakov's novel needs the logic of equivalence which is capable of converting the system of immanent discourse shaped by differences into a common denominator, thus simplifying the contours of the political space and facilitating its literary rendering. The logic of equivalence and the negative outside depend on one another.

The negative outside is variously configured in Tretyakov's novel. At one point, for instance, he speaks of a war against plagues of locusts.

> A tremendous swarm formed by millions of flying, jumping, crawling insects, rolled over the ground, pressing in tight and then loosening out again. Above all it was necessary to prevent the locusts from bedding in the seeds: that would be our ruin. The battle against the flying locust is terrible. It cannot stay in the air for an unlimited time. Sooner or later it needs to rest and touch down. The only question is: on whose plots? A contest in shooing-away begins. Whoever makes the most ferocious noise has the best chance of forcing the pest onto the neighbour's plot. The village arsenal was emptied in the twinkling of an eye – just like in the old days when bandits appeared out of nowhere. Anything that made a noise, a sound, a bang, a clatter, a din was mobilised. (Tretyakov 1931: 122)

A plague of locusts can form a negative outside for only a brief period however. They are temporary and were a factor in agricultural life before the founding of the collective. They have to be coped with no matter if agriculture is to be collectivised or not. Another enemy is needed to create a boundary through the principle of exclusion, an enemy that is lasting, stable

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6   The name of the independent Polish trade union Solidarity served Laclau as an example for showing how the empty signifier worked. Originally only an association formed by striking workers at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk during the summer of 1980, this trade union ultimately became synonymous with the whole resistance movement in Poland, eventually toppling the Communist regime in 1989. The continuous emptying of its signification is a distinguishing feature of Solidarity. In the end, it was no longer geared towards a particular goal, nor did it stand for a singular group; instead, it was the signifier for the revolutionary collapse of the whole Communist system.

and constitutive for the collective: this enemy must embody the radical negative and always be present. The negative to be excluded can, however, only be permanently present when it is also (paradoxically) present in the collective's inner fabric.

Constitutive for the formation of the collective of the *Commanders of the Field* is the "kulak". The name given to the onetime "masters" of the fields, this term is the label for the independent farmers who the Communist Party and the communards declare to be the root of all evil and are made into scapegoats over the course of collectivisation. These farmers are not to be included into the collective, but instead forcibly dispossessed by the collective and driven off the land. The "kulaks" are considered to epitomise the negative, seen as the enemy "in our midst" who could never be integrated into the collective. They form the negative outside through which the political space is simplified. (Bohn 2011: 6-7) Without the uncompromising exclusion of the "kulaks" there can be no collective of *Field Commanders* and no collectivisation of agriculture.

There is, however, a passage in the novel where resistance to the ideologically motivated political demarcation emerges. The poorest cannot see why the collective will help them only at the cost of the independent farmers (the "kulaks").

> As long as the failed harvests had not hammered home the truth to the peasants, they only reluctantly united together into kolkhozes. I remember the following case: a decent fleet of agricultural machinery had been accumulated at the village council as a result of confiscating the kulaks who had hidden grain. The communards wanted to make this machinery available to the poor peasants in the village, enticing them to merge into a kolkhoz. They encountered desperate resistance. "We're ready to join you in the commune at any time," the village poor assured, "but our own kolkhoz, – no, we'd rather be knocked off, it's not for us. We'd only put ourselves in a spot with the loans, – and then there's the machinery belonging to the others. Sell the equipment, buy new machines with the money, and then we can talk." [...] Here we have it all: fear of revenge and the cowardly, petty, genuinely rural worry: I shared the communards' indignation at these childish village peasants and their timidity, unwilling to touch the property of the kulaks. (Tretyakov 1931: 134)

Tretyakov does not share the scepticism of the unpropertied peasants, but the "communards' indignation". The village peasants fear revenge. Tretyakov calls this fear cowardly, petty and genuinely rural. But revenge for what is instilling fear into the village peasants? Are they aware of what is happening to the other farmers (the "kulaks")? Why do they want to have nothing to do with the "machinery belonging to the others"? Are the machines cursed? Why do they suggest their sale? Do they really believe that newly purchased machinery would be rid of the revenge curse? An answer cannot be discerned in the novel; but today we know how the forced collectivisation turned out and its repercussions. While Tretyakov still believes that the "kulaks" could determine their own fate ("who had hidden grain"), the dynamic of the situation in fact becomes more radical, obeying the logic of exclusion. Already before the publication of Tretyakov's novel, on 11 February 1930 Vyacheslav Molotov gives a secret

speech in his capacity of Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (premier of the Soviet Union), declaring the actual objective the Communist Party is pursuing with the collectivisation of agriculture.

> Molotov: "And now onto the question of the kulaks. This question is of extraordinary importance. We have appointed a commission which is to find practical answers. We present these to the politburo. We hold meetings with individual comrades. In particular Comrade Stalin is in the picture. What measures need to be taken? I'll tell you confidentially. As some comrades asked me at the November plenum what is to be done with the kulaks, I said: 'If there were an adequate river, then they'd drown'. But there isn't such a river everywhere, in other words, the answer is lame. But it does make it clear that one has to annihilate them. There's lots of skulls to be counted.
>
> It seems to me that it is beyond doubt that we will not manage without administrative measures and that we also probably need to execute. (Shouts: resettlement!) The first category: shoot, the second category: resettle.
>
> There's no way of avoiding the resettlement of a considerable number of persons to the most diverse areas. Where should we send them? To concentration camps. We have to consider in what kind of work we deploy them, perhaps lumbering, perhaps one can send them into untouched areas to reclaim new land. Perhaps we have to also organise sovkhozes with the kulaks. Never mind, we put a couple of communists at the vanguard of the sovkhozes and they'll get to work then. There'll be a furious battle this spring. Anyone who hasn't caught on by now will feel it soon enough"[7] (Baberowski 2005: 320).

For Tretyakov, the "kulaks" stand for economic exploitation, which has to be overcome by 'removing' the independent farmers: "In the kolkhoz the poor village peasants unite and, supported by the state, pool their productive work, opposing with their collective economic activity the exploitative practices of the kulak, who is barred from joining the kolkhoz." (Tretyakov 1931: 10) Thus, the class of the "kulaks" is to be liquidated: "Simultaneously, the progressive collectivisation brings forth a movement to liquidate the kulaks as a class. On the basis of total collectivisation, the class of the kulaks is annihilated." (ibid.: 14) The independent farmers, who in reality often possessed no more than two cows (Gellately 2009: 529), are not only liquidated by the Communist Party as a "class" though; Molotov calls for their physical extermination.

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7   Tellingly, as he spoke with the journalist Feliks Čuev about his role in the Stalin period forty years later, Molotov saw no reason to distance himself from the terror of the past. He judged the situation in the 1970s no differently than he had in the 1930s: the terror unleashed against the kulaks was historically necessary. (Baberowski 2007)

I'm not going to play the parts of a guest of honour and an observer on the kolkhoz,

The desire for a heroic collective, only constructible in this novel on the basis of the radical exclusion of the supposed 'other', produces a blind spot. Tretyakov fails to find an appropriate literary method to verify the truth of the stories told to him about the "kulaks". Thus, in some parts he utilizes the form of crude propaganda and conspiracy theories.[8]

> The kulak very rarely fights openly. Entering his house from the front, all is clean. But via the backstairs, from the kitchen of the kulak, his secret influence rustles along the various paths of idle gossip, small favours, good advice, cronyism, clan favouritism, the cup of mercy assuaging the feelings of the peasants. And long after one has rooted out the kulak from the compact mass of people he has snared and stitched together, his roots, fibres, sprouts and shoots, suddenly spurting as predatory acts, need to be slashed and burned again. To collectivise here requires cleverness, patient, exhaustive explanation and conversion through presenting an example. (Tretyakov 1931: 239)

Stalinism abruptly ended Sergey Tretyakov's life. He was executed in 1939 in the wake of internal "political purges".[9] His work and progressive artistic practice were in opposition to the ideas of the totalitarian regime which sought to turn art into an instrument of propaganda for Stalin and the Community Party of the Soviet Union CPSU. Tretyakov's artistic achievements, just like those of the Russian avant-garde which ran contrary to the prevailing ideology of the Communist state dictatorship, were banished from the official art history of the Soviet Union.

Tretyakov's life shows the enormous personal risk he was willing to take to put his literary and political convictions into practice. Justice can only be done to his extraordinary courage when we are prepared to critically analyse his work and not shy away from exploring its "blind

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8   Without naming a source, he describes former independent farmers willing to integrate as infiltrators whose sole objective is to disrupt and subvert the kolkhozes: "The first steps taken by the collective were difficult, the kulaks put up fierce resistance, it began with simple agitation amongst the peasants against the kolkhoz and incitement to slaughter the cattle ('In the kolkhoz you get state cattle') and led to setting fire to the kolkhoz stables and machinery sheds, culminating in the murder of the most active collectivists, who had rallied the poorest and the peasants to join them in putting the economy on a collective foundation. Wherever the violence proved not enough, the kulaks tried to infiltrate the kolkhoz, to subvert it from within, triggering its disintegration." (Tretyakov 1931: 15)

9   Tretyakov was forced to confess that he was a "Japanese spy", needing money to pay for gambling debts. Shortly after Tretyakov's execution Berthold Brecht wrote:
My teacher
Tall, friendly
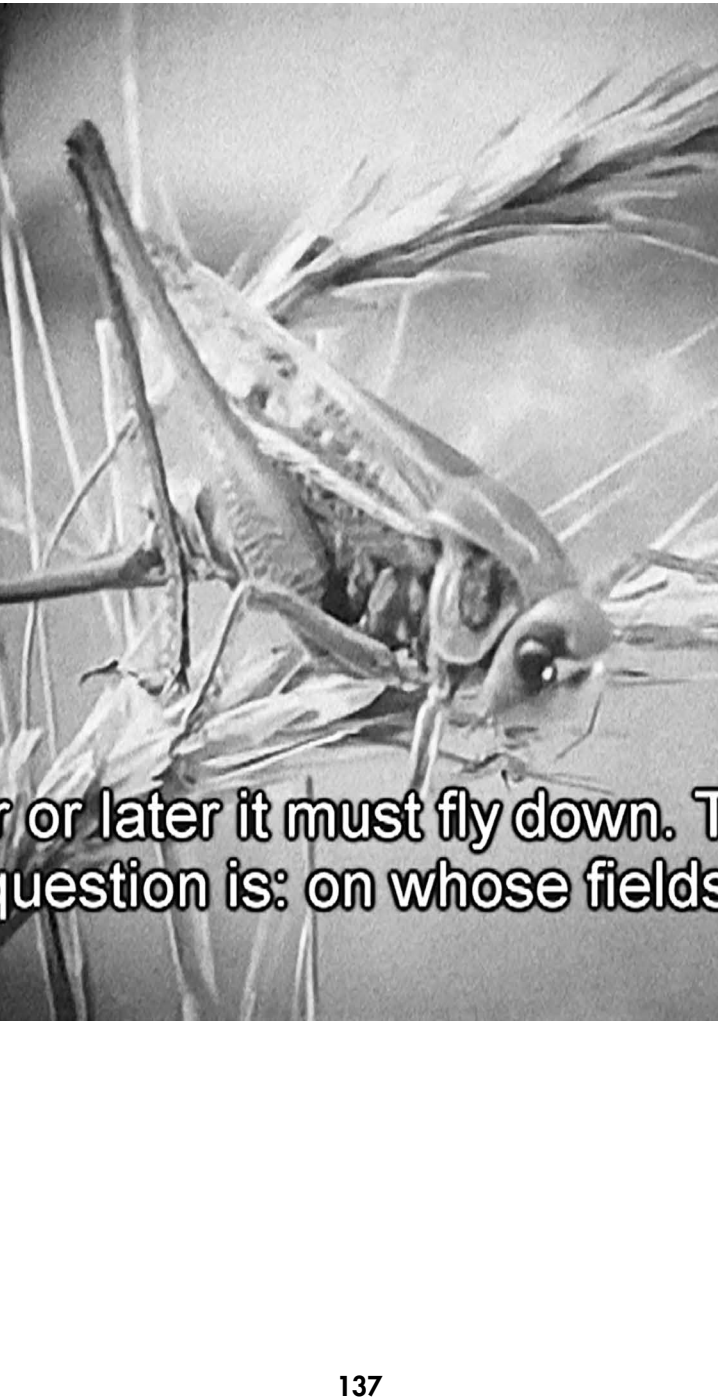Has been shot, sentenced by a people's court.
As a spy. His name is damned.
His books are destroyed. Discussion about him.
Is suspicious and mute.
And what if he's innocent?
(Brecht quoted in Gröschner 2007a)

Sooner or later it must fly down. The only question is: on whose fields?

spot". There is no need to get entangled in justification or condemnation. As it is, a definitive judgement cannot be presented at the conclusion of this case study because only a fraction of his substantial literary practice was considered. Nevertheless, the insights garnered can be productively elaborated on and structural comparisons to current art practices made. Tretyakov's militant defamation and slandering of the independent farmers as a class indicates that blind spots can arise out of an emancipatory, leftist and self-reflective approach. The criterion of solidarity could come into play here as a corrective. Understood as non-identitarian or post-identitarian, solidarity furnishes a counter position to the logic of exclusion. Instead of "blind" solidarity with others and, in the process, distinguishing oneself in the literary field, there is a need to examine in detail beforehand how the 'others' are constituted as a collective and the role the artist plays him/herself in the construction of the 'other'. We need to ask which criteria of exclusion are employed to found a collective and if one – as a political artist – should share or fight against them.

Translated by Paul Bowman

Picture credits

The filmstills are taken from *Feld-Herren Revisited*, a film by Martin Krenn (Austria, 32 min, 2014).

Synopsis: *Feld-Herren Revisited* discusses the historical roots of participatory and propagandist art. The video exposes the connections between artistic research and political engagement and of their related aesthetics. The film is a slide show montage that consists exclusively of film stills from Sergei Eisenstein's The General Line and text quotations from Sergei Tretyakov's novel Feld-Herren as well as Walter Benjamin's essay The author as a producer.

Although originally without context, the iconic movie images of the rural areas of the USSR convincingly integrate themselves in the text extracts of Tretyakov's novel and Benjamin's essay. The video gradually decodes the relationships between the sources used and their potentials, but it also exposes the inherent dangers found in them.

The film can be watched online www.martinkrenn.net/?page_id=2068

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Jaakko Karhunen

Clamor of Struggle and the Strikebreaker

In the social jungle everybody is preying upon everybody else.

Jack London, The Scab, 1904

1. Prologue

In this text I will examine two sounds and their relation to each other, the clamor of the masses and the insistent muteness of the strikebreaker. These 'sounds' are not phenomena that could be investigated by listening to them – they are more like metaphors, but they have some definite ideological functions. This is a *speculative* starting point, a fictive situation: there is a strike, the workers are picketing in front of a factory, creating a dividing line, and the scabs or strike-breakers must pass this line in silence. What happens when they pass that line?

It can be said that for someone to be *within* noise, her position is determined by double movement: noise surrounds, overwhelms but at the same time it *demands* attention. From the urgency of noise must be distilled the relevant information that is required for action. The situation, or event, demands action – noise is the index of the event, it *means* that 'there is a situation'. It means that there is (a) meaning, like the hiccups of Aristophanes, even though the meaning of the event would not be known.[1]

There are two positions within noise as an environment: noise (as the index of the event taking place) induces two possible subjects. The first position is one of participation, the other of exclusion – of non-participation. Non-participation is not a position outside of noise: on the contrary it is a position immanent to noise – whoever occupies it is completely implicated by the unfolding of the event. This second position is analogous to the situation of the strikebreaker.

The strike is a struggle over the material conditions of labour, but it is also a negotiation between identifications. For the strikers, the struggle is waged between capitalists and the collective of workers – the opposing side prefers the terms employer and the employee,[2] in the singular. The strikebreaker is someone who, for one reason or another, during a strike chooses to continue her work, or takes the place of a regular employee. However, the strikebreaker is not an

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1   Mladen Dolar: *A Voice and Nothing More*, p. 25, (MIT Press, 2006); Dolar quotes Jacques Lacan: Le transfert, Le séminaire, Livre VIII, ed. J. -A. Miller (Seuil, 1991, [1960/61])

2   In Finnish, the terms are *työnantaja* (the giver of the work) and *työntekijä* (the maker of the work), emphasizing the ideological relation between the two in the level of language.

identity – even the strikebreakers themselves do not recognise themselves as such.[3] It has been, historically, a *forced* position.

To think about that position, Aino-Marjatta Mäki and myself made an artwork called *Never Cross A Picket Line,* in 2013. It was one possible outcome of the issues we were thinking at the time – now I will revisit its themes to continue in the same trajectory. What we were most interested while doing the work was this position of exclusion within the noise which is not chosen by whoever has to occupy it. I will not explain or re-exhibit the artwork in the form of a text, but will use some material from it to address the problem posed by the construction of a collective. Another important source for me has been Rastko Močnik's text *Ideological interpellation: identification and subjectivation*, for which this text can be seen as a fragmentary commentary.

This text participates to a theoretical discussion about subjectivity, especially in relation to the processes of *identification* and *subjectivation*: identification meaning the capability of an individual to recognise him or herself in pre-existing ideal identity (e.g. citizen, husband/wife, anime freak etc.), while subjectivation meaning something apparently more fundamental, the process of becoming a subject: a proletarian subject, a bourgeois subject, a colonial subject, or migrant subject for example. Whether these two processes can be separated at all is what is at stake – I will argue that they cannot. Or better still, that it is not a useful distinction: that there is no subjectivation without identification. What this means will become apparent in the course of the text.

Instead of talking so much about 'subjects', I will defend the concept of subjectivity as a singular *process* overdetermined by (material) historical processes, in which identification plays a significant role.[4] As this discussion is vast and conflictual, I will deal with a specific way of constructing collective subjectivities, which I call the discourse of the We, in order to argue that the postulation of these We's *in advance,* as *the precondition* of political struggle, is misguided.

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3   There is exceptions to this rule: for example before the Second World War organised strike-breaking was a legitimate business in America. The employer organisations of Finland had also their own strikebreaking company called Vientirauha, see below. However, only the owners and the enforcers of these companies identified themselves as strikebreakers, while the actual workforce was usually even worse off than the strikers themselves. See for example Robert Michael Smith: *From Blackjacks to Briefcases, A History of Commercialized Strikebreaking and Unionbusting in the United States* (Ohio University Press, 2003).

4   A useful reconstruction of Louis Althusser's conception of subjectivity as a process, is in Alain Badiou: *Metapolitics*, Chapter 3. (Verso, 2005); see also: Pierre Macherey: 'A Production of Subjectivity' (*Yale French Studies, No. 88*, 1995), and Étienne Balibar: 'From Class Struggle to Classless Struggle?' (in Balibar & Wallerstein: *Race, Nation, Class* (Verso, 1991))

2. Never Cross a Picket Line

I'll begin in chronological order. We used historical archives and contemporary interviews as research material for the artwork. The finished work focused predominantly on the currently operative ideological preconceptions about labor and its value. However in the core of it was always the absent figure of the strikebreaker. I will revisit that absence, to see how this figure appears in the light of the artwork.

   The material is a result of artistic investigation, meaning that we were looking for material that was suitable for our project. Our motivation anticipated this material that was there to be found. I am not dealing with hard facts – this is circumstantial evidence. To make it doubly circumstantial, I have space to present only a few fragments. The intention of these examples is to depict the figure of the strikebreaker from a specific position, in order to *interpret* it, to make a new reading.

2.1 The People's Archive

While searching for relevant material from The People's Archive, the central archives of the Finnish left-wing labour movement and popular organisations, we found a slim folder titled *Strikebreakers* under the heading of *Labor Disputes*. It contained a seemingly random collection of newspaper clippings on the topic of strikebreakers from the 1940's to 70's. An interesting type of articles were the small announcements titled *Päivän rikkuri*, in English *The Strikebreaker of the Day*. These announcements communicated to the strikers the personal information of the scabs: the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the employees that continued to work in spite of the strike. The information came from the strike committees, and the announcements usually emphasized that regular employees should not work together, or to have any friendly relations with the strikebreakers even after the end of the strike. Other material in the folder consisted mostly of brief news about labour disputes in which strikebreaking tactics had been used by the opposing side to counter the effects of the strike. Here are three short articles from the folder.

2.1.1. Strike as a Battle Weapon of the Workers

Strike is an effective method for persuading the employer to implement the rightful demands of the workers. One of the counteractions of the employers is to recruit strikebreakers. A strikebreaker is considered amongst the working population in the civilised countries to be an immoral individual, who is outside of the circle of camaraderie between honest people. The workers in these countries, in the countryside and in the cities, understand that their interests are shared to such a degree, that they will not start breaking the strikes other workers. To be a strikebreaker is to betray and to trample upon the interests of those workers, who with the help of the strike seek to better their income. It is so shamefully criminal, because through it the attempts to raise the living standards of the poorest of people are hindered. Even more shameful is if a person that otherwise could sustain himself yields to be a strikebreaker. A person can never succumb to such an economical distress, that he would need to lower himself to

the level of a scab. A strikebreaker does not damage only those who are engaged in the strike, but also each working man, and even himself. The interests of all working people are the same. When the wages become better in one sector of employment, it always raises wages of the other sectors too. Even the interests of workers of different countries are shared.

A leaflet by the Social Democratic Party "Against Strikebreakers." 1938 The Printing press of the working people in Tampere

So in words, different in practice!

Published in *Hämeen Yhteistyö*, a newspaper of the Finnish People's Democratic League, in 1948 (the exact date is unclear). The article reproduces a leaflet published ten years prior by the SDP. The last sentence asserts that the from the point of view of the leftist People's Democratic League, the SDP didn't keep its words and were much too tolerant towards strikebreaking in the year 1948 compared to its position ten years before.

2.1.2 News from Kemi

Winter greetings from Kemi, to the editorial of newspaper *Karjala*.

In your newspaper it seems to be very rare to have any news of the Karelian immigrants that have settled in these corners. Because of this I thought I would write a bit, and give some signs of life from here.

There are Karelians here also. There are people who are employed, some have even been foolish enough to try to cultivate the land, like this family of ours. But farming really doesn't pay if you try to grow grains here. Even though for some incomprehensible reason people still try. Every spring the seed is bought and sown. Each summer the frost visits, sometimes mildly, sometimes destructively.

Rye is the most successful of grains here, but last summer was for some reason so strange that even rye wouldn't become ready for harvesting. We cut it in the middle of September. The potatoes have also suffered from the frost, during all of the three summers that we have spent here.

But for communism Kemi is an acceptable environment. It thrives here, and blossoms now and then in vibrant red flowers.

The writer of this text is one those who wrecked the political log jam in Jokisuu, a 'strikebreaker' from last summer. A skunk of society! The thing is that I was working in the log separation in the summer. Before the strike I had time to work there for about two weeks. During the strike, while we were waiting for it to end, I was working at home cutting hay. Then on the 17th of August we began to work

again with a small group. It was a scary day in August, with the protection of the police we survived it unscathed.

It's true that there is work at home also, but when you need money too, then you have to work for others. This land cannot sustain so many.

The locals are cold towards us Karelians. Of course there are exceptions, like there are so many different kinds of people among us Karelians too. – Just last week I happened to hear when a certain local lady berated Karelians. I heard her telling to another lady that she has always said Karelians are very untrustworthy, and one shouldn't have anything to do with them. Just be like they wouldn't exist at all.

This is the way we have been welcomed in this new village of ours. Otherwise we haven't had any welcoming parties. Even though we can read from the newspaper *Karjala* that there are such things in the South. Yes, here we have been living in the middle of all kinds of troubles and communists.

Our Karelian culture has endured. Even the Ladogan dialect is still intact. My little sister who is six years old speaks pure Karelian dialect, and likewise my other sister who is already in school speaks the familiar dialect at least at home. Karelians who visit us are surprised that even the children still speak the dialect from back home. The new generation will forget it first, which is understandable. But when some older Karelian tries to change her dialect, which is shameful even to hear from aside. It is not anymore Karelian, or Ostrobothnian, it is some weird gibberish.

A woman from Kemi

Published in the newspaper *Karjala*, a right wing periodical of the Karelian immigrants, 14.2.1950.

2.1.3 Convicts used as scabs in the harbour of Hanko

The secret behind the bareheaded strikebreakers in Hanko has been revealed. According to the information received by our newspaper these 'stevedores', on top of the boys from orphanages and the gypsies that we wrote about yesterday, are convicts who have been transported from the central prison of Riihimäki to work in the harbour.

One of the convicts showed his prisoners pass to several witnesses, and told them that he was sent with twenty other prisoners from Riihimäki to work in the harbour of Hanko. This convict said that they were given day allowances, and on top of that 600 Finnish marks at the time they were transported from the prison for the harbour. They were told that if they will not start to work within two days, they would be sent back to jail.

Here we can see at last what is the true nature of those 'stevedores that are in line with legality', and who have been praised so much by the bourgeois press and the newspaper of the Social Democratic Party. We on the other hand ask: what do the laws of Finland say about such 'legality'?

In normal circumstances, there are six to seven ships in the Hanko harbour, and the loading of that amount of ships requires 350 to 400 men. Now it has been announced that there are 15 ships in Hanko, which means that it would require around a thousand professional men to keep the work going. Everybody understands the nature of the 'full work output', which the right-wing press claims to be at place, when the work is actually done by a handful of convicts, orphans and gypsies.

The *quality of the scab labour* is the best proof of how strong the united front of the stevedores is, and how difficult is the situation of the employers.

Published 27.8.1949, in *Työkansan Sanomat*, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Finland.

2.2 Interviews

We interviewed employees of temporary work agencies, business consultants, and labor union representatives about the current situation in the labor market, and edited the interviews into a dispute between the participants. The sound piece, sub-headed as *Tragedy in one act,* consisted of five scenes: 1. Scene: Work (4:13 min), 2. Scene: Transition (6:24 min), 3. Scene: Attributes of the employee (6:24 min), 4. Scene: Strike (5:52 min) and 5. Scene: Strikebreaker (3:54 min). In what follows I will reproduce the transliteration of the last scene in its entirety. The abbreviations in front of each statement designate the speaker from which the statement was heard: (C) is centre, (R) right, (L) left, (RS) right surround and (LS) left surround. The time-code tells the duration of each statement. Bear in mind that the voices overlap each other, and that the people were not actually talking to each other in the original interviews, but that the final combination is a result of editing.

2.2.1 Strikebreaker

LS: 00:24:24 But on the other hand, we do have those people in Finland that do not want to work and purposely remain unemployed for one reason or another, and they still get by. 00:24:36

RS: 00:24:34 This is exactly the point, these youngsters don't worry about a thing, they don't stress over where they'll find work the next year or if they'll even have a job. That problem becomes real a year from now. We'll solve that when the time comes, make a decision when the time comes. 00:24:50

C: 00:24:50 It's pretty obvious that if more people are out of work than at work, then we can't pay those who are out of work. So I'd rather pay benefits for people who have a good reason for not working, like people who are actually old or sick, or are actually doing something, something else, and give them a decent benefit, and not like give benefits to all sorts of people that have a negative attitude towards life and work. And I mean if you've never tried something then how could you possibly know that work is unpleasant? Give it a try! 00:25:31

R: 00:25:00 By precarious labour we usually mean odd jobs in which the status of the worker is hard to clearly define, there may be different arrangements in terms of salary and some sort of commission-relationship, a really vague type of thing, and then there's a form of employment where you go to work only when you are called upon, with no guarantee of work, minimum amount of hours or minimum salary. 00:25:35

RS: 00:25:28 These zero-hour contracts are, of course, the worst, it's like slavery. People are put into the position of a slave. 00:25:39

R: 00:25:39 How can you say that this or that is a crappy job, when current research shows that people who've worked at McDonald's thought it was fantastic. It was a good work environment and sensible and nice and so on. I mean it's extremely arrogant to label someone else's work as being a crap job. 00:26:00

LS: 00:25:58 Making a hamburger at McDonald's is standardised, right? There's no room for development, even if the world's greatest hamburger cook worked there, he or she would still be making Big Mac's. They can't pour all of their creativity and capability into the work. 00:26:17

C: 00:26:17 And then we have resources that are placed into processes, these resources can be metal or flour or people, but from a leadership point of view they are all resources; to produce a baguette, we have to use a certain amount of flour and yeast and put in a certain amount of working hours. Who cares who does the job? It's the working hour or minute that counts. 00:26:46

L: 00:26:40 I think the real question is whether casual workers are poor trampled puppets, or are they, in fact, professionals, like modern-day cowboys who pick and choose their gigs. 00:27:01

C: 00:27:00 And in some respects precarious workers are in the position of a strikebreaker, even though they aren't against industrial action at all… (speaker changes) … yeah, yeah, temps, or employees on zero-hour contracts who are worried about their employment. There is no predictability at all. If you go to your employer and disagree even the slightest, then that's it, you won't be called on to work or your working hours decrease, or something like that. 00:27:27

LS: 00:27:25 But these strikebreakers, I've got no respect for them. I think they are… They're nothing but self-seekers and I for one cannot accept that. 00:27:40

RS: 00:27:37 That is the most despicable kind of animal. Yes! Yeah! Yeah! (other speakers). Strikebreaker. It's like a war, war, in a war they are called deserters. And how were they treated? They, they were shot. Yeah, yeah, yeah. (another speaker) When you betray your own people and your mates, and meanwhile others go into combat. That is most despicable. 00:27:59

C: 00:27:59 It is hard to comprehend, that kind of… Well okay, I've been a trustee on various levels, in various positions, for about thirty years now, so I can't understand how anyone can shit on one's own plate, like totally, directly, and on top of that on a friends plate too. 00:28:16

3. Precarious Work

As can perhaps be gathered from the previous part, we suggested in *Never Cross a Picket Line* that the position of the precarious worker is analogous to that of the strikebreaker. It can be said that 'the capitalists' have been successful: in relation to production of collective subjectivity, the strike weapon effectively has been taken away from the population, and has been diminished to a method of solving *disputes,* usually over wages. The function of the strike cannot anymore be thought of as an ideological expression of the formula from SDP's leaflet: '*The interests of all working people are the same.'* Also the latter statement, '*A person can never succumb to such an economical distress, that he would need to lower himself to become a strikebreaker,'* is clearly false. On the contrary, from todays point of view the statement in the end the article ('so in words, different in practice'), seems to refer to *impossibility* of the articulated demands.[5] It is symptomatic for the leaflet that a paradox is materialised in the text itself: to say that being a strikebreaker is 'even more shameful' if a 'person can sustain himself', is in contradiction to the following claim – that it would not be possible for anyone to be so poor that they would need to scab.

Classically the unions and the discourse of the proletarian collectivity have presented the strikebreaker as the enemy within – as an instance of class betrayal. However it seems necessary to *postulate* this class betrayal, because its threat is precisely what holds the collective together. The strikebreaker is an indispensable figure of (self-)sacrifice that enables the strikers to form an identity through negation of that figure. This implies that the strikebreaker must come from the

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5   What I am saying is, that the discourse used by the unions, which condemns strike-breakers as the worst kind of animals, as *morally evil*, is not justifiable. In general the referral to morality is ideologically suspect. The precarious worker and the strikebreaker are *analogous*, not in their evil actions, but in their position/situation within the relations of production.

ranks of the workers themselves – that someone has to renounce the proletarian cause, usually because of perverse personal qualities.

The reality has often been different, as can be seen in the articles. The class position of *The Woman from Kemi* might be proletarian, but her identification to the Karelian heritage, and the hatred of the idea of communism that is affiliated with her past due to historical reasons, totally overrides her class position. The outsider status of the relocated Karelian refugees, as she presents it in the article, makes it even more understandable why she would over-identify herself as the 'skunk of society'. For her scabbing is a *choice*,[6] a demonstration of a position that she already occupies, and which is posited as the opposite to the lost belonging to a historical *Heimat*. It is an ideological construction, but her identification does not function in terms of class, but of tribe and tradition.

The column by *The Woman from Kemi* was the only straightforward statement in which a strikebreaker spoke in her own words. The manifest content of the text deals with general problems of the Karelian population in a foreign region, but the rationale for her correspondence appears to be the need to recount the experience at the logjam. *'It was a frightening day in Kemi…'* For her, a strike is not a legitimate struggle for better terms and pay – instead what is at stake, and what must be countered, is the danger posed by the latent communism dormant in the population of the North. She accepts to work almost casually: 'when you need money too, then you have to work for others.' Scarcity of resources is the obvious reason for scabbing – but at the same time she reasserts the order of things through her own actions: money is obtained only through someone else, and it is inconceivable that it could be otherwise.

The third article provides the most accurate image of how extra labor force was organised when it was needed for the factories and harbours. In the 1920's and 30's, a company called *Vientirauha* (in English approximately: *The Export Peace*) was established to counter the effects of constant labour disputes. *Vientirauha* was also called the *Guards of Pihkala*, after its infamous fascist leader *Martti Pihkala*. It transported politically white smallholders from the conservative countryside to work instead of the strikers, resulting occasionally in violent clashes with the workers. The company was disbanded after the Winter War in the year 1940, when an agreement was made between the employer and employee organisations, in which both parties finally recognised each other as legitimate actors in solving labour disputes.

The agreement did not mean the end of strikes, and as can be seen in the article from the year 1949, the employers tried to break the strikes by mobilising the part of the population that was already scorned. The methods were unquestionably illegal, but what is equally important is how the article takes a stand against the supposed quality of labor provided by the already excluded part of population that had no real option than to scab. Gypsies, orphans, convicts – it is apparent that they don't have any part in the solidarity of the working class, even though their situation was the most precarious. The scab emerges as the figure which is either already

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6   In the level of the text.

excluded from society, or is ideologically opposed to the proletarian cause (as in the case of the smallholders employed by *Vientirauha*), or both excluded and ideologically opposed like in the case of the woman from Kemi.

