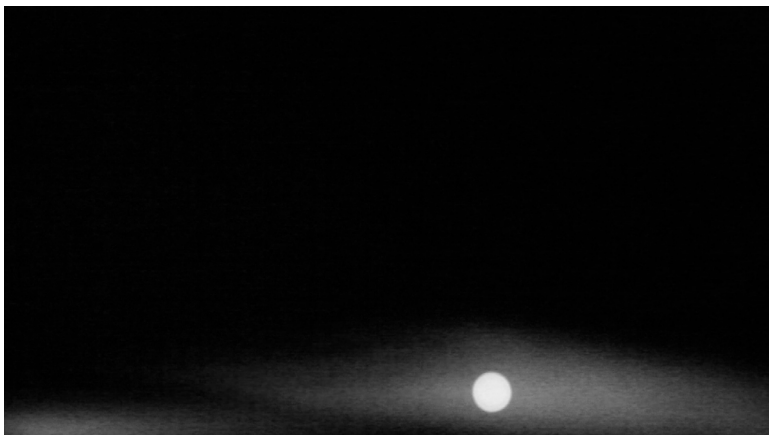


The Production of Hrönir: Albanian Socialist Realism and After

*Write the truth – that will be
socialist realism.*
– Joseph Stalin¹

Hlör u fang axaxaxas mlö.
– Jorge Luis Borges²



In 1941, Jorge Luis Borges published the short story “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” in the Argentinian literary magazine *Sur*. It outlines a world of unknown origin, “whose language and those things derived from their language [...] presuppose idealism.”³ This world “is not an amalgam of objects in space; it is a heterogenous series of independent acts – the world is successive, temporal, but not spatial.”⁴ In a world in which *esse est percipi*, to be is to be perceived, objects acquire a questionable status. In fact, they cannot be expressed owing to a total absence of any nouns. Perceiving, thinking, or even hoping for or dreaming of an object is what constitutes its precarious “existence” – a word that becomes dubious itself – as “reality” constituted of objectively observable fact breaks down. “Things duplicate themselves on Tlön; they also tend to grow vague or ‘sketchy,’ and to lose detail when they begin to be forgotten. [...] Sometimes a few birds, a horse, have saved the ruins of an amphitheater.”⁵ The name of this world is

Still image from Armando Lulaj, *NEVER*, 2012, full HD video, b/w and color, sound 22’.

Imazh nga Armando Lulaj, *NEVER*, 2012, full HD video, bardhezi dhe ngjyrë, me zë, 22’.



Albanian students in front of Vladimir A. Serov's *V.I. Lenin Proclaims Soviet Power* (1954), 1970.

Studentët shqiptarë para Vladimir A. Serov, *V.I. Lenin shpall pushtetin sovjetik* (1954), 1970.

Armando Lulaj, *Parade of Workers* (1950), b/w print, 15 x 25 cm, 2015.

Armando Lulaj, *Parada e punëtorëve* (1950), stampim bardhezi, 15 x 25 cm, 2015.

Armando Lulaj, *Chinese Friendship*, b/w print, 10 x 15 cm, 1992.

Armando Lulaj, *Miqësia kineze*, stampim bardhezi, 10 x 15 cm, 1992.

Tlön, and Borges slowly reconstructs it through a narrative maze littered with plagiarized encyclopedias and secret societies.

Even though the metaphysics or linguistics of this world may be far beyond what we would deem acceptable, there is an important aspect of Tlönian civil life that fails to be mentioned by Borges. Perhaps as a writer of texts that often tend to erase and obscure, to “forget” the borders between fiction and non-fiction, truth and speculation, he was more aware than anyone that, if anything, the visual arts produced on Tlön might not show such a stark contrast with those of Earth. His short overview of Tlönian literature confirms this. The denial of authorship, the absence of a concept of plagiarism, books that contain their own contradiction, poems consisting of a single word – all of these should be no surprise to the average reader of late-twentieth-century literature and philosophy. In fact, we may perversely appropriate Derrida’s dictum-turned-cliché “there is no outside-text” as a perfectly acceptable Tlönian point of view, that is, if they were able to understand spatio-temporally determined words such as “there,” “is,” and “outside.”