I will not say much about the interviews as I think it speaks sufficiently well for itself, and its status is pronouncedly 'artistic'. However, what is noteworthy is the fact that it is quite easy to distinguish to which of the opposing classes the speakers identify themselves. The proletarian position is articulated almost in the same terms as before, and the strikebreaker 'who shits on his own plate and on top of that on his friends plate too' is definitely the same perverted figure whose quality of work is inferior compared to a professional worker. For the union workers this figure still functions as the dialectical opposite of the purity of proper collective of the workers. At the same time they acknowledge the fact that economical change has completely changed the structure of employment, giving rise to zero-hour contracts and temporary employment, describing very well the position of the precarious worker today. The strikebreaker is almost a nostalgic figure for them: a memento from the glorious days of the past when employment was permanent, secure, a source of identity and pride.

On the other hand, most of the employers did embrace the recent changes, stressing the fact that precarity is a condition chosen by the new generation. For the employers the classes do not exist any more: anyone can do whatever they want, and only way you can go wrong is if you don't know what you want. Each subject is supposed to be endowed with a rational self-interest and the will, capacity, and flexibility to adjust to constantly changing conditions. If someone cannot sustain herself the reason must be that she has a negative attitude (unless she are *genuinely* ill or old). The discourse betrays the fact that this is the hegemonic position – in the past the employers at least recognised the existence of the working class. For the union employees, class still exists, but it is dissolving – like in the case of paper factory employees that have their houses and their BMW's. No one ever mentions class *struggle*, either there exist no classes, or the classes are understood to exist in the traditional forms, but without as definitive boundaries as in the past. In this sense the positions have remained in place, while the conditions of production and labour have changed. The precarious work force has only two options, either each individually tries to obtain a position in the owning class through hard work and competition, or to collectively re-invent itself as the new proletariat through the old models of trade union organising. But is this actually the case? It appears that this kind of argumentation is precisely the result of a *construction*: a postulation of a would-be collective prior to its existence.

According to Paolo Virno, the precarity of contemporary subsistence produces the emotional modalities of opportunism and cynicism in the population.[7] The precarious worker is in a position where he or she has no options and all the options: this is precisely what precarity means. The double bind is formulated by the demand: be what ever you want. The question is whether cynicism and opportunism actually are predicates of *the contemporary subjectivity*, or whether they are just the some probable reactions of *whatever* subject in precarious conditions?

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7   Virno, Paolo: A Grammar of the Multitude, p. 84 - 88 (Semiotexte, 2004)

If they are postulated as predicates of the *subjectivity*, then it is necessary to prove, like Virno tries to do, that opportunism and cynicism are actually *positive* characteristics of that subjectivity – to be able to save any political potentiality. However, is it really necessary to postulate fundamental changes in *collective subjectivities* (as if they would be mysteriously solid entities) as outcomes of historical change? This would result in an endless chain of different collective subjectivities, creating a historicist determinacy between the subjectivities and the historical situation in which they are caught. The terminological vacillation of the concept of subjectivity appears to lead to an assumption that there exists a potential infinity of collective subjectivities with different predicates.

4. Discourse of the We

Why do we need a We, a Subject of history, for thinking about organisation? It seems that historical change still requires a *preconceived* collective subjectivity, and a fetish of *practice:* obviously the real struggle happens in the streets where subjectivity *is* – and if you don't have the *experience* of that struggle (i.e. the direct participation to it), there is no legitimacy in whatever you are saying. The case is similar in the arts: practice is knowledge. Each artist knows what art is, in the same way as each politically active individual knows what politics is: from their respective experience of practice of art, or of political struggle. Subjective experience plus belonging to a we equals legitimatisation of authority within discourse. Subjectivity is conceived as a *guarantee*, a backing that justifies all that is said and done. It is a double guarantee: it backs our actions as situated individuals, and it backs the legitimacy of the collective through the situatedness of its members. But in actuality, it is precisely those experiences that are the luxuries of today – this is the exoticism of action. The traumatic position is to refuse the subjective backing as the guarantee of legitimacy.

As can be seen from the discussion of the figure of the strikebreaker, a we effectively implies that there exists a non-we, an exclusion that is *inherent* in the we as its possibility of collapse which must be postponed indefinitely. The problem of organisation, of mobilisation, and by extension of historical change itself, comes down to the problem that 'we' have *essentially* nothing in common – the construction of that *common* is the political task. Nothing necessitates that class identification corresponds to class position, on the contrary, it is a specific labor that produces that correspondence.

To come back to the metaphors of noise and silence. In the beginning I said that noise as an environment entails two subject-positions: participation and exclusion. Making noise as opposed to the silence of exclusion. My argument is that the *metaphor* of the noise of the masses is a specific instance of the discourses that produce a collective subject to which it is possible imaginarily identify, if that subject-position is available for you.[8] The use of that metaphor postulates the We in advance, before the *action,* as it were. The We can be a proper subject

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8   For example, if you are a worker, not an orphan, gypsy, or a convict.

with definite predicates (e.g. 'We as a nation'), or have more concealed form: for example as the 'grammatical' subjectivity of the multitude (which paradoxically consists of subjects that have all the possible predicates).[9]

I am not suggesting that it could be possible to not use the pronoun or that it would be always illegitimate to say 'we', on the contrary my point is that the collective We is a *figure of identification*: and it implies a politics of identification. And identification is precisely what should be questioned and addressed as an ideological mechanism. These discourses are particularly prominent in the field of contemporary art. I will take two particularly interesting examples, first on the point of view of the explicit construction of a We, secondly focusing on noise.

4.1. We

> *We do not 'have' meaning anymore, because we ourselves are meaning – entirely, without reserve, infinitely, with no meaning other than 'us.'*

<div align="right">Jean-Luc Nancy</div>

Irit Rogoff, in her text *We – Collectivities, Mutualities, Participations*[10] creates, through a reading of Jean-Luc Nancy's book *Being Singular Plural*,[11] a particularly sophisticated collective subjectivity, one that is fleeting and prone to dissolve and disintegrate in any moment. Despite its sophistication, I argue that Rogoff's theoretical construction still postulates the collectivity, or actually the collectivities, in advance, even though with such care that the We which is produced does not have any substantial being. The existence of the We is ultimately the condition for the possibility of meaning to take place: 'After all "there is no meaning if meaning is not shared".'[12]

I cannot analyse here in depth what shared meaning signifies, instead what I am interested is what Rogoff says about art in relation to Nancy's formulations. She quite rightly dismisses all essentialisms, 'lost identifications', or the classic roles of the audience or the public, in favour of a performative collectivity, a mutuality that is enabled first and foremost by the *physical spaces* where art is exhibited or performed. The art spaces have this power because in these spaces people come together:

> *Collectivity is something that takes place as we arbitrarily gather to take part in different forms of cultural activity such as looking at art.*

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9   Paolo Virno: *A Grammar of the Multitude*, p.75 (Semiotexte, 2004)

10   Irit Rogoff: *We - Collectivities, Mutualities, Participations* (online article: http://theater.kein.org/node/95 ; 08/06/2004); Cf: http://www.formerwest.org/PublicEditorialMeetings/WhoIsAPeople

11   Jean-Luc Nancy: *Being Singular Plural* (Meridian: Crossing Aestethics, 2000)

12   Ibid, p. 2, quote from Nancy, p.2, which continues: 'and not because there would be an ultimate or first signification that all beings have in common, but because meaning is itself the sharing of being.'

> *[…] we do look at art, inhabit the spaces of art in various forms of collectivity and in the process we produce new forms of mutuality, of relations between viewers and spaces rather than relations between viewers and objects. Beyond the shared categories of class, or taste or political or sexual orientations another form of 'WE' is produced in these processes of viewing and it in turn shifts the very nature of meaning and its relation to the notion of displayed visual culture.*

Now, as meaning is 'us', it doesn't matter what kind of art is exhibited, as long as there is an emergent collectivity witnessing it in the art space:

> *I am not arguing for the centrality of the art exhibition as a political space on the basis of what it exhibits, of the kind of work that the objects on display might do in the world, of the kind of issues that the thematic exhibition might alert us to. I am arguing instead for the art exhibition as what Nancy has termed 'The Spectacle of Society'; 'If beingwith is the sharing of a simultaneous spacetime, then it involves a presentation of this space-time as such. In order to say "we" one must present the "here and now" of this "we". Or rather saying "we" brings about the presentation of the "here and now", however it is determined; as a room, a region, a group of friends, an association, a "people".'*

What kind of political space the gallery is then? A 'stage of appearance', in which it is possible to fathom a 'politics without a plan'. It is, tautologically, the space where the emergent collectivity can appear: here we detect the problematic assumption that politics 'begins' at the moment when the collective subject 'we' appears – and sure enough it also vanishes after the audience gradually starts to leave home from the private view, only to reappear again in the next opening.

4.2. Noise

The sound art collective Ultra Red, which consists of artists and activists, conducts *Militant Sound Investigations,* which engage with social struggles, documenting them and creating an impressing variety of different actions, texts, broadcasts and recordings. Their listening sessions are often but not exclusively held in contemporary art settings, and consist of excerpts of noise and voices recorded in politically charged situations. These excerpts are presented to an audience one by one, and after each recording the presenter asks the audience to relate what they heard, either saying it out loud or writing it down on a big sheet of paper.

In 2014 all the members met in Cologne for the first time in the history of the collective, and made a video documenting the workshop.[13] The video begins with a definition:

> *A sound inquiry, when it is militant, investigates the contradictions that condition struggles against capitalist, racist, gendered, and imperialist oppression.*

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13   The video can be seen in here: https://vimeo.com/110452615

I am not criticising the practice of Ultra Red, instead what I am interested here the concept of noise as a medium, and particularly the way in which the founding member Dont Rhine describes a sound inquiry in the video:

> *Our focus is on how we actually organise the spaces, the processes of listening. So a sound investigation is a kind of literacy of how we develop the means to listen. It is a kind of political education practice that isn't about: here is the analysis that you need to learn, but how might we develop that analysis together. And out of that analysis how might we then begin to understand what actions we need to take, or communities need to take to affect the changes that they need in the world.*

> *We tend to think of political struggle as the articulating of a demand or expressing a grievance, but what we have learned is that politics organises itself at the base in specific communities, through how we hear each other – so once again we are in a sound investigation. So the literacies of listening are always with us. But then how do we take it to the next step – from changing out perceptions of the world to the changing the world that we perceive?*

My commentary towards this passage is similar than the one directed at Rogoff: even though Ultra Red is engaging with the subject matter (the content is relevant, not only the space which enables an encounter), the primary concern in the listening session is the constructed collective, the 'we' that is listening. The ambiguity of the plural pronoun is telling, and it is noteworthy that similar vagueness is present also in Rogoff's text.[14] It raises the question: to which 'we' is Dont Rhine referring to each time that it is repeated in the above passage? The we of the group, of the community where the investigation has been made, to both, or to even more general we of the whole human kind? All of these different addressees are present in the text. It is the temporal and spatial order of things that presents a problem: in a listening session the audience is not the same as the original community, so the community must first be artificially constructed, and it is done through shared listening – only then it is possible to proceed to the next step. But the threat is that the next step never comes, as the community cannot be successfully constructed.

Two more fetishes: one of space, the other of medium. For Rogoff it is not necessary to think about the problem of organisation, as there exists a space in which an emergent collectivity is *potential* – whether it ever actualises or not is irrelevant. Similarly for Ultra Red the attention given to the medium threatens to collapse it to a discourse about the very same medium: to sound or noise and the sense of listening. The sensibility required for hearing each other is important but it has its (inter-subjective) limits, and can hardly be the ground upon which all collectivity can be established. *Negotiation* is a fundamentally different practice than listening to a medium, which carries meanings that are to be heard.

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14   While Rogoff constructs a very elaborate and fragile we, trying to steer clear of identities and 'ideological constructions with a goal', she sovereignly uses 'we' as the addressee of her text - it is a very concrete public of the art world which is addressed by the text.

Would it be possible to start thinking about the properly anti-humanistic problem of organisation, without postulating any 'we's', with no pre-suppositions about collective subjects, about 'the base' where politics organises itself, of its possibly shared premises? A 'we' could only be an end result, so distant that it cannot be imagined until after the event, and so fragile that it is uncertain whether it has any use-value at all.

5. Strikebreaker as the Figure of Non-Identification

Because this thought can go on inside us only if it disturbs what we think, having taken us by surprise.

Louis Althusser: *Machiavelli's Solitude*

The American writer Jack London constructs a striking, if brutal, social ontology in his short text The Scab, written in 1904.[15] For him, 'the nature of our present day society' necessitates that everyone in it is a strikebreaker: *competition* is the organisational principle of society which ensures that individuals of which it consists of, are in constant opposition to each other.

> *All the world is a scab, and with rare exceptions, all the people in it are scabs. The strong, capable workman gets a job and holds it because of his strength and capacity. And he holds it because out of his strength and capacity he gives a better value for his wage than does the weaker and less capable workman. Therefore he is scabbing upon his weaker and less capable brother workman. This is incontrovertible. He is giving more value for the price paid by the employer.*
>
> *The superior workman scabs upon the inferior workman because he is so constituted and cannot help it. The one, by fortune of birth and upbringing, is strong and capable; the other, by fortune of birth and upbringing, is not so strong or capable.*

Afterwards he asks: as this is the case, what then remains to be done? The answer is to create 'equity', not equality, but 'giving like to like, the same for the same, neither more nor less.' Scabbing originates as the result of disagreements over value, particularly because one worker agrees to work on lower wages than the other. There is no need for the strike itself anymore, the world is in a constant state of strike, and each worker is automatically a strikebreaker, because there will always be someone who, paradoxically, *is paid more* than him or her. It makes you a scab if you don't demand the same. But if everyone is already a scab, how then could society with equity be formed? Apparently, a society based on equity would require a fundamental negotiation (between scabs) on the nature of value.

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15   Jack London: The Scab (first published in the newspaper The Atlantic in January 1904, online article: http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1904/01/the-scab/306194/)

London's text is a pamphlet in the favour of union organisation, but it paints such a bleak, social Darwinist picture of society that it is difficult to imagine how it could have furthered its cause. It appears that there is no way out, there will always be scabs, because '*his will to live will force him to exist.*' This is a quite astonishing formulation, which seems to imply that the very *will* of the scab is *involuntary*, forcing him to stay alive. The scab cannot choose not to exist, because his will to live won't let him. In such a world everything is predetermined in the sense that its agents are completely subjected to the principle of organisation of society, which is competition, and to *fortuna*, which determines their physical, mental, other hereditary attributes and their family in to which they are born. *Virtú* has no value here.[16]

Obviously, no one can identify with such a figure, and this might be precisely its only use: a figure for the refusal of constant search for identification itself. If the will is a force that necessitates existence as a scab, is it then anymore a will? Only the principle of organisation remains to be changed. But in London's social jungle it is hard to imagine who or how that change could be effected. London has created an materialist world where chance is king, but in his construction one more ideological factor remains which accounts to its brutality: the will to live that forces 'us' to exist makes it inconceivable for the principle of organisation of society to change. This is the trope of human nature in one of its guises. The will to live is similar to the concept of *conatus*[17], but is 'the things persistence in its being' really just biological survival?

This text has many times touched upon the assertion that identities are imaginary, that identities belong to the imaginary register in Lacanian terms. Rastko Močnik argues in his text that ideological interpellation, i.e. the production of subjectivity, functions not only through identification, but also as subjectivation. He takes for his example of identification the fictional slogan 'We are all workers at Mirafiori', and explains that if there exists a preconception that the workers are waging a legitimate struggle in Mirafiori, all of us 'who are joining this just struggle' can identify ourselves with those workers. Subjectivation, on the other hand, is not so simple. Subjectivation happens for example by the slogan used during May 1968, 'We are

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16   About *Virtú* and *fortuna*, see Louis Althusser: *Machiavelli and Us* (Verso, 1999)

17   'The conatus with which each thing endeavours to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself.", Spinoza: *Ethics*, Prop. 7 (Hackett Publishing Company, 1992)

all German Jews'[18], in which according to Monik there is no identification to 'German Jews', but a subjectivation to the event of '68, due to the polyphonic nature of the slogan. 'There is no chance of identifying the subject with the predicate'[19], I.e. T̶T̶h̶e̶ The users of the slogan did not identify themselves with the predicate 'German Jew', and I agree on that point, but according the overriding argument of this whole text, it is the pronoun 'we' that produces the identification, not the predicate. My reading is that *in both examples the identification is directed towards the pronoun, the subject of the statement who says We*, and not the predicate – the proof of this being the fact that it can be *replaced* (from Charlie Hebdo to the 99%). 'We' is an identity, and so be it – perhaps it is the fragile end result I referred to in the end of the last chapter, but what is important is that it is not postulated in advance – the political problem is *not*: to what figure could the population identify with? The problem is: how to *organise?*[20] As I said in the beginning, my position is that the processes of identification and subjectivation cannot be distinguished from each other, *subjectivation* is not the guarantee for the collective subjectivity to exist in the future. If this is true it would not reduce the value of the slogan or the event, but it would imply the traumatic assertion that 'there is no guarantee' is *the guarantee in itself,* not as some kind of metaphysical ground, *but a precondition for political action to take place.*[21]

What I am trying to say is that there is no need of pre-conceived collective subjectivity as the ground of politics, what should be done is to construct a concept of fundamentally *empty, processual* subjectivity: in 'reality' 'we' are overdetermined by the symbolic order, by multiple and conflictual identifications, and by extension we are the products of ideological formations, but it

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18   'According to the official site of the National Assembly of the French Republic (http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/mai_68/ chronologie.asp, 14. January 2012) the slogan "*Nous sommes tous des Juifs et des Allemands* – We are all Jews and Germans" appeared for the first time on 22 May 1968 on a poster for the manifestation against the interdiction of the stay in France issued against Daniel Cohn-Bendit a day before; the same source states that demonstrators gathered that evening in front of the National Assembly shouted the slogan "We are all German Jews". Already on 3 May, *L'Humanité*, the official daily of the Communist Party of France, published a text by Georges Marchais, the organisational secretary of CPF, condemning "the agitation that goes against the interests of the mass of students and favours fascist provocations", led by the Movement of 22 March "under the direction of the German anarchist Cohn-Bendit". The slogan "*Nous sommes tous des Juifs allemands* – We are all German Jews" acquired notoriety at the manifestation in the Latin Quarter in Paris on 31 May.' Rastko Močnik: 'Two Types of Ideological Interpellation', p.46, footnote 12 (*Belgrade Journal for Media and Communications #6*, 2014)

19   Rastko Močnik: 'Ideological Interpellation – Identification and Subjectivation', p. 315, in *Encountering Althusser* (Bloomsbury, 2013)

20   'Organising has never meant affiliation with the same organisation. Organising is acting in accordance with a common perception, at whatever level that may be. Now, what is missing from the situation is not "people's anger" or economic shortage, it's not the good will of militants or the spread of critical consciousness, or even the proliferation of anarchist gestures. What we lack is a shared perception of the situation. Without this binding agent, gestures dissolve without a trace into nothingness, lives have the texture of dreams, and uprisings end up in schoolbooks.' The Invisible Committee: To Our Friends, p.17 (Semiotext(e), 2015)

21   Not in the sense that political action would not have ever taken place before obviously, but in the sense that the undoing of accepted certainties or guarantees is a prerequisite for action.

is the futural *potentiality* (sort of *conatus*) of being-always-already-interpellated that implies that everyone is a potential agent of historical change. This *conatus* is not the same as the biological will to live that forces the strikebreaker to exist in London's sense – and it is not a ground either, it is the counterpart for the non-existence of guarantees.

> *… this question can probably not be divorced from the question of the 'bad subject', the one who does not manage 'to go all by herself' or who resists interpellation. We might also say that it is a question of the subject's* excessive power, *the result of her very* weakness*, which, nevertheless, constitutes her or confers her 'form' on her.*[22]

What happens when the scabs pass the picket line through the noise? Nothing happens, no strikebreaker-subjectivity is formed, the only result is that the mute strikebreakers will not anymore recognise themselves in the identity that is assigned to them.

22   Étienne Balibar: 'Althusser and the 'Ideological State Apparatuses'', in Louis Althusser: *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, p. xvii (Verso, 2014)

Ben Watson

Bishop Brown

Ben Watson has read a book, which he says has awoken him like no other since 1979, when he found a copy of *Leaving the Twentieth Century* (Chris Gray's selection of situationist diatribes, with graphics by Jamie Reid, later to work for the Sex Pistols) on a stall at an alternative technology festival in Bath, where he also first heard saxophonist Lol Coxhill — and hippies from the famous Peace Convoy (in 1984 scattered by the police in the infamous "Battle of the Beanfield") playing Frank Zappa's *Just Another Band From LA* (both sides) full blast from a speaker mounted on the roof of their VW camper van. Is Watson mad? Probably. But read on, maybe you'd like to go mad too …

    What do you do when a book takes you by storm? You talk about it, tell everyone to read it. Then there's a lull. No-one else seems to get it. At first you don't want to write about it because *everything's already in there*, you've only to open the pages and your head explodes. Doesn't it? Doesn't it? Apparently not. Reluctantly, you take a deep breath and try and explain to people what you see. The book in question is Bishop William Montgomery Brown's *Communism and Christianism*, self-published in Galion, Ohio from 1920 to the Bishop's death in 1937. Subtitle: *Analysed and Contrasted from the Marxian and Darwinian Points of View.* Slogan written around a hand-drawn rising sun and hammer-and-sickle: **Banish Gods From Skies … And Capitalists from Earth**. My copy is the 14th edition, 1932. I found it on my late father-in-law's bookshelves (hwas a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party (1944-9), the Trotskyist split from the Communist Party of Great Britain, and spent a great deal of his working life in the Transport & General Workers Union as an aid for Jack Jones).

    While reading *Communism and Christianism*, I kept muttering**, *Why has no-one told me about Bishop Brown before???*** I could only find one previous mention online: in a talk to young Russian workers in 1922, Trotsky talked about Bishop Brown and his book, noting the rising sun and the hammer and sickle on the cover, and using Brown humorously as evidence that the Bolshevik revolution was having an effect on "heavenly affairs" as well as "earthly".[1] It's significant that Brown responded *at once* to the Russian Revolution; what he loved was its courage and simplicity and *truth*. He wasn't some bourgeois diplomat of the '50s or '60s from the Yemen or Africa or South America, deciding to knock, cap in hand, at the USSR's door instead of the USA's for a deal on fighter aircraft or missiles, draping themselves in the red flag whilst pursuing bourgeois-nationalist ends; Brown was a populist and a democrat and an internationalist; he abhorred violence and militarism and hierarchy; he was a social revolutionary. He quotes Jesus (*John* 8:38): "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (p. 20). For Brown, this meant welcoming Darwinian evolution as an explanation of natural history *and* Marxist class struggle as an explanation of human history — *complete scientific materialism*, with no spooks and no after life.

    The Russian Revolution of 1917 made Bishop Brown decide everything he'd been teaching and preaching for the previous half century was a pack of lies designed to keep his flock docile

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1   Leon Trotsky, "The Position of the Republic and the Tasks of Young Workers: Report to the 5th All-Russian Congress of the Communist League of Youth", *Molodaya Gvardiya*, Moscow, 1922.

while the feudal landlords and capitalist racketeers fleeced them for everything they'd got. Brown is the missing link between **William Blak**e and **Philip K. Dick**, and I love him; yet he's been completely wiped from historical map. I only found his book — the publishing history on the flyleaf claims *250,000 copies* were sold by 1932 —by chance, sorting through the library of my late father-in-law. A Marxist Bishop in 1920s America? This just doesn't fit what we are meant to know, does it?

There's something deeply wrong with official knowledge. It's shaped for the lordly overview: managerial, ministerial, mummified. What is required here — a training carried out every time a profesor marks an undergraduate's esay — is a *précis* prepared by an underling for a superior, not a statement of opinion by an equal. Less "as above … so below" than "info from below … *Diktat* from above". Hence those reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement* which spend most of their time "summarising the state of the field", leaving an account of the book itself to a final sentence. The definition of the educated person is the one who "knows" everything (at second hand), but has experience of nothing. Everything must be reduced to a convenient pill. Hence that repellent academic protocol, an "abstract" — or, in the case of a book, an introductory chapter — summarising what's about to be said. When working as an indexer, I always ignored these paragraphs. They're redundant when you can direct readers to a meatier section. But beyond that, these summaries are *redundant in the face of the world*! If you *can* summarise in fewer words, why go for the long haul, what is the point of blahing on and on? Oh yes, sorry, academics gain credit points for the very length of their books and bibliographies. Real writing, on the other hand, cannot be condensed or boiled down or *précis*ed, *every bit of it* is **necessary**. It pokes you in the eye, changes you. The academic racket makes a distinction between "primary texts" and "secondary literature": this is simply a charter of pedantry and irrelevance.Imagine a world made of nothing but *primary texts*. That is genuine **Communism**!

So what's going on at the *TLS*, then? It's journalism for those who believe formal education has granted them knowledge of everything in broad outline; so a review is meant to *close any gap* a new publication might open up … whereas *real writing* tears **great gaping holes** in educated complacency, showing that formal education — the passive absorption of truths coined by others — actually serves to screen out the weird actuality of the world. Bishop Brown, on the other hand, is *real writing* and he forces you to write for real, too. Here, all distinctions between literature and science, between primary text and secondary literature, are dissolved. This has nothing to do with "unlearning", "deschooling" or "antischooling"; Bishop Brown does not use the irrelevance of bourgeois education to working-class life as an argument for closing schools and burning books. He gives you the reason to read: discovering the Truth.

Who exactly was Bishop Brown? Over to Bill Mayr at *Kenyon Review*: "Some called him the Red Bishop, others the Bad Bishop, or even the Mad Bishop. But no-one called Episcopalian William Montgomery Brown a *boring* bishop"[2]. Brown was the first Anglican Bishop since the Reformation to be tried for heresy, fighting a celebrated battle against the American House of

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2   *Kenyon College Alumni Bulletin*, Volume 34 No 1, Fall 2011.

Bishops in 1924 and 1925. He used these trials to generate argument and texts, issuing a series of eight pamphlets with titles beginning *The Bankruptcy of Christian Supernaturalism from the Viewpoint of …* Starting with *from the Viewpoint of the Trial* he went on to deal with viewpoints of *Other Heretics in the Episcopal Church*; *of the World and the Church*; *of Science*; *of Philosophy*; *of Sociology*; *of the Bible*; and *of History*. This is someone organising all knowledge through a crisis in their own life, putting him on a level with Socrates drinking hemlock, Jesus on the cross and Philip K. Dick discussing the pink laser light which zapped him from outer space in *Valis*. Which is where we should **all** be, gentle readers: the crux of the biscuit is your *own* apostrophe, however small and insignificant it looks compared to the gaudy trumpetings of the money/war spectacle.

Unwilling to pursue the anti-communist vendetta of the Anglican Church, the Old Catholic Church of America, a network of unauthorised ecclesiastics, eventually accepted Brown as one of their own. Recognition by the Old Catholic Church meant that he had to be recognised by the Anglicans, even though they'd condemned him as a heretic. So he managed to retain his Bishopric until his death. Like Russell Brand today, he saw no reason to practise self-abstinence in order to take up the cause of the poor. Unlike Gandhi, he had a clear view of what imperialism and war led to: your personal death.

Brown's post-1917 reading of Darwin and Marx made him revise his previous commitment to racial segregation. Like Jimi Hendrix taking time to come out in opposition to the Vietnam War (out of loyalty to schoolfriends who'd enlisted), this is *real politics and thought* in painful development, not some ticker-tape Political Correctness which already knows the answer to every dilemma and spends its time giving cute reasons why everyone is wrong and nothing worth supporting. With *Communism and Christianism*, you've got politics and philosophy ready to stand next to volumes by William Blake, Josef Dietzgen or Philip K. Dick in your autodidact's library — or John Milton, or Martin Luther, or Karl Marx, or Raya Dunayevskaya — writing that induces a kind of psychosis as you realise everyone else (what Evil Dick & the Banned Members call "Oh Mediocracy" in a memorable track title) has been peddling *excuses for thought and politics* all your life. Bishop Brown's writing has the *conviction* and *trenchancy* which characterises great rock and soul records. Maybe that's why academic Marxists never mention him.

Check, for instance, this email sent me by Will Edmondes of the improv rock band Radioactive Sparrow:

> How did I find my way into Karl Marx's *Capital*? I was drawn to it because of a gig trip with Sonic Pleasure and T.H.F. Drenching to an ill-fated music festival in South Wales (this was 2001-ish). The conversation in the car had Drenching saying, "You should read *Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord". When I did, there were so many Marxist terms like "proletariat", "division of labour" and "surplus value" that I realised I had to take a step back to that source (I was already on this bent having just started reading the your *Frank Zappa: the Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*, which directed me to Marx's journalism of 1848 and a speech he made in

1856). I had no guidance, I'd not joined the Socialist Workers Party yet, so I got *Capital* and also bought *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, which Friedrich Engels wrote before he met Marx, and yet anticipates so many of the ideas they worked out together. I found it cheap in an Oxfam charity shop. Back then, being a musician, I wasn't used to reading anything "hard", so reading *Capital* started out requiring some effort in concentration, following threads. But once I got going, it simply blew everything wide open and apart. Like hearing Funkadelic much too late (having grown up in deeply backward Bridgend), I was angry at how much I'd been lied to, but ecstatic about the new clarity and transparency it shed on the world around me: the substantial unpicking of dodgy guesswork long sewn into my world picture; nuts and bolts revealed under an arc light.

This is just how Bishop Brown reads *Capital*. Not as something to become an "expert" on, but as something which explains how the modern world works. Right at the start, Bishop Brown raises the temperature — and makes an immediate connection to millions of Americans — by quoting the Bible (*Chronicles* 10:4) "**Thy father made our yoke grievous** …" (p. 19). This is politics, not as the trivial point-scoring we observe in Parliament or in newspapers, but as a direct address to our fundamental beliefs. And Brown quotes the Bible, not in order to impart an other-worldly message, but to show that people fight back. He is directly comparable to the recent encampment on Ballard's Lane in North Finchley in LOndob, where they displayed a banner proclaiming in massive red letters:

Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right of the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!

Isaiah 10:1-2

Bishop Brown explains the Bible's outbreaks of revolutionary discourse thus:

In every part of the universe and throughout all eternity, like causes ever have produced and ever shall produce like effect. If, therefore, the course of the Judean masters towards their slaves led to a successful revolt of ten out of twelve tribes, there is every reason for believing that the parallel course which the American masters are pursuing against their slaves will sooner or later issue in a revolution—a revolution which shall do away with both masters and slaves, leaving us with a classless America and a government concerned with the making of provisions for enabling all the people who are able and willing to work to supply themselves in abundance with the necessities of life and with the most desirable among the luxuries, rather than a government which provides that they who produce nothing shall have the cream and top milk of every necessity and the whole bottle of every

luxury, leaving of the necessities only the blue milk for the producers of them and of the luxuries, not even the dregs.

pp. 19-20

Bishop Brown's Marxism is unsullied and direct. It does not arrive from mastering the intricacies of revisionism and restoration which make "Marxism" a field only scholars dare enter. *Communism and Christianism* is a brilliant application of *Capital*, its subtleties intact, to the society of Brown's own time. No mention is made of the scurvy record of the Second International, when the German Social Democratic Party betrayed socialism by voting for war bonds ("our hands are tied"), and no mention is made of Lenin, who understood this betrayal, reread Hegel, made revolution, and stopped a war. In his own book inspired by *Capital*, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Lenin focused on milk production and processing to expose the iniquity of capitalism too:

> Capital possesses the latest improvements and methods not only of separating the cream from the milk, but also of separating the 'cream' from this 'diligence,' of separating the milk from the children of the peasant poor.[3]

Like Lenin, Brown pays attention to what matters — that children be fed, regardless of their parents' income — and does not lose himself in fetishism of a text. Despite his declaration that he'd wasted half his life on "lies", Brown was actually well-prepared for this task by previous immersion in Christian theology, where much is made of distinguishing Grace from Sacred Cows — and the Spirit from the Letter.

Bishop Brown's challenge to Anglican orthodoxy is blunt, and his stubborn adherence to this challenge throught his trial gives the word *Faith* — much abused by those invested with ecclesiastical power — a new and inspired meaning:

> Religion in general and Christianity in particular are nothing unless they are embodiments of morality, and morality does not consist in professions of belief in a God and his revelations as they are recorded in a Bible and condensed in a creed, but in a desire and effort to acquire a knowledge of the laws of nature in order that, by conformity to them, life may be made longer and happier.

pp.26-27

Brown insisted that he was no "heretic", since *no-one* in their right mind can believe everything in the Bible. Everyone takes these things, not literally, but as symbols for … what? For the

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3 Vladimir Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, 1899; Moscow: Progress, 1977, p. 271. Further on, Lenin shows how butter production widens the gap between rich and poor, pp. 285–6n.

happiness of the greatest number of humans, answers Brown, finding in Communism the true philosophy and practice presaged by Christianity.

The Blakean aspect of Brown is the conviction with which he pronounces his opinions. On the flyleaf of the book, his photo is accompanied by the description: *Episcopus in partibus Bolshevikium et Infidelium*. His sentences are authentic *addenda* to Blake's "Proverbs from Hell". But **no-one** expert in "English Literature" ever told me that, not even Allen Ginsberg.

> Wise people consider theories without losing too much, if any, sleep on their account, but they study conditions and lie awake nights over them.
>
> p. 35

Bishop Brown reveals that genuine enlightenment — what conspiracy heads, so despised by the "educated", call "being awake" — comes, not from adopting a partial identity according to the age/gender/race matrix of marketing research, but from realising we are in fact **Gods**. Over to Bishop William Montgomery Brown:

> My god, Nature (the triune divinity, matter-force-motion) the doings of which god are so many words of the only gospel upon which the salvation of the world is to any degree dependent, is an impersonal, unconscious, non-moral being.
>
> For me, this god, Nature, rises into personality, consciousness and morality in myself, and in no other does nature do this for me, though what is true of me is of course equally so of every representative of mankind.
>
> Jesus (either as an historical or dramatic personage, and it does not matter which he was) said, "I and my Father (god) are one," and in saying this he gave expression in one form to the most revolutionary and salutary of all truths. The other form of the same truth as taught by Darwin and Marx is: man has all the potentialities of his own life within himself. Every representative of the human race can and should say with Jesus, "I and my Father, God, are one."

> Stop, man! where dost thou run?
> Heav'n lies within thy heart,
> If thou seek'st God elsewhere
> Misled, in truth, though art.
>
> —Angelus Silensius

This truth constitutes the most ennobling and inspiring part of man's knowledge, and it was naturally discovered by him, not supernaturally revealed to him. It is the foundation of Marxian socialism or communism and the justification of optimism.

p. 115

Brown's Jesus, who teaches us we are all Gods, is William Blake's Jesus, an old Civil War heresy E.P. Thompson calls "Muggletonian" (this is perhaps why non-magic people are called "Muggles" in the Harry Potter series of children's books, though J.K. Rowling claims she called them "mugs" - *i.e.* dimwitted - but with a "-le" to make them more "cuddly"; whether Rowling knew it or not, her muggles are those without an education in symbolic capital, *i.e.* the working class). In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, started in 1789, the year of the French Revolution, Blake stated:

All deities reside in the human breast.

p. 11

This is also the conclusion of *Valis*, the central work of Philip K. Dick's final science fiction trilogy, which takes the "secret" beloved of Conspiracy Theory from *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* through to William Cowper's *Behold a Pale Horse* and "the Windsors are lizards" conspiracy websites today, and turns it upside down to reveal *us* as the Chosen People:

53. Our world is still secrety ruled by the hidden race descended from Ikhnaton, and his knowledge is the information of the Macro-Mind itself.

'All cattle rest upon their pasturage,
The tres and the plants flourish,
The birds flutter in their marshes,
Their wings uplifted in adoration to thee.
All the sheep dance upon their feet,
All winged things fly,
They live when thou hast shone upon them.'

From Ikhnaton this knowledge passed To Moses, and from Moses to Elijah, the Immortal Man, who became Christ. But underneath all the names there is only one Immortal Man; *and we are that man.*

pp. 270-271

Ikhnaton, or Amenhotep IV of the XVIII Dynatsy of Ancient Egypt, established monotheism under the guise of sun worship. Bishop Brown sees the Jesus of orthodox Christianity as nothing more than a disguised sun god, and uses early twentieth-century anthropology (the same anthropology used by T.S. Eliot in *The Wasteland*) to make his case. He aloso uses Giambattista

Vico's historical explanation of lesser Gods ("ghosts of dead men"). His polemic is written in the form of a letter to a fellow priest (the Rev. Arthur E. Watham D.D.):

> In the last analysis it is a disputation as to whether or not the Jewish-Christian bible contains an infallible revelation from an omniscient being, a triune god, Father, Son and Spirit. It does not.
>
> As an objectivity there is no such divinity. He is a subjectivity existing in the imagination of orthodox Christians. You do not agree with me in this, but every day of thought and study deepens the conviction that it is true. None among the gods of the supernaturalistic interpretations of religion are objectivities. The lesser ones are generally ghosts of dead men, and the greater ones are as generally versions of the sun-myth.
>
> The one god of the Jews and the triune god of the Christians, if taken seriously, are superstitions; and the bible revelations of their willings and records of their doings, if taken literally, are lies.
>
> Both the Old and New Testaments are utterly worthless as history. The twelve patriarchs of the Jewish God, Jehovah, are not historical personages, but myths, and this is true of the twelve apostles of the Christian God, Jesus.
>
> Yes, the Old Testament is the Jewish version of the immemorial and universal sun-myth, rewritten several times for the purpose, not of telling any truth, but of imposing the fiction that Jehovah and his people constitute the greatest procession that ever came down the pike of supernaturalism. The New Testament is the Christian version of the same myth, only with the view of showing that Jehovah and the Jews were not, but Jesus and Christians are, this procession.
>
> In itself, the sun-myth, as symbolism, is not only poetically beautiful, but also scientifically true; yet, as literalism, it is in the case of the ignorant, superstition, and in the case of the educated, self-deception.
>
> The sun is, in a very literal and real sense, the creator-god in whom this world lives, moves and has its being; and he is the saviour-god who was born of a virgin nebula, and every winter descends into hell and rises from the dead (the southern solstice) by a new birth and ascends into heaven to be seated at the right hand of the father (the sky) at the northern solstice, and finally he is the illuminator god who lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
>
> And the apostles who preached the gospel of the redemption of the world are the twelve signs of the zodiac through which the sun apparently passes in its annual ascension to the summer solstice and descension to the winter solstice.

Nor is this all: "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world" is the sign of the zodiac, Aries (sheep, ram) through which the sun passes towards the end of March, when all the saviour-gods annually died and rose again. The rising symbolizes the return of the sun towards the northern solstice from the southern one, upon which return seed-time and harvest are dependent, without which the world would perish, not indeed by sin but by starvation.

Jehovah is the sun-myth rewritten to fit in with the ideals and hopes of the owning, master class of the Jews.

Jesus is the sun-myth rewritten to fit in with the ideals and hopes of the owning master class of the Christians.

pp. 89-91

Bishop Brown is writing a text which actually *does* what academic "Althusserian" Marxism professes to do, but can't because it grasps neither the poetry of religion nor the cadences of convincing speech. Unlike such grey, compromised twaddle, Brown's text might actually convince a working class person to break with bourgeois ideology and become a Communist.

Read how Bishop Brown distributed his work:

This booklet, *Communism and Christianism*, is a contribution by Bishop and Mrs. Wm. M. Brown, of Galion, Ohio, towards the furtherance of these downward, upward and forward movements, the most fortunate events in the whole history of mankind. We hope that you will read, mark, learn and inwardly digest its extremely revolutionary, comprehensive and salutary teachings concerning both religion and politics, with the happy result of becoming an apostle of its *illuminating and inspiring interpretation* of the scientific gospel of Marx and Engels to — wage slaves! The only gospel which points the way to redemption from their body-and-soul-destroying slavery.

You may become a missionary of this gospel in your neighborhood, and as such do more good than all its orthodox preachers, teachers, editors and politicians together at no financial cost to yourself by ordering booklets at our special rates: six copies, $1.00; twenty-five copies, $3.00, prepaid, and selling them to workers at our retail price, 25 cents for one copy. As we make no profit and do no bookkeeping, cash should accompany all orders.

To organizations working for bail, defense, liberation or unemployment funds, Bishop and Mrs. Brown donate twenty-five copies for each twenty-five ordered with remittance.

Bishop Brown was writing between 1920 and 1937, and it's possible some of his habits of phrase will offend those who insist on Political Correctness. He uses "he" throughout and generalises about "man" rather than "people". But this shouldn't put you off. The liberal programme for human equality is based on the set of rules for exchanging commodities. It erases all our real qualities and specificities in favour of the abstract citizen/consumer. According to this measure, William Brown is a sexist. But he's not. He has a keen understanding of the bourgeois division of labour which hurls the domestic grind and child-caring into a non-historical pit. He derived this understanding from reading *Capital* and pondering the sources of bourgeois wealth.

> The average price of wage-labor is the minimum wage, *i. e.*, that quantum of the means of subsistence, which is absolutely requisite to keep the laborer in bare existence, as his labor merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence. We by no means intend to abolish this personal appropriation of the products of labor, an appropriation that is made for the maintenance and reproduction of human life, and that leaves no surplus wherewith to command the labor of others. All that we want to do away with is the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the laborer lives merely to increase capital, and is allowed to live only insofar as the interest of the ruling class requires it.

> In bourgeois society, living labor is but a means to increase accumulated labor. In Communist society, accumulated labor is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the laborer.

> In bourgeois society, therefore, the past dominates the present; in Communist society, the present dominates the past. In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality.

> And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois, abolition of individuality and freedom! And rightly so. The abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom is undoubtedly aimed at.

Brown follows *Capital* in understanding that capitalists must make allowance for the **reproduction** of life as well as its day-to-day maintenance. He's therefore free of the Stalinist bourgeoisification of Marx, which only scans "economic" statistics and talks about production in factories, and so cannot understand how housework and childcare relate to capitalism —as unpaid labour. His Marxism is so uncompromised it can accommodate Selma James and the demand for Wages For Housework.

Brown's attack on Christianity does not have the contempt for everyday life and everyday people which turns so-called "secular rationalists" into Islamophobes and war-mongers.

> Gods in the skies (Jesus, Jehovah, Allah, Buddha) are all right as subjective symbols of human potentialities and attributes and of natural laws, even as the Stars and

Stripes on a pole, Uncle Sam in the capitol and Santa Claus in a sleigh are all right as such symbols; but such gods are all wrong, if regarded as objective realities existing independently of those who created them as divinities and placed them in celestial habitations.

p. 81

This again corresponds to Giambattista Vico and his social explanations of myth and religion, and whose divine-heroic-human schema — as transmitted by August Comte[4] — helped to formulate Marx's distinction between feudalism, capitalism and socialism. Adhering to what *Capital* has taught him — rather than listening to career politicians using Marx for their own purposes — means that Brown can even envisage animal rights.

The universe is self-existing, self-sustaining and self-governing, having all the potentialities of its own life within itself, and what is true of it in general is equally so of all the phenomena which enter into its constitution, including man; who, though he is the highest among them, is only a phenomenon, on a level with all the rest, not excepting the lowest. A microbe and a man are on the same footing, both as to their origin and destiny, and as to their having within themselves all power which is available for making the most of their respective lives. (p.62)

Brown's thorough-going materialism results in an observation George Clinton could be proud of.

In truth the body produces the soul, not the soul the body. (p. 64)

Here Bishop Brown flatly contradicts Plato in *The Phaedo*, where Socrates is driven into a rage by the proposal that the soul might emerge from the well-tuned body like harmony from a harp. He flatly contradicts the idealism St Paul took from Plato and injected into the New Testament. He flatly contradicts the idealism which Ferdinand de Saussure injected into linguistics and, under the name of structuralism and its posts, became the ticket for entry into the academic humanities. Bishop Brown flatly contradicts the entire works of Slavoy Zizek.

   Like William Blake, Bishop Brown is able to imagine our lives as historical battlefields, our psyches as strafed by the conflicts of the age. Gone is the boring pseudoscientific "objectivity" academic disciplines use to shore up their authority. He uses Auguste Comte to explain how individual humans go through three stages, reproducing the epochs of human history. As children, we believe in magic, corresponding to the Age of Religion. As adolescents, we are

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4   My editors have pointed out that this account flies in the face of the received knowledge, which would cast Vico as poetry, Comte as positivism and Marx as problematic. All to the good. Here, Brown's observation has some of the force of Walter Benjamin when pointing out that "historical materialism" is actually a puppet worked by theology ("Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940).

bewitched by concepts and theories, corresponding to the Age of Representational Politics, which is what we are living through today. In our maturity, we start to be interested in the actual world and its workings. For Bishop Brown, this corresponds to Revolutionary Socialism, which takes onboard the scientific discoveries of Charles Darwin and Karl Marx, and seeks to apply their insights to a radical reordering of society.

Today, broadsheet commonsense (the "educated" middle-class view) relegates socialism to adolescence, an idealist bubble which must burst on the rocks of hard fact. Bishop Brown will have none of that, and instead interprets capitalist chaos and atrocity as the growing pains of unenlightened humanity. Here is his sketch of world history, incorporating much from Marx, but rephrased into assertions as lucid and penetrating as any Sermon from the Mount.

> Comte, who preceded Marx as a social philosopher, and who is the founder of modern socialism of the reformatory type, as Marx is of the revolutionary one, had this to say about the theologians, metaphysicians and scientists, and he was right:

> From the study of the development of human intelligence, in all directions, and through all times, the discovery arises of a great fundamental law, to which it is necessarily subject, and which has a solid foundation of proof, both in the facts of our organization and in our historical experience. This law is this: that each of our leading conceptions—each branch of our knowledge—passes successively through three different theoretical conditions: the theological, or fictitious; the metaphysical, or abstract; and the scientific, or positive. In other words, the human mind, by its nature, employs in its progress three methods of philosophizing, the character of which is essentially different and radically opposed: viz., the theological method, the metaphysical and the positive. Hence arise three philosophies, or general systems of conceptions on the aggregate of phenomena, each of which excludes the others. The first is the necessary point of departure of the human understanding; the third is its fixed and definite state. The second is merely a state of transition.

> In order for a man who has reached the scientific stage in his intellectual development to make anything out of the reasonings of those who are still in the stage of theological childhood or in that of metaphysical adolescence, it is necessary for him to use their insubstantialities as symbols of his substantialities.

> The only difference that I can see between a theologian and a metaphysician is that, whereas the former personifies a generality which is the creation of his imagination, calling it a god, the latter objectifies a particularity which is the creation of his imagination calling it an entity; but all such personifications and objectifications (gods, things-in-themselves, vital entities, souls) are alike fictitious, because the childish theologians and metaphysicians proceed on the basis of philosophically

assumed realities, not on scientifically established facts which pave the way on which an adult proceeds.

Comte analyzes the difference between the intellectuality of theological children, metaphysical youths and scientific adults as follows:

In the theological state, the human mind, seeking the essential nature of beings, the first and final causes (the origin and purpose) of all effects—in short, absolute knowledge—supposes all phenomena to be produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings.

In the metaphysical state, which is only a modification of the first, the mind supposes, instead of supernatural beings, abstract forces, veritable entities (that is, personified abstractions) inherent in all beings, and capable of producing all phenomena. What is called the explanation of phenomena is, in this stage, a mere reference of each to its proper entity.

In the final, the positive state, the mind has given over the vain search after absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the causes of phenomena, and applies itself to the study of their laws—that is, their invariable relations of succession and resemblance. Reasoning and observation, duly combined, are the means of this knowledge. What is now understood when we speak of an explanation of facts is simply the establishment of a connection between single phenomena and some general facts the number of which continually diminishes with the progress of science.

There is no science which, having attained the positive stage, does not bear the marks of having passed through the others. Some time since it was (whatever it might be now) composed, as we can now perceive, of metaphysical abstractions: and, further back in the course of time, it took its form from theological conceptions. Our most advanced sciences still bear very evident marks of the two earlier periods through which they passed.

The progress of the individual mind is not only an illustration, but an indirect evidence of that of the general mind. The point of departure of the individual and the race being the same, the phases of the mind of men correspond to the epochs of the mind of the race. How each of us is aware, if he looks back upon his own history, that he was a theologian in his childhood, a metaphysician in his youth and a natural philosopher in his manhood. All men who are up to their age can verify this for themselves.

pp. 94-96

Brown explains that your quarrel with someone else may not spring from mere "error" on one particular side, but from different life needs of different individuals at one moment. He conveys something which is not fashionable any more, now that — following the success of Punk and Brit Art — shock and eccentricity have become the hallmarks of the "celebrity" (or commodified) thinker. But it's something we all desperately need: **wisdom**.

> No man can live the moral part of his psychical (soul) life on the truth of another any more than he can live his physical (body) life on the meals of another. Every one must have his own truths, even as he must have his own meals.

> pp. 46-47

> Theories come and go. Conditions remain and work.

> p. 31

> The universe works, whether or not you understand it.

> Frank Zappa, note on first CD-reissue of *One Size Fits All*.

And, in conclusion, let's allow Bishop Brown to say again the abiding twist his reading of Darwin and Marx effected on Christian theology:

> Through the whole of my past ministry in the field I rang out these great truths and rang a great lie in by representing that the salvation of the world depends upon a potentiality which is in the sky and not in man, that heaven is above the earth and hell below it, not on it.

> When I commenced my present ministry in the study,

> > I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
> > Some letter of that After-life to spell;
> > And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
> > And answer'd 'I Myself am Heaven and Hell!'

> Omar, the poetic astronomer, might have added a stanza which would have closed. "I myself am God." This is, in effect, what Jesus did say: "I and my Father are one." This is as true of you and me and of every man, woman and child as it was of Jesus.

Listen, children, THESE are the **slogans of hell** written on the walls of our miserable contemporary existence. THIS is how to organise, make religions awake around us, talk to anyone we see! Wake up, Jim Sherbert, drifting from afternoon TV into antique curse-measures derived from unemployment guilt! Wake up Cliff Montgomery (whoever he is) drinking supermarket whiskey in a bedsit in Croydon! Wake up Kitty Rees in Wakefield, Ann Thoday in

Matlock, Norman Doughty in Leeds! Wake up Bill Drummond and Adrian Sherwood from your bourgeois coffee-table slumbers! The crisis needs you, and by saying so, I respect your lengthy back-story strenuities, but I'm also angry, scornful of your contemporary pastoral silence and absentitude. Wake up Sharon Borthwick applying lemon mousse to your armpits in Peckham!

… Actually I'm running away with myself here. Sharon Borthwick and her FaceBook tirades does not need waking up, she just needs millions of imitators, except no-one is able to imitate anyone, or reiterate, or "fully concur with what the previous comrade just said", for *everyone is unique*, everyone of us a self-defining god, but then so is every pea in its pod, and every chilli hung on a line to turn from green to sickly orange and then crimson red, and every star in the sky, and every microbe in the gap between your teeth …

   Bishop Brown's *Communism and Christianism* may be found on http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30758/30758-h/30758-h.htm

Antti Eskelinen - Eze

Two Seconds Before Midnight

(detail)
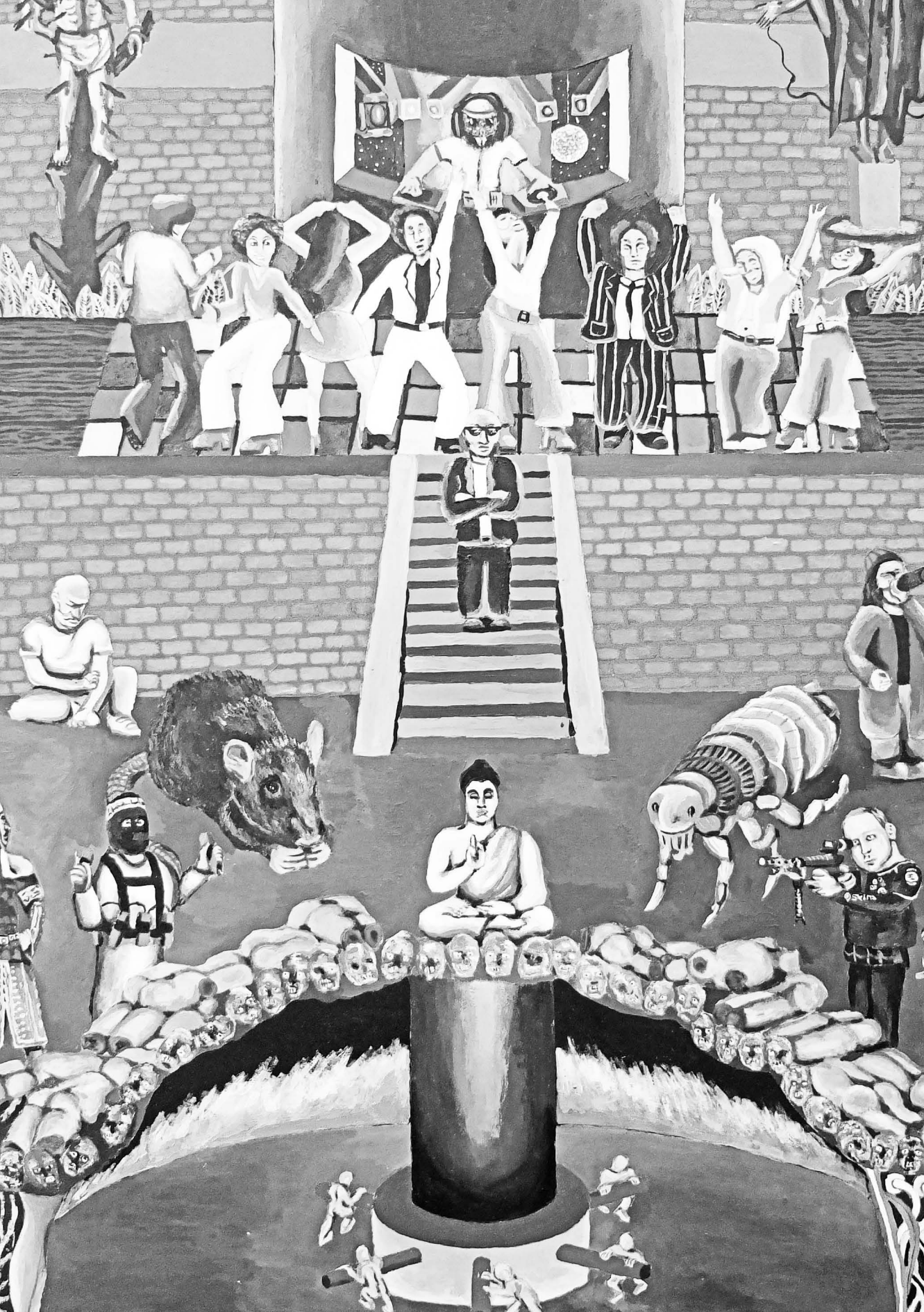
Max Rynnanen

Theory as Noise

1964/1967/1968

Ultimate noise is <u>silence</u>, claimed the young loudmouth Timothy Leary in his *Psychedelic Experience*. The book was published 1964, way before the mainstream hippie wave adopted Buddhism, repackaged it, and made it a quintessential ingredient for the trashy popular culture of the late 1960s.

Still, *Psychedelic Experience* already marks the end of Leary's academic career. During the making of the book he and his tribe – including Richard Alpert who then changed his name to Baba Ram Dass – were kicked out from Harvard. The scholarly revolution of psychology was transferred into a revolt of the outlaws. A laboratory was set up in Zihautanejo Mexico.

Psychedelic Experience itself is, to paraphrase Leary, silent only as ultimate noise. There is such an overflow of excess of structures and boundaries that it, in the end, produces a form of silence of endless noise – and one just has to let go, one just has to float with the strong, enormous stream of thought.

The book could be called a crossover, but that would be misleading. The upbeat mixing of experiential peaks from arts, sciences and religious texts, spiced up with quotes from the *Bardo Thodol* (The Tibetan Book of the Dead), hammer down all imaginable conventions of producing knowledge, writing about experience and theorizing about man and his/her culture.

Maybe following its wild nature the book was never destroyed by popular cultural history or normative scholarly readings that would have taken away its edgy aura. Never have I seen an academic hipster raise his/her voice in a seminar, and saying, "but in Timothy Leary's...". That would be a career disaster. Leary is *out*.

Maybe Leary understood that it was not enough to blow up a track leading theoretically to new unforeseen territories of thinking. It was as important to write the book in a way that could *not* be digested into the mass-impotence of academic philosophical scholarship.

The book is a pamphlet, a manifesto. It celebrates ecstatic experiences. Manifestos are often misleadingly explained to be expressions and proclamations of a vision. But Leary was interested in anything that forced the mind out from the box and the box out of the mind, experiences that pushed the mindset on the move. These experiences could, according to Leary, reprogram our personality and psychic machinery in depth. And the book was not just about expressing the vision, but to distribute the <u>virus</u>.

LSD is, of course, following its sensational value for the alcohol consumers of the white middle class, the most famous example of Leary's methods of ecstasy, of climbing out of 'the static' (stasis), but Leary's work was never just about drugs. In *Psychedelic Experience* he discusses experiences of art and meditation.

The aim of the book is to force the reader onto the move, feeding movement, change, reprogramming (of the mind) and, in the end, working for a revolution of the personality, revolution of the society, and so, who knows, maybe even a revolution on a cosmic level – whatever that means (they are already collecting a group to leave this earth for Mars).

Psychedelic Experience is not just a trip-advisor and a manifesto. It is in itself a psychedelic agent. And it is a theoretical attempt to re-tune the instrument called human being.

Theory and practice worked hand-in-hand. After moving back to New York, Leary sent his missionaries around the world, carrying suitcases loaded with acid. Arriving to London one of the missionaries tried to make his way to the upper circles, so that the effects of the change would be felt in all parts of the society (this is somehow opposite to Marx's idea of the intellectual (himself) from the upper class descending down to free the minds of the workers).

Revolution is the reason why Leary had to write it all out <u>loud</u>. He is not poetic in the sense pointing to enjoyable text (jouissance). He is intense, febrile and surprising. The reader can forget analysis and stale contemplation, and s/he can forget infotainment. *Psychedelic Experience* is about pushing, really <u>pushing</u> thinking to the other side – taking us out from the Matrix – and not about showing 'how this is possible', or grounding it e-pis-te-mo-lo-gi-ca-lly.

I felt the kick when I found a dusty copy of the book in an antiquarian bookshop in the mid-90s. The text you are now reading is just one of its countless echoes / flashbacks.

1848/1994

Path-breakers have always searched for new ways of writing. This has not only been about seducing readers to adopt the stance of the author. Nor has it been just about making a difference. It is neither about doing something new (art is nearly never about this, but art historians seem to be stuck on this perspective).

Here is the key to understand our phenomenon: How can one break norms and expectations if one uncritically and without practical reflection / experimentation just works in the formal framework created side by side with them?

This is, I suppose, why Karl Marx marinated the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) with poetic cacophony. I say marinated, and not spiced up, because we are here not just talking about a finishing touch, but the essential nature of the text. The *Communist Manifesto* was not argumentative, nor really essayistic. It was a heatwave from brain to brain, a theoretical spark for the masses to raise flames, and a trip advisor – like Leary's book – for societal change.

The masses were – in Marx's mind – waiting for someone showing the way. Well, here he was wrong. The position of the proletarian class was easy to understand from the inside without a middle class man walking in and explaining it. (This has been shown by Jacques Ranciere and

his studies of the letters of 19th century workers.) The masses just needed fuel – and sparks. And they got it!

Poor Marx was, though, really lost. If the proletariat was truly laden with revolutionary knowledge about the injustices of the politico-economical system (master / slave) and so potentials for change, why did they need the middle class philosopher to come to help them? Marx was even so lost that he often sadly tried to play the role of a scholar, spicing up his text with argumentation and reasoning, to become heard not just 'down in the drain', but in the upper class world where he roamed. Sometimes his writings are just academic hoax. Simple topics become pseudo-science, explanations on explanations and a lot of footnotes.

The only wise thing Marx really did was to write some of his texts out <u>loud</u>. This breaking of patterns, hot and raunchy revolting, sent a virus out to the world enslaved by capitalists, not the man's B-class argumentation.

The same reason pushed bell hooks – who has been witty enough to even write her name without capital letters, so making a visible difference – to work out her *Outlaw Culture* (1994) in 'street talk'.

Some of Pasolini's (Petrolio) and Foucault's heretic writings, Derrida the trickster (as Michael Taussig calls him, recalling the role of the trickster in mythology) and Helene Cixous's forever expanding textual yin-dough are about the same urge to *do things* with the text.

Marx is often quoted saying that the role of philosophy is to change the world, but the true news is that it happens in his work only through noisy writing, a form of writing that breaks new paths and reforms thinking, and not at all through his scholastic system building, which fitted the visual, philosophical and psychological order of the world that was (and still stays) detached from the infra-structure. Sometimes Marx might have been inspirational with his thinking about e.g. commodity fetishism, but to be honest, in them you find nothing to build on, if you don't happen to be just interested in theory. But his (poetic) noise…

Noise has to be witty, intellectual and bright, and it cannot be elevated with the help of a 'ground' – as there cannot be any real ground for thinking (as Nietzsche taught us). As morals do not have a foundation (outside of culture), the same applies to Marxism.

This is why we have to stand out from the witch-circle of writing as philosophical surgery, and to put the cold knife away.

1968/2015

It is always a mistake to read classics as 'classics'. Reading Deleuze one should note that his text "shits and fucks" (first page in *Anti-Oedipus*). Like historical avant-garde (dada, surrealism, constructivism, futurism), path-breakers of philosophical thinking have later on become

institutionalized in a way that lead us astray from their potentials. In an endless row of thinkers in the academic hall of fame Deleuze is a rational being, far from the animal, the machine and the revolutionary he was, from the mistakes he made, and from the revolution-fueling strength his texts are laden with. What once was an outcry of perennial philosophy written in the modern era is now a piece of a puzzle called the history of philosophy, where one can label anyone in connection to other classics, e.g. being for or against Kant's view, following Hegel, distancing himself from Heidegger. (The destiny of a classic of philosophy is not much better than the destiny of a painting that in the end hangs on the wall in Louvre, with no connection to its original flourishing context, but with labels telling you the century and the place where the painting was done.)

Michel Foucault's and Peter Sloterdijk's texts are more than theoretical analyses. They are booming a change, beginning with the explosion of the mindsets of the readers.

The Academic is not even a work the so called classic could refer to as his/her identity. Kierkegaard called himself a Fireman. Adorno took up the role of an exaggerating essayist, a Writer so to speak, to wake people up. The boundary-breaking French rude and rogue wave of 20th Century thinking (Bataille, Blanchot, etc.) broke totally out to the literary sphere, at the same time as the thinkers of this loser community became Publishers, giving out their own journals and books.

And philosophical noise is a way old and very rich tradition.

Ear-splitting was the scream of Jesus when he destroyed the tables at the kitsch market in Jerusalem and bombastic was the collective that raised the roof in Wittenberg. Cocky was the poetic strength of Rabelais, Villon, Rimbaud, Wilde and Ginsberg – and likewise, disturbing was the life work of Socrates, Diogenes, Diotima, Seneca, Hypatia, itchy freaks like Descartes and Bataille, and the rogue raging crescendos of Virilio, the psycho-tripping of Kristeva (on Giotto or pregnancy) and Mario Perniola, who's post-situationist chaos opens unforeseen windows to new realities.

Where would we be without theoretical, philosophical and sociological outcries, noise and its echoes, the screamers, the shouters – and the ballbreakers? (And shouting is not enough. It needs to be glued to a philosophical strain of thought, to not just be populist or black-and-white, and this is the true challenge for philosophy).

In a world where a collective sordino weakens all true political talk – in today's Finland the media has the guts to publicly call even hardcore Nazis and racists just 'critics of immigration' (not forgetting that one can be the latter without the former) – we need to raise the roof and to study theory as noise, maybe more than ever. It is not enough to analyze the lies of the extreme right wing, and to be honest I am not sure how far you get with that – as the extreme right is as little dependent on argumentation as the left. (Experiences divide in politics more than systematic thinking.) Where are the Marxs of our time when the ghost of fascism roams again in Europe? Where are the authors and writers of philosophical inquiry who would not just show

the way, but who would warm it up, and estrange it, so that we could see better, and not just see, but do the right thing?

Gert Raeithel

Karl Marx, Maledictor

In Karl Marx's early years, his mother was an angel to him, a great, magnificent woman. Later, after he unsuccessfully tried to extract some more and more money from her, he disrespectfully referred to her as the "old woman" (*die Alte, meine Alte*, 40)[1], called her "impertinent" (*impertinent*, 39), and cast a cold eye on her for the rest of her days. He had few relatives he really appreciated. A future son-in-law was put down by him as a "damn rascal" (*verdammter Schlingel*, 408) whom he would rather hit on his "creole skull" (*Kreolenschädel*, 408). To get at the money of one of his wife's uncles, he hoped the "old dog" (*der alte Hund*, 51) would die soon. Richard Friedenthal, in his biography, leaves no doubt that Marx's predilection for name-calling and other varieties of verbal aggression remained a characteristic feature throughout his life. His aggression was directed outward (against others) most of the time, with a few exceptions. Of his own doctorate he spoke as a "trifle" or "rag" (*Lumperei*, 115), and before completing the first volume of *Das Kapital*, he looked forward to the day when "the whole economic shit" (*die ganze ökonomische Scheiße, 418)* would be behind him.

Looking back to his high school days in Trier, Marx recalled his classmates as "hayseeds, clodhoppers, peasants" (*Bauernlümmel*, 33). He conceived Bonn, where he studies, as a "philistines' hick town" (*Philisternest*, 64), a philistine being unimaginative, materialistic, smug, ignorant, insensitive square not able to look beyond his own narrow horizon and unappreciative of art and culture. Marx retained the use of philistines in later life to characterize people he disliked. After his transfer to the University of Berlin, he started to write polemic poems against Hegel, and his aggressiveness did not abate after he had found his first job as editor of *Rheinische Zeitung* in Cologne. "I'll destroy you" (*Dich vernichte ich*, 157), he told his deputy there, Karl Heinzen; and later, in Brussels, he denounced one of Heinzen's writings as an "avalanche of crap" (*Drecklawine*, 299).