If we were to imagine Tlönian visual art, its difference with contemporary visual art, in which both authors and grand narratives have died multiple deaths, would be practically indiscernible. Perhaps this is precisely why Borges does not engage in any speculation on this subject. Yet he does make several observations on archeology, which place it in remarkable proximity to certain visual and monumental practices and may therefore perhaps serve as our provisional point of departure. In of those passages on Tlönian archeology he describes the seemingly outlandish idea of the *hrön* (pl. *hrönir*).

Century upon century of idealism could hardly have failed to influence reality. In the most ancient regions of Tlön one may, not infrequently, observe the duplication of lost objects: Two persons are looking for a pencil; the first person finds it, but says nothing; the second finds a second pencil, no less real, but more in keeping with his expectations. These secondary objects are called *hrönir*. [...] Sometime stranger and purer than any *hrön* is the *ur* – the things produced by suggestion, the object brought forth by hope.⁶

Even though socialist realist art from the twentieth century is often discussed under a single heading, there are considerable differences in style and content between national variants, indeed, at least as many differences as there were between the “communist” regimes in Eastern Europe. These differences are not only dependent on the national art-historical context, such as the prior existence of avant-garde movements or local modernisms, but also on political, social, and historical factors. Moreover, we should be aware of the fact that the narrative of “socialist realism” itself assumes a coherency that is much more the result of the Western gaze than of a presumed communication or artistic cross-fertilization between the different nations of the Eastern Bloc that would make it a true “style.”⁷ Nonetheless, there has been a steady growth of art-historical literature theorizing socialist realism,⁸ although the focus remains mainly on its development in the Soviet Union. Also the “other” sides of cultural production in the Eastern Bloc have been increasingly receiving attention, starting initially with the discovery of the historical Russian avant-garde in the wake of Western European left-wing uprisings in the 1960s,⁹ and more recently broadening up to include the local underground movements that developed independently in different Eastern European countries,¹⁰ as well as the steady incorporation of “emerging” artists from the region into the global art market, as long as they largely conform to Western artistic narratives.¹¹

Deprived of any historical avant-garde that would anchor underground artistic activity or any post-communist “return” to a “lost” modernist tradition, Albania, locked off on all sides by mountains, lakes, and sea, only fits uncomfortably in the dual narrative of Stalinist socialist realism and avant-garde subcultures in the rest of the Eastern Bloc.¹² After cutting ties with Tito’s Yugoslavia in 1948 and deteriorating relations with the Soviet Union after Stalin’s death in 1953, culminating in Enver Hoxha’s denunciation of Khrushchev in 1961, Albania became fully isolated from the Eastern Bloc and the rest of world, first relying on Maoist China, and later only on itself. So if there had been

any initial influence from the Soviet Union on the development of socialist realist art in Albania, it was swiftly left to its own devices.¹³

Faced with this art-historical conundrum in which existing narratives seem to collapse, I propose two related approaches, one maybe more orthodox than the other. The first one is to inspect certain fragments of Albanian art-theoretical discourse that are pertinent to the form and content of socialist realism in Albania. This inspection can only be cursory and incomplete, but at least allows us to listen to voices underrepresented in the current art-historical discourse of Eastern Europe. The second one is to consider the work of an artist whose oeuvre, I would argue, hinges on a thorough reinterpretation of the Albanian socialist realist heritage, offering neither a Groysian paradigm of the (failed) continuation of the avant-garde, nor a Greenbergian dismissal of kitsch.¹⁴

Let us attempt a first approach, an inspection of Albanian art-theoretical discourse from the period of the Cultural and Ideological Revolution in the second half of the 1960s, which for the first time saw a theoretical elaboration of Albanian socialist realism,¹⁵ while at the same time “establishing continuity between Hoxha’s regime and the heroes of Albanian history.”¹⁶ The fact that Hoxha added “Ideological” to the concept of the Cultural Revolution borrowed from Mao Zedong should here attune us to an all-pervasive aspect of Albanian socialist realism: that ideology, being ever “further revolutionized,” prevents any naive, authentic, pre-ideological reality from being distinguished or perceived.¹⁷