The general atmosphere among political refugees in London must have been one of mutual aggressiveness. *Sie schimpften unmäßig*, ("They bitched excessively") Friedenthal writes laconically (378). Marx classified his fellow-sufferers as the "trash of nations" (*Völkerkehricht, 378),* "goddamn filthy emigrants" *(Emigrantenschweine*, 378; lit. ';emigrant pigs') or simply "guano" (*Guano*, 378). Expecting Engels, he did not spare people who admired and helped him. He referred to his readers at home as "German dogs" (*deutsche Hunde*, 457); party members and followers were alternately called "asses" (*Esel*, 451), "beasts" (*Viecher*, 451), "bums" (*Lumpen*, 384), "louts" (*Knoten*, 450) or "oxen" (*Ochsen*, 451). Marx was more intolerant of, and aggressive toward, colleagues and competitors if they were Jewish, Friedenthal says (228). Ideologically he saw in Judaism and Jewish business the capitalistic arch foe. Personally, though of Jewish ancestry himself, he detested the looks of Jewish people. The Ludmilla Assing, a niece of Varnhagen, he ascribed an "ugly Jewish physiognomy" (*häßliche jüdische Physiognomie*, 465), and he was almost constantly after Lassalle with sharp sticks (see below). About Joseph Moses Levy, the publisher of the *Daily Telegraph*, he said, "Mother Nature has inscribed, with the wildest black letters, his family tree in the middle of his face." (Quoted in *Harper's Magazine*, July 1982, p. 68). With

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1   Richard Friedenthal, Karl Marx. Sein Leben und seine Zeit (Munich: Piper, 1981), 651 pages. The numbers following the German terms refer to page numbers in this work.

Engels he exchanged "humorous" anti-Semitic slurs about Moses Hess, a co-founder of the *Rheinische Zeitung*.

The following is a list of some of his favorite targets:

- Edgar Bauer (socialist editor): "the clown" (*der Clown*, 449).

- Karl Blind (emigrant in London): a "hydrocephalic crab louse" (*wasserköpfige Filzlaus*, 488).

- Karl Philipp Fischer (Deist writer): "farting Fischer" (*Fischer* vapulans, 94).

- Hegelians: "donkey's beneath a lion's skin" (*Esel unter der Lovwenhaut*, 111), "dwarfs standing on the behind of the giant" (*Liliputaner [die] auf dem Hintern eines Riesen stehen*, 111), and "philosophers of hair, nails, toes, and excrement" (*Haar-*, *Nagel-*, *Zehen-*, *Exkrementenphilosophen*, 111).

- Gustav Hugo (Professor in Götingen): "old roué" (*alter Roué*, 159).

- Ferdinand Lassalle (German socialist): "Baron Itzig" (*Baron Itzig*, 452; *Itzig* is a "typically" Jewish name), "Ephraim Smart" (*Ephraim Gescheit*, 432), and "kinky-haired Nigger-Jew" (*kraushaariger Nigger-Jude*, 432).

- Karl Liebknecht (German socialist): "scarecrow" (*Vogelscheuche*, 448), "cattle, stupid ox" (*Rindvieh*, 524), "fool" (*Dummkopf*, 524), "little known-it-all" (*kleiner Klugschisser*, 524; lit. 'smart-shitter'), and "clod" (*Tölpel*, 524).

- Mathilde (Heine's companion): "cheap, vulgar broad" (*saumensch*, 214).

- Plutarch: "dumb, narrow-minded village teacher" (*dummer Dorfschulmesiter*, 109).

- Proudhon: "simple ignoramus" (*schlichter Hohlkopf*, 185; lit. 'hollow-head'), and "prattler, blabberer" (*Schwätzer*, 185).

- Max Stirner (German philosopher): "Berlin wheat-beer philistine" (*Berliner Weißbierphilister*, 278), i.e., a philistine sitting behind his wheat beer and making pedestrian comments while the world goes by.

While writing *Deutsche Ideologie*, Marx and Engels compared Stirner several hundred times to Sancho Panza (277). Marx could lose himself in unbridled polemics and enjoyed himself immensely inventing ever-new maledicta. Among his motives may have been impatience with lesser minds, jealousy of rivals, economic pressure, and – when it comes to anti-Semitism –

self-hatred. Friedenthal refrains from going into the motive structure. To him, biography is biography and psychobiography is an aberration.

Note by Reinhold Aman

The Reverend Richard Wurmbrand, who was interned in Communist concentration camps, published *Was Karl Marx a Satanist?* (Diane Books, 1978), in which he also mentions the nasty and foul language of Marx, pp. 31-33:

He [Marx] always lusted after inheritances. While an uncle of his was in agony, he wrote: "If the dog dies, I would be out of mischief," to which Engels answered, "I congratulate myself for the sickness of the hinderer of an inheritance, and I hope that the catastrophe will happen now."

Then "the dog" died. Marx writes, on March 8, 1855, "A veryt happy event. Yesterday we were told about the death of the 90-year-old uncle of my wife …"

Marx was an intellectual of high caliber. So was Engels. But their correspondence is full of obscenities, unusual in this class of society.

Marx spoke about "the stupid German people." "Germans, Chinese, and Jews have to be compared with peddlers and small merchants." He considered the Russians as sub-human. "The Slavic peoples are 'ethnic outfall' [i.e. "dregs, scum, riffraff, refuse"]."

Aeron Bergman & Alejandra Salinas

Hustle Harder:

Art in Colonial Detroit

Detroit is full of noisy hustle. We aren't referring to jammed freeways, smoking factories, packed rock n roll bars or fire engines rushing to put out house fires.

In an earnest effort toward demystification, we present:

Part 1. The Statistics

It is useful to compare the state of Michigan with the country of Sweden, for reasons that will unfold (Detroit is the largest city in Michigan). Beware: this does not infer that Sweden is superior: the actions of the 2006-2014 government demonstrates clearly that something is rotten also in Sweden. However, in the noise of general opinion, Sweden is not considered a poor country, while Detroit is considered impoverished, in decline, etc., and, Sweden has not yet produced a Detroit.

First, general statistics on population and GDP help us see that the parallel is not so far fetched as it first sounds. (All sums in USD$)

> Population of Michigan: 9.9 million
> Population of Sweden: 9.7 million
> GDP of Michigan: $449 billion
> GDP of Sweden: $454 billion
>
> Per capita income of Sweden: $58,472
> Per capita income of Michigan: $25,547
> Number of Global 500 companies based in Sweden: 3
> Number of Fortune 500 companies based in Michigan: 20

Based on the above numbers from 2014 we see that Michigan has similar population and produces nearly as much wealth as Sweden, has more Fortune ranked corporations, but the average citizen in Michigan gets half as much income as their counterparts in Sweden. However, if we look at comparisons between cities in Michigan we see that there are clear winners and losers within the same system:

> Per capita income of Detroit, Michigan in 2013: $14,870
> Per capita income of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, (a wealthy suburb) in 2013: $90,995

Let's also have a look at what kind of taxes are collected in each place to see how public wealth is managed.

> Michigan Tax Collections in 2012: $23,968,760,000
> Sweden Tax Collections in 2012: $201,122,000,000

Ah ha! The state of Michigan collects a tiny fraction of the amount that Sweden collects in taxes. This is consistent with the "Scandinavian welfare state" model that we have all heard something about. Where does all that cash go in Michigan if it is not collected in taxes?

Michigan, number of billionaires in 2013: 11
Sweden, number of billionaires in 2013: 14

The number of billionaires is similar in each country, but Sweden takes the lead. So where is the money trail?

Metro Detroit, number of millionaires in 2011: 90,100
Michigan, number of millionaires in 2012: 169,991
Sweden, number of millionaires in 2009: 48,300

Now we see the money: the Metro Detroit urban area has the 10th highest concentration of millionaires in the United States, even above the famously wealthy Silicon Valley. In Michigan there is a vast amount of wealth concentrated in the hands of 169k millionaires. The annual difference in tax collection between Sweden and Michigan -- that's $177,153,240,000 -- funnels through the system into the hands of a fraction of the population. Who are these millionaires? Well, they are mostly white, the 2010 census reported a 70.1% white population in the metropolitan area of Detroit, and these numbers:

Michigan percent White, 2013: 80.1%
Michigan percent Black, 2013: 14.3%
Detroit percent Black, 2010: 82.7%
Detroit percent White, 2010: 10.6%

Tax potential that went towards wealth equality and public institutions in Sweden go instead to corporations and the richest individuals in Michigan. Let's repeat that so it sinks in: in Michigan, a staggering $177.1 billion every year is funneled towards a tiny population of millionaires and billionaires that otherwise could fix every human problem except love and immortality.

Next, let's have a look at where public tax revenue goes.

1. Amount of Michigan State General Fund spending on k-12 education in 2013: $312 million
2. Amount of Michigan State General Fund spending on higher education (university) in 2013: $1.350 billion
3. Amount of Michigan State General Fund spending on "corrections" (prisons) in 2013: $2.03 billion

Yes, more money is spent on imprisoning citizens than on educating citizens in Michigan. Compare this with Sweden:

PROTECTION OF
CIVIL RIGHTS

1. Annual budget for Swedish public education in 2013: $33.09 billion
2. Annual budget on "corrections" (prisons) in Sweden: $935,480 million
3. Prison population in Sweden, 2014: 4,500
4. Prison population in Michigan, 2015: 50,200

(Sources: Statistiska centralbyrån, Kriminalvården, US Census Bureau, and Nobel Prize website.)

Sweden spends $31 billion more per year than Michigan on education. Furthermore, Michigan more over 1 billion more than Sweden, per year, in prisons. We also notice that Sweden spends 621 euros per day (or around $695) on each inmate, and Michigan only $93.65 per inmate, per day. Where is the rest of the $2.03 billion a year Michigan prison budget going to if not for rehabilitation and living standards for prisoners? Success or failure of each system is suggested by this statistic:

1. Murder rate in Sweden: 2 reported incidents per 100,000 inhabitants, 2014
2. Murder rate in Michigan: 6.4 reported incidents per 100,000 inhabitants, 2013
3. Murder rate in Detroit: 45 reported incidents per 100,000 inhabitants, 2014

The failure of Michigan "corrections" is made even more obvious when we consider that in Sweden suicide and accidental deaths are counted in with murder reports, according to the FBI, and thus the actual violent murder rate is far lower than what is reported.

(Sources: FBI, https://www.bra.se)

The following statistics show more priorities:

1.Percentage of private k-12 "charter schools" operating in Michigan 80%.
2. Cost for Michigan residents to attend premier public University of Michigan, per year: $13,977
3. Cost for Swedish citizens to attend premier public Uppsala University, per year: $0

Education in the United States is big business, another millionaire-generator at the expense of millions of people who must be heavily indebted to pay for even the local public education. In addition to the extreme differences in public and private education, there are also extreme differences in the resources available to different schools in Michigan.

1. Detroit Public Schools annual budget for 2013-2014: $725,557,870
2. Detroit Public Schools pupil population: 65,971 ($10,998 per pupil)
3. Grosse Pointe Public Schools annual budget for 2013-2014: $109,790,237
4. Grosse Pointe Public Schools pupil population: 8,153 ($13,466 per pupil)
5. Cost to attend Grosse Pointe Academy private school: $18,910 annual tuition

FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION

6. Motto for Grosse Pointe Academy private school: "The advantage lasts a lifetime."

7. Cranbrook Schools (private) annual budget: "over" $36 million

8. Cranbrook Schools (private) pupil population: 1659 ($21,000 per pupil minimum declared, not including the already superior infrastructure of the institution.)

What about the results of education? This is impossible to quantify of course, but let's just go with the Nobel Prize since it seems to be taken seriously. The number is close, but Sweden wins again.

1. Number of Nobel Prize winners associated with Michigan: 22

2. Number of Nobel Prize winners associated with Sweden: 30

(Sources: Detroit Public Schools, Grosse Pointe Academy, Cranbrook Schools public websites, SVD, Nobel Institute.)

The other extreme area where wealth is systematically funneled away from the average citizen of Michigan into the pockets of 169,991 millionaires is of course the profit area called "health care".

1. Amount spent by the State of Michigan on healthcare: $13.9 billion

2. Amount spent by Sweden on healthcare: $7.01 billion

3. Amount spent by average U.S. citizen on healthcare per year, not including monthly insurance premiums: $8,233

4. Amount spent by average Swedish citizen on healthcare per year total: $3,758

5. Average life expectancy of a Swedish citizen: 81.89 years

6. Average life expectancy of a Michigan citizen: 78.2 years

7. Average life expectancy of white Michigan citizen: 79.0 years

8. Average life expectancy of black Michigan citizen: 73.4 years

What we see here is that Sweden spends almost half the amount on health care as Michigan, and gets better measurable results. Even if we adjust for whiteness, the average white Michigan citizen dies nearly 3 years before their Swedish counterparts.

Thus, what we see in the comparison between the two places is the clear priority of the ruling policies of the United States: elite resource corralling, at the expense of every pretense of producing a civilized society for all. It is especially at the expense of Black Americans who disproportionately suffer, primarily, it would appear, because the population is easy to single out for resource extraction. This does not mean only Blacks suffer, in Michigan 16.8% of the entire population lives below the federal poverty line, that is 1.6 million people of all colors and backgrounds.

HUMAN RIGHTS

(Sources: Kaiser Family Foundation. http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-of-general-fund-spending/, FBI, Statistiska centralbyrån, Kriminalvården, OECD Health Data 2012, US Census Bureau, and Measure of America.)

In addition to "education" and "health care" what other sorts of models are in place to systematize the funneling of wealth in Michigan? Well, there is the tax structure, first of all: Michigan collects most taxes by locally levied and locally spent property tax, preventing distribution of funds between cities. Also, Detroit is home of companies that make a sport out of the vile maxim. For example, DTE Energy, the local investor-owned electric utility company, paid no taxes during 2008-2009, although it made a profit of $2.5 billion. There are a total of 819 individual owners and 505 institutional owners of DTE Energy stock. DTE reached number 270 in the Fortune 500 list of most successful companies in 2014, the same year the company spent $4.37 million lobbying congress for various self-interested policies. DTE got $17 million in tax rebates, making its tax rate that year at -1%. DTE also invests strategically in the Detroit "art scene", as we shall see in part 3 of this essay, and their stock price recently hit an all time high in Feb 2015.

(Source: Nasdaq.com, Public Campaign. http://publicampaign.org/sites/default/files/ReportTaxDodgerLobbyingDec6.pdf)

Part 2. False Narratives

There are 3 main false narratives about Detroit that appear in different concentrations on all sides of the political spectrum and especially in all forms of current journalism.

1. Racial tensions are caused by black radicals and agitators who complain.

2. Labor and union demands have caused all economic problems in Detroit.

3. Detroit's manifest destiny is inevitable: creative, white pioneers will establish safe-colonies amidst the frightening, native 'other', which will enable waves of business-minded mostly whites to safely invest their private money back into Detroit and thus "save" the city by returning it back to its rightful owners: rich and upper-middle-class white people.

Incredibly, one recent Wall Street Journal report from 2013 contained all 3 main false narratives about Detroit in one shameless rant. Let's have a closer look at passages from Allysia Finley's handiwork.

   "Not far outside of Detroit's downtown business district is the emergent hipster colony of Corktown, where do-it-yourself, brew-your-own-beer types are fixing up cheap, rundown houses. The pioneers grow organic vegetables such as corn on nearby vacant lots. Corktown represents the frontier of civilization in Detroit."

SOLIDARITY
ACROSS BORDERS

In the colonial narrative, who are the colonists and who are the natives? When journalists use images of "settlers on the frontier" they do not so much as mention the current population of the city, 750,000 residents. On the south west side next to Corktown lies Southwest Detroit, a thriving, mostly Mexican neighborhood of 43,902 residents (2010 census) with the supermarkets, banks, gas stations, schools, cafes, and restaurants that are the classic hallmarks of "civilization" the author seems unable to identify or locate. Furthermore, the Corktown neighborhood of Detroit has historically been majority white, so it is not even a colony of recent transplants.

On order to impress upon the reader that this colony narrative is a meme, here are a few more examples from the press:

> 1. "Artist Colony Successfully Reseeding Detroit" posted by "Next American City" June 27 2011.
> 2. "Write a House is Giving Writers Free Homes" Huffington Post, 12/19/2013 " We've heard a lot of ideas for "saving" Detroit -- but turning it into a writer's colony has to be one of our favorites!"
> 3. "Detroit's Hard Edge -- and dirt-cheap real estate -- attract artists from around the world." The Detroit News, March 13, 2009. "At first glance, the hardscrabble neighborhood north of Hamtramck might seem an unlikely spot for an artists' colony."
> 4. "Detroit"s New "Writers Residency" Poets & Writers, Sept/Oct 2014. "Eventually they came up with the idea, Barlos says, to "build a model like an artists colony, unique to the conditions that define Detroit these days: a lot of available real estate."
> 5. "Detroit's Growing Artist Colonies". Time Magazine, August 3, 2010
> 6. "Artists buying cheap houses in Detroit" by Corey Doctorow. BoingBoing, March 17, 2009 "A small colony of artists is cropping up in Detroit, taking advantage of the bottomed-out property prices, buying houses for as little as $100."
> 7. "Reinvigorating a Detroit Neighborhood, Block by Block", NPR, July 28, 2013. "The debt-laden city of Detroit has been an incubator for new strategies in urban revitalization, including a downtown People Mover, casinos, urban farms, artist colonies and large scale down-sizing."

There are countless others, but let's continue to look at Allysia Finley's Wall Street Journal text because it should be held up as exemplar.

"Travel a couple of miles farther out, and the scenery begins to resemble the wild, wild West. There are no shopping centers or chain supermarkets. Sixty six thousand vacant lots and 78,000 abandoned or blighted buildings, including the old Packard factory, occupy 130 square miles of no man's land. Yards are overtaken by knee-high weeds. A house with unbroken windows and shutters is a rarity."

GUARANTEED PENSIONS

This description frames the unspoken reality: there are also thousands upon thousands of occupied houses among the vacant houses where hundreds of thousands of human beings live, trim the grass in their yard, go out to buy groceries, and dream of living in a city where they are not invisible citizens. The author of the Wall Street Journal piece also cannot distinguish between the poor, working, middle and upper class populations of non-white groups who are thriving in thousands upon thousands of occupied working, middle and upper class homes in Detroit that comprises one of the greatest political and intellectual capitals of Black culture in the United States. This fact is almost never mentioned in the press.

> Let's continue with the article: "These neighborhoods were deserted over the last 60 years by white, middle-class families leaving for the suburbs. The exodus accelerated after the 1967 race riot and during Mayor Coleman Young's regime from 1974 to 1994—a regime that inflamed racial tensions in part by tagging white police officers as racists. "

Coleman Young was an elected public official, a very popular mayor among the a majority of Detroiters. Using the word "regime" is used to frame "black radicals" for enflaming what would otherwise, it is implied, have been pastoral. We are required to ignore businesslike incidents of police brutality such as the murder of Malice Green in 1992, and subsequent conviction of the police officers who perpetrated it. Even the Kerner Report commissioned by (and then ignored by) President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1967 found that "The police are not merely a 'spark' factor (in the race riots)...many police do reflect and express these white attitudes."

Incredibly, in this single Wall Street Journal text, the other false narrative about Detroit is also on display: the laziness of labor and the greed of unions and their full responsibility for the economics of Detroit.

> "For a long time the city was dumb, lazy, happy and rich," he (Detroit Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr) explains. "Detroit has been the center of more change in the 20th century than I dare say virtually any other city, but that wealth allowed us to have a covenant [that held] if you had an eighth grade education, you'll get 30 years of a good job and a pension and great health care, but you don't have to worry about what's going to come."

If we understand correctly, Orr's opinion is that precarity, joblessness, substandard health care, denial of earned pensions and extreme poverty are the keys to fix Detroit rather than the primary problems facing the city. The governor of Michigan appointed "Emergency Manager" Kevyn Orr to implement this strategy from the top-down.

This WSJ example is among the worst and most obvious of its kind, however, the same false narratives show up everywhere one looks, from left and right of the political spectrum. Recently in Vienna, we were interviewed by a liberal, seemingly intelligent radio journalist who began his interview questions about one of our works: "how is it to work in Detroit? We have heard so much about the ruins and the economic decline from the media." We get the same ideological

HEALTH INSURANCE

line of questioning, repeatedly, from otherwise intelligent, politically minded artists, journalists, thinkers and organizers from across the western world. Ideological noise has obfuscated all facts, even close up. One local Detroit artist who is otherwise extremely bright said to us one day: "how will the city recover unless someone manages the bankruptcy?"

(Source: Finley, Allysia. "Kevyn Orr: How Detroit Can Rise Again. Motown's 'benevolent dictator' talks about his fight with creditors and unions, and what the city's leaders can learn from Miami and Atlanta about revival." The Wall Street Journal, Aug. 2, 2013)

Part 3. Art and Culture

Art and "creative activity" are wrapped into the mythic rebirth of Detroit. What we see, predictably, is art used as an instrument. What is perhaps new in the formula is that the "creative" life of Detroit is driven from the top down, as a directly implemented strategy via incentives, marketing campaigns, and extra-governmental business advocacy corporations. This is unlike other previous forms of gentrification where development begins organically from the bottom and its results eventually get co-opted by the top. Headlines such as this one: "The Creative Studios Transforming Detroit's Urban Wasteland Into An Artist's Paradise", are generated by clearly formulated business models by non-democratic policy groups with massive power to implement self-benefiting development at the expense of the public, as usual.

There is a long list of Detroit's non-governmental, "neighborhood" business groups that are actively creating a private government more powerful than the government itself, but for the purposes of the brevity of this text, let's focus on one: Midtown Development Inc., or MDI.

MDI's mission statement is as follows (italics ours): "MDI's initiatives are shaped by the collaboration of key community stakeholders and are supported by the many dedicated funders that recognize the importance of Midtown's revitalization and its positive effect on the community." Areas of action listed on their website include aspects of urban life that have historically been under government responsibility. District planning, beautification maintenance, community development, real estate development, district marketing, planning and economic development, and special events are all mentioned explicitly as mandates of MDI. Private security guards watch over a park, owned and operated by MDI. Midtown Development Inc. have already lobbied to alter public infrastructure such as traffic flows and street lights -- based on plans benefiting its members, corporations and businesses, bypassing democratic processes.

But let's finally focus on art. Of the "special events" produced by MDI, are two self-declared art biennials, Art X Detroit and Dlectricity. The self-declared "festival of light", Dlectricity's headline sponsor is DTE Energy, the predatory, highly profitable, tax-evading, shareholder-owned, electric utility previously mentioned in this text. The other prominent sponsors of the event are the predatory home mortgage lenders Quicken Loans, and Flagstar bank. Both Quicken Loans and Flagstar bank were directly involved in the real estate and home mortgage shenanigans that economists have agreed contributed to the bubble and financial meltdown of 2007-2012,

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS

which put Detroit over the edge and into a bankruptcy filing. Quicken Loans benefited greatly from the crisis both from the bubble and the collapse: Dan Gilbert, the founder and CEO of Quicken Loans, acquired around 60 buildings downtown during the worst of the crisis, (including historic skyscrapers), got $200 million in tax incentives from the former Democratic state governor towards "revitalization", and is almost guaranteed to see his real estate ventures give dividends. His marketing campaign to "revitalize" or "secure" selected sections of the city is an essential element in the plan to transfer real estate and then increase its value for key community stakeholders.

But let's focus on exactly what Dlectricity is, how it operates, and what its stated goals are. A Metro Times article from September 2014 lays it out fairly clearly. The spokesperson for Dlectricity, Annmarie Borucki, states: "Our role is really about enhancing Midtown, and showcasing what's there, and also getting people to feel comfortable in coming out to Detroit at night, coming to our restaurants, and coming out to bars. It's about the arts, but it's also about the development." An art festival is used expressly to construct an image of a safe, well-lit city center so suburban, mostly white people can return to selected "green zones" and "revitalize" without having to face the dangerous, losing other. From their website: "cutting-edge works of art will illuminate Midtown Detroit". It is logical that Dlectricity uses light as its main metaphor: sponsored artists will light up the dark streets in a city where 78.2% of its residents are black, making it safe for innocent white sheep to return.

The form and content of works "curated" by Dlectricity are depoliticized, uncritical displays of escapism that promote an agenda of technological optimism. One project called "Kindur: The Adventurous Life of Icelandic Sheep", perversely invites the audience "to be part of a big flock of sheep", an all-white flock of sheep, we see in the press photo. It is not clear why Iceland. Another work "The Legendary Leland City Club" by New York based Sue De Beer, documents a Detroit club that used to make events such as "Zombie Night" or "Heaven and Hell Party" claiming to "celebrate the complexity of life (and death) and the edgy energy of the city of Detroit." Not one project in Dlectricity faced the reality causing the "edgy energy" of the city, or anything remotely resembling criticism towards the unaccountable private entities reaping endless bounty and causing the endless suffering in Detroit. It is no accident that chosen projects for Dlectricity are not pointed or critical. The event is the paragon of disengaged, instrumental art.

Annmarie Borucki again in her Metro Times interview: "We're definitely not a democracy here. Most people are willing to work with us, because they really want to be in the festival. This time, I think we've been so tightly involved with every project that we know what we're getting." Artists have no control over their own work, and citizens have no control over their city.

While there has been endless hype for the supposedly highly creative activities of the city, actual work is almost never seen or written about. The most important art in Detroit is the least spoken or written about: Black artists producing political, spiritual, anti-institutional art that is repressively called "outsider art" if at all mentioned, because it does not fit the corporate narrative.

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And speaking of the motley crew of corporate sponsors: the Dlectricity spokesperson described their motivation in the Metro Times (again without shame or self-consciousness):

> "Sometimes a festival like this may not neatly fit into their mission, but they find a way to fund it anyways, because they know it's important on so many different levels — economically, what it does for Detroit's persona, and developing a more positive image," Borucki says. "It all comes together in the end."

(Source: http://www.metrotimes.com/detroit/dlectricity-brings-sights-and-sounds-andmdash -and-cosmopolitan-flair-andmdash-to-detroit/Content?oid=2249275, and dlectricity.com

In every mission statement we found in websites and publications of the many "development corporations" of Detroit, we saw a desire to explicitly join the interests of business with art, to produce an image of "bootstraps" entrepreneurial developments, best exemplified by the myth of the independent creative artist who is also an entrepreneur, and probably makes pickles on the side.

Corporate interest is largely symbolic: actual material support of art and artists is extremely limited, thus making it impossible for most artists to live with minimum standards in Detroit. The ubiquitous but symbolic "support" for art by these organizations mirrors the entrepreneurial optimism of neo-liberal ideals: an onslaught of "positive creativity", explicitly avoiding even slightly critical art in favor of an absolute faith in the market and the individual. The rhetoric goes as follows: artists are rebuilding Detroit and artists are creatives. Creatives are entrepreneurs, and a discussion of entrepreneurs veers straight toward the ideal of Dan Gilbert (the Quicken Loans CEO), or towards any number of other similar entrepreneurs such as major league sports team owner and real-estate mogul Mike Ilitch.

Dan Gilbert is an artist, this is the subtext, and he will fix Detroit. Gentrification has finally bypassed artists all together: what blighted cities need are bankers and real estate developers, and thus the problem is also the solution. There is relatively little art being produced in Detroit, instead there are hustling entrepreneurs and well-lit white sheep.

In fact, there is not even a critical mass of actual artists moving to Detroit, despite the press. The statistical number of creative migrants is miniscule compared to the total yearly population loss of Detroit, and especially relative to other larger migrations of people that are left out of the narrative, particularly the Hispanic population. Over 20 years, Detroit's Hispanic population has grown by 70 percent, from 28,473 in 1990 to 48,679, according to the 2010 Census, yet there is very little noise about the energy of this growing demographic shift. Instead, the narrative excitedly invents a movement that is not matched by numbers: the 2012 US Census number for "Independent Artists, Writers, Performers" in the entire metro Detroit area was 7,837, a 7.2% increase from 2007 when 7,270 people self-declared as artists. Why journalists are so fascinated by the 500 or so artists who appear to have moved to the Detroit area (this statistic includes the suburbs) tells the story of false ideological narratives. Compare these numbers: the census data about the New York City area for 2012 lists 90,098 people as "independent artists"

and in Los Angeles 71,764. Even little Seattle declared 10,834 artists and tiny Portland, Oregon 8,339 artists. Statistically, and in terms of institutions and networks, contrary to the noise, Detroit does not compare with any of the big artistic centers of the U.S. or the world, and has not had a remarkable population shift inwards according to raw data.

This instrumentalization of art in the urban context is usually called gentrification, however this concept only describes an end-game, and therefore does not go far enough to describe what is happening in Detroit. Instead, we need a concept that describes the legal, political, entrepreneurial, and racial dance of violent resource thievery. Oh, wait, we do have a term, it is called colonialism, expressed this time in internal movement rather than external. The juridical and moral calculations to prevent the other from obtaining resources is demanding, strategic, back-breaking work for the colonist, especially if it needs to operate within "legal" bounds, the United States is not a lawless, warlord state after all. Entire professional fields are trained and employed (and paid almost middle-class salaries), in order to meet this labor need, implemented painstakingly across this great nation, and exported across the globe to shysters who gobble it up like sermon (praise the lord!). Straight up genocide is tasteless in western cultures, therefore this slower, much less visible version is employed with naturalistic-sounding justifications, (Detroit Hustles Harder!) supported by a tasteful myth of the entrepreneurial artist who looks more like a banker and moves like a contortionist before vanishing into a puff of smoke and a tax-bracket full of dollars.

Re-Assembling

Art and its Relation to Labour

interview with Jan Eugster

by Milica Tomić

'RE-ASSEMBLING – Art and its Relation to Labour' (2014) investigates the interplay of labour, politics, economy and art within participatory production of a work of art (e.g. 'UNTITLED', Rudolf Stingel, 2002). 'RE-ASSEMBLING' reveals the labour behind such an artwork; analyses its stability through the network of exploitation underpinning its production, as well as exhibiting strategies within practices often referred to as relational aesthetics and participatory art.

'RE-ASSEMBLING' analyses mechanisms of artistic practices that insist on producing a new type of collective, one devoid of repressive relations within collective labour. Whilst appearing to invite participation, the very act of calling for participation is also the site of the artist's control and monopoly over the outcome. It is precisely by appearing to be offering his/her creative labour and status up for collective use that the artist simultaneously reserves absolute authorship. Despite their claims on emancipating democratic practices, these mechanisms are, in fact, a reflection of the ideology of participation in civic society and parliamentary politics.

Jan Eugster: I am educated as an art founder, in a foundry facility, so my basic knowledge came from casting bronze and other metals. I went to school with a model maker for the industry and with the technical foundry technologies, so that's basically my education. In Switzerland you have foundry technologies apprenticeships, where you have four years of education. You go to school for a week , and for three days you work in a facility, on typical daily stuff. This kind of apprenticeship didn't exist before, so we made it up, and then I did another.

Milica Tomić: What do you mean by, you made it up?

JE: Well, there was a system in Switzerland to educate foundry technicians, but there was no art foundry and nobody was teaching that. Because the foundries were all dying in Switzerland, so for the last thirty years, they didn't teach it anymore, so we just said look, we are gonna make an apprenticeship as a technical founder, but it needs to be in an art foundry, so they had to adapt basically.

MT: It was a demand from the students...

JE: No, it was just a demand from me and my company.

MT: So, you had already a company before that...

JE: No, no, not me, that was my boss. That was my old company.

MT: Your company asked the school to change the education system...

JE: Yeah, there was one student a year before me, so we were all just trying to get through it. We were the only foundry technology students in German speaking Switzerland, and they were interested to reestablish new foundry technologies in this field, but we didn't want to be industrial foundry technicians, we wanted to do it in the artistic field...

MT: So they had to bring professors to teach or was it more self taught?

JE: Then after I finished four years, I stayed another eight years in the same company. When I started the apprenticeship, there were five of us and after twelve years, we were thirty or thirty five. It was really in the last four or five years that we established a lot because we had some young artists who were experimenting with new techniques, and we were adapting, so we didn't stick to just casting bronze or brass, but we started to use all these digital methods to enlarge stuff, or to scan stuff, and play around so we would assist artists in doing whatever they wanted and not just work with classical foundry techniques. I had this solid education and then of course I was one of the young, progressive, motivated, nerdy guys who was always motivated to go into new stuff and I would follow or lead stuff in our company or together with one other guy. So we would develop all of that, and be very much all the time on those projects which were not just classical art foundry stuff. At that time I did so many projects with so many different techniques and materials, and that basically was my education. Actually it was self education and we offered to the artists, that you could come in with whatever you want! And then they just made up tasks or problems. I would very often be the one who would solve them , so I think that's why later on I had such a fulfilling time with such rich experiences, even if I was so young. When I was thirty I had already done so many projects and I was involved in so many big projects, that I could already look back on a rich amount of experience, in many different ways. I stopped working in the art foundry because I think I just grew out of it a little bit. I started as a student and grew up to be in the second highest position. It was in this time the whole thing would change, as I said, from like 5 to thirty people. The whole

system changed, and the structure has to change, and there was a lot of moving going on, so there was as well, times when I couldn't agree with the politics of our company...

MT: What kind of politics, in terms of production or...

JE: For example, my boss wanted to be very flat, like to have no management structure in the company for a very long time, and I think that was a big mistake, as the first of all the mistakes...

MT: So, it was like more some kind of horizontal...

JE: Yeah, very flat...

MT: He was a worker and at the same time controlling everything ...

JE: Yeah, he was the boss, he had a hard time to let go. I think its typical in his generation, he was born in 1960. And this was very typical to try this very flat, no higher positions, and it was probably good, or has very good intentions but in a company where things get so serious there needs to be a hierarchy, and this is what then happened, because we grew very much in the last couple of years where I became a leader, but I was never an official leader so I had the trouble that I knew better. I was better educated than everybody else in our company. And I had to stand for stuff, or I wanted to have stuff made like this, because I knew how to do it, but then other people would say, who is he to tell me what to do, so I didn't have the back up all the time.

MT: So you weren't recognized as a leader and you didn't have this position...

JE: I was recognized as a leader, when it was convenient, and I wasn't recognized when it wasn't, and that's something which is typical for structures like that. That of course, if you kick ass, and you

do fantastic job, and work your ass off for 60, 70 hours a week for five years, then of course that's nice, but if you then start to say I want to have this like that and somebody disagrees and then you say I need to have it like that, because otherwise I can't work. In that moment I am not this fantastic guy anymore.

I always want the art-piece to be where it has to be, not too much, not overdone, not underdone but to bring out the art-piece the best way it can, that was always my motivation. I was completely loyal and I wouldn't have stopped working at the art foundry in St Gallen and I wouldn't stop for the next twenty years. I would take over. I was basically leading the art foundry, because there were kinds of satellite activities going on, like my boss opened a gallery on the side and we had a showroom and a library, and we started almost a kind of cultural center. And it was really good. I was involved in all of the decisions, or at least in the execution of the decisions. We were always informed, and breathed along all of it, so everything was O.K. I was leading in that time and I realized my boss had his head in other places; in the structure and development of big projects. They were very giant projects so I realised that somebody needs to lead the foundry and that's what I did. I was leading the foundry for the last two and a half years. I was there, after two other people, who had been there longer, left for the same reasons. I was completely loyal and I would have stayed, but not with those same conditions, because if I'm leading something I need to have my position backed up by the boss, otherwise it doesn't work. This is the reason it didn't work and what I really didn't like about working there, is that my boss had to do projects as much as possible in the house, and we did a lot of projects for example like working with fibreglass, that we tried to do in house, which always meant that I had to do it and I always gave my best, but of course there are people who do fibreglass every day, they don't do art every day but they do fibreglass every day, so they can do it much more efficiently and faster and

probably better if you brief them properly. I always wanted to involve more professionals in this way, and my boss never wanted that, and he started to be a little sloppy about researching, about how to paint or what paint to use, if it goes outside or like this, he would just take whatever came and just coded stuff and in that very moment we already had been reached a very, very, high level of art market stuff and our customers were top class and I had so many discussions with him. When I said we need to get more professionals, we need to back up our structures if they're exposed to rain, we need to check our paints if they're in contact with people, or if they are exposed to sunlight, or see if the sculpture is going to be installed on the seaside, can we still use bronze or like with paint on it, and what is then the paint that lasts longer, he always thought no, no. Then I left and after that he got heavily sued on a couple of projects from Mathew Marks and other giants because exactly of that, it was the result of using paint without primer on aluminum.

MT: Things you say are very much about professionalisation. Because your former boss wanted to do everything in house, which is not very contemporary, even if it is interesting. You were searching for professionals and the whole project of yours is based on professionalisation and outsourcing. When did you feel that this kind of professional...

JE: I grew up in this foundry into this production and it took me a while, but I had couple of times the feeling why am I the person who is laminating something in fibreglass, if 10 km away there's this boat building shop who is doing that every day, there were a couple of moments when I thought, wouldn't they be more efficient in something like that, so I had this inner feeling of, is it right or are we just doing something to just try. Then for the first time I saw a sculpture of balloon dog by Jeff Koons, who is real market changer, in some exhibition in Kunsthaus Bregenz. I had already

heard and read a little bit about it, and it was there and I saw the perfect fucking polished, super-hard stainless steel: there are no dents, there are no scratches, there's nothing, those casts are so high level. In that moment I saw a project, for the first time in my life, that I thought if I had been the one who did that I would be so proud and I am so glad that I didn't have to do it, because I understood how much work it was and how complicated, no I didn't understand, but I had like...

MT: Which year was this?

JE: I'd say it was 2005, or something. I could check up when this exhibition was when I really saw it. I was just, I mean until then I already had a couple of of handouts but there I realised that our foundry was based on Italian foundries like the Pietrasanta foundries, and all that taste of bronze casting and stuff and I did the patinas in our workshop for 8 years, 98 percent of patinas. I did. I developed new ones and did that, but I often had the customer standing beside me when he saw it cast for the first time and came to finish it with a patina. So, of course there were these moments where artists would point a finger to a mistake or something, like a small hole or something, and I was standing there and I had to say, you know that's kind of normal, that's bronze casting. This was the attitude we had, it's like it's handcrafting, there is a certain tolerance, and then you see for the first time this Jeff Koons, basically you have for the first time the argument that any 'kind of hole' doesn't have to be there, like of course its a different dimension and a different level of money, but to always just say it's like that, there is like this moment where I thought I saw this balloon dog and I thought there is zero tolerance and if you really go for it you can do it, so I understood that for example in our facility that would've been impossible. Of course the balloon dogs, and other Koons celebrated sculptures, are so high tech, and so expensive to produce, and this and that, but anyhow somehow I thought, we just get along with our mistakes and sometimes

customers of ours were really a little bit pissed, and I would try to get excuses why this looks like that or why it wasn't fixed. Why after twenty years of doing bronze cast can see the welding seam. How is it possible that you still see a welding seam, it's like you didn't do the research, and then I think that these were the moments I started to think, that's nice and romantic and everything as long as you have a raw patina from the casting, which looks nice, and this is what you are looking for. I think a shitty cast can be good if the sculpture behind it can use it, if it is a ruff plaster sculpture form, then it doesn't matter if there are small holes. Not everything needs to be a Jeff Koons, not at all. I think there are sculptures that need to be Jeff Koons, to have this perfection, to be where they have to be and they lose something if they are not there.

MT: Tell me when did you start to work for this foundry?

JE: It was in '96.

MT: You were already working for eleven years, when you saw this sculpture of Koons?

JE:Yes, I realised when I started working often in China, that the art foundry in St Gallen was a protected workshop. It is so romantic, beautifully located on a river, and it's in an old industrial area and has its own water, power plant, and then my boss has this very good sense of making people believe in something, and gets the right people interested, and also they wanted to be there, they wanted to be a part of it. So among them they got all this romance about the place and all the nice attitude of art foundries. People came to us and they would swallow a lot of the negative aspects because we had such a beautiful place, with such a nice family atmosphere: we would have lunch together and in the summer sit outside.

I stopped working at the art foundry in St Gallen in the end of 2007. Then in 2008, I was without a job, or looking for a job, thinking about what I could do, and of course I had a lot of contacts, a lot of artists would already knew about the stuff I did in the art foundry so they were already waiting until I showed up or they had contacted me already, so what happened is that I went for a couple of weeks to New York and Shanghai to check out places, for production or collaborations, so I met with people. And there was a giant yellow teddy bear from Urs Fischer, which I produced some of his works for Shanghai and had installed it in a castle, close to Paris (which was one of my last tasks in Paris). In New York I met the guy from *Art Crating* who was just asked to install Fischer's work at Adam Lindemann's house out in Montauk, so he saw it in my portfolio, and he was asking questions about the whole thing and how I have installed it in Paris. He then said, "I am probably going to hire you to consult for us when we'll be installing it in Montoc". So, for the first time I got this network in New York, I got to feel how it works in New York. It was not completely new, but significantly different than in Europe or Switzerland, where people are more reserved or protected: and the networks are slower and less efficient. In the beginning of 2008 I came to New York for three weeks. I was just there going to openings, meeting some people, had some art studio visits, and events at the art foundry up state in Beacon, what's his name again? So, I saw this art foundry which was a little bit opposite of what we were doing in St Gallen, completely not romantic, it was completely standardised, they had this bar code scanner, so this would start to work on an art-piece they would scan and calculate the time you spent on it. They had everything like this, everything was giant and of course no raw patina, nothing nice, nothing sensitive, like no person who was taking care in the sensitive way, but the outcome of the cast in the end, in a technical way, was way beyond what we did in St Gallen, really just much better, with a comparable price,

so I figured, we were just staying with this old technique from Italy, without investing a Swiss frank into developing something which maybe would be better for certain things. We had projects that we did in ceramics or we had projects that we did in sand, if we had to cast stainless steel, we couldn't do it in house and we had to do it somewhere, but in the end we just came back to casting shamot if not bronze, then aluminum. I was talking to other artists like Urs Fischer, Ang Jue who were in New York, and they said what's basically missing there, is a guy like you, where you could talk to, and he knows where the piece is, and has the sense to make the right decisions, because there you give it, and pick it up when its finished, and you cannot interfere in the middle. Usually things are not like this, except if you are one of the top five customers, otherwise you're nobody; nobody cares for your thing but they care only about perfect result, with no sense from where, or how it has been realized..

MT: In a way you should be an artist alter ego, the one who could do the production, that an artist could totally rely on...

JE: Urs said "look Jan, if you are gonna go to Beacon we're gonna cast there, just because they...

MT: What is Beacon?

JE: A *Beacon* is a big art foundry in up state New York.

MT: So you started to work for them ...

JE: No, no I didn't. I knew that I didn't want to go up two hours to upstate New York, to work there in another art foundry even if it would've been interesting but I wasn't completely in the mood for that. I first wanted to see what would happen if I start to work alone so I wanted to meet them, as well as to see how I could collaborate with them. Then I was in an endless amount of

foundries, just at that time that's what I did, and then things started to happen kind of fast in New York. There was opening in *Gagosian*, fifth avenue and then there was one from Franz West and then in the lower spaces there was a couple of pieces from Rudy [Rudolf Stingel], then Rudy saw me and said, "ah you are here, can you come over to my studio tomorrow, or the day after."

MT: He knew you from St Gallen or no?

JE: He knew me, he has been there. Well, he hasn't but his assistant from Milan, Thomas, has. He was in St Gallen with an art project I was then involved with, taking care that things go well. and then I met. I was installing an art-piece for Urs Fischer in a show at *Sadie Coles* gallery at London, that was one art-piece which is still in my portfolio. This nice dirt hole, this grave I did in China for Urs, which I think is really a fantastic piece of work.

MT: It's fantastic, can you just tell me now, because it is really interesting, how was it produced? Because it was produced in few different places right?

JE: No, basically I was at that moment working really ...

MT: You already had your company?

JE: No, no, no, I was working for the the art foundry in St Gallen, that was in 2000. The dirt hole like this great thing came, I think...

MT: Is that for Urs Fischer?

JE: Yes for Urs. Urs called me up in the evening at the art foundry and we were talking about other projects I was doing for him, like the teddy bear and this chair with the cigarette pack and endless others, we did so many things parallel to each other at that moment, and I was leading all of them, so

he would constantly call me, he said look I have an exhibition in October or something...

MT: *Frieze*...

JE: November at Sadie Coles no I'm not sure it was related to Frieze, no I don't think so, so it was the new gallery space from Sadie Coles.

MT. And ...

JE: So he said, during a phone conversation, I would like to cast a grave I then asked him "have you been watching some bad movies lately?", he said, "no, just thinking about going around some cemeteries, and thinking what it is and stuff". Then he would explain to me a little bit about how he was thinking that he would like to install it over two floors in the gallery, and that from the lower side he would see the inside from the outside and all of that, and he was asking can you do that on time, because it was then April, May or something, and the exhibition was already in October, so there was another of those moments because in Switzerland the team of the art foundry was not so happy that we dug it more and more in Shanghai, so I involved them in the discussions, and said look, he is asking this or we could concentrate on St Gallen productions and think about how to do it here, or we need to do it in China: and then I let them think a little bit. I already made my calculations so it came out to be in Shanghai. It was actually Easter of 2007, when I went to Shanghai, or shortly before Easter, and started these projects for the bear and another project, and then I was just building it up. It was by then that I had a sketch from Urs about how he was thinking that it could maybe work, or I first made a sketch I sent him, he said maybe more like this, then we had two sketches going around, and then I went there and then things were completely different, cause in Switzerland I could dug a hole and it would have looked as I wanted, but to have it in Shanghai put on the site where the foundry was, if you dig after 40cm, or 50 cm you have first

ground water, and there is just sand, cause it used to be a swamp, no stones, no underground life going on, it would look completely boring. So we had to make it up, so I installed this foundry crate, so in the end I made it happen somehow really adventurously, funny, cause I had to build it not into the ground, but up, so the whole thing was built up from the ground and then...

MT: The hole was off the ground.

JE: The hole was built up off the ground and then we had to make a new platform because we wanted to have the dirt which came out of the hole, of course around the hole, then we had to have new horizontal floors to do this. It was all kind of adventurous. I have nice photos of the project and then, I filled it up with this digger machine. I had to buy stones, we had to import stones from 250km away because there is just no stones around, something which in Switzerland would be beside the foundry, you could have just walked.

MT: But it was even cheaper to do it there...

JE.: Oh, yeah, of course, it was like way cheaper to do it there, but also time wise in St Gallen we couldn't have managed it, like no way. So even when we were considering it turned out...

MT: And ...sorry...

JE: Dirt and wood and some roots I found, and I just threw some plants in it so that there would be something going on in the earth, and then I would tell the Chinese guys to dig it out again, to dig a hole out of it. And then Urs would come by, and we would do a little bit of changes, a little bit of this and that. There was no documentary film about it. So then Urs left again and I started the whole casting process, and he was really tight on time and so was I, and because it was not planned properly, from my boss or anybody else, that was the hardest time of my life. I was couple of weeks

in Shanghai, and then I went back to Switzerland, after 8 days I had to go back to Shanghai, after 9 days I had to be back in Switzerland, because I had other projects with Ang Jue and Urs in Switzerland, than I had to go back to Shanghai. It was constant, and my body just couldn't get a rhythm anymore, I was just really tired of the endless flights. Anyhow we built it up, and it had to be in October, or November, in London, so there was no time to ship it by boat, so we had to ship it by airplane. Therefore you need to take care of the sizes of the crates, and how wide is the openings of the airplane; and there are different ones. In the end it required two shipments with five crates and that all was installed later for me in London at this gallery. In the end I even fabricated the structure to lift the whole thing and I bought a hand crane to install it there, because otherwise it wouldn't have fit. It all just worked out. I was all out to the last minute, I was constantly busy with it, but nothing went wrong, no mistakes, everything was fantastic. We were finished two days before the opening, and it looked just fantastic, and Rudy's thing, because he had a show on the front door.

MT: And you know this is the dream of every artist, I mean.

JE: That's the point, Urs Fischer came by the day before his opening and he saw it and sent me a text, "Hey Jan it looks fantastic, really cool." So at that moment it was already clear that I would quit the art foundry in St Gallen. Rudy came up to me he said, "Wow that's really fantastic, you did a fantastic job." I said, "thank you very much." He said he would have a couple of projects I could help him on and he would come to the foundry. I said, "that's really nice but I wont be there." He said, "well, you wont go far, right?," so I said, "no I wont." So it was already settled with Rudy. And again in Gagosian in 2008 we met and he said, "come to the studio," and then I started working for Rudy a lot, so first I did some bronze casts, he was happy and I was also...

MT: But tell me, sorry, just not to forget this, so in Shanghai ...

JE: Shanghai happened basically because of this giant yellow teddy bear, because we ...

MT: Is there a place where do you do this, is it an existing space ...

JE: It was an art foundry which just started, we didn't know that, but they just started. They split somehow, and they made their own facility, basically at the moment we arrived there. So what happened is that we fabricated the teddy bear in styrofoam and placed the plastic over it, polished it and everything was installed in Rotterdam. And it was sold three times over as a bronze cast. So, the question was, where would we do that because one of those bears would have blocked the entire facilities of St Gallen art foundry for more than a year. It would have been too expensive, and basically impossible for the other customers. It would have made everything else impossible to fabricate and would have take all our time. Martin was still kind of leading the art foundry at St Gallen.

MT: Martin was your boss...

JE: No, Martin was the guy, who was twelve years older than I and basically has the same CV as me. He was working in St Gallen from '97 or '98 to 2005. So the last thing he would do was that he would find an art foundry in Shanghai, he would travel there, and the decision was made that we're gonna work with them. They basically offered the same stuff that we did but they were interested to work with us because they didn't have so many customers. They had just started and they had a Chinese guy who emigrated to, I can't remember anymore, but I think to Canada, then it didn't work out so he came back. He didn't have a Chinese passport anymore but he grew up in Shanghai. He would speak English and Chinese

and they wanted to find foreign customers. So, at the moment we came it was perfect for them. They started to do this whole thing. The first couple of casts were absolutely useless, and then there was nothing. I was then constantly in Shanghai cause Martin left our foundry in St Gallen, and Felix, my boss, didn't realise that it wasn't working: And at this very moment we had our most important art-pieces with our most important customers in fabrication and somehow he didn't realise that; he was too occupied with all this other stuff. It was at this point I said I don't want to be managing both places, meaning China and St Gallen. That's why 2006 and 2007 were so important and destroying to me. I had 1000 hours overtime in 2007.

MT: And you were paid for this?

JE: I had to sue my old boss so in the end I was paid yes.

MT: You were looking in Eastern Europe for...

JE: Yes, what I realised in 2007 is that I either move completely to China, which was not what I wanted to do because it is on the other side of the market itself, which is New York. But the Chinese foundry showed that you can work with very low tech, very big sculptures for a very low price...

JE: So you learned there was actually another way of producing very big projects and for a very low price, with low tech.

MT: With low tech...

MT: What does it mean concretely, can you just....

JE: Casting bronze is basically 5.000 years old so it is a low tech procedure, if you don't aim to be like Jeff Koons, casting bronze is not too complicated. You need to have somebody who knows about it who has a facility, but basically it is a low tech thing, you don't need super high tech procedures.

For big projects like this teddy bear that's perfect. All these projects we did in China made for the first time in it's history a profit for the foundry at St Gallen. We never had made a profit before and from then on we had giant profits, that's how it works.

MT: And tell me how is it possible you have low tech and you can produce this like Jeff Koons.

JE: No, no you cannot, that's the point, you don't need to try Jeff Koons in China, not now, so Jeff Koons works today are produced in Germany, so they...

MT: And it was never produced in Shanghai, actually or this kind of...

JE: No, no that's a completely different story, that's really high tech. Jeff Koons is really high tech, that's really car industry C&C polishing, in the end 40 guys polishing it, really well educated people, working labor, real nasal production.

MT: Who is doing this?

JE: I think the first cast was made at Carlson in L.A, but then Carlson got busted. In between I think they started to build up a bigger facility, but they haven't been as good as the Germans. I think what's his name, Arnett, like a Western Germany company, and they work in a network, so they cast with industrial casting facilities, with partners who are specialised in stainless steel casting, because it's really tricky and it's really hard. Then they have this mashing park of C&C milling, like all of that. So I mean there I just learned that you can search anywhere: basically if you know what you are looking for, and if you kind of know where to expect what. So I think that's the biggest trick, where galleries or artists don't know where to go, who to talk to and which material and what technique to use; I know all of that. So, if somebody comes to me and has a project maybe big and this and

that, then I know, O.K, we want to have it in the end not in bronze but in brass, because the patina needs to be very black, all of that and this could be done in a foundry over there because it doesn't need to be Jeff Koons, and it needs to be not so expensive. And then if you know all of that, if you have the background, to choose and supervise the project with those partners and get the results you need, for a financeable price, that's the business model I then started to realize what was missing. So I was surprised that one gallery realised how valuable I would be for them, because if I would work for a big gallery and I would take care of the artists productions, they would have their guy who is supervising, who knows technically everything, can travel everywhere, and can consult with everyone. I think it's so unusual to have a guy like that, that nobody had the balls to do it and I swear I would save so much money for those that are involved in the production, which is kinda normal today. I walk around *Art Basel*, or wherever and I see stuff and think, wow, such an effort, just the wrong technique or material and it didn't work out: it's ok but not good enough, or it could be made for twenty percent less money.

MT: To have an in house guy who is...

JE: To buy in-house and with the right partners, instead of constantly fighting with all the foundries. I kind of started working on different projects here and there, three times in New York working with Art Crating and others. This for me is always very, very important because there's reality. So even after 12 years at art foundries in St Gallen, Shanghai, installing in London, Paris and all these big projects for giant artists like Urs Fischer, Ugo Rondinone,... in Shanghai, Paris. I never got the real idea how the art market works, and of course I still don't know, but I'm not as naive anymore because I was working with Graham Stewart and he liked talking to me. When we installed the bear in Montauk, we basically spent three weeks talking to each other. When his phone rings it's constantly

either Jeff Koons, or Richard Serra, or someone like one of these super giants like Demian Hirst, and they would all call him directly, not assistants, and of course it was very exciting when I saw his iphone ringing and it was someone like Richard Serra on the display. I was sitting beside him in the car and thought, wow, they are the giants of what I do basically. And he would talk about how the art market works. How to collect works and how this price development follows the same rules then if you trade, how they hatch prices and how they do whatever they do, how that works. I didn't have a clue about that before I came to New York, I got to know things a little bit better and then it completely deromanticised art and market and everything. And on the other side it's so contemporary, makes it so real. It is just reality as it is. If you look at it closely you realise that. For me it was a possibility to look at the art market as it is. I had some clue about it, and then I looked at it and I realised, wow, that's how the rest of the world works, this price development follows the same rules if you hatch phones, hatch prices, like do financial games and so anyhow that's like the side effect of the whole thing and of course...

MT: This is interesting. Is it a side effect or the core?

JE: It's both, the side effect for me is that I got to know it from those who are from this area, during my work, my travels and talking to people who are from this area and it's the core of my business basically. That there is the money coming or not coming depends on exactly these rules. So, of course sometimes I'm tired of it, doubting it, I don't think that art traded on the market is bad, I just think its disconnected from it.

MT: Disconnected from..

JE: Its disconnected from quality...

JE: There is good art traded on the art market which doesn't fit into the market

MT: What is disconnected? And from what?

JE: I think that art in the market basically if it is expensive it can hardly be made of nothing. I don't say that it doesn't exist. There's something behind it which generates the value, or makes the arguments for a high value but there's art that doesn't stand a chance in the art market, consistent solid work which doesn't fit into this art market and therefore doesn't get any money. Just because it's expensive it's good. That's what I mean when I say it's disconnected. I think if something is expensive that qualifies it to be good and fitting into our market.

MT: I still don't understand disconnected from what...

JE: From how good it is, like how good art is

MT: Is disconnected from that which has a value.

JE: Yes, I think the art market value, the real value overlaps but it's not the same.

MT: What would be the real value then?

JE: That's a good question of course. I said, I didn't study art. There is sculpting for example. In the last twenty years there was not much of it, even if endless amounts of sculptures have been fabricated, with very much conceptual art. Real people who are really sculpting can work with various materials, you can sculpt with flowers, it falls apart but you can sculpt with it so I think those real sculptures, I think they're hardly evaluated by the market. It is very hard to sell them. It is much easier to sell a balloon dog because it's flashy then to sell pieces which are less conceptual, but like more classic art pieces. It is even hard to find examples of this kind of art, and these artists don't get famous anymore.

I mean there were a couple of them in the 70s, 80s in New York or around New York but even those guys disappeared.

MT: Yeah, but they're also digging them up...

JE: Yeah, yeah, of course stuff that wants to be sold. But now I think it's always an interesting time to dig them out. I think it needs to have some substantial value, to really bring them up again otherwise it's really hard.

MT: So we go back to you, actually thinking about Shanghai, to go there. It was too far, and you didn't want to just be related to the East coast of the states 200km in upstate New York

JE: I would have, I just wanted to try it on my own. I didn't want to get employed in another art foundry like 200km in upstate New York.

MT: So you were looking for the space for production.

JE: I was just looking for partners for production.

MT: What does it mean partners?

JE. Like to find foundries I could work with, if somebody came up to me and I would lead a project and was interested so I needed to know who is doing what, for what price.

MT: So in Eastern Europe there were no art foundries...

JE: No, no there were, there were a lot actually. I realized that in Bulgaria. Actually when I traveled around Bulgaria I realised there are a lot of sculptures standing around, so I realized there must be an art foundry somewhere.

MT: But when we say art foundry, it can also be a classical one, we don't think about art foundry production.

JE: Classical art foundries. If I was asked for high tech stuff, I would've not have looked there, I would go look in Switzerland, Germany, and find my partners there: like to fabricate a project leader, project facilities and go to Switzerland, Germany.

MT: Did you have a certain artist on your mind when you were doing your research?

JE: : When I was searching where I could do what, and was probably overlapping anyway, of course I had in my mind whom I was working with and who might come up. After conversation with Rudolf Stingel, I just knew I needed to have in the first moment an art foundry where I can cast bronze, brass and aluminum because I knew that's gonna come up in a certain moment. I was looking around Bulgaria and Serbia, I tried Romania, couldn't find anybody there, was checking Italy where I had contacts.

MT: And you were in Croatia and Macedonia?

JE: I was traveling all around there, but there was no reason to go there, I just didn't have a reason to believe that there were art foundries there. So, when I traveled around I had my eyes open. In Bulgaria and in Serbia there were more sculptures standing around, especially in Romania and Bulgaria; which has more bronze sculptures standing around then in Croatia for example. And then in Serbia, in Belgrade I realised again there was a couple of them but not too many. But Sofia is full of bronze, and of course I would have probably searched around Hungary and Poland, but I just didn't have the connections there. And in Hungary, I just knew that language is such a big difficulty there. Not many people speak English, so finding an art foundry is kind of difficult, and you need to have at least somebody who speaks good English or something. . Anyhow, I was impressed, and then I kinda quickly found the first art foundry in Sofia, and started working there, but soon I had some troubles. Then in the meantime I found another foundry and they had already worked for Paul McCarthy in Sofia which made me feel fantastic. I knew that they already knew what it means to work on this level. I saw parallel structures to Switzerland and I kind of recognised what they can and can't do, and what would be good to work with. I had a couple of difficulties when I started to work with them for the first project. It was hard but they were already at a good level and that was good but in the end it was very nerve wracking. I would come for the patina and I would talk with the man and I would agree to a date, and things had just been casted. Then you are there for a week doing nothing because the patina is three weeks later. Then you make a new appointment for three weeks later, and I book a flight, book a hotel. I'm back to make the patina and it was kinda decent, but in the end very nerve wracking All in all the quality was good enough for what I wanted to have, and later on I worked at it again and again, and it became better and better. And Bulgaria is amazingly cheap, it's unbelieavably cheap, half the price of Serbia, half the price of Belgrade and its surroundings. Taxis are literally 50 percent less of what it costs here. It's kind of cute, nice, cozy, not so urban.

Though I really like Belgrade. Belgrade has somehow self confidence of being the capital of the Balkans. It's located like that, and I like that about Belgrade, its really cool. Sofia has other troubles, but Bulgaria is already in the European Union, so exporting is easier, and companies are coming there, transporting stuff is easier, getting materials like half finished products, and ready made products, and all of that is so much easier there than here, where you die fabricating something.

MT: O.K. but why didn't you. You opened something there, how did you move here?

JE: Well, now we're coming back to Rudy [Rudolf Stingel]. The thing of the production basically, everything that is based here, is this Rudy's thing of the selotex panel. He asked me, he wanted to cast...

MT: Selotex...

JE: Yes, selotex panels are an installation material foam with aluminum foil. He had them in Venice and then in Chicago, in Whitney, and he told me about them. He said, "look I want to cast them in bronze, can you do that for me?," I said "yes, I can but I think bronze casting, even if it's easier for me, is the wrong procedure here" and he said, "why," I said, "look, technically having reliefs this size, completely flat is really difficult, we had this relief with the undercuts made by lost wax casting and then with the size of them, the pressure of casting and with just this translation to the original, to silicon tool, wax to shamot to bronze, you have a lot of handcrafting and you have a lot of technical problems in it, and you will always have cracks on the surface, and need to rework everything." But he was not interested in technical explanations and stuff, he asked, "what is on your mind?" I said, "look I think there is this old technique about galvanisation." Somewhere I saw something, but I couldn't find it so I started looking around. And I found one workshop in Germany where they could do this galvano-forming but they didn't want to do the size I needed to have.

MT: There is *galvanoforming* and *galvanizacija*...

JE: Yes, one is plating, just covering a surface with a metallic layer.

MT: Which is this galvanizacija?

JE: No, that's electroplating, the English word for galvanizacija...

MT: This is just having a cover...

JE: Yes exactly.

MT: On the surface.

JE: It's like one layer which is, basically works the same, it's just a little bit different.

MT: It's a layer...

MT: And Germany is doing this...

JE: Galvanoforming and electroforming.

MT: It's more complex, let's say the whole form.

JE: Yeah, it's not more complex. It basically does the same thing but for longer and with a little bit different additives.

JE: You make the layer as thick as you can. And take the thing where you built it on down and it still stands. So you make this layer as thick as possible so that it can stand by itself.

MT: Why did you stick to this, because you could use this galvanizacija...

JE: No, that wouldn't worked.

MT: Why?

JE: I mean yeah,you are right it's not entirely negative. I could have made some polyester cast and then covered it. I am not a big fan of solutions for covering and I knew there was a budget. And it would have been less precise because whenever you copy something, of course, and you cover it, it gets less precise because you add on the surface.

MT: Yes but you add what is exactly that which is there.

JE: Of course, with the first casting he had a material that needs to be metal and then all these

Für die Clichéerzeugung wird das Wachs ca. 1 cm dick ausge-
gossen. Als Gießkästen dienen eiserne Rahmen, welche auf dem
unten zur Abbildung gebrachten Wachsschmelztisch (s. Fig. 4) auf-
gelegt werden. Der Tisch ist
mit Dampf geheizt und wärmt
die Gießkästen vor. Bevor das
Wachs erkaltet, werden mit
einem scharfen, langschneidi-
gen Instrumente solche Par-
tien des Wachses abgeschabt,
unter denen Luftblasen sicht-
bar sind, die noch warme
Masse wird oberflächlich noch
mit Graphit eingestaubt und
gebürstet.
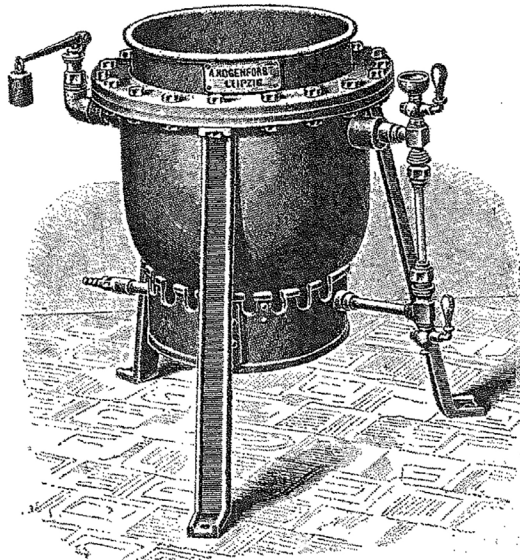
Nach amerikanischem
Muster werden die gegosse-
nen Wachsplatten auf eigens
hierzu konstruierten Maschi-
nen plan gehobelt.

Fig. 3.

Die graphitierte Wachsfläche ist damit zum Prägen fertig.
Nun wird das Original für die Prägung vorbereitet. Dieses wird mit
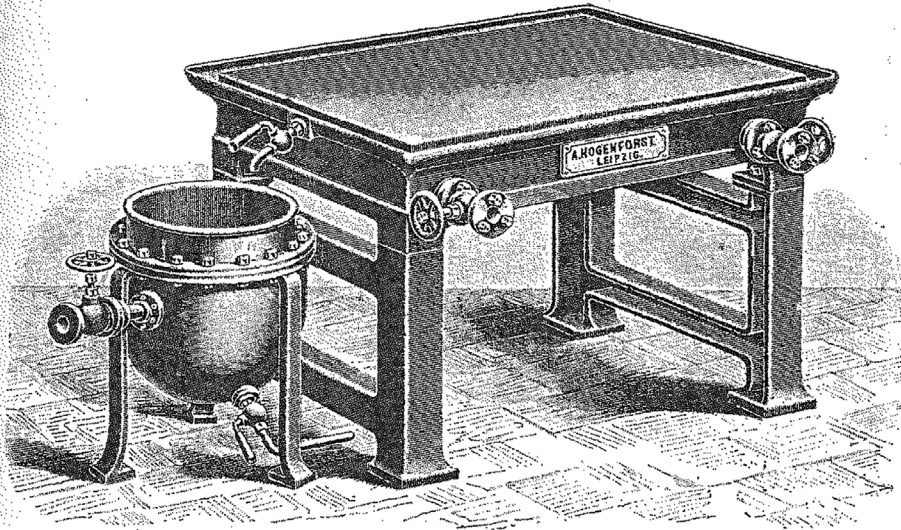
Fig. 4.

einem Rahmen umgeben, der das Original beim Prägen vor allzu
starkem Drucke schützen muß. Zum Prägen ornamentaler Modelle,
wie Reliefs, Bücherecken usw. wird die Wachsplatte auf den Tisch
der Presse gelegt, das Modell ganz wenig mit Seifenwasser einge-

plastic materials covered the layer of metal. That is technically possible, but it is not a solution which would last for fifty years and at least in twenty years it would start to peel off or the plastics would start to disconnect. You either take polyester, and than it stinks from the resin, and for the next 10 years you have poison in your environment. I think there's a lot of arguments to go for a metal solution. In the first place you could not cover the original ones, if you were to go one layer back on this cover, you would probably lose the very surface you have here. You know this is what makes it not completely flat, but it looks flatter, like its fake but it looks flatter.

MT: Yes, but ...

JE: You cover it with metal, you would lose that basically because you layer it up.

MT: Yeah, I understand, but then I don't understand what actually is galvanizacija. Because I thought that *galvanizacija* is like we have as the base layer, the plastic and then we have something that will copy the atoms for example, as we have the same surface as *galvanooblikovanje*, the same complex lets say, you know...

JE: Not entirely, so if you had a surface, for example, this cardboard, if you would take a cast of that and it would look big. It will also make the shading glossy, so now galvanisation doesn't do that if you do normal electroplating, it doesn't do this. So the gloss gets different and you would loose the surface. Instead what I do is I first take a mold form this or any object, I could basically take your book, and I could add copper here. However, it looks on the backside, I could take it this way and then you have a perfect copy of this surface.