Through several fragments from the writings related to art of party leader Enver Hoxha collected in *Mbi letërsinë dhe artin (On Literature and Art)*,¹⁸ we may be able to reconstruct this Stalinist conceptualization of Albanian socialist realism. In his speech to the 5th Congress of the Albanian Labor Party on November 1, 1966, Hoxha announces the Cultural and Ideological Revolution with the statement that “the further revolutionization of the life of the country cannot be understood without the development and deepening of the ideological and cultural revolution,”¹⁹ he formulates the role of socialist realist art as follows, characteristically in two breathtaking sentences²⁰:

The Party puts forward the duty that literature and the arts become a powerful weapon in the hands of the Party for the education of the workers in the front lines of the struggle to educate an ideologically and morally pure youth, that all artistic creativity have a high ideological level, be driven by the martial, revolutionary spirit of the Party as well as by a healthy national spirit. The Party demands that literature and the arts more broadly reflect the struggle, work, and life of the worker-people, its ideals and aspirations, its noble feelings, its heroic character, its simplicity and majesty, its revolutionary force, that they truthfully and in its own revolutionary development reflect our reality and current situation, that at the center of creativity be placed the heroes of our time: workers, villagers, soldiers, people's intellectuals and revolutionary cadres, young people, educated by the Party, those who with dedication and heroism work and struggle for the building of socialism, for the defense and for the flourishing of the socialist fatherland, that the artistic and cultural institutions are at any time guided by the ideo-political demands of the Party, that they fight and unmask bourgeois ideology, with the aim of exerting a revolutionary educational influence on the masses, and that they be of the people and for the people.²¹

There is much here to unpack – a laborious task that is beyond purview of this text –, but what springs into view first of all is that art is conceived as a tool of ideological education: it should “educate an ideologically and morally pure youth” and exert “a revolutionary educational influence on the masses.” This is also what curator Edi Muka points out when he speaks of Albanian socialist realism as “an art of profound educational character that was required to translate the ethics of communism into artistic form.”²² Second, we may note that art itself is, on the one hand, supposed to have “a high ideological level,” but, on the other, ought to “truthfully [...] reflect our reality and current situation,” in all of this “guided by the ideo-political demands of the Party.” Although art historian Raino Isto rightly suggests that socialist realism ought to be considered a “strategy adopted by a par-

ticular group (in this case the Albanian Communist Party) to achieve specific ideological goals,"²³ something happens in the consolidation between the seemingly contradictory demands of being highly ideologically charged and the demand to truthfully reflect reality. A few paragraphs further, Hoxha elaborates on this point.

Socialist realism is the faithful reflection of the socialist life that we are building in all its aspects, of the enormous material transformations at revolutionary tempo happening to our country, our society, our people based on Marxist–Leninist theory and on the masses of decisions elaborated by our Party. But this socialist realism is no way presented in static, solid forms; it boils, is in permanent and constant development through the struggle of opposites, through class struggle, through the struggle of the new against the old: This socialist realism, presented and understood in this way, is related to the present and with the perspective. The present prepares the future and it doesn't prepare this future through dreams and unreal imaginations, but through scientific, materialist predictions, directed by laws that are uncovered, which scientifically help to uncover the new.²⁴

So it seems that the "faithful reflection of socialist life" can only be accomplished successfully by a socialist realism that "boils" from the "struggle between opposites," between the reality of the current situation and the ideological demands of the Party. Thus it is in a "constant development," which, while relating to the present and preparing the future does so not "through dreams and unreal imaginations," but through a process akin to the logic of scientific discovery. In other words, socialist realism forecasts the future in a manner akin to scientific methodology, offering a "realistic" perspective on the future in the present. Socialist realist art is summoned to bring out the ideological truth of the present (in both a subjective and objective sense), preparing for the future of its actual realization. Thus, the reality depicted in socialist realism is "more real" than any naturalism could achieve, because it "scientifically" filters out the new from the old. Nevertheless,

this artistic process can sometimes fail; not each work will turn out as “successful” as the other. In fact, in a remarkable passage, Hoxha suggests that this is because any art “reflects reality flame by flame, will be created from the void,” therefore always risking failure:

If our socialist realist literary-artistic creativity does not duly correspond to the current situation, has not been fully placed in the frontline of the struggle of the Party and worker-masses for the uninterrupted deepening of the revolution, that doesn't mean that it has left the ranks of that struggle and needs to be put aside, because each new work that will represent reality flame by flame, will be created from the void.²⁵

Reality here is precisely the ever “further revolutionization of the life of the country,” the intense fire of the building of socialism, consuming the old and making way for the new, or, as slavacist Petre Petrov put it inversely, “socialism is the kind of reality that has realization as its constitutive principle.”²⁶ The effects of Hoxha's discourse on socialist realist art theory and criticism are perplexing, as we gather from the following important passage by Andon Kuqali, one of the leading Albanian art critics of the time, following on a discussion of the concept of the “truth” of the work of art during the “Plenum of Criticism” in 1972:

The creation of the artistic figure as a meaningful and generalizing figure [...] is a duty with a great ideological responsibility, with is linked to the passage into metaphor, with figurative comparisons, with symbols. These constitute the highest level of artistic realism.²⁷

Here we find the synthesis of reality and ideology: metaphoricity, figuration, symbolism are the highest form of realism, or, as Isto has succinctly formulated it: “when one looks at ‘the reality of socialist life’ in socialist realism, one is looking not just at a metaphor for reality, but reality as metaphorical.”²⁸ The frantic process, in which art boils over from the incessant attempts to capture the flames of reality, even

seems to affect language itself, ever creating new words to represent the present. When we move from the demand “that all artistic creativity have a high ideological level [*nivel të lartë ideologjik*],”²⁹ to the phrase “[i]n the majority of our literary-artistic creativity, which is characterized by its high artistic level and level of ideas [*nga niveli i lartë ideor e artistik*], our new man finds himself,”³⁰ and finally to the qualification “a very high ideo-artistic level [*me nivel shumë të lartë ideoartistik*],”³¹ we are witness to an adjectivic merger, a grammaticalization, where art and ideology are compressed together in the neologism “ideo-artistic”³² that captures the essence, if there were such a thing, of Albanian socialist realism. Borges speaks of a language on the northern hemisphere of Tlön that only consists of adjectives. This could have been one.

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In an anachronistic postscript to his story, postdated to 1947, Borges describes the “Tlönification” of the world after the discovery – perhaps we are already here dealing with a *hrön* – of the complete set of forty volumes of *The First Encyclopaedia of Tlön*:

Almost immediately, reality “caved in” at more than one point. The truth is, it wanted to cave in. Ten years ago, any symmetry, any system with an appearance of order – dialectical materialism, anti-Semitism, Nazism – could spellbind and hypnotize mankind. How could the world not fall under the sway of Tlön, how could it not yield to the vast and minutely detailed evidence of an ordered planet? [...] Numismatics, pharmacology, and archaeology have been reformed. I understand that biology and mathematics are also awaiting their next avatar... [...] If my projections are correct, a hundred years from now someone will discover the hundred volumes of *The Second Encyclopaedia of Tlön*.³³

The parallel drawn here between Tlön and totalitarian world views should not surprise us, and we could argue that its influence on cer-



Removed faces of Mehmet Shehu from *Gju me gju me popullin* (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1978).

Fytyrat e fshira e Mehmet Shehut nga *Gju me gju me popullin* (Tiranë: 8 Nëntori, 1978).

tain types of artistic and cultural production has in fact been quite extensive, and not only as regards the hypotheses of Albanian socialist realist art that we have attempted to excavate from the dirt of history. For what, we should ask, are the grave mounds of the Illyrian tribes that were the “first” to inhabit the Balkan peninsula other than *hrönir* “found” by the eager Albanian archeologists of the socialist period?³⁴ And what about national hero Skënderbeg, who seems to be uncovered in each of the Western Balkan countries with a fresh ideologically inflected heritage. For as Borges suggests, “[t]he systematic production of *hrönir* [...] has been of invaluable aid to archaeologists, making it possible not only to interrogate but even to modify the past, which is now no less plastic, no less malleable than the future.”³⁵ The language of Albanian socialist realism, as I have suggested above, is fully consistent with the Tlönian world view, and therefore the *hrön*-like aspects of its visual and monumental art production should not surprise us. Nor should we be held back by a supposedly clearly demarcated distinction between fact and fiction. If anything, this is an opposition that is irrelevant to Albanian socialist realism as much as it is inexpressible on Tlön.³⁶