MT: So, you could do it also here...

JE: Yes, I would create the negative, so if I want to have a copy of anything I would hold it in, I would

wait for four days, take this layer off, copper off, it would look exactly like this but negative. So, if I want to copy this surface, I first need to make a perfect copy. You see it is something else.

MT: But you couldn't do this in Bulgaria, you didn't find the people who were doing *galvanizacija*...

JE: No, what happened is in the art foundry I started working with, I was as well asking about this and that, and it's a little bit different. And then one afternoon I was waiting for someone to leave the foundry, and I went into the cultural center in Bulgaria, a building from the 70's, 80's. And inside there, on the wall, I saw giant copper reliefs, and I thought they must haveve been made by galvanisation. They were giant, the biggest one was probably 3m by 2m. So, I started asking around who made those, and after not so long, they said yeah it's Vasil this older guy. So we visited Vasil who was like somewhere outside on the hill. This guy was 72 years old and in his garden there was a structure where he made them; like in these sheds, which were really shabby, creepy, with a dirty floor; really super basic but he made those reliefs. So I talked to him about his project. And then I asked him to make a sample which was 50 by 30cm and that was the first time then we took the negative off, and we saw the result for the first time, I knew that was the right way. Then I immediately informed Rydy about my discovery. It was like 8 months later when I told Rudy that I found the technique that could work maybe, so Rudy was really patient but of course he would say, Jan Ok either or, can you...

MT: He is so patient.

JE: He was super patient, he was the best customer ever, I mean he always said, 'Look I'm painter and really I'm patient.'

MT: I'm a painter...

JE: He said, " I am a painter. Normally I see what I do immediately. I don't wait until it happens." But I kept him alive with informing him about the progress, maybe it was not late, but was just ongoing. In between I made a cast in bronze, made it black, and I showed it to him, then I had the first sample and I could send a photo.

MT: Made in this shabby shack in a garden?

JE: Yes, and I just had to retake it off with a negative, and we brushed a little bit and and it looked almost perfect.

MT: And it was his work already...

JE: I got also some some samples, yes. I did the same in a bronze cast and I did that one, so I had a photo, a difference in brilliance was already completely visible, it was completely there. Rudy also liked, he said, "oh wow that looks really fantastic. So, when can we start production?" They started to talk to this old guy but he said, "he is too old for it," but I said, "yeah but there's good money in it" and then he said, "but I don't need money," and then I said, "the biggest museums in the world, the best of the art market, it's gonna hang these works, everywhere in the world, it will be beautiful." He was fascinated by me and my energy and I was completely fascinated with what he did and I completely respected what he said. At that moment I didn't know how much work releases me, so I kept searching. There was another guy in Sofia, a younger guy who made me a bigger one, which was good, but he lied to me twice, on his first sample and I told him,...

MT: What did he lie about?

JE: He said that he was doing it and that he is doing it in his facilities, but I figured that he is not telling me whole truth.

MT: So, he was doing this with some other...

JE: Somehow, yes. And then I told him, "look, I know that you don't do it here, and I know and I need to know where you do it, we're talking about a big project, you need to be open to me." Then he lied again and then he was late twice and I decided that I don't want to work with him. And in the meantime I started to do some research about art foundries around Belgrade, and I was looking around for somebody who could make something bigger and gold plated. And then one guy told me that he knows somebody who can do that.

MT: Galvanisation.

JE: In this way yes, in one art foundry with Jeremić brothers, there was one guy who lived in Switzerland, he could speak German, and he told me, that he knows a guy who could do this gold stuff, electroplating gold so...

MT: In gold, no...

JE: Just gold, electroplating gold.

MT: So this is the last phase...

JE: That would be the last phase, but it was the last phase for another project. I didn't have selotex panels on my mind at that very moment, because I was working in Sofia on that solution. Overlapping projects, anyhow, brought me to Zoran. Then we first talked about tampon gold and that he has one guy who could do that and it was the 6th of January or 5th of January or 8th of January, just around Serbian Christmas. The first time I met Zoran, in his home, in his workshop thing, and saw what he was trying to do there, and there were all these things lying around that were what he last tried. I don't know for how many years, but he tried this and that, and he tried to make a production for the Serbian Orthodox church. At that time he told me he used to produce plates for

the Serbian Orthodox church in nickel, in format of maybe 25 by 20cm.

MT: So it can be produced in different metals, sorry...

JE: Very little, it's iron, nickel, copper, basically, like pure gold but it's not affordable.

MT: Maybe this is the best solution, actually if one could have the money for this, just in gold 'cause then it would be the whole you know you wouldn't have...

JE: The material for one stengel [metal sheet] it would be like 40 kg times 30000 euros, plus production.

MT: It's the extreme consequence...

JE: Yeah, I know that, its a consequence of course, yes the extreme consequence. Like the solution would be to fabricate completely in gold, but of course at that very moment that was out of the discussion.

MT: So O.K. we are now at nickel, in this small house of Zoran's...

JE: And it started in this moment, when I was in this workshop and saw that this guy knows a little about this galvano or electroforming and stuff, for me that was like wow, though his facility was super little, it was like 4m by 3m, and completely messy. And he was excited about this and that, and LED and horrible...

MT: Ah, LED...

JE: LED lights, you know he was this guy who was excited about everything, fifty years old and like a child in a sand box, which I liked. So, I told him, "look I need to have this production, the selotex panels in copper, and then asked him to imagine

if he could do that" and he said, "yes, but I need to make some calculations." It took a month until we kind of squeezed out what he wanted, so at this moment I had a thing with another guy in Sofia, the first time was 120 by 120 and it worked well and then he came and said, "look it's all he could do and I would have to invest 12.000 euros for the infrastructure, and then for the fabrication, this and that". At this moment that was a lot of money for me, a young person who just started a business, just to give somebody 12.000 euros, in a strange country, where he doesn't know the language, it's kind of absurd and a high risk game. But I had a good feeling, and thought that it's gonna work out. So we decided to found a company because I didn't want to just give 12.000 euros to somebody. So we founded a biro D.O.O, you know GMBH.

MT: What's the name, what did you say?

JE: A D.O.O, GMBH in Serbian, so we founded this company together and we started, or he started to build up the infrastructure. He already found this small space and this and that, and then before we started the production, he said "I'm out of money," that the 12.000 euros were basically for the fabrication of three panels. It was the first time I felt that something was wrong here. Things took way longer than they should have, and Rudy started to be impatient, and said, "Jan what's happening, can you or cant you, because otherwise I'm just gonna cast it in bronze," and this and that. Luckily, I finished the one in Sofia and I sent it to his studio, and he said, "wow, it really looks better," that's the first time when he saw it in full format..

MT: Zoran was out of money, because he was buying the products for...

JE: I didn't know what he was buying basically...

MT: He wasn't sure, he was also testing or...

JE: Yeah but he was just never communicating very openly with me. The answers were always sneaky, and he was never clear about stuff...

MT: It was because he wasn't sure?

JE: I think it's his type. It's his personality as well. He wasn't certain about how to really give the answers, because he never did it in this material, that size, and all of that, and he didn't have all the solutions, but he wouldn't talk to me cause I am really good at finding solutions when someone explains the problem to me.

MT: But you know we are not like this.

JE: Yeah, I know but I gave him the sign, because we were talking how to make the negative. I have done so many negatives in my art foundry career, and in such complex ways, that I know really well about negatives. He should have known it would have made complete sense to talk to me, and because I always asked those kind of questions. But he would sneak around and I could only trust him fifty percent of the time.

MT: Shacked.

JE: And 5000 euros were missing. That was really not good, and then of course, because Zoran never invested any money, the money always came from me, and just from me, I started to feel, that he just spends, and I have to cover him if it gets...

MT: But he spends it on the material, I remember that once he bought tones of chemicals that he really didn't need.

JE: Of course, the big materials were never the problem, we had invoices and things like that. Later on I figured out that the transformer and the top that I thought I had paid for were never paid. So I had to pay it again, and then later on the guy who never got the money told me, "and by the way

you could now pay the transformer and the top?", and I said, "I payed that long ago," and he said, "no Zoran never payed me that," so 1.500 euros were missing. There were things that were not clear, shady and just not healthy. And even when we started the production work we had troubles here and troubles there, so we had to find always some new solutions. And I think for a while that Zoran and I were very important to each other, to figure this whole thing out, but because from the very first moment there was basically a deal that he was doing the whole production, and I was basically coming here to check results. That I'm an investor and he is fabricating the stuff. We had deadlines and hard deadlines for openings and stuff for Rudy. And I told that to Zoran, and he just wouldn't react to it. I told Zoran if were not gonna deliver on that date, they are gonna bust us, and there's my career and this all here would be lost, and he just didn't understand.

MT: Why do you think that he didn't understand?

JE: I think there's two things, first he didn't have an idea of what it really means to work in this kind of a market, he didn't understand how the world works in New York, and what is connected to the art market, and that galleries sue you and they sue you for whatever number, and they don't give a shit about who is behind it. And I think he is a bit artistic, and half genius and half not able to get to know about stuff like that, but also he wouldn't let go of his thinking and he trust me on that. I so often told him I need your full trust because otherwise I wouldn't have this job. I made it as simple as possible to understand, he said, "no, no, I completely trust you" And I sat with him in front of the computer and said I don't want you to do that with other people. I was looking up with him about how four of these panels at Christies went for 800.000 and we had by then 22 of them in our workshop, and I said look, "if we don't deliver they're gonna sue us on numbers like that, and my reputation is done then," and I tried to make it as

simple and as clear as possible. We had a very long deadline and Rudy had a couple of collectors and gallerists invited to his studio and he wanted to show his panels, and it was soon after Easter and three or four weeks before I said O.K.

MT: How, one or two years later than...

JE: It was a year later after we started producing, pretty much exactly, a year later. So it was now 4 years ago and exactly over Easter, and he was on the phone with my assistants here, I think that was already Milica, or maybe was still Mina, other old friends of mine. They would kinda be my connection point translator, observing what's going on when I am not here. So I realized that things are behind, and I was asking, "hey can we deliver?" and he said, "no problem were gonna make it." I got photos from Milica and realised that we are far away from where we should be. Then I came here and realised it's really far away and I hired over 15 people over Easter, fixing, polishing, cleaning, welding and we would work day and night until three o' clock in the morning for ten days in a row to keep this deadline up, because we just had to do. And I had to show Zoran that there is no way I could talk to Rudy, that he should move his happenings and his studio...

MT: It was still a show but it was important, because he had to show the product that he had ...

JE: At 5'o clock in the evening Zoran would say, "oh I have to go now," and he'd probably show up the next day at 9, or 10am and we were working until three o'clock in the morning, and we started at 8. He said, "I'm the director, I don't have to be here," and I said, "you know we are in an emergency here, and we need to finish, and if you are not here you should go around and buy sand paper." And then he would disappear, and we would wait for sand paper, and I would call him, and ask him, "where are you?," he would say, "I'm eating lunch at home." I said, "we are waiting

for you, for sand paper," so he just didn't realise and never understood the importance of team work. So, things were really unbelievable for me. I couldn't believe what was happening, so I tried to keep him around for the knowledge, because I didn't have a clue about galvanisation. I thought it's really super-science, I figured out later that it is much easier than I thought. I wanted to keep him for the knowledge, but I started taking him off the positions where I didn't want to have him, like leading the team, so I wanted other people to lead the team, so that he could concentrate on what he needed to do. But he never understood what I was doing, and he never understood my decisions. Sometimes he was pissed, and me too, because he wasn't doing his job, but he would always get his good salary for a Serbian, and he was a 59 percent owner, so after all we delivered these 22 panels, in this insane action of constant working, employing people for a lot of money, just to deliver on time.

MT: Milica [Lopičić] was there at that time...

JE: Milica just started at that time, she was actually finding a lot of people and being around, helping me finish it, day and night.

MT: Was she the one who structured the whole thing, in a way also to find people and organize everything or was this done together?

JE: Basically, behind all those decisions it was always me. And like leading the art foundry in China from Switzerland, I knew how I wanted to have it and where it needed to go. I financed it all, so I made all the decisions which were structurally important. There was a moment, when 5.000 euros were missing and I covered it, and took over Zoran's share, so he was just director and from then on it was clear that I make the calls. Milica is the best assistant you can imagine, because she does exactly what you say and is so reliable and she has a good network and a good sense of who could help in what moment, and where to find

Borchers beschreibt diese Vorrichtung wie folgt:

Es ist im Elektrolysierbottich ein weites Bleirohr angebracht, das genau vom Flüssigkeitsspiegel aus bis mitten unter den Schlammteller führt. In dieses Bleirohr ist ein unten in eine feine Spitze endigendes Glasrohr eingeführt. Letzteres wird durch einen Stöpsel in einer die Mündung des Rohres überdachenden Bleihaube gehalten und kann leicht gehoben und gesenkt werden. Durch dieses
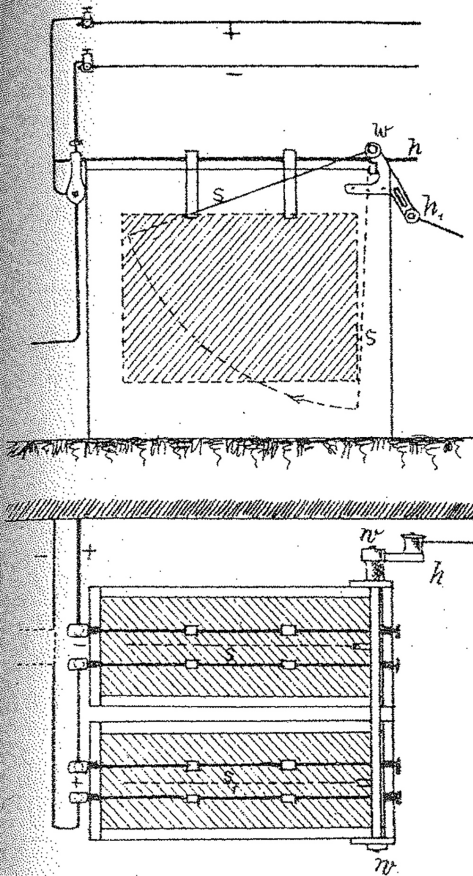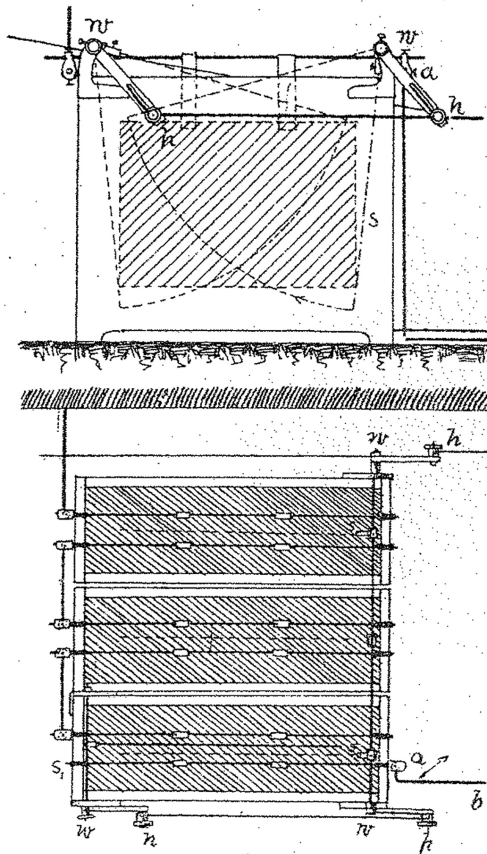
Fig. 19.   Fig. 20.

Glasrohr wird die Preßluft in die im Rohre befindliche Flüssigkeit eingeführt. Da das Glasrohr in eine feine Spitze ausgezogen ist, zerstäubt der Luftstrom in feine Luftbläschen, wodurch der Elektrolyt spezifisch leichter wird und im Bleirohre steigt, über den Rand fließt und sich oben im Bottich verteilt. Gleichzeitig dringt unten an der Mündung des Rohres Flüssigkeit nach und so entsteht eine konstante, sanfte Bewegung in der ganzen Flüssigkeit.

Das direkte Einleiten von Luft hat sich in der Schnell-Kupfergalvanoplastik sehr gut bewährt, weil die Lösung dadurch weit mehr als durch irgend eine andere Methode in Wallung kommt. Allerdings bewirkt der Luftsauerstoff in Verbindung mit der Schwefel-

Bewegen der Lösung durch Einblasen von Luft.

what; like she in time would find somebody who could transport something strange from Hungary to here, and in time she would find a person who could do in three days this job, that was so helpful. And Zoran wasn't, that was basically all Zoran's job but he...

MT: But how could you think this, I remember that he didn't even have a computer so I remember, showing him emails and all this stuff, how could you believe he could do this...

JE: I didn't know that from the beginning, because I didn't doubt what he told me. He said that he lead 40 people at the ISKRA factory and that he was the manager there and...

MT: But that's different, though yeah this is interesting...

JE: I know it's different today.

MT: For instance leading 40 people at ISKRA...

JE: And he tells me that, then I thought that he know how to lead a team, and he knows what efficiency is and how materials need to be around so that everybody can work. And so in the end all of that didn't work and then Veljko was there, with really good work attitude ...

MT: He is also intelligent, he is pretty interesting.

JE: Yeah, so he would start to be more involved. This guy as an artist was completely fascinated with Zoran, and he never doubted anything that Zoran said, which was very strange for me to understand. He was so often there when Zoran made completely wrong decisions. Later on the numbers just became bigger, because things, the whole infrastructure and everything started to grow, we had a technical problem in the copper production, and after half a year of just having problems and everything...

MT: How did you have problems when you had already produced, how did it become a problem? This I didn't understand. When I was talking to Milica, she was explaining to me, she told me that there were problems. How was it possible when you already produced, that there are problems because those were larger objects or no.

JE: Zoran optimised something about galvanisation; the thing about galvanisation is, even when I read German education books, and I have this row of books about galvanisation, they don't really understand all the details of how it really works - basically it's not scientifically proven how it works. It's like in casting, you never know how the metal really flows, it helps to know how the temperature really moves, how it cools down and where, you can only really guess and no-one really knows how the atom bonds itself on the surface. So there are a couple of things that nobody knows, but we had a working infrastructure and then he optimised it, and I invested a lot of money to enlarge the infrastructure, and we started working. The results were verying a lot. one day it looked good, and on the second day it looked bad.

MT: So one day it looked good, one day bad, but was in a moment when you widen ...

JE: We just got the next big pile of Stingel's work.

MT: Which was bigger than before...

JE: Yeah, so the first two, than twenty two and then another eight. Which means that you needed more of everything.

JE: Rudy wanted us to fabricate faster, and for these two we needed four months for twenty two, probably almost a year, and than he had a plan to send a hundred, so he didn't want to wait four years, so we needed to structure the production that it would work faster.

MT: So Zoran optimised, but actually he didn't know.

JE: We had the old bath which was standing there, and a new top which would have the capacity with more impact, and then we started fabricating, one day looked good, the second day really bad. I wasn't here so it looked bad. If the product is good, if our copper is good, it's glossy, if it's bad it's like this. So what happened was we just invested another, I can't remember, 18.000€ in new infrastructure, and it became worse, so then he went back to the old bath, the old infrastucture to make a test and more or less the same thing happened. Now there were so many things that could be wrong at that very moment. If there were very big problems Zoran would concentrate on completely unrelated things. So, he would go and buy sandpaper when the production wasn't finished and then he would go and fix a door and go and do whatever, and not concentrate on what is really wrong. Another problem was that he was more of a crazy scientist then a very analytical person. So it took a long time to find out the problems we were having. So, at first we thought it was the silicon we were using, new electrolites would be expensive, and we made some analyses. Things that in our workshop didn't work, at the test facility supplier, things worked perfectly with the same electrolites. And then we had problems with the copper, so I had it analysed, in Switzerland which is super precise and everything was good with the copper. The analysis always took two weeks and Zoran wouldn't continue to search for other problems but was certain it was the copper. He would just wait for those two weeks and nothing would happen. It was only slowly then that we had sure things. It was completely primitive in the end, he was certain that it was the copper and wait for the results, all the while the pressure starts to build up. After long I got involved in getting educated about the galvanisation process from Switzerland, into the problem, and they would advise me. We also had

advisers from our supplier from Germany. Have you ever been there, yes, no...

MT: ...

JE: It bubbles, there is like a Jacuzzi, there is air blowing in … It has to move ...

MT: It has to move, that they go everywhere...

JE: It's basic galvanisation knowledge. After Zorans work and after installing a very expensive large pump which was making the circulation without air bubbles he was absent a lot; he had back problems, whatever problems. I started to be there more and I started to work very analytically, I would test each material involved, like the stainless steel from the bath, this and that, and one after the other we made an infrastructure at 5,6,7 parallel tests going on, and tested each material and we made an archive. We noted all this very analytically and in the end it was very primitive, it was just air bubbles that we had installed in the first bath and not in the second one. In between it became summer and the temperatures rose, and that was the second problem. When it gets hot, these additives are pushed in, to make the structure better they just work under 30 degrees, Zoran was sure that they would still work above this, even if in the data sheet I read that 30 is the top and I figured when it gets out of these ranges and it gets too hot then we will have problems. So these were the two problems overlapping. It would have been really easy to find out, and it would if we have worked and in the end it is completely basic galvanisation knowledge. It's described in Serbian, by the supplier of our chemicals. How it needs to be mixed by air bubbles and not by pumps, it's there. So we wasted 10 months and an endless amount of money, that's very typical, that's problem number three with Zoran. If he doesn't know then he changes his mind completely. He said, "anyway we should do it in nickel," and I said, "Zoran, nickel is so expensive, the whole

infrastructure for nickel is more complicated, more high tech, much more clean, it's much more fragile." It's what I had read about so far, so I said, "are you sure?", he said, "yeah, 100 percent" and I said, "Zoran we are really out of money. Just for a test, that's another 10-15.000 just for making a test 60 by 60 cm." He said, "no, no, this is completely sure, this is what I did before and I know how it works and everything," so I involved a whole team in it. I wanted people to understand why I doubted Zoran sometimes. I didn't want to explain later what he told me, a 100 percent. OK lets involve everybody, so he explained why he wanted to leave behind everything we had done before that and make something completely new. So, he did that before we worked with this one first back without a pump: and it would have worked but I didn't know that then but I had an idea it might.

MT: You could have a bigger bath but just with bubbles, but do you need it this pump that goes...

JE: I use it, do I need it, no...

MT: But you used it for what ...

JE: Basically it levels temperature; that would've been much easier and cheaper, but now we have it already. Whatever, we made a test in nickel, and the outcome after two months of experimenting, investing 15.000 euros was zero, like zero, like nothing. The nickel was bad, that's the problem with other materials, they get tension while building up this layer, and they start to just crack and peel off, so the surface looks completely different and not controllable, even all our people around here who would like consult us and stuff.

MT: And everything costs...

JE: And it costs hell...

MT: It's like a waste of money instead of finding this...

JE: The one problem was we had to change the whole thing but if it would have worked we could have talked about another 100,000 euros in investment to it on a larger scale, insane amounts of money, and I would have been ready to talk to Rudy.

MT: You decided also to make this shift already but not...

JE: I might have considered it if he had a really cool result already, and that's the problem. After we had copper because he wants to have it in gold, we had to have it nickeled and gilded, so we would lose detail. I didn't like that too much. So the thing is probably if you would have had it in nickel...

MT: Over nickel, no...

JE: Probably then it would have been possible to activate nickel, a layer of nickel and so the result maybe would've been better which was my motivation to go to that pump, but the outcome was and try ..

MT: Sorry, wasn't it already nickel why should you have tried nickel again?

JE: Just technically it's very hard to activate nickel directly from gold. If you don't put a fresh layer of nickel so it's completely covered, this galvanisation is complex stuff, its also technical. I don't know all of it because I don't have that education about it. You know in Switzerland people have like my education of a technical founder guy or a foundry technician, but they do it for four years in galvanisation. Then when I called them, they asked the right questions, I just didn't realise.

MT: Did you have to pay them for...

JE: No, those were friends.

MT: But a lot of advisers you had to pay...

JE: I had a couple of them I had to pay but that was when i needed high tech analysis. So, altogether there is a milion of those stories where I learned more and more. Zoran is interesting for my future production, and even in the beginning there was this agreement that he would find somebody here who works with him. We would do that in our company when Ilander came back to him and wanted to work with him. He went behind my back and founded a new company and started working parallel there.

MT: He founded a new company and started to work...

JE: To work for Ilander, even though the agreement was totally different. The moment he told me, I was so full of Zoran, I realised that I solved most of the problems. He made more problems than anything. So the only problem I had was that I didn't have someone who could be the director, so then that was when he told me he wanted to leave, so then Veljko came into the discussion, because he was the most loyal, dedicated person to the company. But I knew that he had other troubles which made it hard to have him. But it kinda worked out for this period and now cause I have this residence I am able to be the director. It works out very well, since the production is really good.

MT: Where did you live in the meantime, before you had this flat?

JE: I rented a really shabby place across the street.

MT: You rented the place?

JE: Yes.

MT: I would also like to say, just so I don't forget, that what I think is important is to disconnect the idea that the value of an artistic work is to be measured only by the financial value.

JE: I mean, he really wrote books about it.

MT: He himself...

JE: Yeah there are books from his early works that he made in the 90s where he describes how to do his artpieces, how to basically copy his artpieces, which I think is so fabulous.

MT: Yes, this is fabulous, and I also want this to become part of the library. But this is about how to paint, how to make a ground of the painting, you say *grundierung*, how to make this base for the painting or how to do all this kind of stuff, but then they were also writing about his pieces specifically for example this one [Rudolf Stingel, *Untitled*]: the second object produced at your company because this was like a participatory work or 'relational aesthetic' work. And it is interesting that it coincides with all this participatory work that is happening behind the object. It is the second step of production of this object which doesn't happen in the gallery.

JE: I mean for me, the selotex panel kind of work is a kind of classy art foundry work. I think the difference happens before that, the audience of the gallery is like making the relief or the marks on the canvas and then from then on it's kind of very classical. It's like if you would have an original plaster and you go to the foundry, and you have it in metal and it's basically classical art foundry work. I was trying to find the process to do it, and not just do what was most common. But that's it, I think it's completely normal basically.

MT: What is normal?

JE: I think that there was always an artist and the artist brought the sculpture to the art foundry or to somebody who knew how to cast and that person cast it because it hardly was the same person so that's very, very classical.

MT: No, that's very traditional from the Middle ages. But there is something else I'd like to continue with and that is this participatory art. Actually the real participation is achieved not in the gallery where the people are but in your company for example or in the way you imagine the whole thing, and for me this is interesting. But I don't think the single work is more important I think that this disconnection is more important.

JE: The disconnection between art market and the real value.

MT: And actually what connects it, because there is impressively big and endless hours of work of conceptualisation of ideas of invention, of research that stands behind it that is totally invisible and that is self understandable. You know this is interesting for me and the way to not show, to expose people, objects. I really don't like this, to show the whole narrative behind.

JE: The whole process is optimised for 1.200 mm by 1.200 mm panels, with whatever surface one or 4 cm high sides completely right angled accurate for 0.1or … mm.

MT: And how many pieces?

JE: What we do, we basically fabricate two a week with electroforming, which means that we prepare two a week, before we make a negative, that means to prepare everything so everything is ready Monday morning to electroform. Then we start electroforming until Friday and Friday they're finished, and the next two are ready for Monday and then the post-production starts: which is not fixed and standardised but basically should in theory just be to finish two a week in post-production. It's just that normally doesn't work because you need to have all of them in the end together, to make the whole picture and then you can start to adjust certain small things if they're not completely accurate so that's…

MT: So that's post-production…

JE: Yeah, that's post-production.

MT: So which means yeah, O.K. it's not easy to say, there is a preparation and things are going on…

JE: Yes, things go completely parallel, it's basically built up like that. The pre-production and production can fabricate two a week. In this case we get selotex panels and we clean them…

MT: How do you clean them?

JE: Well, it's just basically that they're dusty or something, so you just take care that there is no grease on it or something that would maybe make trouble with the rubber we are using.

MT: So this is like conservatory work almost, contemporary art conservation ..

JE: Yeah, but also not, as they are not so unstable. You can kinda clean them with a wet rag. If you take care and blow a little bit. Of course it's a little bit conservatory but not nerdy or something. There are no tags on it from the markers and they are not copied anyway, so if they disappear anyway basically glue it to a vibration table and we make frames in the real size…

MT: And this is all in pre-production …

JE: Yeah, yeah, this is all pre-production actually. It's not completely to put the whole picture together and normally the selotex panels, they come in 240 by 120, so they are bigger, even a little bigger 242 by 122, some of them a little smaller, some of them a little bigger, but they are not right angled and they are not the same, which in selotex panels doesn't matter. You can push them a little bit, and they are soft, so they will adjust in the end. We need to have a completely accurate number, so

[handwritten marginal annotations]

— roba → upotrebna vrednost
prometna vrednost
kao agreg. proizv. relacionih *[?]*
rad → kao *[?]* njenih *[?]*
snaga. *[?]*

PRVA KNJIGA

PROCES PROIZVODNJE KAPITALA

Prva glava

ROBA I NOVAC

I Roba po sebi

Bogatstvo društava u kojima vlada kapitalistička proizvodnja sastoji se od *robâ*. Roba je stvar koja ima upotrebnu vrednost; ova postoji u svim društvenim formacijama, ali u kapitalističkom društvu *upotrebna vrednost* je ujedno materijalni nosilac *prometne vrednosti*.

Prometna vrednost pretpostavlja tertium comparationis kojim se meri: rad, zajedničku društvenu supstancu prometnih vrednosti, naime *društveno potrebno radno vreme* koje je u njoj opredmećeno.

Kao što je roba nešto dvostruko: upotrebna vrednost i prometna vrednost, tako je i u njoj sadržani rad dvostruko određen: s jedne strane kao

we first need to cut them in a measure, which is 120 by 120.

MT: And then ...

JE: And then when we have it prepared and everything and then we add the silver to it, then the production starts with electroforming so we put it in the bath, and the current the copper gets travels from the anodes to the cathodes which...

MT: I don't understand, I really can't understand this but O.K. It travels one atom by another.

JE: It does travel, I mean I don't completely understand it as well, I think nobody understands completely but this is explainable because if you hold them here you give the plus on the crystal metals which are bound by a crystal structure, which is basically held together by their sharing the same electrons. So now, if you give a plus on these electrons they will go away, atom by atom, so the electrons will get loose in the solution. And on the other side you do exactly the opposite, you take electricity, so on a metallic structure the electrons start to connect and then the copper wants to go there because it's bonding. So that's like in a very childish way what would be the explanation, then it starts to build the crystal structure one by one, atom by atom, it's very glittery.

MT: Impossible to be so precise...

JE: Today they do like they used to, like they still do to press vinyl records, the tool to press the record is made with this technique. So there is no difference between the original and a copy of it, otherwise the DVD wouldn't work right. I don't know at all is there form but there is, and that's how they do it. Then the production goes for a week, like four and a half days, we have production or this electroforming process would constantly go on, like night and day, and it's controlled by temperature and different chemicals and we

constantly control the electrolytes. So after these four and a half days I have about one and a half to two millimeters of copper, on the backside of our negatives; so we grow copper on it and there is like chemical, electrochemical reactions that are actually doing it. So what happens is, if we have a negative which has a higher point and is the anode then the copper which travels from here to there has actually a shorter way to go to here, so that's why more of it collects in one place...

MT: I understand...

JE: So it's not completely the same and I could see somewhere they grow and somewhere they are really thin, so some edges are really thin. The post production in Milan and the guys there are doing the most labourous work. The result is there and then its structure on the backside makes the thing more stable so you can hang it later so they're not too soft, that they don't bend. So we don't touch the surface anymore. One problem we had is that the rubber we are using is still not as flexible as silicone, so a lot of pieces would stick to the lower parts of the relief and we needed to find how to get them basically out of there, like pieces would stick in the lower parts of the relief and not dissolve the negative but make it more jelly. We would use high pressure water gun, like the one you would use to clean your car and we can actually clean it out so all these rubber particles get out of the deep spots. So at the very end there are my art guys, women and men coming again to finish it. And after that I have my art guys, one more time to make the finish and then everything gets great basically and electro-plated, in gold in Italy.

MT: So it goes to Italy and it happens there and comes back again.

JE: Yeah, and in this case it came back again, normally it never came back, we also tried to do that in Serbia, but the partner who wanted to do that, tried and wasted a lot of my money, an

endless amount of money and they wouldn't pay me back, it's another nerve killing story. Anyhow it didn't work out, he just couldn't bring the quality he promised and it didn't work out, and we had this one company in Italy which was basically founded by Stingo Studio and they were collaborating with them, so I was not involved in the building process, I did the copper product and I sent it to Italy. I wasn't involved in building which was much better for me because this is...

MT: And this is now...

JE: That was really good because once they had a really big problem in production, and they wasted, I don't know how many panels, if that would have happened here they would've doubted my partner, so now it's their partner which is O.K. for me. So I am not involved in this step now, I am involved in the very last one because they go there, they get gilded, they come back here and I re-install them because they are not reliefs anymore, but they are free standing walls and they're covered all around. The problems we had about right angles and right measurements became now three dimensional, and created a complete set of new problems.

MT: So, how many people are working there?

JE: It's directing 8 people, 4 artists and 4 non artists,7 people in production and one in the office, it's three artists actually, and 4 non artists at the moment.

MT: So it is under control at the moment, so its really...

JE: Yes.

MT: After five years.

JE: After five years things are working here. The best thing about Rudy is that he first pays everything on time, never makes trouble about the

speed anymore, he just got it that it takes time to fabricate, just as well if I consult with him when there's a technical problem. He just has full trust that this is how it has to look, so he just lets me go and pays everything. He has been patient all the time. He was really a dream client, Rudy's a dream client, I never had a client like that, there were other good ones before, but that's really fantastic.

MT: But also Milica told me that it would be more easy to do this in Berlin than here, because of the materials or maybe this was just a moment, or perhaps I understood wrong.

JE: There are many reasons why Serbia is really difficult place to work, why Belgrade is kind of an expensive place for what you get out of it, which is now not the same anymore but five years ago that was kind of comparable with Berlin. But in Berlin you have much richer markets, have a hell of a of lot of educated people, technically educated people, whereas here you have to search the work attitude, it's completely different.

MT: Yeah, but it's more expensive labour in Berlin.

JE: Yeah, but how much more is the difference here until someone is satisfied in what he needs to get paid, that range is as big as well, some of my workers there are satisfied if they have 450 euros a month in their hands, the others are not satisfied with 750. Then you pay 67 percent tax on it and if you pay that all correct, which I don't do because I literally wouldn't be able to afford to work here it's too expensive: because with the work attitude and the efficiency of the whole system things get more expensive.

MT: Yeah, you have to get the infrastructure in order...

JE: At the moment, my best guys earn with the thirteenth and fourteenth salary, about a thousand

in cash a month so that's 1.660 euros. And with that money you could find a worker in Berlin...

MT: But did you think about education, lets say educating people?

JE: I did start thinking about it very early and I still have that in my mind. But now my stress level is too high and things aren't going as well. Things haven't been going so smooth for so long, so there's always some support, or if that is a Swiss fund or German fund which is helping me build up something...

MT: Because you are doing that, actually you are educating people...

JE: I do educate people, and I know that, but to do it really, my knowledge of galvanisation is not good enough to educate somebody. And then I don't know Serbian so...

MT: Yes, but if we speak about education it is not just about galvanisation, it is about how to think about things, what kind of an approach. What is totally different cause it's an enormous knowledge and of course nobody thinks you are not a professional like let's say in the beginning. So it is more about the way to think about things, and it's about thinking actually, and this is this education, how to come to the sources, how to...

JE: I actively do that in may company. I talk to my people and I am very open about everything. Once I was giving this guest lecture at The Fine Art Academy of Belgrade and I was thinking what shall I tell them, and then I kinda pushed it a little bit in this direction. I had all these sculptors from this art school, sitting there, listening to me and I was wavering that either I do the same thing and tell them about crafting work, or I tell them more about how it works that somebody can do a 7 meter teddy bear, so I pushed there and said look, "if you want to be a famous artist, you need

to brand your name, before you need to have a giant production, and pull your name out on as many pieces as possible that your name gets acknowledged, otherwise nobody knows you, and nothing gets expensive," that's how it works.

MT: In every lecture you had there they asked you how did you get there, so you had the right approach for this academy, I think.

JE: I think I would be completely good for this Academy, but of course the professors at that Academy would work completely against that. So they would never call me to come and give this guest lecture. To give a quick opinion, I think that their teaching is still in the middle of the last century.

MT: Yeah, of course, but I felt that some education center, you would have people like Veljko or other artists who are interested ....

JE: I think it's not on me to make some kind of education center. You would have people but of course this is another level of energy you have to invest.

MT: But your company is already an education center, you know, some kind of extra department.

JE: Yes, and I am completely open for that, but I think that the initiative for that doesn't have to come from me. If somebody would recognise that and think it would be valuable for students or others than anybody could come up to me.

MT: And what do you think if we would, let's say during this exhibition, make a tour of the audience. Because this is a show that will be in Spain and in Ireland, well I'm not sure if Ireland is still involved because there is some European foundation but the Irish partner museum is somehow functioning now. But it would be interesting to them and some guidance from your company.

JE: I would do that, when is it?

MT: Lets say maybe June. It would be an interesting time for this, or do you have work there?

JE: At the very moment they are gonna have this settled panels and they are gonna be in gold ..

MT: When are they finished...

JE: November.

MT: Nothing, no, no, no, I understand because this is the worst thing I know.

JE: I am kind of nervous at the moment, to get them back, to install them in my workshop. They are just too fucking expensive.

Christine Delphy

Continuities and Discontinuities in Marriage and Divorce

Studies[1] devoted to divorce in the past have presented it as the sum of individual divorce situations, they have not defined it (e.g. Goode 1956; Kooy 1959; Chester 1973). This is doubtless because the definition of divorce and its sociological significance are taken for granted; divorce means the breakdown and failure of marriage. These are the words used by the individuals concerned and sociologists have implicitly approached the problem from the same point of view. Even if they have apparently (but not always) refrained from direct value judgments and emotionally laden terms such as 'failure', they have still considered that the definition of divorce as the end of marriage, its revocation, or as the opposite of marriage, was a satisfactory one.

By contrast, a great deal of attention has been paid to the individual causes of divorce, and here it is evident that sociologists have not limited themselves to the reasons advanced by the protagonists, nor to their psychological 'motivations', but have included in their studies more objective data: for instance, social characteristics such as class origin and educational level. They have, however, always directed their attention to the 'couple' or the individual union. This method may have enabled them to pinpoint the differences (if indeed there are any) between couples and/or individuals who are divorced and those who are not; but it cannot teach us about the institution of divorce, for this is not just a multitude of individual accidents.

Where a similar method of analysis to be applied to marriage as has been with divorce (and indeed this has unfortunately been the way sociologists have approached marriage, unlike anthropologists) we would look for – and would in all probability find – differences between married and non-married individuals. But marriage is an institution and merely to look at those who enter or leave it, cannot shed light on the institution or why it exists. Similarly with divorce. Divorce is an institution which follows certain rules, it is codified and subject to control, ranging from implicit but unformulated social control to penal control.

Furthermore divorce is organically related to the institution of marriage. In an old American film the heroine asks what the grounds for divorce are in the state where she lives, and the lawyer replies, 'being married'. But I would go further and argue that not only is marriage the necessary condition for divorce; but also that divorce is not inconsistent with marriage. For while a divorce signifies the end of *a* marriage (marriage meaning here a particular union), it by no means implies the end of *marriage* as an institution. Divorce was not invented to destroy marriage since divorce is only necessary if marriage continues to exist. Indeed, it is often argued that the increase in the incidence of divorce can be interpreted as proof, not that the institution of marriage is sick, but on the contrary that is thriving.

Further, divorce reveals and throws into relief certain institutional aspects of marriage, and it makes clear what is otherwise latent. Conversely marriage sheds light on divorce. Not only do certain aspects of marriage make the institution of divorce more intelligible; what is more noteworthy is that they are carried over and perpetuated in divorce.

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1   Reprinted with permission from author and Verso Books from *Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression*, The University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1984, pp. 93-105.

The institution of marriage is, of course, complex and it is imperative to specify which aspect and which function is being studied. This paper will focus attention exclusively on the economic aspect of marriage, and to make clear what this means, I will first summarize briefly the approach that is used.

A theory of marriage

My proposition is that marriage is the institution by which unpaid work is extorted from a particular category of the population, women-wives.[2] This work is unpaid for it does not give rise to a wage but simply to upkeep. These very peculiar relations of production in society that is defined by the sale of work (wage-labour) and products, are not determined by the type of work accomplished. Indeed they are not even limited to the production of household work and the raising of children, but extend to include all the things women (and also children) produce within the home, and in small-scale manufacturing, shop-keeping, or in farming, if the husband is craftsman, tradesman, or framer, or various professional services if the husband is a doctor or lawyer, etc. The fact that domestic work is unpaid is not inherent to the particular type of work done, since when the same tasks are done *outside the family* they are paid for. The work acquires value – is remunerated – as long as the woman furnishes it to people to whom she *is not related or married*.

The valuelessness of domestic work performed by married women derives institutionally from the marriage contract, which is in fact a work contract. To be more precise, it is a contract by which the head of the family – the husband – appropriates all the work done in the family but his children, his younger siblings, and especially by his wife, since he can sell it on the market as his own if he is, for example, a craftsman or farmer or doctor. Conversely, the wife's labour has no value because it cannot be put on the market because of the contract by which her labour power is appropriated by her husband. Since the production intended for exchange – on the market – is accomplished outside the family in the wage-earning system, and since a married men sells his work and not a product in this system, the unpaid work of women cannot be incorporated in the production intended for exchange. It has therefore become limited to producing things which are intended for the family's internal use: domestic services and the raising of children.

Of course, with the increase of industrial production (and hence the number of wage-earners) and the decrease in family production, many women-wives now work for money, largely outside the home. They are none the less expected to do the household work. It would appear that their labour power is not totally appropriated since they divert a part of it into their paid work. Yet since they earn wages they provide their own upkeep. While one could, with a touch of bad faith, consider the marriage contract as an *exchange* contract then women work only within

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2   I use the expression woman-wife to stress that the one is a person and the other a role. This ontological distinction is blurred by the fact that the social role is so widely associated with a biological category that they have become equivalent.

the household, with married women providing domestic work in exchange for upkeep, when married women earn their own living that illusion disappears altogether. It is clear then that their domestic work is given for nothing and the feature of appropriation is even more conspicuous.

However, the modes of appropriation differ depending on whether the woman has a paid job or not. When she does not, her total work power is appropriated, and this thus determines the type of work she will do – if her husband is a doctor she will make appointment for the patients; if he has a garage she will type the bills, etc. It also determines the nature of the relations of production under which she operates – her economic dependency and the non-value of her work – for while she may accomplish exactly the same tasks as her well-to-do neighbor, the upkeep she receives will be different if her husband's financial status is not as good. When she has a job, however, she recuperates part of her labour power in exchange for the accomplishment of a precise and specific type of work: housework. Legally any woman can now choose the second solution, although in France the law requiring a husband's authorization for his wife to work outside the home was abolished only some ten years ago. In point of fact, however, it seems reasonable to suggest that the only women who work outside the home are those whose husbands give their consent if they consider that they do not need all their wife's time. Equally, in France, the obligation to do housework is not written in any law; all that is said in the Code Civil is that the wife's contribution to the 'household charges' can be in kind is she has no dowry or independent income. But this obligation is inscribed negatively, so to speak, in the sense that failure to assume it is sanctioned.

Some of the possible sanctions are social worker intervention or divorce (see Dezelay 1976). When social control agents intervene, whether it be in the person of the children's judge, the social worker, or the court, and if a divorce ensues or the family budget comes under the control of the social workers, the obligation of marriage are officially expressed and in particular the different duties of the husband and the wife. The precision and differentiation contrasts markedly with the vague legal formulation of marriage contracts, which suggest an apparent reciprocity in the respective duties of the partners (notably the wife's contribution in kind and the husband's in money are presented as having the same value and producing similar status for both partners).

Conclusion following from this theory of marriage

It is clear that the position of women on the labour market and the discrimination that they suffer, are the result (and not the cause as certain authors would have us believe) of the marriage contract as we have described it.[3]

   If we accept that marriage gives rise to the exploitation of women, then it would be logical to suppose that pressure is brought to bear on women to persuade them to marry. Of course there are various sort of pressure – cultural, emotional-relational, and material-economic – and one could argue that the last is not the most important, or that it is not perceived as a pressure at the time of marriage, or that it is not operational at this time. However, if we compare the standard of living to which a woman can aspire is she remains single and the standard which she can reasonably expect from being married, it seems certain that relative economic deprivation will be experienced by single women as time goes on. We are confronted with a paradox: on the one hand marriage is the (institutional) situation where women are exploited; and on the other hand, precisely because of this, the potential market situation for women's labour (which is that of all women, not just those who are actually marries (see Barron and Norris 1976)) is such that marriage still offers them best career, economically speaking. If the initial or potential situation is bad, it will simply be aggravated by the married state, which becomes even more necessary than ever. The economic pressure, in other words, the difference between the potential 'single' standard of living and the actual 'married' standard of living, simply increases as time goes on.

Marriage as a self-perpetuating state

When women marry or have a child they often stop working or indeed studying; or even occasionally among the middle class – the American model is becoming general in France[4] – they stop studying in order to put their husband through college, by means of a job that has no future, and they stop working as soon as their husband has obtained his degree. If they continue working, they do so at the cost of enormous sacrifices of time and energy, and even then they are still not as free to devote themselves to their work. As a result they cannot aspire to the promotion which they might have had if they had not had to look after a husband and children materially as well as themselves. Ten years after the wedding day, marriage is even more

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3   The thesis of Blood and Wolfe (1960), for example, is that no model exists, let alone a patriarchal one. If more married women do the housework than married men, it is because they have more time to do it and their husbands less since they work outside (!). And if married women are of less weight in making decisions, it is owing to the fact that since they do not work outside (this being compensated by the extra time they have to do the housework) so their contribution to the domestic economy is less important.

4   See, for example, couples where the husbands are at business school (Marceau 1976).

necessary than before because of the dual process whereby women lose ground or at best remain at the same place in the labour market, while married men make great progress in their work as they are not responsible for this situation, but all men benefit from a situation that is taken to be normal. A 'normal' day's work is that of a person who does not have to do his own domestic work. But even though this is the norm, it is none the less made possible only by the fact that the household tasks are assumed by others, almost exclusively by women. It is evident that the career of a married man must not be compared for our purposes with that of other men, but with the life he would have led if he had remained single, or if he had had to share the household tasks including the raising of children. This dual process is particularly evident in the case where the wife gives up her own studies in order to finance her husband's. Here, even though both begin in more or less the same position (not taking discrimination into account), marriage results in the wife moving down the economic ladder and the husband moving up, and these changes combine to create an important gap between the economic possibilities of the two partners.

Thus it can be said that, from the woman's standpoint, marriage creates the conditions for its own continuation and encourages entry into a second marriage if a particular union comes to an end.

In this respect statistics are ambiguous, or, more precisely, are difficult to interpret. There are generally more divorced women at work than married women (annual statistics from the Ministere de la Justice 1973). This could be taken as confirmation that their economic situation, notably the absence of an independent income, discourages full-time housewives from getting divorced. But on the other hand many women begin to work just because they face a divorce – they start the moment they decide to get a divorce, long before the decree is issued. This explains why they are registered as 'working' at that particular time. Having a job enables some women to envisage divorce, while others in the same situation but lacking a job have to 'make a go' of their marriage. A large number of women who are divorced or about to be divorced come on the labour market in the worst possible conditions (as do widows), with no qualifications, no experience, and no seniority. They find themselves relegated to the most poorly-paid jobs. This situation is often in contrast with the level of their education and the careers they envisaged, or could have envisaged, before their marriage, the social rank of their parents, and not only the initial social rank of their husband but, more pertinently, the rank he has attained when they divorce, some five, ten, or twenty years after the beginning of their marriage. In addition, those with dependent children have to look after them financially, and this new responsibility is added to the domestic work which they were already providing before divorce. For the majority of women, the contrast between the standard of living that they enjoy while married and that which they can expect after divorce simply redoubles the pressures in favour of marriage or remarriage depending on the circumstances.

The state of divorce as a continuation of the state of marriage

The fact that the material responsibility for children is assumed by the woman after divorce confirms the hypothesis concerning the appropriation by the husband of his wife's work, but it suggests as well that the appropriation which is a characteristic of marriage persists even after the marriage has been dissolved. This leads me to contend that divorce is not the opposite of marriage, nor even its end, but simply a change or a transformation of marriage.

At the beginning of a marriage this appropriation is legally masked; it is a matter of custom in the sense that the legal framework which underlines it is vague and unused and even useless. It only begins to operate -by means of the intervention of the judicial system- when the marriage comes to an end. Even then its apparent purpose is not to burden the wife with the entire responsibility for the children nor to exempt the husband totally. It *permits* such an outcome, but by omission rather than by a positive action. There is positive action, however, in the official guideline of considering 'the child's interest'.

Unofficially custody of the children is considered to be a privilege and even a compensation for the woman who may be left badly off in other respects. A real battle is staged to make the two spouses turn against each other and to keep them uncertain as to the outcome of the conflict for as long as possible. The custody of the children[5] becomes the main issue, and at the end of the battle the spouse who obtains this custody considers that he or she has won the war. But in fact when the children are young they are almost always entrusted to their mother. Officially both parents share the responsibility for the cost of looking after the children, but the woman's income after divorce is always very much lower than that of her former husband, and the allowance for the children decided by the courts is always ridiculously low.[6] The woman's financial contribution is thus of necessity greater in absolute value than her husband's, even though her income is lower. As a result her participation and her sacrifices are relatively much greater. Furthermore, 80 per cent of all allowances are never paid (Boigeol, Commaille, and Roussel 1975). Even if the official directives are respected and the allowance is paid, the amount agreed never takes into account th woman's time and work in the material upkeep of the children.[7] Thus the courts ratify the exclusive responsibility of women both by positive actions, granting custody to the mother and assigning a low allowance for the children; and by negative action, failing to ensure the payment of the allowance. The 'child's interest' makes it imperative

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5   This is a legal notion which officially denotes official responsibility and, unofficially, the right to dispose of and enjoy as one may dispose of and enjoy any possession.

6   In a study I was involved in, we found in one provincial court that the ex-wife was awarded a mean of £10 per month per child. In general, courts in France will never instruct the ex-husband to pay more than one-third of his income to his ex-wife and children.

7   I distinguish the financial and material upkeep of a family. The first is the part of the consumption that is bought. The second consists of services, or labour applied to goods bought by the wage.

for him or her to be entrusted to his or her mother, be she poor, 'immoral', or sick, as long as he or she requires considerable material care: as long as there are nappies to wash, feeds to prepare and special clothes, toys, medicaments, lessons, etc. to pay for. As soon as the child reaches the age of 15 the courts usually regard the father more favourably than the mother:[8] she is thought to be unable to provide the child with as many advantages as the father, who is better off (for very good reasons). A child who has been entrusted to his or her mother can then be handed back to his or her father, again in the 'child's interest'. And yet, curiously enough, this aspect of the child's interest — the parent's wealth — did not come into play when the child was younger. Objectively the child's interest[9] has served to make his or her mother poorer and his or her father richer, creating thereby the conditions in which it will be 'in his/her interest' later on to return to the father.

Two conclusions can be drawn: in divorce, as in marriage, the work involved in raising children is carried out by the woman unpaid and the husband is exempted from this charge as part of the normal process. Furthermore, the financial care of the children, which was shared by the couple or assumed by the husband alone in the marriage, is there-after assumed predominantly or exclusively by the woman.

In compensation the woman no longer has to carry domestic responsibility for her husband. This casts a special light on the marriage contract. Indeed, when the married state is compared with the official as well as the real divorced state, it becomes clear that the material responsibility for the children is the woman's 'privilege' in both cases; while in marriage, in contrast to divorce, the wife provides for her husband's material upkeep in exchange for his contribution towards the financial upkeep of the children.

Marriage and responsibility for children: a question of theoretical antecedence

An overriding concern in this paper, so far has been to rethink economic aspects of the institution of marriage and to give them the definition that they have lacked. Comparing marriage to divorce, it s that the material upkeep of the husband by the wife is related to participation of the husband in the financial upkeep of children. This provides grounds for viewing marriage differently. This approach is consistent with the contention that whereas marriage sheds light on divorce, the reverse is also true. So far this has meant only that divorce reveals the nature of the marriage contract, but it can also be taken to that divorce can shed light on what made this contract possible in e first place. I contend that these conclusions allow us to see childcare (from the analytical not the empirical point of view) as separate from the rest of domestic work.

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8   This is based on statistics from the Ministere de la Justice (1973) and oral communications from a lawyer.

9   That this is a mere legal fiction is clear if we consider the result to which it leads, and that from the very beginning it is the judges and not the children who talk of their 'interest'.

The obligation of childcare may have to be viewed as so much perpetuating the husband's appropriation of his wife's labour, as making it possible in the first place. Or, to put it slightly differently, these conclusions compel us to consider the possibility that continuation of the obligation of childcare is a continuation of the age contract, *in so far* as the appropriation of the wife's labour includes the obligation of childcare; but that this obligation, while cried out in marriage, does not necessarily *stem* from it; that it might be antecedent to it, and might even be one of the factors that makes the appropriation of wives' labour — the free giving by them of the rest of housework — possible.

If marriage is considered as giving rise to the appropriation of the en-wives' work, the position of married women who work outside the home suggests that this total appropriation can be transformed o a partial appropriation, bearing no longer on their time or work power as a whole but on a specific task, the household work, that can eventually be replaced by an equivalent sum of money.**[10]** This evolution the system of appropriation of wives' labour may at first sight call to d the evolution of the appropriation of the labour of slaves between Roman Empire and the late Middle Ages. The appropriation by the seigneur of the slave's total work power became a partial appropriation, proximately half of his time, three days work per week (Bloch 1964), hen the slave became a `serf' and was 'settled'. He then worked -time for his own profit on a piece of land which he rented from the seigneur. The time debt to the seigneur was later itself transformed into e obligation to accomplish a specific task, the *corvee*, which later on could be commuted into a money payment.

However, this way of formulating the problem is perhaps false because the partial appropriation of the married woman's labour on this analogy should be counterbalanced by the woman partially recuperating her work power, when in fact she pays for the freedom to work outside, and to have an independent income, with a double day's work. It cannot be said that she recuperates either a period of time or a value. On the other hand she does partially escape from a relationship of production characterized by dependency.

Furthermore, if marriage as a state is characterized and differentiated from divorce by the 'contract' of appropriation, marriage and divorce can be considered as two ways of obtaining a similar result: the collective attribution to women of the care of children and the collective exemption of men from the same responsibility.

Seen from this angle, not only the married and the divorced states but also the state of concubinage, in short all the situations in which children exist and are cared for, have similar characteristics and are different forms of one and the same institution, which could be called X. The situation of the unmarried mother can be taken to be its extreme form, and at the same time its most typical form, since the basic dyad is the mother and child. Marriage could be seen as being one of the possible forms of X, in which the basic couple is joined by a man who

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10   When for example the woman buys off her obligation by paying for a nurse or a public nursery, etc. out of her salary.

temporarily participates in the financial upkeep of the child and in return appropriates the woman's labour power.

This view is similar to that of those anthropologists (Adams 1971; Zelditch 1964) who criticize Murdock (1949) and say that the family defined as a trio proceeding from the husband and wife couple (taken to be the fundamental dyad) is not a universal type, whereas the mother-child association is. This point of view may become a new element in the study of western societies, where it has generally been taken for granted that the family is patrifocal. This element may be new, but it is not contradictory; for if the family, considered as *the place where children are produced*, can be viewed as matrifocal, even in our own societies, it remains none the less true that as an *economic production unit* (for exchange or for its own use) it is defined, as during the Roman era (Engels 1884), as the group of relatives and servants who give work to the head of the family: the father.

Going a step further, the state of marriage-with-children appears as the meeting place for two institutions: on the one hand the institution relating to women's exclusive responsibility for child-care, on the other the institution relating to the appropriation by the husband of his wife's labour power.

Indeed if one considers marriage alone, it appears that the care of Children, their upkeep, which is no different from the material upkeep Of the husband by the wife and which is carried out in the same manner the execution of work in exchange for maintenance (financial upkeep) partakes of and flows from the appropriation of the wife's labour power by her husband. As long as there are two parents it can be postulated that the children, in accordance with the legal terms, are their common property, possession, and responsibility. In this case, in the marriage situation half the work involved in the upkeep of the children is appropriated by the husband-father, and continues to be so after the divorce. But children do not always have two owners. In the absence of the father, their upkeep by the mother, or even half of this upkeep, is obviously of no benefit to any particular man. Besides, even in marriage or divorce it is doubtful whether the parents are the only ones, excluding society as a whole, to benefit from the children, and consequently it is not at all certain that the husband-father should be considered as the only one to benefit from his half of the work involved in looking after the children, or as the only one to appropriate his wife's work, since he does not carry it out with her. If this is accepted, then the raising of the children will have to be considered apart from the woman's family work (household or other) and the exclusive responsibility of women concerning the children will have to be treated as a relatively autonomous institution with respect to marriage.

If the relationship between marriage and divorce is viewed in this way, it appears slightly differently from what was suggested at the beginning of this paper. The husband's appropriation of his wife's work then ceases, in part or completely, as soon as the marriage comes to an end (depending on whether or not the husband is considered as continuing to benefit from the children, and from their upkeep, either partly or not at all). In this view divorce is not the continuation of marriage. However, the situation after divorce, in which the responsibility for

the children is an important aspect, constitutes a strong economic incentive to remarriage for women.

When there are children, the responsibility for their care continues to be borne exclusively by the woman after divorce, and this burden is increased by the financial cost. However, rather than considering that this illustrates a continuation of the husband's appropriation of his wife's work, it would now seem more exact to say that it illustrates a new form of women's responsibility for children, which exists before the marriage, is carried on in the marriage, and continues afterwards. This responsibility can be defined as the collective exploitation of women by men, and correlated with this, the collective exemption of men from the cost of reproduction. The individual appropriation of a particular wife's labour by her husband comes over and above this collective appropriation. It is derived from, or at least made possible by, the collective appropriation which acts in favour of marriage, since if the husband appropriates his wife's work power, in return he contributes to her financial upkeep and the children's, and in this way he 'lightens' her burden by partially assuming a responsibility from which society exempts him. In other words, the institutional exemption from which he benefits allows him to claim his wife's total labour power in exchange for his contribution to the children's financial upkeep.

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Practice Always Precedes Theory

Interview with Peter Gidal

by Sezgin Boynik, Giovanna Esposito Yussif
& Kari Yli-Annala

SB: *I would like to start with lines of demarcation you draw with American Structuralism by criticizing Adam Sitney's 'structures' as naïve, empirical, and descriptively formalistic where 'the overall shape predominates' over the filmic processes. You say that in England for you "the shape was not the main interest because if you can interpret/decipher/disentangle a composition and if you can have a clear idea about it and have an insight into it, then at least for me it is the same as clear narrativity"* [1] *...*

PG: because you are just describing the shape.

SB: *To this Structural Formalism, you are opposing Structural Materialism. I would like to start with the question what actually materialism means for you?*

PG: Here is book for you *Materialist Film*, that's number one answer. Number two answer is theoretical. The problem I had with American Formalist Structuralism was that they really did talk about shape, but in the way one speaks of narrative. So in the end, similar to watching any narrative film, where you want to interpret, the formalism in experimentation of American Structuralism film had become a substitute for narrative; whichever ones you are watching. At best you end up trying to disentangle shape or form. Of course this is a generalisation. As it is usually the case, in the end of all this, the answer to what the film is, or is "about", and even the extra-filmic, such as questions of perception, subjectivity, unconscious subjectivity, was for much American Structural film in the end to do with that. Remember how in the early

sixties (and late 1950's in relation to Abstract Expressionism) American criticism dealt with Conceptual(ism in) Art; they were always in the end describing things. When I used to read *Artforum* in the sixties, I remember that writers and critics would always describe what is already there. The pure empirical object ready for consumption. That was their American formalist answer to what paintings is: how it functions in the world, and even how they thought that function is political. So, for me the Structuralism of Sitney was a pure extension of that, as opposed to, what I thought of as materialism, which hopefully is not a mechanistic materialism. Precisely not a materialism claiming that material somehow just "is what it is", because that would be part of a circular tautology, which would be, in a theoretical sense, a very limited proposition.

In some basic sense, nevertheless, that kind of description, that material, is what it is, yet is also a part of what I describe as material*ist*, because I am also tautological. Stretching, we could say that actually Althusser is tautological too: this is because of this, and that is because of that; I do that often in my films as well. Tautology is not necessarily bad. But on the other hand Materialism has to be more than just as it is, as a piece of material, because then it is just a crude mechanistic materialism as opposed to a materialism which first and foremost has to do with the material of thought. That thought is a material has to be stated again and again, otherwise one always will fall in the world of empiricism. Here is where description holds its sway, when we start to discuss the materialism as the crude empirical stating of visible facts.

Opposed to this is the to me inevitable a conflict between: a materiality of (the) object (even if it is a represented object) and the materiality of thought, which has to engage

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1   Peter Gidal, "Matter's Time Time for Material", in *Experimental Film and Video: An Anthology*, ed. By Jackie Hattfield, John Libbey Publishing, 2006, p. 22.

with it. For me materialism always was the fact, on the simplest level, that "it" is simultaneously always more than one. Not a "thing." In the moment when it is a more than one then there is the object, the screen image, the light, the thought; there is already a conflict.

So that is a first basic idea of materialism as I understand it, which is a Marxist idea anyway, that there is a conflict; and the other second part of materialism is from the practice of art making, which is the idea of process. The crude materiality which film-structuralists were talking about (which at the end wasn't even materiality, but it was structure), was also related to the process; but they thought of process as something which led in simple causality to the artwork, a simplistic teleology. But for me the artwork itself was a process. Because if process is eliminated from (or repressed into the unconscious of) the final artwork then there is no process left. So the materialism of my understanding implies that process in itself has to be evident. And then comes the immediate problem, which is, if process is what should be the *evident*, then what happens with everything in a capitalist system would inflect also the issue of process, which would then be a fetishization of a process. So as a result the process would become thereby *a new object*. You end up in the place you started from. This turns process into a kind of redundancy; where process does not lead you to some next problematic (it doesn't have to lead to some solution, but it has to lead to something other than a simple fetish-object or spectacle or time-denying "result"). Here is how, and whereby, time, the temporal, comes into it; you realize that process is going to be not-mechanistic, not-fetishized as an object itself.

Object itself, what would that mean? If any film maker would be asked about the issue of process, the answer could easily be yes my films are full of process.[2] That answer became a decoy, which in American Structural film meant the process became the decoy for individualism, for example: I Hollis [Frampton] working in a room for 24 hours, putting together "like James Joyce" or even like Ulysses himself, ideas and meanings, etc. … Well that's not a process. We are all engaged with that kind of thing all the time. That does not mean that work is a process. Each human being's constant process is no relation at all to a finished work. If the work has a process in it, and if it is not fetishized, then there is a possibility that the work in itself could force the process onto the viewer. And to me that is a distinction; if the viewer is engaged in a process, however the level of the engagement of the viewer, then we can talk about a possible materialism, in all its complexity of various *reals.* This is linked in a way to the fact that all work is materialist, but if the process is repressed, suppressed, fetishized, displaced, then it becomes something else.

SB: *If you say that materialism is thought, which you often refer in your texts from Lenin's* Materialism and Empirio-criticism *as …*

PG: Which now I am embarrassed about. My dislike of Lenin was a slow process itself! I remember reading a wonderful book by Belgian Trotskyist Marcel Liebmann called *Leninism Under Lenin*, even though I don't care for Trotsky any more than for Lenin, having massacred the Kronstadt sailors after their demands for their own Soviets, amongst other things... Anyway, Liebman

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2   But then you see a shot, and ask where is a process here?

wrote that one thing we know about Lenin which is unquestionable is that he was resolutely democratic. And I thought that this doesn't taste right. It was Liebman's shocking repression. But still then I was using *Empirio-criticism* as wonderful theoretical material. Later it was Marx's pamphlet *Critique of the Gotha Program*, wherein he polemicized that nature is the source of all value, against (his comrades in) the revolutionary left's "labour is the source of all value."

SB: *But often the citation you use from* Empirio-criticism *is Lenin's statement that he prefers the dialectic idealism to a vulgar materialism.*

PG: That was for me absolutely like a light bulb. Because it meant that you have to see the difference between vulgar and dialectical materialisms. Which is actually similar to my previous answer. Even the issue of process could be related to this statement, considering that the process itself could be viewed in relation to dialectics.[3]

Anyway I haven't switched like many others to the other side, just that now I have many criticisms about things related to power and so on. Lunacharsky had a great deal of trouble with Lenin after a while, and Shklovsky, for me a real hero in the last ten years, and of course impressed when first reading *Sentimental Journey* and ZOO in the late 1970s, then forgotten for a while.[4] I find him stunning ; he had, as you know, big problems with Leninism.

SB: *The thesis of materialism in thought has many far reaching consequences, one thing which I would like to ask, and often you discuss in your texts is your concept of anti-humanism. You wrote that film ought to be necessarily anti-humanist, because it deals with technology.[5] What are your current ideas about anti-humanism?*

PG: Anti-humanism for me had a specific meaning.

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3   "No cinematic function can be ontologized, such as splice versus non-splice, or sound-over-image versus lack of it. Lenin warned that often mechanistic materialism is the greater danger, idealism the lesser, because the latter can still be dialectical and one has to educate away the idealisms, whilst the former is a mechanistic and undialectical basis for whatever formulations are made, theories constructed, politics avowed. Such mechanization is then harder to dialecticize, as it becomes the base for an entire method and practice, whatever the method (Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*)." Peter Gidal, *Materialist Film*, London: Routledge, 1989, p. 105.

4   SB: Can you please tell more about your relation to Shklovsky and Russian Formalism in general? More precisely relation between yours and Shklovsky's formalism: "As Peter Gidal expresses it: "In fact, the real content is the form, form becomes content. Form is meant as formal operation, not as composition." (Julia Knight, 'Materials, Materials, Materials: Question of Technology and History', *The Undercut Reader*, p. 18.)
      PG: Wish I could, but can't..

5   "Anti-humanism is necessary even when not utilized by filmmakers as a conscious concept. Theory often lags behind practice. The machine is a critique of humanism, the cinematic apparatus is durable, in duration, machined, endless, *and* unendurable, in duration, machined, endless." P. Gidal, *Materialist Film*, p. 150.