Although the suggestion that the entirety of the country succumbed to this extreme form of idealism may be exaggerated, it must be admitted that the ideology that infused and nourished Albanian socialist realism in the years leading up to Hoxha’s death not only resulted in these types of retroactive depictions of a genealogy of nationalist heroes and their artifacts up to Illyrian times, it also entailed the retroactive and collective *erasure* of the depiction of anyone fallen out of political grace – and there were many. As historian Elidor Mëhilli suggests, “History unfolded not only in the spaces of tomorrow but also in the blank spaces of the past – waiting to be partially erased, rearranged, rewritten.”³⁷ In 1981, the entire nation grabbed their pens and erased Mehmet Shehu from every single publication in perhaps one of the most definitive gestures of socialist realism. Once again, *esse est percipi*.



The model of the cachalot skeleton in the former Enver Hoxha Museum, 2011.

Modeli i skeletit të kashalotit brenda ish-Muzeut të Enver Hoxhës, 2011.

Image of Mt. Shpirag before the intervention of NEVER, 2011.

Pamja e Malit Shpirag para ndërhyrjes së NEVER, 2011.

Armando Lulaj, *US Spy Plane*, c-print, 80 x 120 cm, 2014.

Armando Lulaj, *Avion amerikan spiunazhi*, stampim me ngjyrë, 80 x 120 cm, 2014.

It is in response to these continuous attempts of the Albanian socialist state to produce *hrönir* and elevate the symbol to the highest level of reality that we should interpret the artistic work of Armando Lulaj, which, now that the socialist project has been prematurely aborted, has perfected the laborious process of unearthing or fabricating them – the difference is impossible to make. All the artifacts that populate his work have a vague and sketchy quality, overgrown with weeds, forgotten in museums, lost in time and space with hardly a single photograph or archival document to prove their existence. In fact, Lulaj himself often has to “produce” the documentation necessary for these artifacts to exist in the eye of political and artistic bureaucracies alike, and sometimes even has to resort to *copying* a *hrön* so that it may exist: The skeleton of the cachalot in *It Wears as It Grows*, of which copy was carried around the streets in Tirana, but whose existence inside the Natural History Museum is only supported by the single archival indication “whale skeleton”; in *NEVER*, the inscription “EN-VER,” overgrown by weeds and with no remaining photograph in the national archives, only lingering in the memory of a handful of villagers; an American military plane in *Recapitulation*, rusting outside the castle walls of Gjirokastër, which has been seemingly erased from us archives and documentation of which is practically inaccessible due to opaque references to “diplomatic sensitivity.” Even one of the few depictions of planes in Albanian art and important contextual element in *Recapitulation* Spiro Kristo’s painting *Flying Day (The Pilots of Division 7594, Rinas)*, was without archival file, belonging to a long-forgotten owner, orphaned on the walls of the National Gallery of Arts. Objects, copies, photographs, documentation, all of them hang together through a handful of eye-witnesses.

In precisely this sense, the oeuvre of Armando Lulaj is a coherent and rigorous contemporary response to Albanian socialist realist cultural production, both in terms of artistic and archeological artifacts, not mired by shame or false modesty about its supposedly art historical irrelevance. In fact, it seems to be the result of what is nothing but a thoroughly emancipatory gesture, in which Albanian socialist realism is recast as the consummation of conceptual art. If we abandon

the outdated model of the artist as author, and no longer view the socialist artistic production in Albania from the perspective of single, individual artists, but rather as an ideologically driven machinery that encompasses an entire conceptual chain ranging from the Central Committee down to the artist in his studio, the actual production process of art works from socialist realist runs entirely parallel to that of conceptual art.

As Sol LeWitt famously stated in 1967, "When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art."³⁸ This indeed comes very close to Hoxha's conception of socialist realist art, working from scientific predictions and like a Turing machine representing reality "flame by flame." In fact, it is precisely his ideas on socialist realist art that "produce" it in the exact same way that socialist realist art produces reality. Conceptual, as adjective, is here a synonym for "ideo-artistic." The institutional and bureaucratic aspects of socialist realist art production – the plenums, debates, organizations, material allocations, work plans, etc. – follow naturally, in the same way that many conceptual artists imposed strict regulations on their own modes of productivity. And whereas the latter ventured to strip themselves of any authorship, the former's authorship was diffused through the many collaborative efforts and removed through the bureaucratic apparatus. In this sense, the "death of the author" promulgated through various theoretical circuits in the West was still very modest compared to his death in Albanian art, in the sense the Western-style authorial death was self-imposed and moreover allowed for an enormous authorial output about this death itself; those who claimed his death definitely did not renounce their own authorship. This imposed death – may we say murder – of the author under socialist realism at the same time accounts for the fact that by far the majority of artists active under socialist realism have been unable to "regain" their authorial voice and style after 1990, mostly lapsing into a seemingly desire-driven, sensuous form of semi-abstraction.

The work of Armando Lulaj traces the few remaining pieces of

evidence of this murder. Dealing with objects whose authorship and ownership is contested or unknown, he makes them his own, although he never adopts the language of authorship himself. The texts that accompany his films are always slightly condensed historical narratives without any specific authorial quality, sketching out the minimal framework for the viewer the gain access to the work. The filmic images, interspersed with archival footage, suggest a performative catalogue of archeological gestures and actions – reconstruction, measuring, displacement – without clearly establishing objects and objectives. His work thus appropriates and affirms the vagueness of the *hrönir* that are its quasi-objects as the only truthful way to deal with them and their ideologically charged past, articulating itself in an artistic language of mere adjectives.

1. Cited from Petre Petrov, "The Industry of Truing: Socialist Realism, Reality, Realization," *Slavic Review* 70.4 (2011): 873–92, at 889.
2. Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 1998), 68–81, at 73.
3. *Ibid.*, 72.
4. *Ibid.*, 72–3.
5. *Ibid.*, 78.
6. *Ibid.*, 77–78.
7. Eda Čufer, "Enjoy Me, Abuse Me, I am Your Artist: Cultural Politics, Their Monuments, Their Ruins," in *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, ed. Irwin (London: Afterall, 2006), 362–83, at 374–5: "In principle, communism did not have an international cultural policy within the framework of its political bloc, and if cultural exchanges did take place at the state level, we can be sure that those who were at odds with the logic of the regime took no part in them whatsoever." See also Eva Forgacs, "How the New Left Invented East-European Art," *Centropa* 3.2 (2003).
8. To name three major publications: Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (New York: Verso, 2011); Evgeny Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People's Republic of China*, trans. Robert Chandler (New York: Overlook, 2011).
9. Set off, in part, by the publication of Camilla Gray, *The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863–1922* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962). For an overview of this rapprochement, see Jürgen Harten, "From the Black Square to the White Flag," in *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, ed. Irwin (London: Afterall, 2006), 384–9.
10. See for an excellent overview Irwin (ed.), *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe* (London: Afterall, 2006).
11. Cf. Čufer, "Enjoy Me," 375.
12. Gëzim Qëndro's *Le surréalisme socialiste: L'autopsie de l'utopie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014) remains the only monograph devoted solely to an analysis of Albanian socialist realism to date.
13. Raino Isto, "In It We Should See Our Own Revolution Moving Forward, Rising Up": *Socialist Realism, National Subjecthood, and the Chronotope of Albanian History in the Vlora Independence Monument*, MA Thesis (University of Maryland, 2014), 29 n. 62: "The

emphasis on continuity between the artists of the National Awakening and socialist realism also allowed the influence of Russian socialist realism to be almost completely elided." Isto's blog *afterart* is an invaluable resource for those wishing to explore Albanian socialist realism: <http://afterart.wordpress.com/>

14. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Collected Essays and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). See for an analysis of the impact of Greenberg's and other Western narratives on East European art history, Ana Peraica, "A Corruption of the 'Grand Narrative' of Art," in *East Art Map*, 472–6.

15. Cf. Isto, "In It We Should See Our Own Revolution Moving Forward, Rising Up," 27.

16. Bernd Fischer, "Enver Hoxha and the Stalinist Dictatorship in Albania," in *Balkan Strongmen: Dictators and Authoritarian Rulers of Southeast Europe*, ed. Bernd J. Fischer (London: Hurst, 2007), 239–68, at 264.