SB: *I meant that specific meaning; was that to do with anti-humanism in theory?*

PG: That is exactly what I meant. Usually in USA, in discussions, when they ask me how I can be anti-humanist, don't I like people? That kind of ridiculous, un-theoretical, un-political way of thinking is exactly what I don't want to engage with. Anti-humanism simply means this: as long the work does not lead back to a human, to an ethics that from the start proves good intentions – or is self-identified with "the good". Good for whom? How? Why? Where? When? The work doesn't need to lead back to human because then we go back to individual consciousness, as you know something like Schiller was better than Goethe because he believed in revolution, the other one didn't, he was, is, or is not, a good person, etc. In this kind of discussions there is nothing to do with a poem itself, zero. I have to say that most works unfortunately lead back, however invisibly, to some imaginary ethical being. And the viewer/reader's identification is into that. A "that" which precedes the filmwork, obliterating it.

GEI: *Not leading back to human does mean also not leading back to the author?*

PG: Yes. That's exactly it. Not leading to the, or even an imagined, author, to the author who everybody thinks has a clear narrative in their consciousness. Then you don't need a work at all! My insistence on anti-humanism (it began as being against intentionality in all art) is to struggle against these tendencies, which suppress the work, where the artwork, the filmwork became redundant and everything is explained through the artist's consciousness or unconsciousness. This suppression of the work I find as very cynical and nihilistic. They always accuse an ideology

of anti-humanism of being nihilistic, actually it is humanism which is nihilistic, because it wants to suppress all (human) labour: all material production, the presence and process of the artwork/the film, and suppress the viewer/viewing. So, that's the answer to your question on anti-humanism.

SB: *In your writings this ideological humanism is often linked with the form of the narrative, which you describe as "illusionist procedure, manipulatory, mystificatory, repressive."*[6] *What is most remarkable in your criticism of narrative is that you detect it even in experimental films, which are supposed to oppose this form. You just mentioned about narratives visible in Structuralist films.*

PG: Even visible, yes. But I should say that that (i.e. my) sort of hard-line anti-narrative also comes out of contradiction. Theoretically, i.e. as the theoretical position, I'm opposed to narrative completely, as I think everything gets projected to some imaginary level (of narrative) by narrative. Though I admit easily to being a person in the real world, and for that reason I am also hooked on narrative, but by being deliberately against narrative and working against it, I think … For example... say I turn on the TV, and there is a conventional car chase, or a secret agent, or a jealous lover, or a resistance fighter in camouflage, whatever.... within the ten seconds I am already in the narrative: who gets caught, who gets the girl, who gets the loot, who finds the passport; while I watch this I don't say oh this is a boring narrative. I am really hooked. This is the contradiction of narrative, and I am aware of it. I don't read

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6   Peter Gidal, "Theory and definition of Structural/Materialist Film", *Structural Film Anthology*, ed. P. Gidal, London: BFI, 1978, p. 4.

novels, I just can't. There I do get bored. I haven't read much work of fiction in forty years or so, maybe one or two such books a year. There I don't have complex problems of narrativity, simply I am not hooked. For me narrative books, that kind of fiction, are just impossible to read.[7] . But I have to admit, visual narrative, dialectical or not, structural or not, advanced theatre or not, I am hooked; and because of that I realize it makes you immediately suspend all processes of thought (humanism comes in through the window too). I wanted to admit this to make clear that I am not someone who thinks they are outside of the world, in fact too much inside, if anything.

SB: *To me it seems that your description of being hooked up to narrative is similar to what Althusser describes as being interpellated to an ideology. This also implies the over-determination by contradictions, which you also underline on a few occasions. What I found very interesting, and somehow relating to Althusser's use of psychoanalysis is when you discuss the similarity between narrative and ideology, saying that "one is in ideology and one does ideological combat." So, it seems ideology and narrative is functioning even when we are opposed to it.*

PG: Yes, it does; even when during the process of producing the work against narrative.[8]

SB: *My problem with this ubiquity of narrative and ideology is that it can somehow lead to a nihilistic position …*

PG: Well, a proper answer would be that it could, but it doesn't have to. It can lead to making Room *Film 1973*. I would say that my film practice is to work on this tension/contradiction, and to avoid ending up in nihilism. By the way do you think that this theory and practice has to lead to nihilism?

SB: *No, I don't. But I wonder what is then the condition of the break from the reproduction of narrative?*

PG: It is a refusal, which is not that easy. Though it is very difficult to answer this question without sounding like everyone else would sound: "oh, it is difficult to break from the reproduction of narrative!" This refusal,

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7   My love of and need to re-read Proust, Kafka, Musil is another story of course, same goes for *Finnegans Wake, Everybody's Autobiography, To the Lighthouse,*…a different kind of "fiction" And all the authors dead.

8   SB: *Following this observation regarding the ubiquity of ideology you write that "the unconscious doesn't get excavated at all; it is constantly operative, for example through repression, but it is of no avail to call on the unconscious as a position against knowledge in the name of non-suppression of the imaginary. That is why it is important to fight against the 'objectivity of the images and the rationality of our relation to them.' You come up with the slogan: "A materialist isn't a rationalist isn't 'against' the unconscious (which by the way is a process)", which I think clearly breaks from logical positivism of narrative film making. Sometimes mistakenly people compare the Structuralist/ Materialist films to overall schematized structures and obsession with logical and mathematical systems. Relating materialism to irrationality is very strong break from it; could you expand bit on this?*
    PG: This new question is so precise and wonderful really it is the answer too, within itself.

of course, has some consequences; it leads the work to some kind of social marginalization. This is what you have to put up with.[9]

The answer to your question regarding the break should be that the experimental film's refusals should lead amongst other things to not wanting, definitely not wanting, to have them be at the centre of their culture.

SB: *Can we say that condition of break is refusal of national, class, gender representations (belongings).*

PG: Absolutely. Especially national belonging. I've been living so many years in England, in Britain, but I am not really British, though my passport is. But the main thing is the work, it is always so aberrant that even when you get some level of success in culture, whatever level, even on the edges somewhere that little bit, you ought not give yourself to any illusion of the importance to that success. Always you've got to be alert to the non-sense, meaningless, and ephemeral nature of this illusion. If you're going to be an atheist, be an atheist about that too. So, that's the refusal, the work's refusals of so many givens, refusals of representation, recognition, identification… a continuous struggle in the straightforward sense. And if you personally,

somehow, stop refusing, you can still be sure they'll continue to refuse your work anyway! And that refusal equally comes from the culture, because why should refusal be seen to come solely from the individual. You can not say " Philosophically I'm anti-humanist, materialist even, but refusals only come from (the) me!"[10]

SB: *The conditions I was thinking about was not only practical conditions, but more theoretical conditions. How do you relate theory and practice? When you are writing about history of London Filmmakers Co-op, you say that practice always preceded theory in your work.*

PG: Not only in my practice, but also in my experience. That was true also for the other Co-op film makers. Practice always preceded theory. Almost no one made the film by pre-conceiving how shape or rhythm or form should look like. Always first the film does it, and then you learn from your own work and you realize that the practice has determined this work to be for example not reifying (e.g.) the other – the "represented" or "a representation." Then you start to reflect on it, assuming that to a degree you know (or "know") what are you doing. Then after screenings you will realize that you have been led to a wrong or right place, because you do fall back sometimes; especially because of seduction of certain images. For example it happens that you can't drop certain images because they look too beautiful, and you unfortunately stick to it in a film. I have realized a few times that kind of fall- back, then I understood that the (my) film is no

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9 Which fits the problematic we spoke of as to the American filmmakers, we can see that clearly in the discussion in *Artforum* between Sitney and Michelson. (Parenthetically: Whatever things they and I don't agree about Sitney, Annette and I get along famously and always have throughout our serious public and private antagonisms) In that discussion in the late 1970s with Michelson on experimental film at Knokke he said that Americans experimental filmmakers wanted to be at the centre of their culture, the Europeans did not.

10 Assuming this figment "me" or "I" for a moment, as it does seem to function on the simplest levels when going out for a sandwich – less (or more?) when not using language.

their culture.6 The answer to your question regarding the break should be that the experimental art's refusal should lead to not wanting, definitely not wanting, to be at the centre of their culture.

SB: *Can we say that condition of break is refusal of national, class, gender representations (belongings).*

PG: Absolutely. Especially national belonging. I am living so many years in England, but I am not really English. But main thing is the work, it is always so aberrant that even when you get some level of success in culture, whatever level, even on the edges somewhere little bit; even then you shouldn't give yourself to illusion of importance to that success. Always you have to be alert to the non-sense, meaningless, and ephemeral nature of this illusion. You should not sit and stop and hold your struggles even for a moment. So, that's the refusal, the continuous struggle. And if you stop refusing they'll continue to refuse. So if you weaken your own work ensured by the illusion that refusal comes from culture, because why should refusal come from individual. You can not say that I am anti-humanist and materialist but refusal comes from me! No, refusal comes from them, and that's the way it should be emphasized all the time.

SB: *The conditions I was thinking about was not only practical conditions, but more theoretical conditions. How do you relate theory and practice. When you are writing about history of London Filmmakers Co-op, you say that practice always precede theory in your work.*

PG: Not only in my practice, but also in my experience. That was true also for other film makers. Practice always precedes theory. No one makes the film by pre-conceiving how shape or rhythm should look like. Always first the film does it, and then you learn from your own work and you realize that the practice has determined this work to be not fetishizing shape. Then you start to reflect on it, assuming that you know what are you doing. Then after screenings you will realize that you have been lead to wrong or right place, because you do fall back sometimes; especially because of seduction of certain images. For example

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6   ."European filmmakers are wary of the structure and ideology which might create the conditions for cultural imperialism in the are of filmmaking. They are, therefore, involved in a redefinition of the nature and function of filmmaking that differs from those of the Americans who are making their way gradually towards the center of our own culture." Michelson, Anette and P. Adams Sitney "A conversation about Knokke and the independent filmmaker". *Art Forum*, 1976, 13.9, pp. 63-66, op.cit. *Matrialist Film*, p. 162.

good at all. Then you simply throw it out. And the negative. All the original 16mm material. I have thrown away a good dozen of them. Some after showing 2 or 3 times, some before. Some a bit too late, but it's never too late. You have to do that, but narcissism makes it difficult sometimes. Not doing it is more destructive.

SB: *You have criticized how the journal* Screen *appropriated and used Brecht as the "good conscience of avant-garde formalists," and that they were "idealizing this kind of perfect political avant-garde position making it unproblematic, in a sense, in spite of constant use of the words contradiction and problematic."[11] This idea of representing Brecht as something of pure, clear political art ...*

PG: …and successful

SB: *Yes, and successful, and you are opposing to this by showing the contradictions in Brecht. Sometimes you refer to "the unnecessary relation" between theory and practice.[12]*

PG: Actually that is the right way to put it. Because often there is no relation at all. You wake up and realize that there is no relation;

but that there will be a relation because practice has been made without the relation. Then from that you build some relation regarding your next theoretical insight. Even for me the theoretical lessons on such things such as temporality have come after viewing my own work. So then there is a theoretical relation between a concept of temporality, how its functions, and the film making. For example if I think, because of theoretical reasons, that time should always be evident, because otherwise it is repressed, and therefore death is repressed; therefore we would all be (or "live") in this eternal foreverness, which I see as an illusionist relation, a reactionary relation to the real, even to what the real may be. But how that theoretical insight will affect/effect ones practice? It doesn't mean that you will make 50 hour blank films. You have to construct a relation to the practical, which definitely is not evidently and spontaneously available. For those moments wherein one does construct such a relation of theory to practice or practice to theory one *does* then think there is such a relation, but you should not say more than that. Otherwise it implies some kind of deterministic relation, and thereby implies that there is always a relation, or always a relation to be made – or a specific relation to be somehow unearthed – between them. Sometimes though – even this might sound sentimental – there is a relation. Because it led to something in a next work, which is definitely the theoretical product of that "practical" work.

SB: *The refusal to think with the terms of relation is also a refusal of determinism.*

PG: Yes. Otherwise you would just get it right, get a few right notes, and for rest of your life you would be making the right films (or sound compositions, or….).

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11   Peter Lehman, "Politics, History and Avant-garde: An interview with Peter Gidal", *Wide Angle: A Film Quarterly of Theory, Criticism, and Practice*, 1983, 5:2, p. 76.

12   SB: Could you write more about what this impure Brecht meant for you, and also if you care, about how *Screen* journal have tried to present structural and avant-garde film and your work at Co-op as pre-industrial and nostalgic quest for purity and escapism of experimentation …
     PG: Can't write more on that, as Screen long ago disappeared and the writer's were anyway hooked on conventional narrative, and various forms of a de-politicised aesthetics.

SB: *I am curious to hear more about your interpretation of this uneven relation between theory and practice, as you did in your text in the* Cinematic Apparatus *book, mentioning Malcolm le Grice's use of relatively primitive machines but doing formally more advanced film than those who were owning the technologically developed apparatuses/machines of film productions. And there, echoing Karl Marx of* Grundrisse*, you say that art forms do not coincide with capitalistic expansion.*[13].

PG: We at the co-op had a relatively primitive machine (actually not that simple: I certainly never learnt how to use it!) built by LeGrice with others. When the Co-op was closed it was taken from there and now it is in place called *No/where*, it is a film-group/film-lab, a strange and good place. But they didn't yet get machine to work again. Several filmmakers at the London Film Co-op knew how to use it, and two dozen made wonderful

films. William Raban once did a 7-minute sequence for me for *Room Film 1973* when the images freeze and suddenly you realize what the other part is – temporally differently – about. At that moment you become aware of differing time, in a very condensed way. Raban printed that sequence via an optical printing then on this printer, and Malcolm printed then the whole film. I was standing next to him in the dark shouting things over the noise.

To be specific: printing a film you see what is within the circle of light which for you to see "well" has to be larger than the filmic rectangle. In *Room Film 1973* for instance you often don't see a whole rectangle of image when viewing, because in terms of the production process there often was not enough light, so the circle of light is *inside* the rectangle, a circle of visibility, like viewing (sometimes closeup sometimes from afar) through a reflex camera zoom lens, in the dark, a circle that moves and you only see what is within that changeable circle of light, light forms the momentarily visible "image", and even that with difficulty; the rest of the frame remaining too dark or almost too dark to see anything clearly though you see enough to know there is a "there" there. I did this on purpose, as the original footage, negative, had more light, not much more but more, then I made a much darker print and treated that as the new negative (all this was on what was then called reversal original film, no actual negative). When we printed there was sometimes just enough light pushed through by the printer to show a bit of the circle of light – visibilizing that – within the rectangle of the screen. Those kinds of things, this lightbeam of visibility constantly moving surrounded by near-darkness, this kind of thing even made by such a primitive printer can be fantastically productive.

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13 "[it] is important to combat the simplistic misreading of avant-garde film practice's historical relation to technological development. Avant-garde film practice in England since 1966 has not in the main been determined by technological development, so that, for example, optical printers, quality of film stock, computors, advanced colour processing all have nothing to do with the experimental work done over the last ten years. This is first of all because such materials were indeed not available, and also because the (materialist) beginnings of a practice (as it stemmed from its relation to various other social practices) did not privilege consumption on that level as its implicit or explicit ideological form. The lesson of various art forms, for instance, was read as *not* coincident with capitalist expansion." Peter Gidal, "Technology and Ideology in/through/and Avant-Garde Film: An Instance", *The Cinematic Apparatus*, eds. Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, London: The Macmillan Press, 1980, p. 158.

Meanwhile the Germans who had very high quality machines since the 1970's made hardly any interesting experimental films. Once I got so angry in New York at the collective of Living Cinema in New York, when there was a show of German experimental cinema, I said that it looks like all were made by (and for) *Audi* commercials, *Vorsprung durch Technik*. Looked technically glossy, internally vacuous; empty but glossy. I was sure the film makers worked in advertising companies, or quasi-commercial television. As (the Austrian) poet Erich Fried wonderfully responded when faced with German kitsch/kulturtheater: "Jetzt haben wir Kultur gehabt."[14] Anyway, that night at the Collective in 1978, some got angry, people from *Arsenal,* Berlin, you cannot attack experimental film this way, it's such a fragile thing anyway! Nonsense, and they were not experimental films; BMW ads masquerading as experimental film in 1976/77. There are analogies today. Why I am telling you this? Because the primitive co-op machine allowed even then for so-called "mistakes", to allow the process in procedure of making film.

For us in London that was the opposite of a real experimental film practice or a possible avant garde.

SB: *You discuss this impurity and errors often in your texts. You also mention the socialist principles of co-op working related to the collective work you have just mentioned.[15] I would like to know about this working principle, specially the way how you describe the collective in your book on Beckett as in relation to "the function and effect of the whole matter not being a matter of individual subjectivity/authority, nor of any inter-communal 'collectivity'. A theorisation of ideology makes obvious how 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 is not necessarily more collective than 1, or '1'.[16]*

PG: For example when I was telling you about making Room Film, it was about the collective nature of co-op, but it is not a good example. Because I could say that 80 % of films there were made with one person, alone in a room, like Kafka sitting with his pen in his room. In my case, I didn't even know how to use printing machines. But was always good at projecting and working at editing (Steenbeck) tables, which are thankfully also machines. Truly if I can manage that, anyone can. But I have to underline that

15   "Filmakers Co-op had an ongoing public, social, definition of practice, as practical as it wa stheoretical. It was a political necessity for the collective work of the London Filmakers Co-operative filmmakers; collective was meant to mean such for production, distribution, exhibition and critical/theoretical/polemical work. Precisely because of this materialist and radically socialist notion of the utilization and collectivization of the means of production, and their open access, it was unnecessary to set up a pseudo-collectivity for each specific film." P. Gidal, Materialist Film, p. 146-147. "Co-op was … for more people, out of socialist principles, of access and a base for a practice rather than just a spontaneous utilisation" P. Gidal, "Technology and Ideology", p. 154.

16   Peter Gidal, *Understanding Beckett: A Study of Monologue and Gesture in the Works of Samuel Beckett*, London: ;The Macmillan Press, 1986, p. 13.

14   A good example of such garbage/kitsch/film for last 20 years is Alexander Kluge.

the real collective part was not technological collective; the collective part was that when you had done it or even during the making, you would immediately show it, you wouldn't wait for a special occasion to show, or premiere, and when you showed it there were people around and they were reacting in different ways to it. Or someone would see over your shoulder on the steenbeck, or when you first projected a freshly printed negative! It was a primitive democracy; we simply treated each other as equal voices in a process of viewing that person's work, showing it, talking about it, but it didn't mean that we all worked together. But we were *there* together. Had tea at the corner shop. Answered phones. Looked for things in film closets! Therefore 1+1+1+1 is good description. I was anyway against collective based on group solidarity suppressing contradictions.

I was literally working there nearly four years, from 1971 to 75 (though treasurer since 1969), actually it was lot of work, consistently each week. Not just sometimes. It was great. Screening the films, sweeping the floors once a week, getting mattresses from an old Church hall, even one weekend mixing cement to build the worst – or the most crooked – breezeblock wall in history (something I am still proud of or I wouldn't mention it), writing articles for *Time Out*, and elsewhere, writing film makers in Poland, in Switzerland, in Japan, in Spain, in Canada and the USA to PLEASE send the Co-op their 16mm filmprints for distribution and for screenings. I would say half a dozen others did as much or more Co-op work. Printing and developing film. Setting up live performances. Distributing films every day. Carrying projectors and getting furniture. Cleaning. Another half a dozen helped a lot when they were there, and so on. 1+1+1…. People said if you want to clean the floors on

Wednesdays, be my guest. Or paint the wall red. Or fix the heater or at least the window lock in the winter as it was always freezing! Many people helped that way. I quit in 1975.

SB: *How come that Time Out was interested to experimental film at that time.*

PG: What happen is this: I moved to London in June 68, and my girlfriend at that time was reading IT (*International Times*), and showed me a small add announcing a co-op meeting in July. There was I think Malcolm LeGrice, Annabel Nicholson, Simon Hartog, Steve Dwoskin, and David Curtis. In meeting they mentioned that there were open screenings at the Arts Lab in Drury Lane, and they said bring your films, which I did. I brought my 1967 *Room* film. I had made two prints before leaving Massachusetts. Didn't have a splicer and I told them that I have only two prints on one reel. They said then show the two. It fitted to my ideology, my consciousness, my understanding of repetition, anyway it was perfect idea. So I did that; I showed the same film twice. The screening was a revelation, even to me; because shown twice it was totally different. Same but different. Because they liked the film there I was so pleased, felt at home with them, saw LeGrice's *Castle II*, same night, loved it. I joined the co-op immediately. Some weeks later saw and liked Dunford's 8mm and Dwoskin's early films. Then in early 69 there was a meeting of the co-op, at Dwoskin's house, and we were standing in the rain outside and Simon said that I should be a treasurer of co-op, he would put it to the meeting for a vote. The committee was I think 6 people. I resisted, am very lazy, then said ok. Six months after being made treasurer – which was very important because they were losing money like crazy! – I was very strict… when Europeans ordered films from us, my first

years. But he thought that I should be thrown out because I was taken too much on control, I was three four years, from 71 to 75, actually it was lot of work. Screening the films, sweeping the floors, writing articles for Time Out, writing for film makers to USA. But Malcolm did a lot as well. Though Mike's criticism didn't get through. People said if you want to clean the floors on Wednesday, be my guest. So, his theoretical Marxism was attacked by me and others, because actually we were sitting there and working, while he, Michael and William were occupied most of the time with machines. It was lot of work for me, that's why I quit in 1975. Apart from screening and maintaining the place, I was also writing a lot, I could say one out of three reviews in Time Out is written by me. Each week.

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PG: What happen is this: I moved to London in June 68, and my girlfriend at that time was reading IT (*International Times*), and showed me small add announcing a co-op meeting in July. There was Malcolm, William, Annabel, Simon Hartog, Steve Dwoskin, and David Curtis. In meeting they mentioned that there was opening of screenings at Arts Lab in Drury Lane, and they said bring your films, which I did. I brought my *Room* film. Didn't have splicer and I told them that I have only two prints. They said then show the two. It fitted to my ideology, my consciousness, my understanding of repetition, anyway it was perfect idea. So I did that; I show same film twice. The screening was revelation even to me; because it was totally different. It's same but different. Because they liked the film there I joined the co-op. Even Dwoskin's films were amazing in those day. I hate them now. Then in 69 there was a meeting of the co-op, at Dwoskin's house, and we were standing in rain outside and Simon said, obviously he realized that I am good at something, that I should be a treasurer of co-op. So we went to meeting and I became treasurer. Six month after being treasurer, which was very important because they were losing money like crazy! But I was very strict. When Europeans ordered films from us, first policy was that any films you order from us should be 50 % British. You don't like it; go fuck yourself. Go to Jonas Mekas, they would not even send across the ocean. So if you want a Brakhage or some other from us, then you will have to get also fifty percent our films. No one ever said no to this. For example Apra in Rome made twelve programs with our films. But you also had to collect the money. The worst person to collect money from was Peter Weibel from Austria, actually we had to take Austrian lawyer for this. It happened only once in ten

policy was that any programs you order from us should be 50 % British. You don't like it; go fuck yourself. Go to Jonas Mekas, go to NY Co-op, they would not even send them across the ocean. So if you want a Brakhage, or Ron Rice, or Storm de Hirsch, or Maya Deren, or Carolee Schneeman, or George Landow, or Mike Snow, or some others from us, then you will have to get also fifty percent our films. No one ever said no to this. For example Adriano Apra in Rome made twelve programs with our films. It got the Co-op a lot of shows and quite a bit of money. But you also had to collect the money, 95% of the time in advance, or at least 75% of the payment in advance... The worst person to collect money from was Peter Weibel, a really nice guy from Austria, actually we had to take Austrian lawyer via the Austrian Consul, business section for this! (I forgave him only about five years later!) Other than that, everyone paid but often it took some doing. Next step after treasurer, doing various things, I decided that we are producing and showing lots of films weekly, so somebody has to write about this. So I went to *Time Out* and there was a wonderful person there, Verina Glaessner, she was Editor of the film section and also herself a good writer. I said that Co-op should be represented and that we want to write weekly about our Wednesday shows, and we want our stills to be published once in a while as well. She asked me to write a piece so that she could decide; I went home and wrote a 500 word short piece. It was about an Italian film by Marco Ferreri, *Dillinger is Dead*. I am not sure if it is good or bad film, but I wrote the piece and brought it to her 2 days later, and she said this is wonderful and printed the text immediately, which I didn't know till I saw it in *Time Out* ten days later. So she said that I could write about co-op films. That's how everything started. She was enthusiastic and supported the films. Every week we had a listing with some text, every three or four weeks we had a picture with a longer text-listing, every six or eight weeks we had big picture with a short article. And sometime we got two whole pages. Malcolm wrote a lot, another person who wrote a lot of very good critiques was John Du Cane, who was already working for Time Out after Cambridge. Du Cane got interested in experimental film suddenly. It was mainly three of us writing. Annabel Nicholson was editing a performance and film journal, *Readings*, which she put together mainly herself with some help for two others sometimes, which had wonderful pieces on some of the evenings and performances at the Co-op, not just film. Sometimes we were lucky; once when we had a Warhol film at the Co-op, *Couch*, which we had hijacked from Warhol we made enough for the Co-op Cinema costs to be paid for three months. It was going from the N.Y. *Factory* to West German TV (ZDF or WDR); the distributor whom we all knew, told me the print was in town for few days on its way to Köln. So I ran over and he lent it to me for 24 hours, raced over to the lab, had a proper print made, brought it to the distributor to send on quickly to Germany, and kept the better one for the Co-op, showed at the co-op six months later (after writing about it in *Time Out* in extreme language), for which we had long lines down the fire-escape external staircase in the rain, all around the block. We did three extra shows that day, the place was packed. I told Warhol about this some months later, and that we needed the money more and weren't gonna pay him. He said "oh, that's okay." Mainly the Co-op Distribution and the weekly Cinema paid its own way by taking 25% of filmmakers' rentals,....we just managed.

SB: I*n your films and writings you are working on avoiding the representations of relations that we assume to be ideological. You mention film* Nightcleaners *in relation to this discussion; I am curious to know how do you relate Room Film 1973 with instances of class struggle? Especially I am interested to know this, because room is such a personal and inner space, which somehow we assume as introducing a barrier to an exterior of reality outside, where actual struggles are happening?*

PG: I agree with that question (perhaps not the use of the word *actual* as all struggles are actual), but I argue that history is in each moment. I will start with negative response: a films that represents, supposedly adequately, transparently, the struggle of night cleaners, is by itself ideologically oppressive. Because it means a reproduction of believability, which is the dominant mode of believability, of truth, as the consuming of images via identification into a transparent medium, and secondly, automatically it is the truth of the owner of the means of production. That in itself is reactionary.

The excuse is not that *Room Film 1973* is automatically more in the interest of any specific class struggle, as opposed to something like a film about night cleaners (the non-unionized workers who clean commercial buildings at night for substandard wages and no secure contracts, and whose campaign in London was at its peak at that time.) The point is that the film which was ostensibly for class struggle was just one of so many simultaneously reproducing the dominant ideology of viewing, of meaning making, of truth, of beauty, in fact doing the oppressors' work for them. Yet even various terrible internal contradictions (personal and political) of certain quasi-documentary film practices on the "left" were not the

problem; it was the fact that they couldn't interrogate their film practice at all. Neither they nor their films did, *and* they did not understand that the problematic to be addressed was that of endlessly producing the narrative reproduction of the ideological systems of representation of those in power.[17] So it ended up that such work was simply conventional manipulatory documentation, humanist spectacle in (bad) faith. Somehow avant garde "documentaries" where one mixes things together to look radical in two ways at once have never succeeded. Even Vertov and Eisenstein didn't in the end manage it. Having the correct sentiments is not changing the powerful forms of representation, which remain precisely oppressive. Reproducing a reactionary viewer and viewing via "good" content is in the end cowardly.

My own problem is this: to make a film that situates the viewer in a different way, in terms of truth, in terms of believability, in terms of anticipations *not* being "fulfilled", in terms of being, in terms of the split between perception and knowledge. Not to act in a normative way in terms of representation. Nothing in fact can be fulfilled via a projection of the viewer, consciously or unconsciously.

I am talking about possible radical viewing, viewers who cannot conceive themselves as consuming in an adequate way a representational process. If you cannot be made to believe by a film viewing that you are consuming a political process adequately, that it is trying to keep it as something problematically related to the outside, elsewhere from the seen, then you (have to)

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17   We used to try to simply tell them you cant make a left wing revolution via a right wing medium

start to struggle with what you have been given.

But of course I never had an illusion that people who watch my *Room Film 1973* at the Co-op (or anywhere else) will enter a specific represented struggle in the world. It is to break attachments to the representationally adequate, whether it was to do with masculinity, femininity, class movements, etc. In my view, the viewer who questions (those kind of) representations is a different viewer, it is politically and ideologically a different presence at that moment. That is, and makes, a different history.[18]

It is always thus a matter of a position which is the result of a specific, and radical, viewing process, which is the place of all aesthetics, philosophy, not to mention all theory and polemics.

SB: *When I said class struggle I meant how Althusser describes them as asymmetric relations between antagonistic elements. That's why I see class struggle in a formal level in your films.*

PG: Definitely, the struggles in relation to, and within, the aesthetic realm. The film is not a barrier to external reality. It is a presence, it is historical, it is no less reality. I think that struggle is between the elements. Either you

agree that the practice of cinematic or theatre aesthetics have any function/value, or you don't. If you don't agree on this, then you have to go on to organize rent strikes, political campaigns, and so on. Though, if you even consider the latter, there is the problem of the various illusions: of immediacy as well as of (ahistorical?) effectivity, of the dangers of catharsis, etc. There are contradictory and antagonistic temporalities in all struggles. My problematic is how the film viewer operates within, and is situated by, those antagonisms.

Afterwards Questions

SB: You are since seventies writing about pessimism being part of anti-humanistic Marxism, which you are relating as well to the form of your films. Once you said that reactionary pessimism is like reactionary optimism, you feel so bad you feel good, which you call it as *Guardian/New Statesman/ Village Voice* position. Stephen Heath writing in *Afterword* to your *Anti-Narrative* text, which is also not an optimistic text, takes your separation between reactionary and radical pessimism as an echo of Benjamin's observations in his text on Surrealism on organizing pessimism. The quote Heath uses from Benjamin is that "to organise pessimism means nothing other than to expel moral metaphor from politics and to discover in political action a sphere reserved one hundred percent for images." (S. Heath, *Afterword*, p. 95). My question is what do you think of pessimism prevailing today in political struggles, and especially of a dominant art discourse replying to this pessimism with overall optimistic moralism, through activist agency, spontaneous sentiments, and similar reactionary positions. Do you think, is there such a sphere reserved hundred percent for

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18   Otherwise you go into counting the number of viewers: I had 62, you had 4.300, but Spielberg has seventy million! So, on that small level what you do does not make a difference at all. But it does. So if these aesthetico/political struggles –for and with and through the viewer – are measured in their terms (or even in terms of immediate social effectivity via some mechanistic system) there can be no struggle at any level, no imagination, no change, only reiteration of the given.

images where politics is expelled from moral metaphors?[19]

PG: To expel metaphor would be a beginning, though possibly impossible. My position is determinately against metaphor.

SB: *In your book on Beckett, the ideology of language takes important part as in your many other films and writings. For example "speaking as unified subject" which conceals the contradictions is what you oppose through Beckettian operation, which is "not allowing any fullness to any word, phrase, sequence, or sentence … and places representation only in order to evacuate it, bit by bit, phrase by phrase, tortuously." You say that "this is a realism of use, of language-use, not of communication," and you add that what is really striking here is that this "lesson can be learnt only by a force of abstract thought". Could you please expand and tell bit more how do you relate this learning to the issue of* forcing *the use of language?*

PG: I didn't mean forcing a use of language but rather: a certain use of language can force what I called a realism of use not of consumption – and the "learning" is in that usage's use! Simply defying *belief*.

SB: *As you say that nothing is outside of ideology, you also claim that "nothing is outside of history." But also you write that certain avant-garde and experimental films "produce history", in opposition to films claiming to be anti-illusionist, but in fact representing very coherent history (especially referring to Godard and Straub/Huillet). In which way can history be produced when nothing is outside of history?*

PG: One of the most important, seriously important, questions for a political aesthetics. When we meet again.....this will still be the question. And the answers, so far, are a few works that attempt this, in precise but very different (no doubt) ways. To represent those "ways" in (my) language is truly impossible, for me.

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19   "[One's] cultural backlog does not allow one to stay away from all great Hitchcock movies any more than the cultural backlog makes it easy for Jean-Luc Godard to emigrate to Cuba. Nor do I fight for the Viet Cong." Peter Gidal, "Film as Film", *A Perspective on English Avant-Grade Film*, p. 22.

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The expenses of the first issue of Rab-Rab were 1.200 euros in total, for printing and shipment. Designer, writers, and editors worked for free and the texts were not proof read. The issue was financially supported by Art School Maa with 500 euros (in return Art School Maa received 30 copies of Rab-Rab journal). The remaining 700 euros were paid by the editors. From the sales of the first issue of the journal we received approximately 900 euros revenues.

The second issue of Rab-Rab received as grants 3.500 euros from Oskar Öflund Foundation, 2.500 euros from Arts Promotion Centre Finland, 2.500 euros from The Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki and 1.000 euros from Frame Visual Art Finland, in total 9.500 euros. The estimate for the printing and shipment costs of the second issue is 3.500 euros, the designer gets 1.250 euros (for work both on the first and the second issue of Rab-Rab), proof-reader receives 550 euros, and approximately 1000 euros will be used for distribution and postage of writers' copies. The remaining approximately 3.200 will be used for future projects of the Rab-Rab Press and toward the expenses of the third issue of Rab-Rab journal.

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