17. In fact, everyday life was to be avoided as representational theme. See the chapter "La quotidiennité comme résistance" in Qëndro, *Le surréalisme socialiste*.

18. Enver Hoxha, *Mbi letërsinë dhe artin (nëntor 1942–nëntor 1976)* (Tiranë: 8 Nëntori, 1977).

19. *Ibid.*, 241: "Revolucionizimi i mëtejshëm i jetës së vendit nuk mund të kuptohet pa zhvillimin e pa thellimin e revolucionit

ideologjik e kulturor." For the entire speech see Instituti i Studimeve Marksiste–Leniniste pranë KQ të PPSH, *Dokumente kryesore të Partisë së Punës të Shqipërisë*, v. 5, 1966–1970 (Tirana, 1974), 61–200. Available online at http://enver-hoxha.net/content/content_shqip/librat/ppsh_dokumenta_kryesore/dokumenta_kryesore_5.htm. Unless noted otherwise, all translation from Albanian are by the author.

20. See for an excellent treatment of Albanian ideological lingo, Ardian Verhbiu, *Shqipja totalitare: Tipare të ligjërit publik në Shqipërinë e viteve 1945–1990* (Tirana: Çabej, 2007).

21. Hoxha, *Mbi letërsinë e artin*, 253–4: "Partia shtron detyrën që letërsia dhe artet të bëhen një armë e fuqishme në duart e Partisë për edukimin e punonjësve në radhët e para të luftës për të edukuar një rini të pastër ideologjikisht e moralisht, që gjithë krijimtaria artistike të ketë një nivel të lartë ideologjik, të përshkohet nga fryma revolucionare luftarake e Partisë si dhe nga një frymë e shëndoshë kombëtare. Partia kërkon që letërsia dhe artet të pasqyrojnë më gjerë luftën, punën dhe jetën e popullit punonjës, idealet dhe aspiratat e tij, ndjenjat e tij fisnike, karakterin e tij heroik, thjeshtësinë dhe madhëstërinë e tij, hovin e tij revolucionar, të pasqyrojnë me vërtetësi dhe në zhvillimin e vet revolucionar realitetin dhe aktualitetin tonë, që në qendër të krijimtarisë të vihen heronjtë e

kohës sonë: punëtorët, fshatarët, ushtarët, intelektualët popullorë dhe kuadrot revolucionarë, njerëzit e rinj, të edukuar nga Partia, ata që me vetëmohim e heroizëm punojnë e luftojnë për ndërtimin e socializmit, për mbrojtjen e për lulëzimin e atdheut socialist, që institucionet artistike dhe kulturore të udhëhiqen kurdoherë nga kërkesat ideopolitike të Partisë, të luftojnë e të demaskojnë ideologjinë borgjeze, me qëllim që të ushtrorjnë në masat një ndikim edukativ revolucionar, të jenë të popullit dhe për popullin."

22. Edi Muka, "Albanian Socialist Realism or the Theology of Power," in *East Art Map*, 131–140, at 131. This resonates with the argument made by Groys in "Educating the Masses: Socialist Realist Art," in *Art Power* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 141–8, at 146: "Whereas the market dominated, even defined, Western mass culture, Stalinist culture was noncommercial, even anti-commercial. Its aim was not to please the greater public but to educate, to inspire, to guide it. (Art should be realist in form and socialist in content, in other words.)"

23. Isto, "In It We Should See Our Own Revolution Moving Forward, Rising Up," 31, n. 66.

24. Hoxha, *Mbi letërsinë e artin*, 292–3: "Realizmi socialist është pasqyrimi me besnikëri i jetës socialiste që po ndërtojmë në të gjitha aspektet e saj, i transformimeve kolosale materiale dhe me temp revolucionar që pëson

vendi ynë, shoqëria jonë, njerëzit tanë në bazë të teorisë marksiste-leniniste dhe në bazë të masave e vendimeve të përpunuara nga Partia jonë. Por ky realizëm socialist nuk paraqitet aspak në forma statike, të ngurta; ai zien, është në zhvillim të përhershëm e të vazhdueshëm, nëpërmjet një lufte të kundërtave, nëpërmjet një lufte klase, nëpërmjet luftës të së resë kundër së vjetrës: Ky realizëm socialist, i paraqitur dhe i kuptuar kështu, është i lidhur me të tanishmen dhe me perspektivën. E tanishmja përgatit të ardhshmen dhe këtë të ardhshme nuk e përgatit nëpërmjet ëndërrimeve dhe imagjinatave ireale, por nëpërmjet parashikimeve shkencore materialiste, të drejtuara nga ligje të zbuluara, të cilat shkencërisht ndihmojnë për të zbuluar të reja.”

25. Ibid., 290–1: “Në qoftë se krijimtaria jonë letraro-artistike e realizmit socialist nuk i përgjigjet sa duhet aktualitetit, nuk është vënë plotësisht në vijën e parë të luftës së Partisë dhe të masave punonjëse për thellimin e pandërprerë të revolucionit, kjo nuk do të thotë se ajo ka dalë jashtë radhëve të kësaj lufte dhe duhet menjanuar, se çdo vepër e re që do të pasqyrojë flakë për flakë realitetin, do të krijohet nga hiçi.”

26. Petrov, “The Industry of Truing,” 884.

27. Andon Kuqali, “Kritika të orientojë e të hapë horizonte për të ardhmen,” *Nëndori* 19.4 (1972), 77–82, 82: “Krijimi i figurës

artistike si një figurë kuptimplote e përgjithësuese [...] është një detyrë me përgjegjësi të madhe ideologjike, e cila lidhet me kalimin në metaforë, me krahasime figurative, me simbole. Këto përbëjnë shkallën më të lartë të realizmit artistik.” I thank Raino Isto for this reference.

28. Raino Isto, “‘Kritika të Orientojë e të Hapë Horizonte’: Some Comments and Resources Related to Aesthetic Criticism in Communist Albania,” *afterart*, August 23, 2014: <https://afterart.wordpress.com/2014/08/23/kritika-te-orientoje-e-te-hape-horizonte-some-comments-and-resources-related-to-aesthetic-criticism-in-communist-albania/> (accessed March 10, 2015).

29. Hoxha, *Mbi letërsinë e artin*, 253: “gjithë krijimtaria artistike të ketë një nivel të lartë ideologjik.”

30. Ibid., 314: “Në pjesën më të madhe të krijimtarisë sonë letraro-artistike, që karakterizohet nga niveli i lartë ideor e artistik, njeriu ynë i ri gjen vetëveten.”

31. Ibid., 315: “një art me nivel shumë të lartë ideoartistik.”

32. Elsewhere we also find the more common adjective “ideo-political” [*ideopolitik*] and “ideo-aesthetic” [*ideoestetik*] (Hoxha, *Mbi letërsinë e artin*, 411), and even “ideo-emotional” [*ideoemotional*] (Kuqali, “Kritika të orientojë e të hapë horizonte për të ardhmen,” 81).

33. Kuqali, “Kritika të orientojë e të hapë horizonte për të ardhmen,” 81.

34. The recreation or “discovery” of historical presence under the

pressure of ideology – the production of hrönir – is of course not exclusive to Albania. We may point to a contemporary example described elsewhere in this catalogue, where Jonas Staal describes the retroactive production of cultural artifacts of the Kurdish independent cantons in Rojava (see this volume, 76).

35. Kuqali, “Kritika të orientojë e të hapë horizonte për të ardhmen,” 77–78.

36. It is typical that another scholar, Ani Kokobobo, has also adopted a literary model to discuss socialist realist ideology, in which she speaks of “philosophical madness” resulting in a “mad and arbitrary reality” and draws parallels with the disintegration of reality in socialist Albania into a Baudrillardian “hyperreality.” See “Bureaucracy of Dreams: Surrealist Socialism and Surrealist Awakening in Ismail Kadare’s *The Palace of Dreams*,” *Slavic Review* 70.3 (2011): 524–44.

37. See Elidor Mëhilli, “Written. (Erased.) Rewritten.” in Armando Lulaj, *Albanian Trilogy: A Series of Devious Stratagems*, ed. Marco Scotini (Berlin: Sternberg, 2015): 43–61.

38. Sol LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 12–16, at 12.